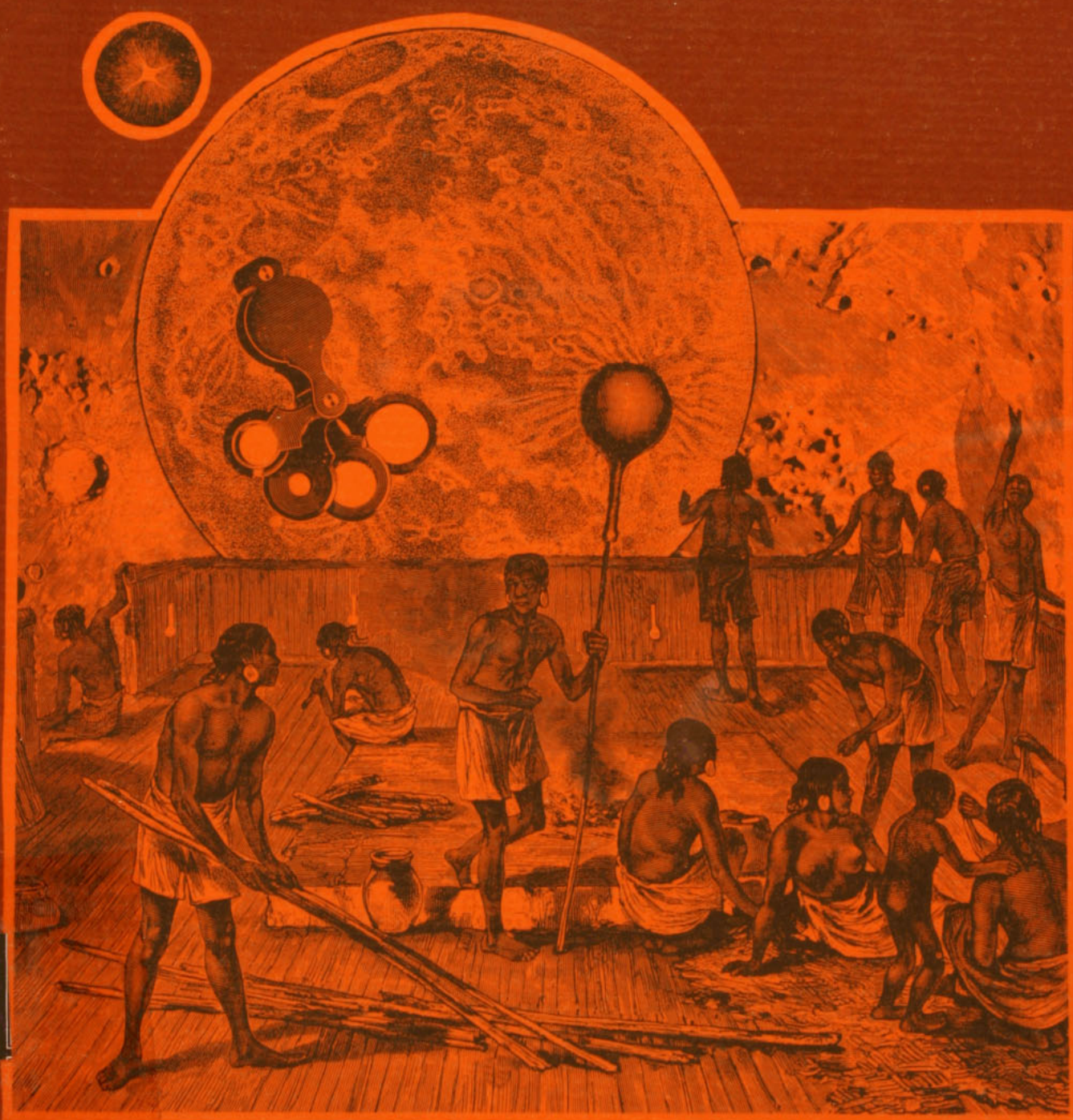
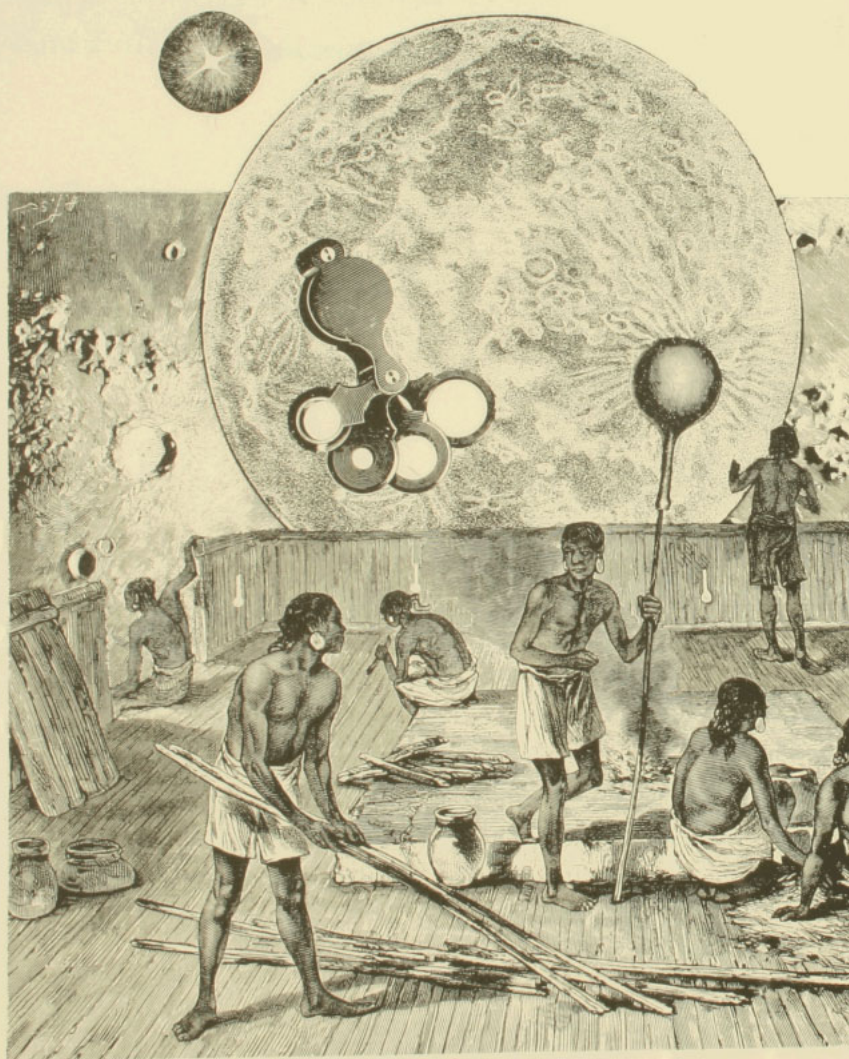


IN THE COUNTRY OF THE ANTIPODES

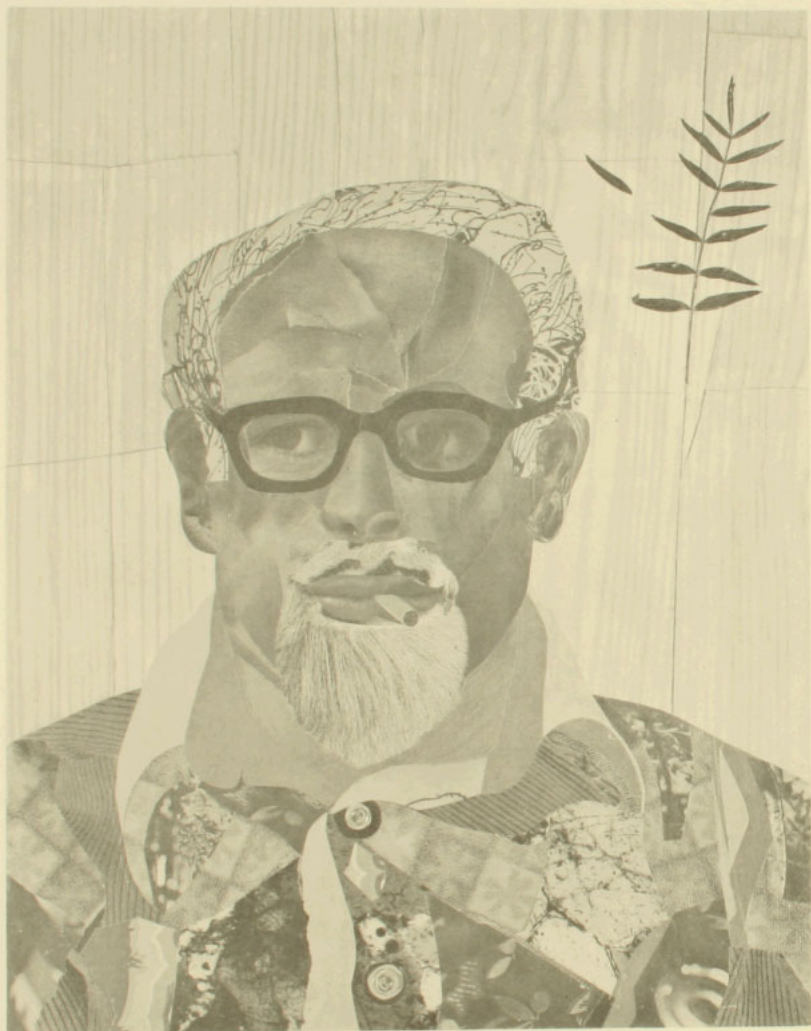
Ludwig Zeller











Anders Jeller

IN THE COUNTRY OF THE ANTIPODES

Ludwig Zeller

Poems 1964-1979

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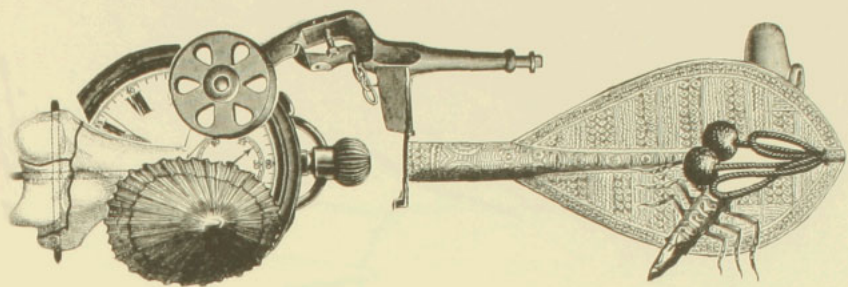
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Translators' note

Many persons have assisted in the production of this book, but thanks are due above all to John Robert Colombo; the translation of *When the animal rises from the deep the head explodes*, on which he collaborated with Susana Wald, is only the most evident of his contributions.

Theresa Moritz's command of Spanish and skill with English eliminated errors and introduced improvements at many points in all the texts published here.

Fernando Alegria, George Hitchcock and Estela Lorca are among the translators of Zeller's poetry from whose versions ours have benefitted. Valuable suggestions for both the translations and the introduction have come from essays by commentators on Zeller's poetic and graphic work, chiefly Anna Balakian, Jean Louis Bédouin, Hugo Goldsack, Edouard Jaguer, José Miguel Oviedo and Arturo Schwarz.

Perhaps most important of all, Ludwig Zeller generously cooperated in the entire translation process, encouraging and aiding us to give these English texts their character as new works, able to stand alone.

A.F. Moritz and Susana Wald



Introduction to the Poetry of Ludwig Zeller

by A.F. Moritz

For all its evident prodigality of image, Ludwig Zeller's poetry is at bottom a work of unremitting criticism. Poetry that devotes itself to a rigorous and difficult investigation, seeking to elaborate itself along coherent lines and accomplish an envisioned project, is neither common nor fashionable today, and hence when it occurs does not easily find its proper audience: one willing to contend with the exploratory and forego the self-indulgence of reading to satisfy preconceptions of desirable poetic styles, themes and types of difficulty. Only when we have understood the poet's criticism, the results of his effort to strip away the false schemas erected before reality by human obsession or weakness, can we see his critical vision of the nature of things and go beyond it to the flower of his project, the new creation that he has found possible, full in the face of reality's recalcitrance as he alone has come to know it. A real barrier to serious poetry is the current predilection for miscellaneous brief poems expressing private feelings, insights, situations; this goes hand-in-hand with a general bias, not totally mistaken but totally inadequate, that poetry opposes 'reason', that its proper sphere is emotion or intuition, and that its genesis is in a humble modern version of inspiration: the flash of sensitivity. Thus, the poet who today would link his work to the greatest traditions of poetry by making it a systematic examination of human being, is likely by this very decision to find himself cut off from the majority of readers. Here we see evidence of a decadent sense of poetry's nature that only careful study of major poets, as opposed to popular writers of small poems, can remedy. Besides its absolute value then, Zeller's work has the virtue of being a corrective and a stimulus.

