

Canto Diurno #1

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 23 RD, 1986.

0.10 a.m.

Je répète, pour Bataille, l'interrogation: pourquoi "communauté?" La réponse est donnée assez clairement: "A la base de chaque être existe un principe d'insuffisance. . . " (principe d'incomplétude).

— Maurice Blanchot

0.45 a.m.

after the storm
the flat
lineaments of

word
I
meant
world a letter
on the lam
a greek
lamb-
da / fort
missing the
eleventh leg
- not a wooden
- not a toy
of this journey
though it is
the meat we eat
in this house

after the storm
the skies
 dangling
limbs
lambdas
 fort
where we
fiction our
selves to be
at one

*

1.30 a.m.

Reading a book should not be like filling a vase but like lighting a fire.

Montaigne

2.05 a.m.

Prose demands that one read between the lines. Poetry, that one read the lines.

7.15 a.m.

MIDNIGHT OIL

night moves
dark in
to grey
burns

 a
bulb burns re
flects on
pane

 a
piano in
to mor
ning

 a
radio
diodic deity

 a
a place of wonder
of work

 a
wrap
for

 a
cold
night like
this night

 o
blue

 I
move in
small steps
the hordes follow alpha
betical
ly
 vertical
horizon down
the hand

*

downhand
night
clears
thoughts
no - less
shadows of
 shadows
ashes of ashes
 Bruno
 pyre
of mor
ning
 we burn only
once i.e.
 we better burn
all the time
 in this
soon to be
sun-
 lit
 night

*

here you go
again old
George used
to say burning
that mid
night oil again —
he up nights
cups of tea
watched
night street cats houses dark moon
watched his
own old
bones age & mornings
out for the
paper he'd stop

me tell me
his nightwatch tales
conspiracy of him &
I nightlording it
over deal road
dawn did
come slid in on
sirens over boulevards
the usual news stereo
phonic aubades
from the bedroom english
bbc voice
here in the living room
the french announcer
--morning bulb keeps burning
only its reflection
dims & dies out
more coffee
luke-warm
by now your body
warmer under covers
night's last
encroachment

*

8.10 a.m.

a
tempted
au
bade

pros trate
sun

cloud claw

no
milk
in
this
cof
fin

caves
in

clear
po
lice
si
ren

sires
day

*

8.30 a.m.

But the individual is only the residue of the tria of the dissolution of the community. By his nature — as his name shows, he is the atom, the indivisible -- the individual reveals that he is the abstract result of a decomposition.

... one doesn't create a world with simple atoms. One needs a clinamen. One needs an inclination (in both meanings of the word) of the one towards the other, of the one by the other or of the one for the other. The community is at least the clinamen of the "individual".

— Jean-Luc Nancy

9 a.m.

THE NEWSPAPER DEAD. the paper picked up taken home, like going to church on sunday, long ago, as regular, as much of a rite. the double ritual of reading, of writing, take notes, see how it can enter, that world, your world, too. *introibo*. no altar but what rolled off the presses, heavily inked. iconography of random death: if to pray is to give thought, intensely, then that is what I am doing right now. unalienable format: too large to be cut out and glued into notebook: this dead will have to stay where it is, on the front page, tomorrow's dustbin liner. this is a Reuter dead from Rome, young woman in heavy wintercoat, wool cap with studded rim pulled down to half-inch above eyebrows, face pressed three quarters towards me to the asphalt, ear to the ground as if listening for a distant tremor an approaching train a faroff revolution or simply for what the earth has to tell her. whatever it is, she can no longer hear it. Vilma Monaco, 28, carrying a .38 in her hand and a German MP40 in her bag, 15 spent cartridges littering the ground, the pointless numbers, do what you want, they all spell death, Vilma surrounded by numbers caught in a web like a medieval hex, killed in Rome trying to kill a roman politico who played with bigger numbers, she a member of the Fighting Communist Union, a splintergroup of the Red Brigades, offshoot born to die out of the second split of the BR in Paris 1984. collar frayed where a bullet went through I think. I would like to put my finger there. to shake you death of europe, by the shoulders, get up, it was all a dream of winter, the minor corrupt christian-democrat politico not worth it, wrong strategy, though who am I to say despair is ever wrong. coldblooded: she is wrong because she is dead. one of us is dead, one more skull to be strung on a chain we all carry around our necks. but that too, too romantic, as gooey as her own harsh choice. Vilma Monaco, a name Hollywood might have picked. this is hello and good-bye, Vilma Monaco. Vilma Monaco, you leave me here with only an *introibo* , with no *credo* , which

is all you had, you leave me here with your name only, with your smudged inky deathmask,
already a twenty four hour dead, Monaco, Vilma, your face pressed against the street, listening to
someone I cannot hear.