In addition to the wealth we receive from any individual writer, Zeller imports through his poems an entire foreign way of thought and feeling into our poetry. He enters English poetry from Chile: from Spanish literature

with all its popular and learned styles, from the native and European heritages of his country which is the 'caterpillar of the moon-moth', from the sand and stone of its northern desert, the difficult human strand crushed between mountain and sea. Zeller gives us, through the glass of a single writer, the whole Spanish and Latin American literary endeavor, for we can say of a major poet what Jorge Guillén says of a 'point in time':

All is concentrated
By centuries of roots
Into this moment,
Eternal and my own.

The poem brings home to us with doubled force the fact that in poetry we deal on the personal level, but that each poet is in fact a separate world. The very foreignness of Zeller's way, when we meet it conversing with us familiarly in English, deepens for us the mystery of communication and commonalty.

Immediately noticeable in Zeller's work is the problem of coherence versus inspiration or intuition, which has consciously occupied, to one degree or another, all serious writers since Mallarmé. It was defined by Valéry in these terms:

The most difficult project to conceive, to understand and above all to pursue in the arts, and especially poetry, is to *submit production of a work to the conscious will* without this strict condition, deliberately adopted, being allowed to harm the essential qualities, the charm and the grace, which must effectively be carried by any work of art that aims to lead men's minds to the delights of the mind.

Valéry's terms — charm, grace, delights — are perhaps too soft for the often fractured and scorched texture of Zeller's work. Also, Valéry's statement indicates a fear that will may stifle inspiration, whereas Zeller's preoccupation remains that of Mallarmé himself: the volcanic upheaval of inspiration dwarfs man and continually threatens to carry will away. Still, Valéry's formulation provides a key to Zeller, especially if we note that it defines the specifically aesthetic form of the great Western tension that the Chilean poet constantly evokes and revitalizes: measure and spontaneity, Agape and Eros, Apollo and Dionysus. Zeller's conscious exploration of this tension takes place on a variety of levels which are 'images superimposed on the papyrus of solitude' or 'another world... superimposed on yours other images/On the present ones'. Due to the project which Mallarmé undertook and Valéry stated, the poet is now conscious that in the struggle of will and inspiration for his work he experiences the same tension that he sees everywhere when he

looks outward at nature and society. Henceforward, then, form itself must be the chief bearer of significance. It has never really been something into which 'meaning' is poured; it must no longer be thought of in these terms. The effort to make the form and meaning one must now be foremost.

In Zeller, the metaphorical process of superimposing seemingly disparate, actually unified realities, achieves a comprehensiveness and intensity that can be painful. Geology and the universal history of mankind are superimposed on the individual; the history of culture on personal psycho-history, both theoretical (Freud, Jung) and experienced (Zeller); historical events on myth, literature on autobiography, metaphysics and cosmology on the love of man and woman. And all of these are metaphorically equated with the poem and the act of creation. We face a shifting symbology, a fluid allegory in which first one, then another aspect of this vast, multi-faceted whole may approach us while the rest recede; at times all seem equally present in harmony and confusion; and at times all have disappeared and there is perfect lack. Why all these things that seem one thing, that visit us in dreams to torture and bless, that expand our lives with wonder or cause us to wake trapped in 'Kafka's old machine'? What are our true dimensions, where is our true home? Always we are aware that we are something not ourselves, and this is torment and salvation. Thus, in section XXII of *The pleasures of Oedipus*, Christ and Oedipus interpenetrate before our eyes, so that they become both themselves and a single divided Adam:

It is all finished, I hear within
How they tie my arms into knots and the nails scraping
My eye sockets in which the sun made its nest.

Why should I drink? Why do the threads
Drag themselves from the well in childhood there?

Yet a few more moons and you will no longer see me,
I will have arrived in the Kingdom. The thorns open slightly
At the vinegar, but the memories never.

The bound arms are Christ's, the empty eye-sockets are Oedipus', the nails belong to both and merge them together in a pun (nails are the claws of Oedipus, the spikes of Christ): that is, in language. This Oedipus-Christ wonders about origins, he thinks if he understood them he would understand himself. But while man's lot, the vinegar (pain, insult, condemnation), may paradoxically work against suffering, it does not open the memories even slightly. Christ came to end not mystery but the misery that seems to emanate from it; here, however, he collapses into Oedipus, who in recovering his memory lost his ordered and circumscribed personality in memory's enigma,

the vast forces in and beyond us that drive us through the kaleidoscopic void. Thus, in being superimposed on one another, Christ and Oedipus are also superimposed on poet and poem, for theirs is also the poet's situation, his awareness, and his search.

Two active poles are always interdependently operating to generate the charge in Zeller's work: absence and presence, or nothingness and creation. There is the ceaseless cascade of beings, with behind it the suspicion of nothingness and before it the poet's fear and love of existence, and his relentless probing for the truth of its nature, regardless what it may be. In this probing, which I have termed 'criticism', using the word in its philosophical sense, there are several crucial elements that recur. First, there is the question itself, which is the poet's tool and the sign that he has imposed upon himself the critical task, whose immediate consequence is solitude and pain, though its object is to win through to communion and assurance. The question is the poet's life, the foundation of his work. How often questions motivate Zeller's poems! —

Why are there so many flames, so much burnt pulp,
And on arid knife-edges that child who pastures his worms?
Why so many eyes? Why aren't we allowed to delve
Into the well of the antheap palace?

Machine of pleasure of my torture my queen
Where are we?

Am I here or am I not?

But what have I done?

What did we get from it all?

Here are we prisoners of Chance?

We have waited for you a thousand years, where are we now?

Who is waiting for us there?
Are words only smoking embers?

When Oedipus is silent, what does the Sphinx reply?

And there are many others, not infrequently at the conclusion of a poem or passage. In a real sense, it is the recurring human questions that the poet



starts from and arrives at, deepening and intensifying them as he goes. By continuing to ask them, not by rote but each time with eyes open and body exposed to their full danger, he lives.

The second basic element of the poet's critical inquiry springs from the question and is the dual image of man as questor and questioner. First, man is the pilgrim, on the move through reality, wandering and exploring, though often belittled and forced along by his environment. His image is that of sailors or horsemen toiling over dunes of salt and dust, through sunburnt landscapes of mirage, or into the mists and 'visionary dreariness' of the last pages of Poe's *Arthur Gordon Pym*:

But they who were mine turned their horses back not for grass
or forage

But for anxiety scrutinizing the heavens advancing in the open folds

Of the south where the wall of mist rises
Cascade of tears surrounding us in desperation
Among linden branches the invisible wind

In his other aspect, the questor is the immobile questioner, seemingly helpless and inert before overwhelming reality, eroded by torture and ennui and dream, yet stubbornly pressing his question, watching and waiting. The image repeats in many poems:

I was sitting here, for a thousand years
I cannot rest, or sleep or die,
My eyes turn over in the depths of the glass...

I question myself among the bodies but they do not answer...

Before the knot that closes its grooves I inquire,
I shout and faces burn...

Fallen into a trap I interrogate myself

Zeller's extreme case of the questioner is the unfortunate man of 'Poetry and Truth', from whose elbow grows a knot of wood and to whose skeleton a 'great tattooed hook' is attached, a submarine image of himself from the other side of the mirror of water. He is situated before an incredible outburst of phenomena (enigma-heads, a sphinx, the Rano-Raraku, etc.), and he sees without understanding that his own questioning is only a 'flower of lava', a tiny by-product of the very eruption he confronts. Yet the term 'flower' records Zeller's slender but tenacious allegiance to a possible salvation, not in knowing, but in seeking.

The third element of Zeller's criticism can be termed 'skepticism', and is the poet's distrust of rationality and rationalism, as opposed to reason. Rationalism exalts logic, denies what cannot be quantified, and seeks to 'understand' by imposing the requirements of logic and efficiency in any situation. It is reason gone mad, and it typifies our technical society, which cannot comprehend dialogue or dialectic and so reduces discourse to the opposition of mutually exclusive, polarized ideologies. This society is the 'antheap palace' where it is forbidden to delve into the well of living water, and where men make the divine

spirals of laughter
Inaudible through the turning wheels of all the hours
Square flasks of vinegar the cities
Without light columns of ants without history or dream

Reason, on the other hand, believes and seeks harmony and proportion, but imposes nothing and stands above all for the honest acknowledgement of all facts, no matter how ugly or illogical. (We could go further and say that reason is man's participation in a fact of harmony which is the origin and meaning of all being; this idea, as re-interpreted by romanticism and again by Breton, comes to Zeller through surrealism — but it belongs to the deepest visionary aspect of his work and is strictly speaking beyond the scope of this introduction.)

Reason in the true sense is both a tool and a goal of Zeller's poetry, as witnessed by its ultimate grace and balance despite having assumed the full weight of chaos, phantasmagoria, the nightmare genesis and metamorphosis of forms. Because of reasonable skepticism, this subject matter does not control the poem but is controlled by it. Skepticism defends our questioning even against the mind itself: it refuses to accept the finality of intellect's discoveries, it casts doubt on all human concepts and even on interpretations of sense data, it reminds us that our portraits of reality are provisional, it refuses their claims of being identical to fact. Thus, while the skeptical poet cannot cling to comforting dogmas, neither can he lose hope due to pessimistic hypotheses or even his own bitter experience. He perforates such hybris as, for example, that of Sartre, who imagines that he knows what no man can know, that the universe holds no answer for human desire and is therefore absurd. To the skeptical poet, all things remain possible. Zeller announces his skeptical position in 'To understand is not to know', a poem which stands near the beginning of his mature quest:

Thrust out, deprived of air, I awaken, fall asleep
And awaken again: I hear the knife-edges far away.
A voice answers me from every crack:
Your doubts are denied. To understand is not to know.

The poet's inevitable, unending search for his source ends in the silent haze that shrouds all origins. The answer that comes back is this: even to understand everything in man's present categories would result only in error. Our doubts are denied because they spring from our own inadequacy. Inadequacy motivates our quest and quest is its proper outcome; no deductions can be based on it concerning the nature of being, human nature, or human destiny. These are all things which we do not comprehend.

The fourth and last basic element of Zeller's criticism is the largest, most immediately gripping one: the specific content of his examination of reality. Basically, he is concerned with the problem of being as flux, the problem of Heraclitus and Lucretius; but, in a post-Freudian age, the problem had been radically internalized — not only the body, but even the mind and the self, whatever it may be, are part of the same cascade of forms and images: "From

the real to the invisible the torrent falls endlessly, like flaming skin." Everywhere within us and beyond are the threats of loss, pain, dismemberment, metamorphosis into the non-human, loss of memory, incoherence, death. Yet the self is not only this: what is it? In the midst of the flux, provisionally, we not only exist but continue to utter our cry as to a person — our creator, torturer and friend — who lies beyond:

Our heart grows

Like rivers flung downhill giving birth to the phantom
That you call life but in the immense spiral we are only
Wanderers passing through the signs the glaciation of memories
Where your images are superimposed on the papyrus of solitude

In this flux, all is ambivalent and multi-valent. An image or reality may be benign, but the passing of a few lines of verse, a few moments, changes it, and it suddenly presents a face that is vicious or decayed. In fact, the ambivalent quality of both thought and reality are so faithfully mirrored in Zeller's style that they appear as in one of those optical illusions that shift moment by moment from mountain to pit and back again. At one point in *Circe's mirrors* Zeller addresses the Person felt to lie behind experience in these terms:

Organize the concert of my age this dark disaster
I want to drink at a gulp that summer light
Which pulls me toward the depths of your eyes that sing
I am falling inward a seed into the pollen
Of your body wrapped in the ten thousand tulles
Of that perfect and ageless mummy oh powerful enchantress
Whose rancid perfume we steep in the total season
Until it reaches the purple cloud of lavender whose freshness
Is the true shape the transparent body of lightning

This passage is, first, a prayer to one who is (or may be) the creator of phenomena and who can organize the dark disaster of life which, in some hidden sense, is already a concert. The prayer leads immediately to the image of summer light and the poet's desire to be nourished by it. This is experienced at once as a return both toward personal origin (through seed to pollen) and toward the beginning of human history and of time itself (the mummy that is 'ageless'). There, suddenly, human creative responsibility reappears. It is we who must actualize whatever the enchantress can give. The poet, whose journey began with summer light, suddenly becomes recreator and savior of season, odor, cloud, freshness, lightning. Above all, he can create a transparent body that is the ideal fulfillment of temporal life and



its forces. The female deity, womb of forms, has in a short space been transformed from beneficent intercessor, to mummified 'perfect' image, to malodorous witch, yet the transformation takes place within a context that preserves her identity as the producer of good along with evil, as the source of hope which with man's help can be rescued from its involuntary, self-

contradictory profusion and accomplish the harmonious creation of which it is capable.

Yet only a few lines later we find that a totally different coloring has suffused the same basic vision of being's nature and man's existential situation:

...I burn my life away to find you oh octopus
Of my love you slice me you scatter my limbs
And I cannot shout and everything starts again in those sparkling
Instruments of love beneath the humming of honeycombs on fire

Another aspect of the same reality has turned its face to us. Now human creativity is a self-immolation, and it only serves to expose us more nakedly (this indeed is one of the important effects of Zeller's work) to the destructive power of flux. Things, including ourselves, are ceaselessly abolished and 'everything starts again in the sparkling/Instruments of love', the fire that consumes the old order, *our* order, and all its sweetness. In these lines the benign possibility, formerly triumphant, has become only a small grain imbedded in the heavy ore of the individual's fragility, brevity, contingency. A moment ago the poet could envision absorbing reality and making it human; now it has swallowed and digested him. The landscape is that of the earlier lines, but a confused night full of fire and cries has fallen across it.

The confrontation of ceaseless flux on all levels of experience leads Zeller to his basic metaphorical superimposition, which is three-fold: reality upon dream, both upon poetry. That is to say, his work bodies forth the real convergence of these realms, rather than merely inventing a comparison among them. At the beginning of *Circe's mirrors* Zeller places as epigraph a fragment that points to the union of reality, dream and poetry, and that answers for him the 'why' that we should address to any serious poetic work:

Because it wasn't Ulysses who saw Troy burn,
who heard the sirens' song and enjoyed Circe's
enchantments, but Homer, the blind one,
who understood that life is a deserted beach
where images multiply.

The reality is what is seen and sung by the poet, but it is not seen with bodily eyes only; it is compact of dream, for the poet is blind. We are reminded of Wordsworth's vision that only occurs when 'the light of sense goes out'. Then, no longer fascinated by ephemera (as a bird is fascinated by a snake), the poet sees within himself the true nature of the reality he has absorbed.

Zeller exalts every class of ephemera to its archetype: dust, storm, noise, blood, petal, seed, etc. Thus we are in a realm of universals, the Ur-text of the epic of phenomena, and ephemerality is perceived as the basic problematic category of material existence; we have totally surpassed the level of the myriad contemporary writers who, dominated by the ephemera of the moment, reproduce the flotsam and jetsam of today's junk culture and who are symptomatic, not creatively expressive, of man's fate.

In opening himself to this continuity of reality and dream with his poetic task, the poet allows, as it were, his eyelids to be torn away; he accepts the pain of a continual immediate awareness of the human position between flux and nothingness. He is adrift in

...the nocturnal soup into which the blood is raining
And in which I am only drifting timber
Beaten dragged to the pier the cretinizing
Labor that makes ink run the stain
That now no tide will wash away...

The poem is the result and the contradiction of this 'soup', this 'tide'; it is a pier in the stream, yet it springs both from the poet's inner flood of dream ('I dream bottles full of salt violins/Their glass thinning the flames of that carriage of leaves') and of reality's oceanic dream ('the foam that even beneath the shadow will go on dreaming us'). The poem comes from the 'vital delta of illusion', like all else; it comprehends illusion, yet it is subject to it.

What is the conclusion — does the poet absorb reality or does it absorb him? Creativity tirelessly labors for the mystery of reason, but must always face anew the apparently a-human beauty and magnificence, disproportion and decay, of the real. Hope and despair, salvation and absurdity, renewal and annihilation, seem evenly balanced possibilities:

The last illusion is it in you rain which lights
That womanly yeast as fragile as reality and like it
Only a noise of petals taken by the wind
To the other shore? Who is waiting for us there?

Are words only smoking embers?

In this sequence, the third question balances the second, but since it comes last, it gives a pessimistic tone to the passage, expressing not despair but the temptation to despair. In the face of the heartbreak of eternal flux and bafflement, there is the impulse to 'sew the eyelid over the eye'. But this in turn is negated by the poem itself, which would not exist if the temptation

had been yielded to.

The poem always attempts to assume and subsume both reality, with its oneiric insubstantial flow, and dream with its lacerating impact of the real knife-edge. In this attempt, dream becomes the fundamental category, the 'tenor' of the metaphor, and reality is only its image. The poet is immersed in dream, and the task of subsuming reality becomes a continual effort to awaken, so that the dream will be within him, and not he within the dream. Sometimes he awakens, sleeps, awakens, etc., in hopeless cycles. But finally the naturalistic circular process is inscribed within a vector: the poet wakens, finds that his new wakefulness is still not truly conscious, and wakes again. Always he wakes into a new day that turns out to be another dream, but a dream that is closer to clarity. In 'Insomnia with scales' the poet wakes and finds that 'Behind the windowpane I am alone,/Perhaps in another dream, giving vent to my shouts.' In a certain sense, then, the effort to awaken is never fully successful. But it persists as the central creative effort and the sign of an impregnating aspiration that links the poet's desire to that of reality, his sister and his queen:

Queen of fever open in warmer arches those eyelids
The jewels that flower in your steps my well-beloved
Wake sister of dew let us wake to life

Before leaving the subject of dream, we should mention the problem of surrealism in Zeller's work. Though Zeller derives from many sources simultaneously (one thinks immediately of the Old and New Testaments, Aeschylus, Homer, Virgil, Dante, Heraclitus, Lucretius, all of whom are explicitly present in the texts at many points), there is no doubt that he is an inheritor and beneficiary of surrealism. Once this is said, we must pay special attention to his revisions of surrealism in order to avoid misunderstanding. He stands in relation to it somewhat as Poe stood to first generation English romanticism: he has understood and emphasized the shadow side of being, and the danger of annihilation and incoherence in the project of surrendering oneself interiorly to the subconscious and exteriorly to 'objective chance'. The doctrinal optimism of Breton, noble and profound though it is, imposes a consciously willed direction on the flux of reality, channeling it toward the benevolence which, in Breton's deepest belief, was its essential truth. Zeller has preferred to re-open both the subjective and objective questions, to delve into both dream and reality in order to deal with them before any human direction has been given. In so doing, he has discovered and wrestled with a Proteus many of whose shapes are malign. Far from undercutting Breton, Zeller comes as a development and a completion, an example of the self-transcendence of surrealism which Breton himself declared to be its true nature.

Wherever something is gained, something is lost, and in Zeller we no longer find Breton's buoyant joy and confidence before the irrational. But in return Zeller shows us that hope still exists at a level beneath that of Breton's will to salvation, the level at which will is born and does not yet impose anything, the level at which the forms spill from the mouth of the void. Humanness, Zeller sees, is coeval with being itself. Through him, we glimpse a possible triumph and experience ourselves in the depths, where being appeals to man to end its civil war and establish it once and for all as an unequivocal reality, something more than a wavering and indecisive image of itself.

Zeller's work possesses to an uncommon degree the one real *sine qua non* of major poetry, i.e. a mature unity of form and content. Each poem, and the poetry as a whole, is in fact a 'significant form'. The ultimate meaning of the poem can only be grasped by viewing the total work, once its content has been mastered, as an all-inclusive symbol that is continuous with the reality being 'spoken about'. This unity of form and content is visible on many levels in Zeller, but we will mention only one of them, the most immediate: that of imagery.

The reader perceives almost at once that the same images repeat again and again. Yet each time they appear, they have suffered a sea change, they are in a different order, with some elements missing while a few new ones have been introduced. In short, Zeller's imagery is baroque in the strict stylistic sense of the term. The baroque is 'a genre of art uniquely Spanish', as Garcia Lorca notes, and Zeller's imagery is most successfully viewed not as surrealist but as an outgrowth of Spanish and Latin-American baroque, which was refreshed between 1870 and 1930 with the help of symbolism and surrealism.

Baroque style resembles a cloud: it develops slowly, rolling and changing forms, one yet never the same, a thing which at a glance seems immobile but which has become something else when one glances back again. Yet baroque has the underlying rigor of mathematics, an abstract form which seems rigid while the plenum of things which live and die embodying it is capable of infinite development. There appears to be motion but little change, but a close look reveals that all is constantly in metamorphosis, each moment is a precious and unique constellation of all reality, is indeed a sacrament — an efficacious sign ordained to give grace. At the same time, 'the baroque arouses the sense of the void', as Ungaretti has perceived. As a master image, or form, that comprehends the endless recombination of all other images, it raises in immediate emotional terms the possibility that reality is illusion, that we are a dream, that nothing exists but a mechanical cycle of shadows cast on nothingness. If only we lived long enough, we might see an image identically repeated and realize that an endless wheel has entered on a new, senseless

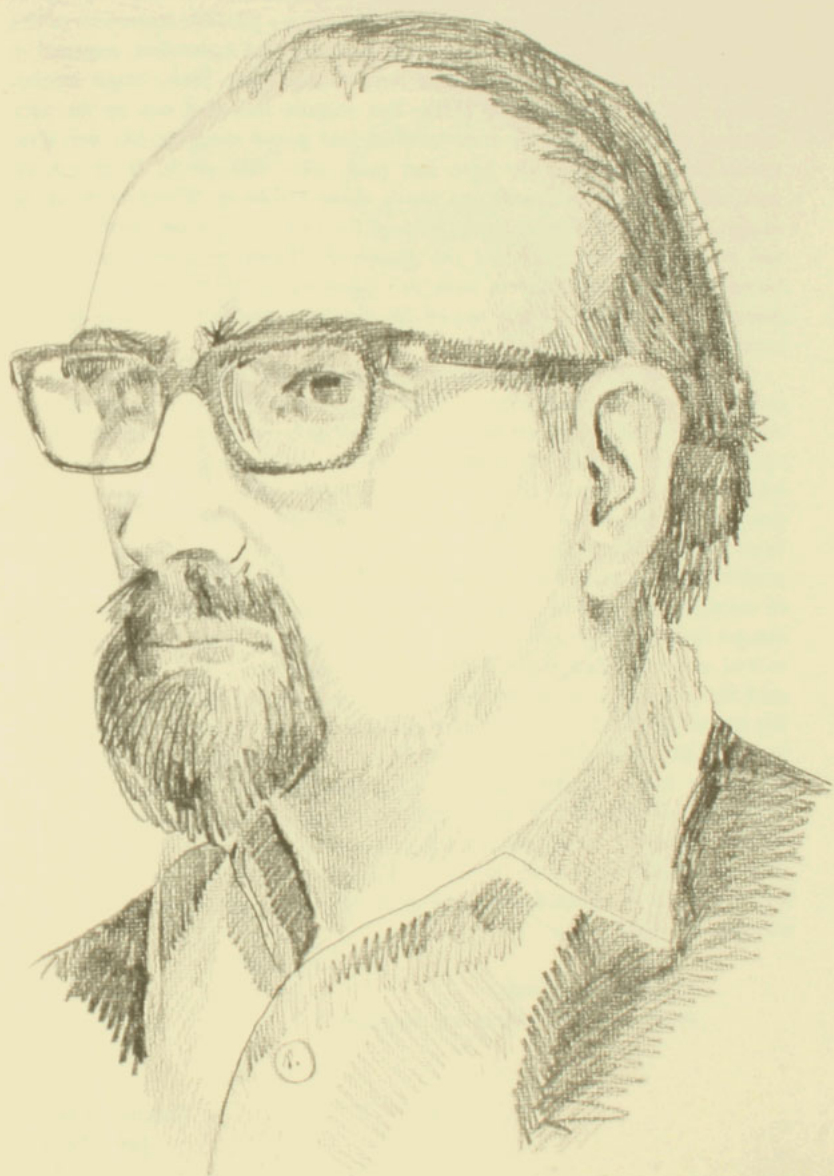


revolution. These qualities of the baroque allow it to be molded, in Zeller's hands, into the exact aesthetic equivalent of human nature and the nature of being, as he sees them.