*

11 a.m.

IN REAL TIME:

that dream . co
incidence of a day
now 14 years
ago

a day
planned as a page
to write

a canto
diurno all
day long
& as large as I
could make it.

(& how
to tell today
coming out of
another night,
how to
tell the making
of that un-
made dream?

unmade canto
coincidence of
dawn & night,
had gotten up
in pre-dawn
November light,

had started
the tracking, had

turned the radio on,
heard the news
(the only news
instanter as old
as it ever gets)

that

EP
had
died.

It stopped
me for a day, a year, a decade.
shaking off the fathers.

here it goes on.

some un-
finished busi-
ness, skirting
not shirking
the far-
ther quest
ion.

*

noon

re Sobin's work:

two ways of working, essentially: first the vertical / spine poem that turns/twists on grammatik,

cf: 'compose. (no ideas
but in...)'
grammatik

a grammarye I sense owes much to Celan, as does that corkscrew movement that anchors the poem *downward*, into earth, air into earth, from the top of the page, the heading, chapter, *caput*, no longer gives permission for any kind of spread, the poem runs from its own title/inceptor ie first word or line given who knows how, runs in the shortest line possible, ie hairpin curves, mountain travail, where the descent beckons, in a spiral, narrowing, downward, vertical straights, sharpest *clinamen*, always downward, screws itself into, earth.

(this vertical *tropos* is not be confused with the 'organic' - romantic image of poem as tree, of art/work as natural growth, tree with bole/trunk, roots & branches, or with man as tree confusion, the renaissance romance, Leonardo's tree-man inscribed upright in the cosmos, that cosmic anthropocentrism out of which (even if seemingly as reaction against) came romanticism, all the way down to us — for us still there in Duncan, though he already on the edge of a new configuration, twin to the *explosante-fixe*, already close to what this new figure might be, is, in, say Celan, Sobin, some others', my own work: a necessary denial of tree image, a first approximation of the *rhizome*.)

&, secondly, a horizontal/horizontal single line sprezzatura (even when it takes two, or three, or, rarely, four or five lines, it always works on the one/single, line. These, nearly always truncated, fore-shortened, literally, as if the eye (the writer's ?, the reader's ?) cld only catch that tail-end, or started out too fast, flew over, too eager at the beginning, the beginning therefore, the origin therefore always hidden/in hiding, the breath that is inhaled, invisible air that goes in to come out again of the body, colored, thus visible, inky glyphs shaped by lips & teeth & tongue -- but something always already caught / now catches / in the throat.

Catches, caches. a scroll, a banner of words / no banter here/ no more air about to breezily agitate the sentences. It is as if all the air there was, was needed in the breath-making of the line and now those foreshortened lines rest exhausted, after a long journey, a trajectory descrI~b~, come to rest in the playing field of gravity (of words, of language - the invisible ether/origin maybe the ideas as forerunners ((but what does come first : thought or language? the aim of poetry clearly the attempt to put that question out of play by creating the concordance of the two: the shadow and the thing, the thought and the word)) gravity, I said, then there is play again, *ça en decoule*, *gravitas*, *gravide*, *grave/grave* — bringing it all back down to earth.

*

The horizontal and vertical forms interpenetrate in the architectonics of the book, creating for the reader the design of a cross, a cross firmly planted in the grass and ground of southern France.

but that cross formed, that many-armed figure is not meant *for* the man who wrote the poems: it is not even meant as the man's shadow: it is the man.

his shadow the high summer scarecrows speckle the Vaucluse.

or maybe his shadow is only the shadow of those scarecrows.

he said them.
unsaid them all.

crows are birds of omen. so are scares. so are the scars we call words.