The baroque — when it does not become mechanical — brings author and reader to the brink of a precipice. This is true in Spanish literature from Lope and Gongora to Unamuno, in whose radiant *The Christ of Velázquez* the shadow passages read like a presentiment of Zeller:

For thou art
the eternal book of the five seals rolled
on the cross that on it like a press prints
letters of blood on leaves of parchment torn
away neatly from the caul of thy entrails,
and where only love is able to read.
Thy whiteness, spattered with bloodstained enigmas,
is for the knowledge of this world
only a source of incredulous blindness...

Indeed, Unamuno's limpid meditation on Velázquez' vision of Christ as Apollo places us in a very Zellerian world where certain images always repeat and recombine: flocks, parchment, whiteness, birds, wind, mirrors, salt, dust, knives, blood, seeds, insects, etc. Both poets exemplify the way in which reason, seeking harmony and resolution, refuses to impose order but rather obeys its own first law: humbly to seek, rigorously to inquire, honestly to deal with things as they are, including mystery. It is at this point that surrealism joins the Western ideal of reason in its creative struggle with both linear,

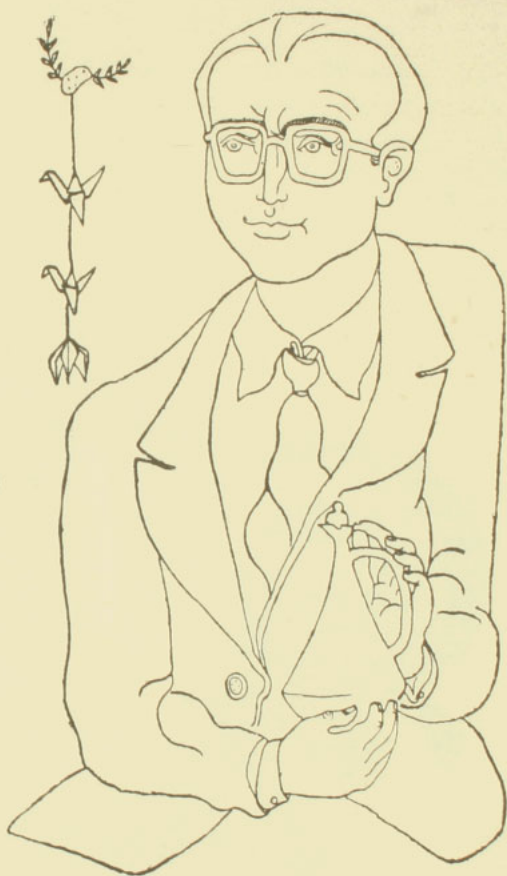


salvational Christianity and circular, abyssal naturalism. Breton's point at which all the dichotomies are seen to be illusory is a possible statement of the continually redefined goal of reason. St. Anthony and Aphrodite, engaged in their fearful combat in the alkaline desert around Mt. Sinai, laugh human culture and its aspiration to scorn. But reason, hounded too by its own demons, strives to resolve their conflict and prove that the life mankind knows and loves, the life here and now upon this earth, is or can be something more than illusion and vanity, decay and death. Which of the three images is true — the dying man's misery, the ascetic's vigil on a pillar, or the sun through a locust tree and the plume of a fountain? Just as being and human society in themselves raise this question, so do the works of major poets such as Zeller. Such works do not state but embody the human condition.

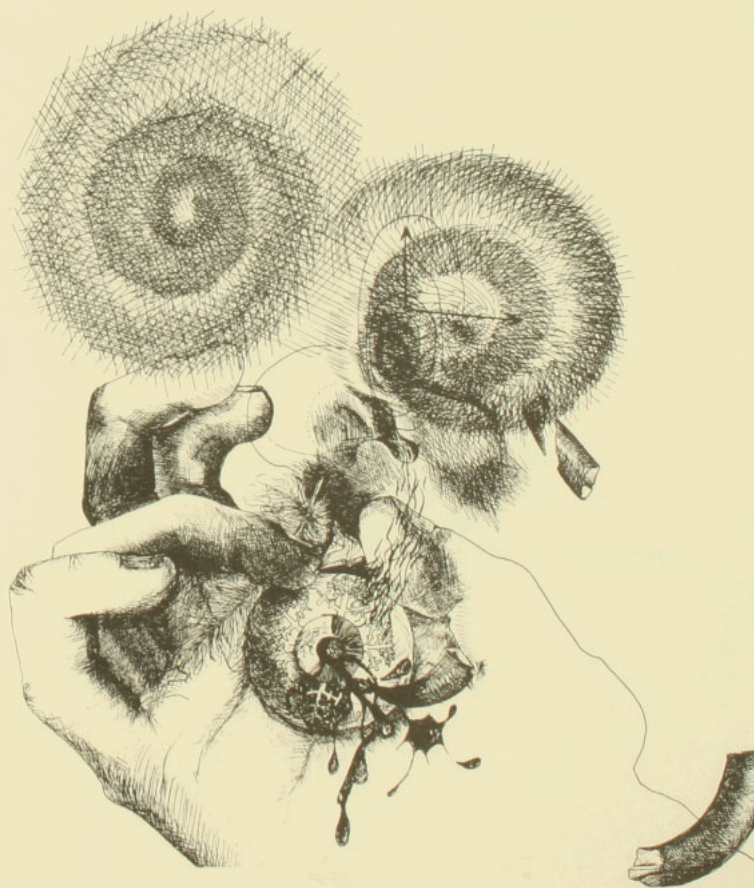
In Zeller, the whole poem is the symbol and reality of our state; it incarnates what is given to us in its subject matter and imagistic content. We may be nothing but illusion, but at least let there be no illusion about it! Let us open our eyes, investigate honestly and accept no solace. But the poem also recreates what it finds, and this is the mute significance of form and style, the presence of the poet as creator behind the work. After all the evil of being has been acknowledged, the poet finds that he still possesses human freedom, possibility and power. Perhaps, because Zeller has delved into flux, the charge of indulging in 'phantasmagoria' may be levelled at him by those who read images rather than poems, and who do not have the powers of concentration to deal with what Zeller calls 'a work on the American scale'. This would be to miss the point that Zeller has defended human will and creativity at precisely the crucial point, that at which the struggle is joined with the threat of the void and the meaninglessness of phenomena. This problem that he faces is absolutely basic, so that from it we can reach out to every aspect of experience. If the work is labyrinthine, it shows us the real labyrinth where we find ourselves: we should not try to ignore the fact, but neither should we drop in despair because we do not immediately and surely know the straight way home. As Gongora, founder of one of the main traditions in which Zeller stands, has said,

in baffling solitude
some are lost, others are inspired.

— Toronto, Canada
June 1979



THE RULES OF THE GAME



Possible Impossible Forbidden

An incredible patient

"I was sitting there, for a thousand years
I cannot rest, or sleep or die,
My eyes turn over in the depths of the glass . . .
So tired . . . I would like to . . . "

I advise you
To think of nothing, float like the rivers under the skin,
Stretch out, let your limbs relax on the table;
Be only a shapeless mass without limits
Like a sandbag that laments, that mourns its twilight.

Now listen carefully:

Close your eyes, try to open
The doors . . . Where are we? . . . Answer.
Where are we?

(Silence)

(In the depths)

"I am blind, I am dumb, I can no longer hear you . . .
My bones wear away in the air . . . "

(Silence)

Remember:

If you return you will always have your home.
Here is your mirror, the chart that supplies all your data.
(Stumbling I go out, I bow to excuse myself)
I read under my eyelids: "Box of Tortures." The streaked silver
Of the mirror lets no more be seen.

Search!

Search for me through the thread of blood!

If you keep watch will everything be revealed?

The wind blows in the high vertical solitudes
Where on the knife-edge their phosphorous heads are lighted,
Birds that keep opening veins in the night.

Behind the burned-out eyes that image endures,
Ants that devour her incunabular nipple.
The thorns do not hurt, they float upon nothingness,
If we fly in circles her skin throbs and speaks to us.

— There is no answer, sir, the number doesn't exist,
The wires are cut, you can't hear anything, awaken
To another dream in another room. — The dove does not return,
The ashes grow quiet in the backyards of the Ark.

The back of the mirror

If the blind spirals talk at night,
Her temples beat, again they bleed the stone
Of the warm pillows; spin, hard drill-toothed root
Go down into the well drink her eyelashes.

Above as below the mirror-silver of the sun
In the mills, the colored glass and those broken
Nails of childhood. Turn your ear and listen,
Tell me, where is the vacant ticking of the eddy?

The swift hook leaps turned to splinters it leaps,
The eye-of-god bleeds, clasped in his hand, the chimera
Hears the snow of silence burn.

The true game

The extended nails found the flame,
From the lip to the knife-edges goes a single question
When the sun undresses the skin of the water falls
The birds describe the hollow of her shoulders.

With mouths to the depths I hear beehives moan,
Monsoons in the curving hair of fright,
You laugh like rain, you open into the cold
Scissors of the animal behind its teeth.

I descend the stairs, I scream, slice, open the closed
Doors of dream. Do you renew your toys with the years?

On going up or down

The secrets carry us across her eyes
I keep opening roads following the thread
As hard as pearls cold as the skin of playing cards
Alone at night she sucks the stigmata.

We have no answer, sounds are forbidden,
Let's turn the sheets the flames lengthen,
I hear someone weaving, I hear the chant, its cruel shuttles
Are the legs at the rim of a funnel of sand.

We go up or down the stairs where do they lead
We do not know the spider or the stones of the eye,
Let's follow the gardens they grow like fever, the sun bellows
Between your teeth we divine new scars.

Inevitable journey

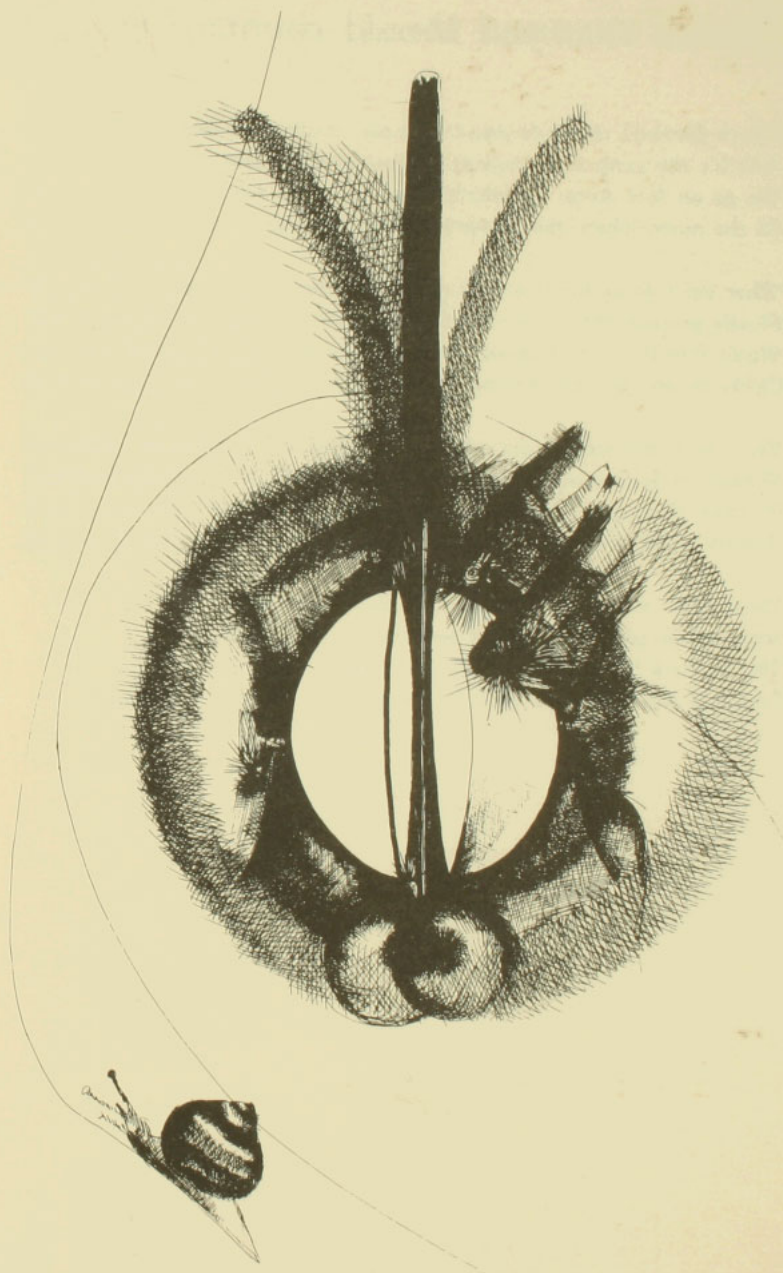
The clocks strike the coals the night
Closes to string its threads to hide in the hollows,
Panting swallow after swallow I hear footsteps approach
While the cornea of hairs grows in the hand.

There is no exit, I don't understand, the waters drag us
We depart, with a hook they pull us from the womb,
We scratch, striking the wall ventriloquist animals
Nail us, let's listen the ribbon voiceless now keeps singing.

They call a number, the monster puts out its nakedness, we have
No cigarettes, in my bag I keep only some withered lips,
There is no return, in the bottom of the glass the screams repeat.

Geometric description

The eyes interchange their round spheres, they drink
Behind the diamonds, for pleasure they harass those images.
The waters recede, the snails climb her legs
Tender the birds come down to peck the glittering fingertips
Of heat, to the scent of those fruits, symmetrical segments,
Perfect, slit in two by the razor.



Wealth that you should count

I have dreamed that I dream, I lean out on the balconies
And it's the earth at night that bellows in the skies,
We go on foot across the dumb scars
Of the moon where the mastering Gorgons croak.

What am I doing here, why do I cut their neck with my scream
Blindly groping they turn their heads whose thread
Winds into the sole skein of knots the blood,
Clocks on the ground, leaping, broken to pieces.

Years pass, she smiles, the talking head the adored one
Without body was my life. I want at flame-point to force those walls
To open those two legs, those parted lips of the cruel
Embers of salt, metals of boredom.

There is no water if I awaken I see their scales boil
Scattered by gusts I no longer see you, in other lights
The feathers like tongues follow each other,
Caress of the knife your gaze, to leave is to enter the labyrinth.

Secrets that you should know

The ships brought hides from the other world
In the door of its nests they burned the wasp
Playing the fruits I see that they keep dropping
Through the tubes of time their almond secrets.

Why do you fear its coming? Bricked up forever
The heads strike their roots into the salt;
Let's see how it hurts, how the lines are changing
In your hand the shrapnel describes to us its courses.

Incredible, incredible, what will we do with them?
The flocks flutter in a circle and then, we cut them in bits,
They talked like mad. For fun we threw them in the pot:
Let's laugh Alice your hairstyle is from the end of the world.

If she came back

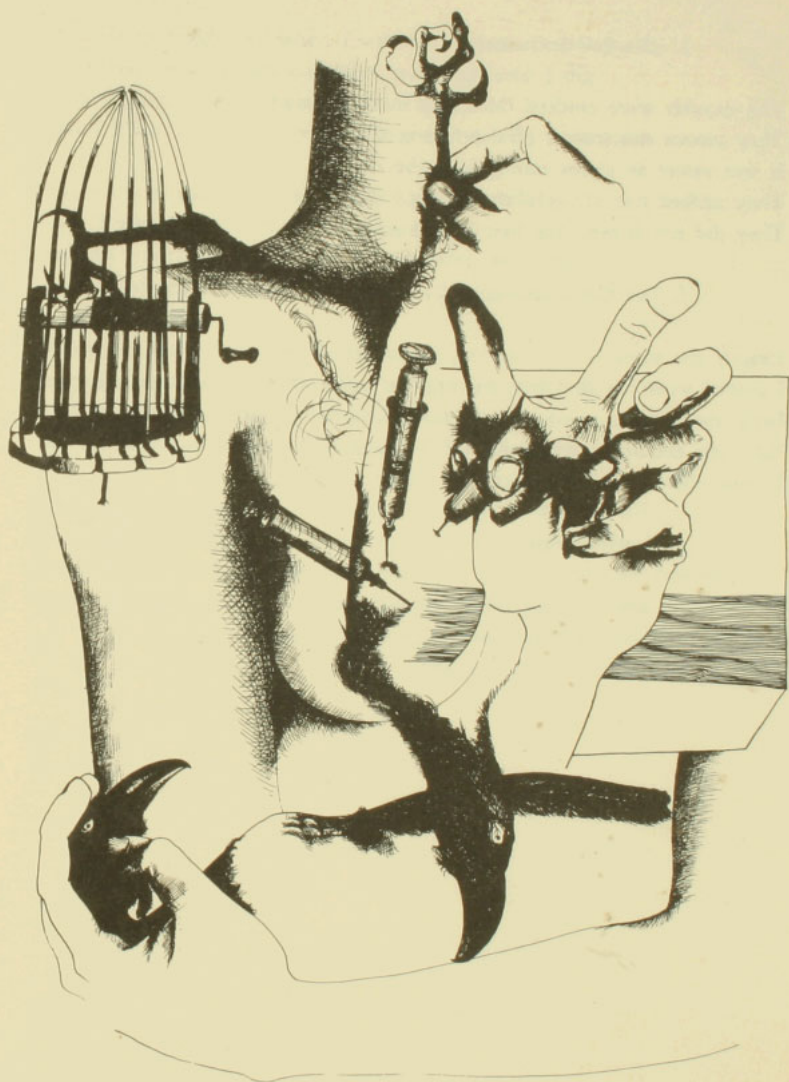
Groping she questions me I see her on the roads
Without unfolding her arms she displays her fabulous merchandise,
Let's repeat the voices let's simulate, shall we no longer dream
Larvae like ladies with automatic teeth?

I remember you, oh Sublime (Habakkuk 2, 11),
Contemplating the navel, her stones bored me,
It's hardly possible that they sing I give her back the crows:
Let syringes prick them they will bellow patiently,
At the bottom of all depth do their cages lead to a bottomless well?

Guess or I'll devour you

The vultures turning polished the bottle
They came down in splinters they pecked the wool they bled it,
The coals are landscapes where hands are smoking
Mouths grow stones bite us like questions.

It is late in the postcards my mother is waiting,
Stumbling they will return and the garden exists no longer;
Flayed in the brambles I hear the enigmas burn,
When Oedipus is silent, what does the Sphinx reply?



The laws of smuggling

1. The Bad Influence

The moulds were cracked fluttering in the grass
They awoke the insects of the five senses,
It was sweet so sweet falling into the ear,
They milked her at night they sucked her blood
They did not listen: like hair her words grew.

2. The Good Influence

Exactly the same but in reverse, like a cat
I played with the skin lengthening her veins with a glass splinter.
Let's uncover the trunk. Have precise shuttles ceased to exist?
Let's stir the aunts with care, by the segments of your eye
I remember: it had five legs but did not know it.

3. Exact Advice

Neither late nor later, neither high nor low.
Not here but nearer than you imagine: Forbidden
Dreams, forbidden dreams forbidden.

Landscape for the blind

I no longer remember when I withdrew from those wounds.
I go screaming through darkness, with my head I dig
In the well the years multiply their swarm
I don't know if I'm awake if they give me milk or vinegar.

I open my fingertips into nails but they stretch
Beyond where their creaking voices throb,
She will return with the rain I have eaten my tongue
Overturned the globes settle their accounts.

Where are we groping we seek a way
Beneath the sun the stumps the inscriptions of wrath,
We carry burning ices we thrust hot coals
Into our eyes — sweetly the glances lick each other.

What do you see? I see you gasp like a fish in another air.
What do you see? Only a desert of mirrors and the knife.
What do you see? My root torn from the feathers of your bowels.
What do you see? I do not see. I only sense your presence.



Mysteries and miracles of the ritual

On their knees in darkness the events follow each other
Where her screaming entrails prevent the snakes from sleeping,
From embers in the white throbbing of her breasts
Her wounds that reach to the core untied the knots.

Drunken birds thirsty enchanted by the friction
Sewed the questions with violence closed their rings,
Sucked the buttons to death to the bone
Delicious insects blinded her.

The sun turns with a hook buried in its hand
I hear the beans shake in the hard rattle,
Did they sift you awake, did vampires nail you? Speak low,
Still lower: if you remember, the miracle-wounds will repeat.

To understand is not to know

Day after day I wait.

At last they arrive. They ask me the names

Of forgotten beings with my own face

Who wither, shave, classify the world

And rise.

I don't understand why.

Night after night I dream you in two halves

Closed over me like the lips of that mechanical

Insect that chews the numbers, gasps in the scales

And leaps and suddenly is blood clotted on the pillow:

All in the dark, thick, rootless, in the light

The waters are crying.

I don't understand why.

It's late. Now tired the clock hands break.

It seems to me we will never arrive.

Why are there so many flames, so much burnt pulp

And on arid knife-edges that child who pastures his worms?

Why so many eyes? Why weren't we allowed to delve

Into the well of the antheap palace? Why does the dream

Dream itself and repeat each nativity with its toys?

What for? Answer me, what for?

Backwards we descend the rails without lament,

A garden of rodent drills awaits me.

Thrust out, deprived of air, I awaken, fall asleep

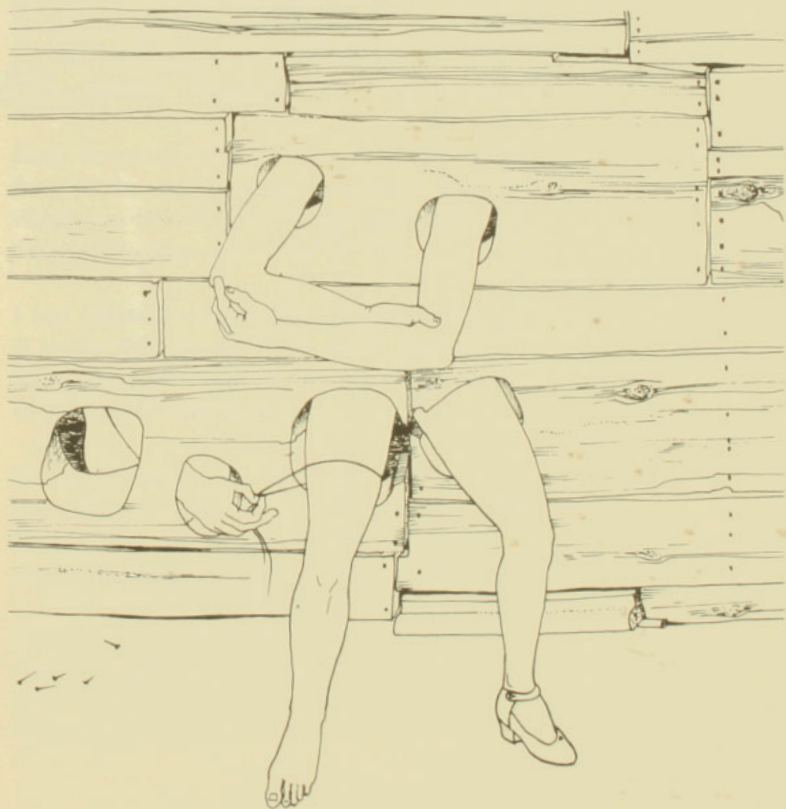
And awaken again: I hear the knife-edges far away.