*

Strange how I hear Blanchot in so many of the horizontals:

"towards that ear, that ether, that *absentia* of all presence: presence itself."

*

& this, which Duncan immediately worried out of the 'ars poetica':

"but death continuously discharged, expelled,
projected...

a death kept alive."

i.e.: our life alived
in the tension
of the worded
line

*

ex-vita, he writes, I hear the rime: *ex-voto*, & look up

votive: 1. given or dedicated in fulfillment of a vow or pledge:
offering

a votive

2. expressing a wish, desire or vow. A votive prayer.

ex-voto: (according to a vow) a votive offering

*

that many-armed cross also a loom, the woof & weft of the cloth woven thereon.

and in woven there is the vow makes the poem a votive offering.

which is not the violent/bloody sacrifice of devotion where everything goes up in fire and smoke.
no sparagmos here, what happens here happens as air, as breath that a-lives, and thus “the earth
as air,” even.

*

... and come now, a few pages further into the text, to the word 'votive' I had earlier teased out of
ex-vita:

the rose
as votive: for
the

vow
of the rose.

2 p.m.

to write through the numbness of body --
stretching the dream-
drum's

skin /

skein

this length of thread, a yarn-wound
twisted around a loose skeleton
coils

earthy suggestion of this, a
quote *a twisted skein of lies*
the story

goes on not-
withstanding the numbness, the cackle
of geese

warns of danger

the sky pierced
arrow-shaped flight of similar
things, birds or
tales of

an anlace piercing

porous nighthide

through which sweat
of my life

dangles me from a rope-
trick, o how I envy
Mozart's ease

let it come down, frag-
rant fragment

-- pushed through.
to hold, held, told in hell.

2.45 p.m.

second attempt at translating Todtnauberg, Celan's encysted record of his 1967 meeting with Martin Heidegger (a disaster as far as Celan is concerned, according to most sources). Clearly Celan had hoped for something (the opening botany, arnica, eyebright, is of healing plants) which Heidegger did not (could not?) (would not?) provide: in the visitors' book he wrote a line "von einer Hoffnung, heute,/auf eines Denkenden / kommenden /Wort/ im Herzen,". Then a walk on unevened, unplanned, ground where they walk singly (Orchis und Orchis), then in the car, later, driving back, more talk, rough talk ("Kruedes") overheard by a third person, the driver. And then a harsher landscape, high-moor, log-paths or trails, humidity.

TODTNAUBERG

Arnica, eyebright, the
draft from the well with the
star-die on top,

in the
cabin

written in the book
- whose name did it record
before mine? -
in this book
the line about
a hope, today,
for a thinker's
word to come,
in the heart,

woodturf, not evened,
orchis and orchis, singly,

crudeness, later, while driving,
clearly,

he who drives us, the man,
he listens in,

the half-
trod log-
trails in the highmoor,

humidity,
much.

*

6.35 p.m.

the hearth again
& against
the en-
croachments, the
pull of
 polis, its
exigencies.

the question of

hearth as elective
polis as de facto

"the community of lovers
has as its ultimate goal
the destruction of society"

a war machine
two beings made
or not made

for each other
a possibility
of disaster

here is the room
the closed space

here no night
can come

to an end
here happens

the lie
of union

a union always takes place
by not taking place

(there is no
free union)

these walls are
against polis

here we hatch
treachery against

those who glorify us by
codifying us

here we destroy
ourselves laughing

inventing community
unaware-aware

the danger geese of polis
cackle on the landing

*

7.30 pm.

reading the date
in the palm of
my hand:

 calm o-
asis nailed
to the blue
of the sky, be-
fore Easter, way
before, the snows
give warmth back
to the hand,

 and here
now we offer
each other
food, milk
& dates.

*

9.30 p.m.

bring your
self to
the place,

 ring
-ed with
lace,

an
-swer the
swerve of

mind, the
eye
-mace,

tired

tracks
at

night's
slovenly
pace

park
there
ere

it all
(errs, it
all

does) come
to this:
(la mise

en intrigue)
we mouth

-ed the st
ory, the
store

of more
in place
of

the place
brought
to

a halt
-ing
breath

a crys
tal knife
edges

the hoar

frost a-
mother

night
's in (-
sight.

* * *