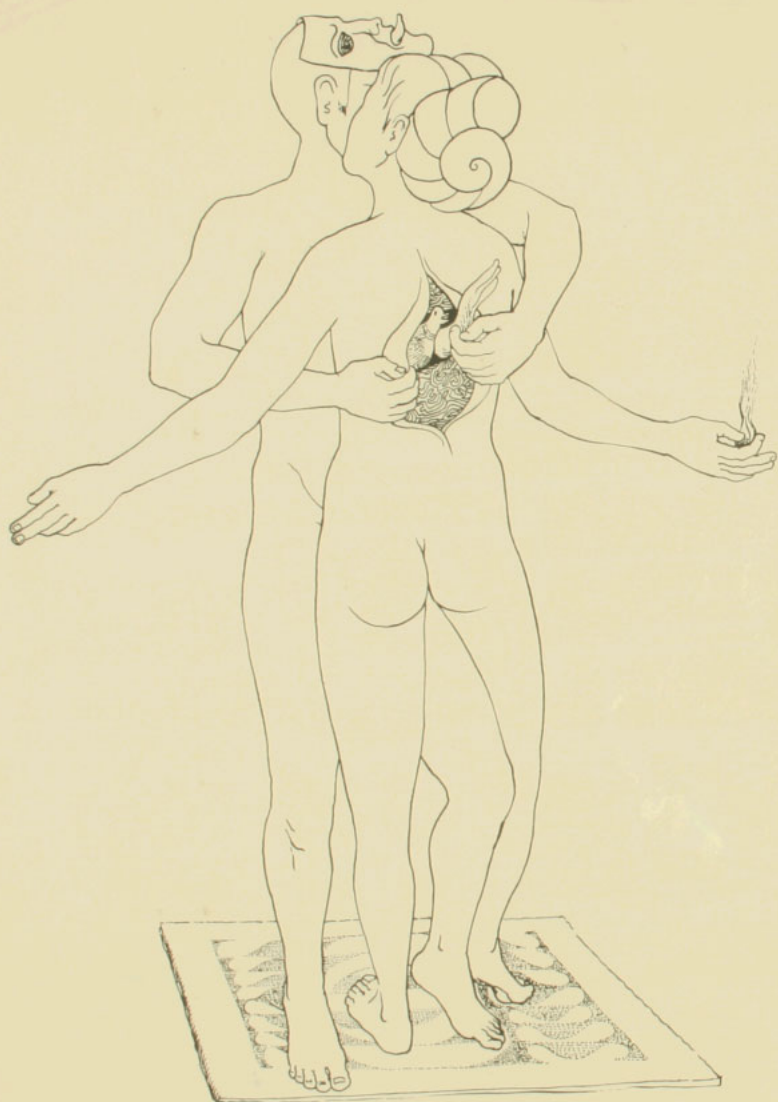
A voice answers me from every crack:

Your doubts are denied. To understand is not to know.

Through the flames to the ice of pleasure

TO ALOYSE





To Aloyse

At the ticking I remember I awaken and I can not
Detach my lips stuck to the glass to the knife
What will we do? Tell me then we are stringing her eyes
Into necklaces wide open like a river

Let's defoliate again the skin of her clothing
Like algae like insects like the fish you eat
The roots of your nails my little cat let's play secretly
Let's laugh let's shuffle her true name we do not know

Idol my adored one there is no longer any crevice
Of skin in which red hot pupils are not burning
Let the almond gather its questions the snow
Those flawless wheels covet you they dreamed you

From temple to temple I raise your perfume the flowers
Beneath the sun maturing the scales I raise
Flayed you take fire my beloved the clocks
Cut our life into two halves

I fear lightning I keep drinking your braids
If in the light already there are no moons
Set in the fruits open in carnivorous air the eyes
Gushing backwards leave you

If I could find you if I could sew skin
To skin your wrists the dolls unclasp your mirror
Let's invent vices we will put on our glasses
Barrels in blood we will put our hearts in brine

You rise you perforate the dreams of plaster
From my pillow you would leap playing Rapunzel on tiptoe
Go down by the tongue I want to rise I want to descend
Groping my way to hide myself in your bones

Put down the bread of your shoulders my bellowing inmate
Aloyse now reigning your armpit's iridescent furies
Wind the circular mirror those kings
Take turns combing you the locust swarm of laughter

Governess your sockets the ash dispersed all around
Your hands burn no longer you can see and you ask how is it
That eyelashes are smoking from your mouth feed me
I swallow the rings we'll dig into the veins

The ships burned in the cold north wind the horses water
In the white in the black the reds keep pulling at the thread
I love you by bites gulp by gulp I drink you
Through the marrow the bird pecks diamonds at the Pole

The lancets burn your ear-nipples those flowers
Syringes of the arms that end in eyelids
And ache like the eye that migrates to the back
Blind trepanned flies go singing to the sugar

Corridor with little boxes yours and mine my life
We will all end in the same forbidden
Dungeon the wrinkles of the swan and the spiders
Wove the unending halls of the drum of the asylum

Roundness in your navel the yellow algae petals
Yellow on yellow I keep your tattoos
I scrape your little bones to see you on serving trays
We swallow the hair of luck in an instant

Remember that it doesn't hurt you wake up you don't leave
The garden where the eiderdown gazes sprout cover us
Inside we are cantharides on fire on the sand
Those open hosts of your legs

Oh sweetest oh octopus of the girl of my eye
Return when you find me the thorns the pillow
You keep grinding turned to blood turned to flour
In the loaves of the oven burned the doors

Adored one mollusk let's go forward beneath the skin
By Ariadne's threads the medusas I recall
How the roses grow to remove the thorns from you from the womb
I comb your wounds like thirsty veins

On the oar the magnetized beds at the center
Spin you on the other side of the mirrors I am your son
Your father I awaken with the bee that hums
Little doll let's play at life with tortures

How long must we be two — you and I — like fever
Of the moon and the suns with throats cut here she is she is not
Here the woman that I love I excavate as soon as you spill through the air
The roads your tear gates

We go from tomb to tomb and demented bile
I question myself among the bodies but they do not answer
If I could see you from without how white
As in an ingot made into petals my tongue escapes me

Through the eyes I go to seek you embers I give you
My teeth I torture you at my pleasure I keep chewing
The pips I spit them into oranges that recall
Hieronymus Bosch through the spoon

At the knife's edge steel-tipped warning
Gliding always at the level of the static birds to enjoy
To suffer happiness let's save the nails
How the wilted scythes of another time are aching

Aloyse our games have the same expression
As stones with blood I awaken you I turn you
I reverse you with my knife I have dreamed you
Seamless gardens there we shall find you Aloyse

There is no time to waste in bits I gather
Your bones at your back you are missing only one eye you know it
Let's build new madhouses where the love
Without frontiers abides my threshing woman



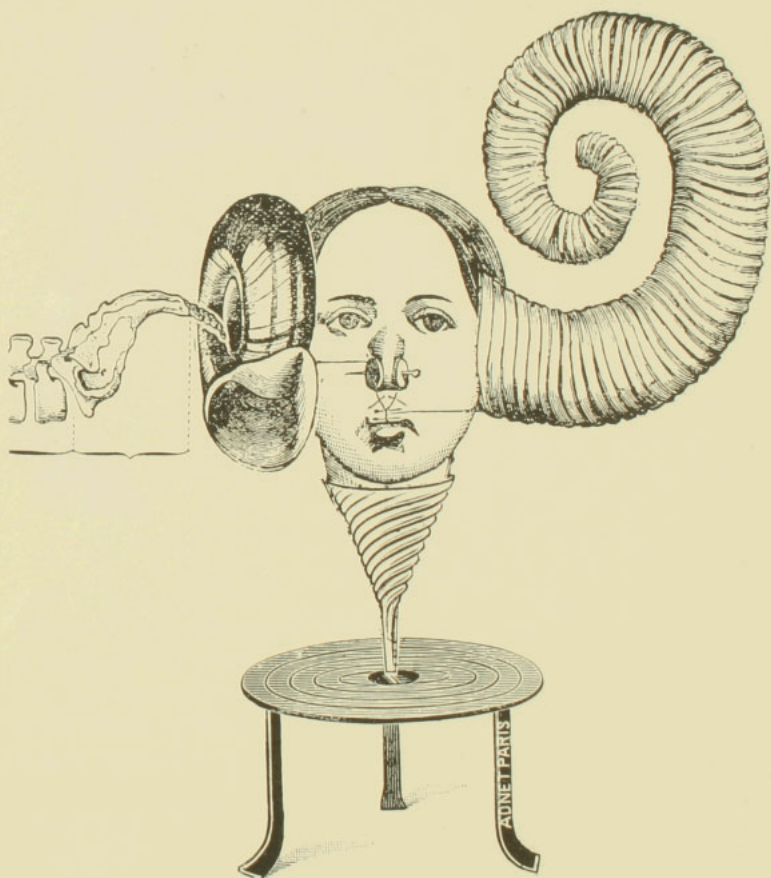
Machine of pleasure of my torture my queen
Where are we? Accept my hands I bring them to you
On a tray my nun my adored one they wind you and shrieking
You are suddenly covered with rings

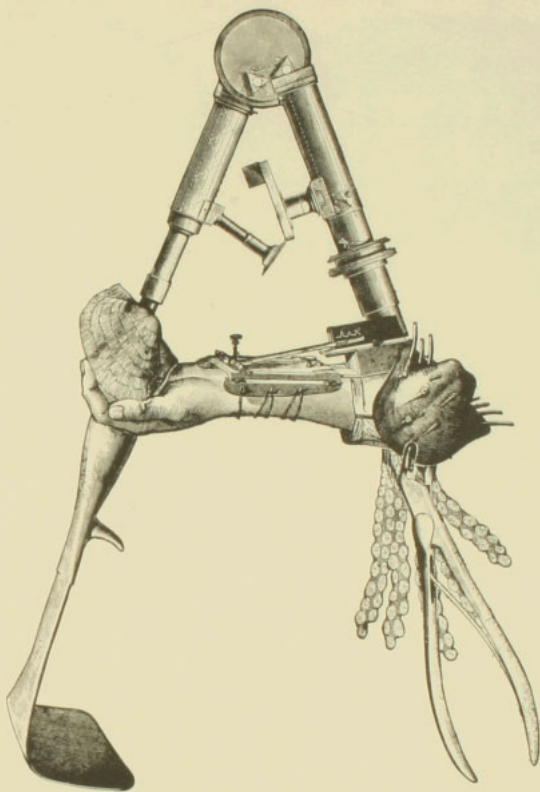
The bees follow you by your footprints I find you
You have all the names and here you have your own
You my life Aloyse Aloyse my death
You are that unforgettable wound

In motion snakes emerge from your breast
Little hands signal me they shuffle other cards
Round with pleasure blind rings under the eyes that clock of flesh
Which was yours has it forgotten to toll with the bells?

Opals of the shoreline breathe you through the four walls
Of your body my cat on the roofs adored
Of my wireless saw let's keep speaking low
Under eyelids if you behave I will show you the simoniac vessels

THE PLEASURES OF OEDIPUS





Before the knot that closes its grooves I inquire,
I shout and faces burn in huge bitten
Stones, sliced are the images, to know
From where, to where we are, from top to bottom
I open them as if they were doors.

Eyes growing in the calcareous root
Of the days mollusks left by the tide
In the walls I hear the salted shells
Of her ears, throbbing, crackling they called me
Mirrors of sun of her dark-ringed eyes.

Thirsty moons of alcohol nail us
With needle-knives from the depths
Drink the open whitecaps of the oracle,
We travel in a meteor that much we know:

Lowing the bodies moving toward blind corrals
Flowers of iron grow from the five thorns
Of the hand the destiny on those long flat tables,
Under the slow rain of blood I awaken:

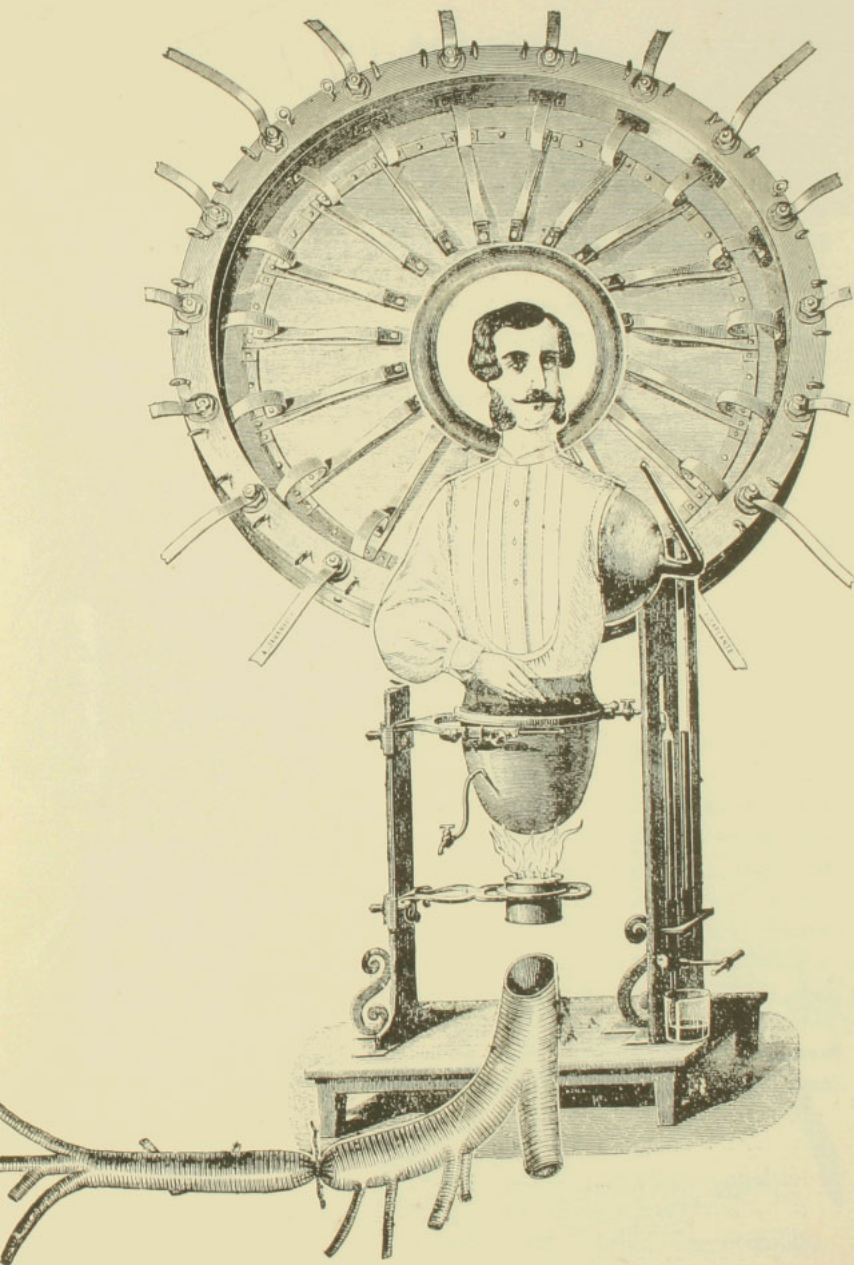
Oedipus the fifth — I say —, I dream of five, where?
I see stones boiling in the alembics,
Let's descend on lips of blue dye toward recollection.
Do you understand? Already I've looked at you across the bones
Of the mill, white skein without beginning or end
Through which we move, erotic ants upon the white-hot brand.

I

The knots of the enigma had already knit the water,
From the well she called shouted stuck out her tongue at me.
What she said and I said you won't be able to repeat:
They strung the filament with beak-thrusts, they adored each other
With fury and I keep only a spray of bones.

II

Like the meteor I feel that sometimes
My ears bleed, I fly around the flames
Of ice of the pillow and, if I don't fall, I say:
Fever is like a balloon with little hairs.



III

The Three Graces and the Prince
Was the name of the tale. It was noon already
When at last by carelessness they achieved it:
To string onto one thread all their thoughts.

When the birds croak my aunts go out,
They stare at them and furiously they stir
Their baskets. If you go to war
Don't forget: above the knots the angel howls.

V The peril of the observatories

Jacob Fux, a Benedictine Brother of the Third Order, tells in his chronicles that Otardo, King of Wales, preoccupied by the constant propagation of heresies, ordered his subjects — churlish and of primitive customs — to destroy down to its foundations any tower or look-out that could serve for observation or adoration of the moon. Certain as he was of the bewitchment that nocturnal shapes gain in the minds of those who are exposed to that light, filling the interior of their skulls with larvae that the unfortunates see in the form of beautiful women, more than once he had had himself locked in a dark chamber when he was feverish. With the passing years, this terror increased his misanthropy and he was seen wandering through the shady woods, hiding from the light of his enemy, dying of a seizure of "delirium lunatis," devoured by hungry wolves. His death is the exemplification of what he wanted to avoid and the destruction of the observatories a sign of his clairvoyance.

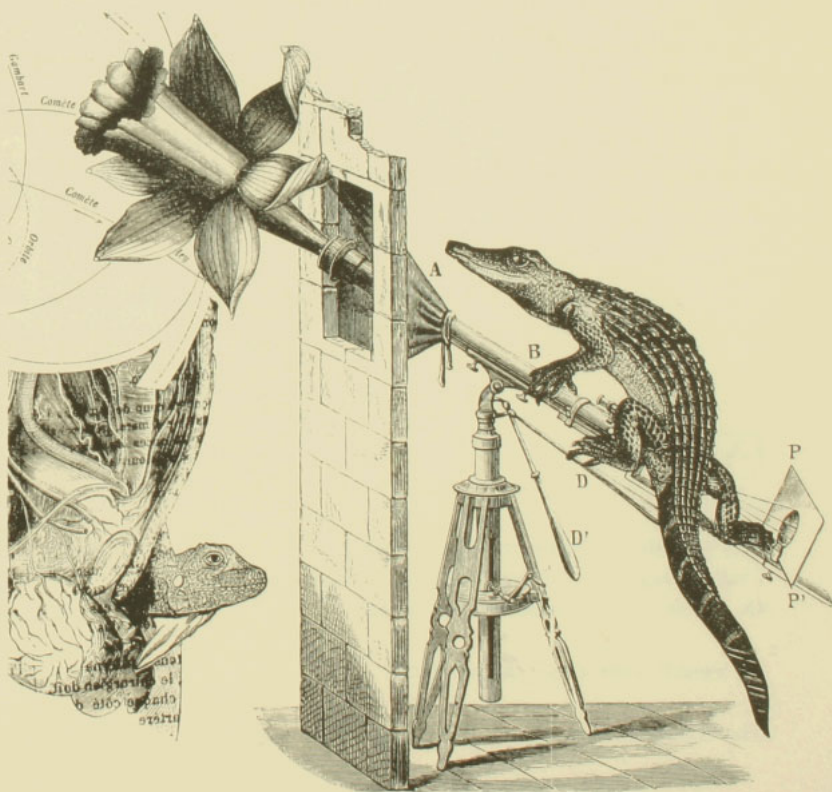
— Histories of the King of Wales, collected by Jacob Fux,
Amsterdam, 1774

VI Discovery of America

Here I am.

From the cold border of quietude
The nails leap to describe the orbits
Of the hollow, sacrosanct yarara snake of a thousand
Years that turns the tender,
The sweet crank of its instinct.

One way or another everyone is certain
That he himself discovered America.



VII Homage to Freud

Once there was a man who stared
At the sky of The Mothers, he had a hook
In each hand and they say that he heard dreams.
His name was Sigmund, he intrigued me with all his patience,
I no longer know what he could have wanted, they buried him in Vienna.

VIII Memory's vices

The adept, placed with tied hands in front of the warm throbbing of the immense sphere (the precarious equilibrium that results from the combination of sulphur and antimony having been duly secured and the danger of typhoons considered), ought to approach to the maximum the fetal position, introducing himself mentally into that spiral that is the beginning of the trip to the third world, warm or prenatal ocean, called in other treatises Paradise.

- Writings of Apollonius of Tyana on the preparation of the Alchemical Oven or "pelican." This motto was later adopted by the Roman Church in the fourth century.

IX

The wounds of the moon already open
I fall through the torrents toward the edge
On which timeless time repeats its call.

My eyelids were there, do you hear?

The fingertips that flower at the end of a thread.

X

On the waters I watch the plumb-line oscillate
But I don't want to see what there is in the depths,
In my hand I warm the pebble that talks
And at night the roots grow by shrieks.

You, traveller passing by. My pupil stops you in the needles,
Tell me, I've heard you mounting from dreams:
I keep for you a little thrush that feeds on eyes alone,
If you no longer remember me, guess...

Your name

Was Anguioser, Ambrosia, Antadares, Ariadne,
Ants with pointed nipples carried madness,
If I move the embers pain me under my eyelid.

XII If Jocasta were to dream

Give me a spray of turbulent lavender
Mix the butterfly with the knots
And wait for all the locks to bleed.
Jocasta will come soon; if you behave
I will show you a bat that knows
How to read destiny in Sanscrit.



XIII

This was the locket owned
By the Brontë sisters. I found it there in the dust,
Between the dry rails of the same station
Where they waited for their impossible lover.

Their dresses had so many petals
That admiring the pattern of the cloth life passed;
They smiled at each other glancing sideways like someone
Who bites a hard, mysterious secret...

Perhaps all of it doesn't exist, perhaps only I
Have the keys, the leaves of that time, but I am
Mute before them just as in childhood and I don't understand
Why no one comes, no one, no one will ever come.

XIV

Everything in that sphere was clear like water,
Sweet as the bee-swarm in the erotic machine,
He turned and turned till reaching the spiral shells
He put them on their backs and ordered their vertebrae:
Later, he shut off the air, slowly sewed her two lips
To seal in the screams and watched.

What did you watch? My time
In the alembics, the sweet, the lascivious turbulence
Of listening with my eyes until I bleed from insomnia
And see the sole image, ritual of the labyrinth
Where God tries on his new bodies.

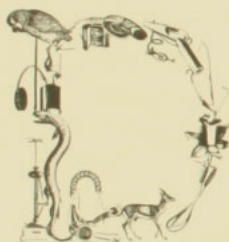
XV "Describe your moons..."

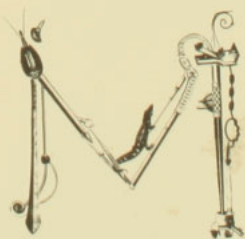
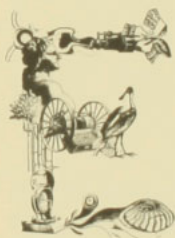
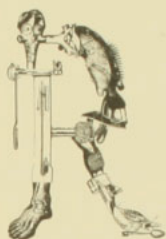
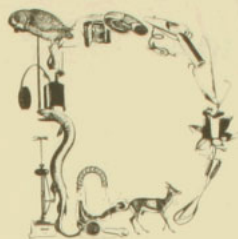
"DESCRIBE YOUR MOONS..."

FOR THAT WHICH I DREAM

THERE EXISTS NO EQUIVALENT IN WORDS

FOR THAT WHICH I...





XVI

Close to the burning wheel the crows made their nest
In a spiral they descended to drink at the bone.
Where would my mother be? Among the trees
The tongue hears its honeycombs open.

The cross turns now and with sharp edges
Its teeth keep cutting the onion on my back;
How sweet that root, here is the cup where tears
Well up, there is the twitching cup of claws.

The feet now broken I hear the knife
Like a curse. Where? Toward where?
In the rain of blood the lamb bleats and bleats,
The key opens its eyes, the roads its wounds.

XVII Year of the quiet sun

Years, quiet of time. On the sweet terraces
Of the total season, the almonds fall
From my pockets, their bees deafen the sun.

XVIII Games of the beautiful governess

Each time I awaken I slice open my eyelids
To be able to draw from there that image. She
With cold set fire to the spells, her hair thirsty
Mirror in flames.

Turn back! — she said — Your veins
Will explode if you look at me!

But what have I done? But what
Have I done? — Keep going, don't answer, don't speak.
There is no exit, unless on the other side
Of the pillows.

XXI Triumph of Oedipus

It is all finished, I hear within
How they tie my arms into knots and the nails scraping
My eye sockets in which the sun made its nest.

Why should I drink? Why do the threads
Drag themselves from that well in childhood there?

Yet a few more moons and you will no longer see me,
I will have arrived in the Kingdom. The thorns open slightly
At the vinegar, but the memories never.

XXII Memory of childhood

I found myself in a harbor with the sack
Of salt on my shoulders, there was no one there
And walking by the old jetties I found near the water
That column of burning ceramic at which to moor
The ship that descended on its sails of feather
Toward open seas.

I remember nothing further
It was long ago, today I drink
Through a crystal that the threads of the lamp deafen,
Her words are roads of milk. She measures
My temples and groping in the dark keeps tracing by numbers
The image on the glass, hypnotized by the likeness,
Not knowing that the wheels have already moved her tongue
And sunk the hooks in the deep forever.

Outside they sleep and their dreams float
On the ancient ships of the fog. Am I here
Or am I not? Someone smiles at the brutal torture
Of being only what the seas drag to other beaches
Where naked bodies remnants of shipwreck
Move between sheets of sweetness and awaken.

XXIV Miraculous fishing

Relieved of the hunger that tormented them, the disciples gathered in baskets the fish and the bread that were left over. They were sleepy and they forgot, while sleeping, the rest of the miracle. The following day, when they wanted to eat again, they saw that the baskets were no longer where they had left them. The peasants said later that men had descended from a sphere similar to a moon covered with hide, and had lifted them up into the air. Those who had not seen this thought it a fraud, but in truth the fish rotted like any fish that come out of the water, producing that acrid smell that awakens the reason and with which perfume the Phoenicians learned to attract the sea serpent.

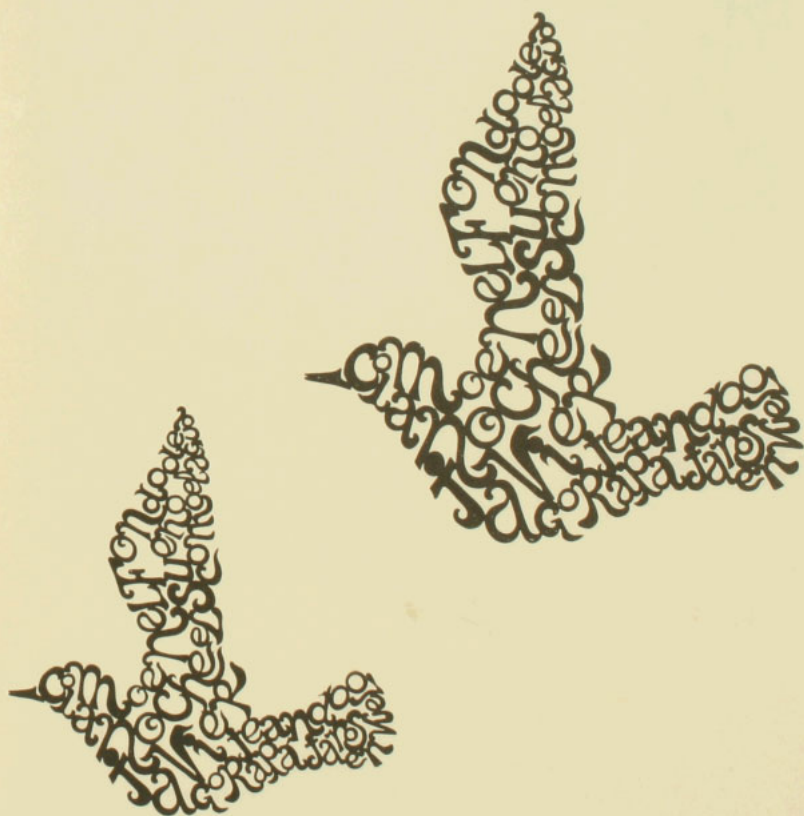
— Sermons and devotions of Fr. Stanislav Szellessy, Szeged, 1892

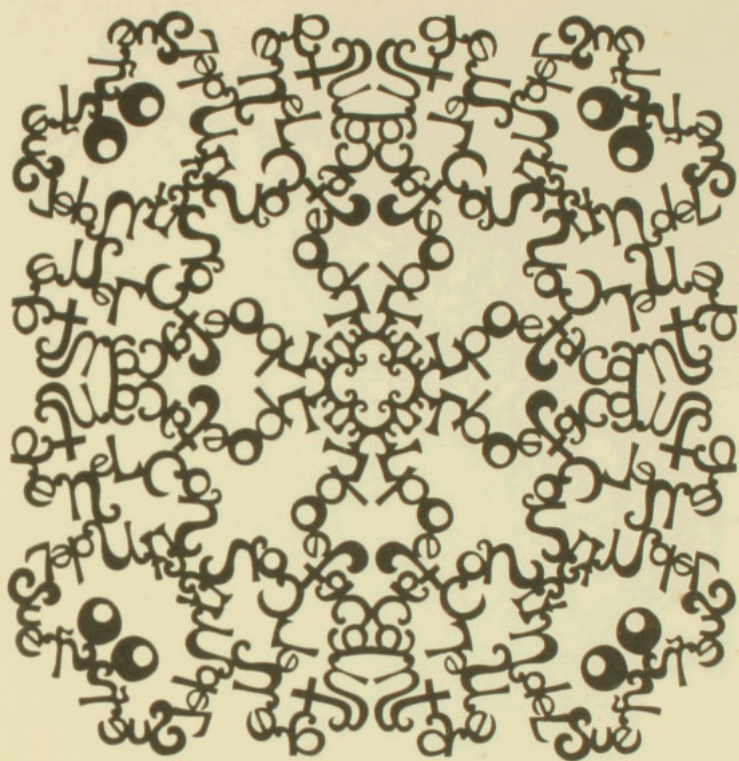
Notice

To those who read from back to front, let them be advised when they start that here end the pleasures of Oedipus.

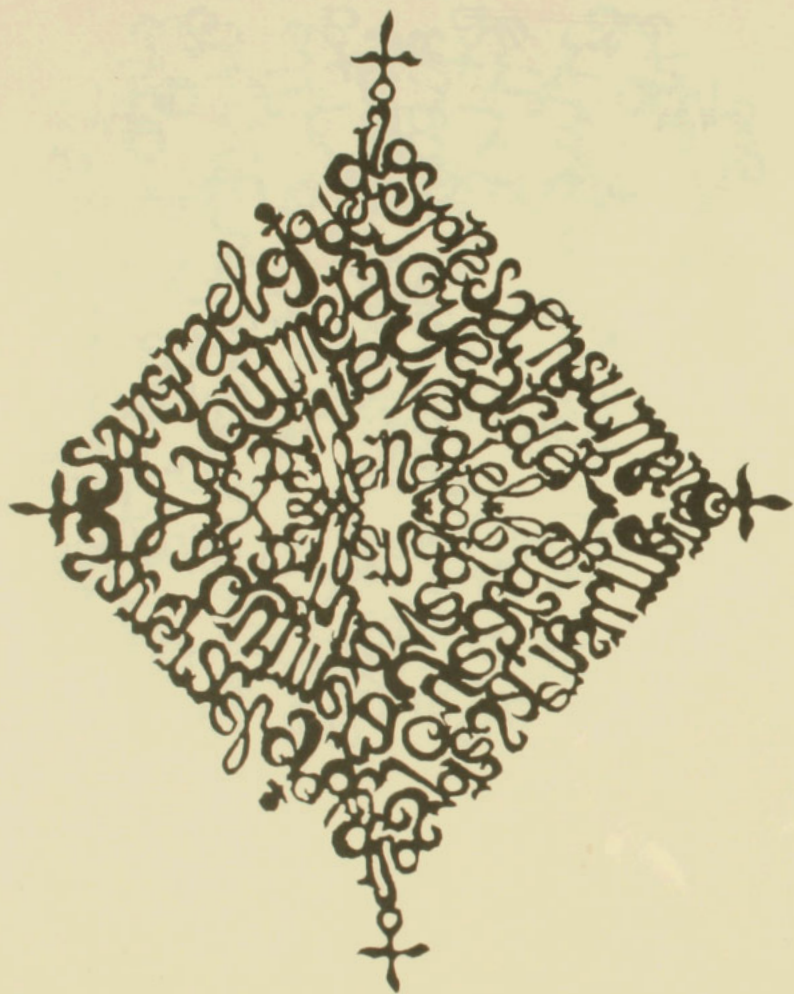


CALLIGRAMS

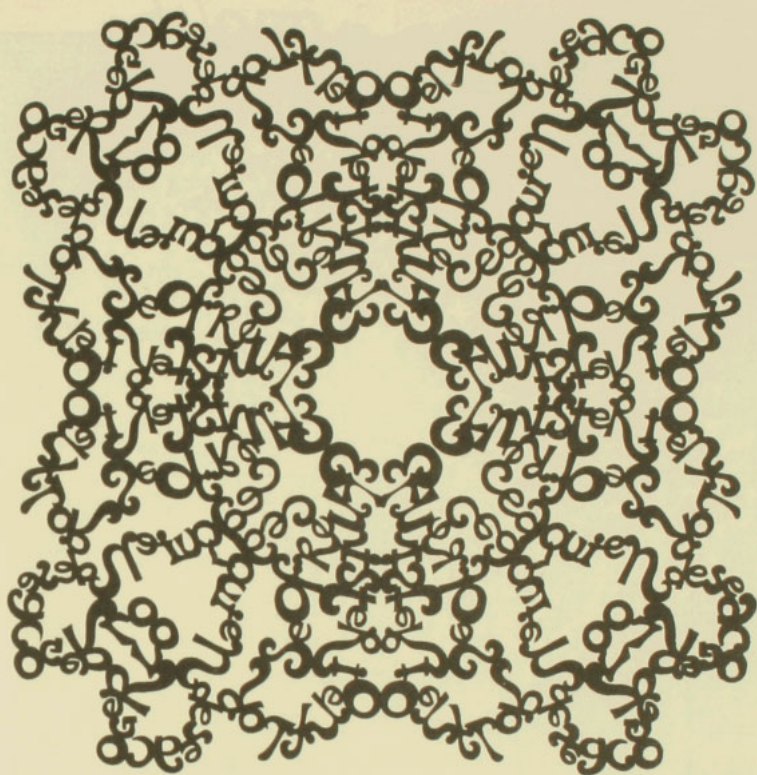




The poet sings at the edge of dream

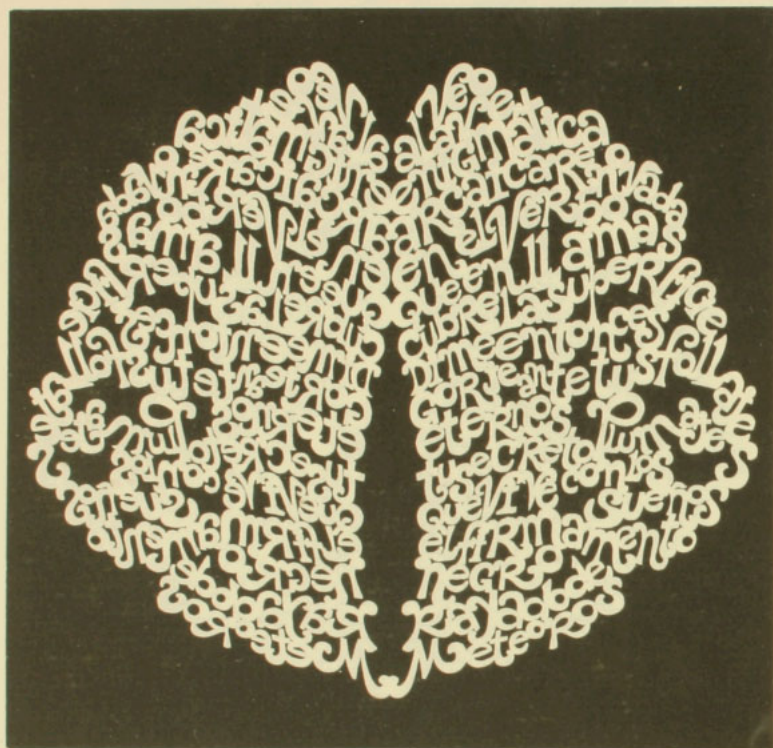


The eye-of-god bleeds, clasped in his hand, the chimera
Hears the snow of silence burn

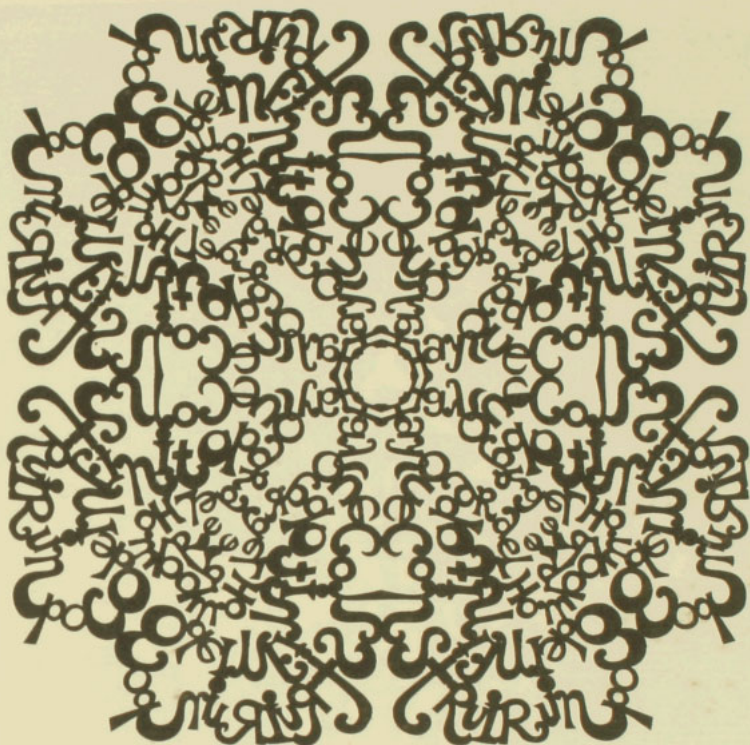


Mystery in flower offers itself to whomever wishes to gather it

(Apollinaire)

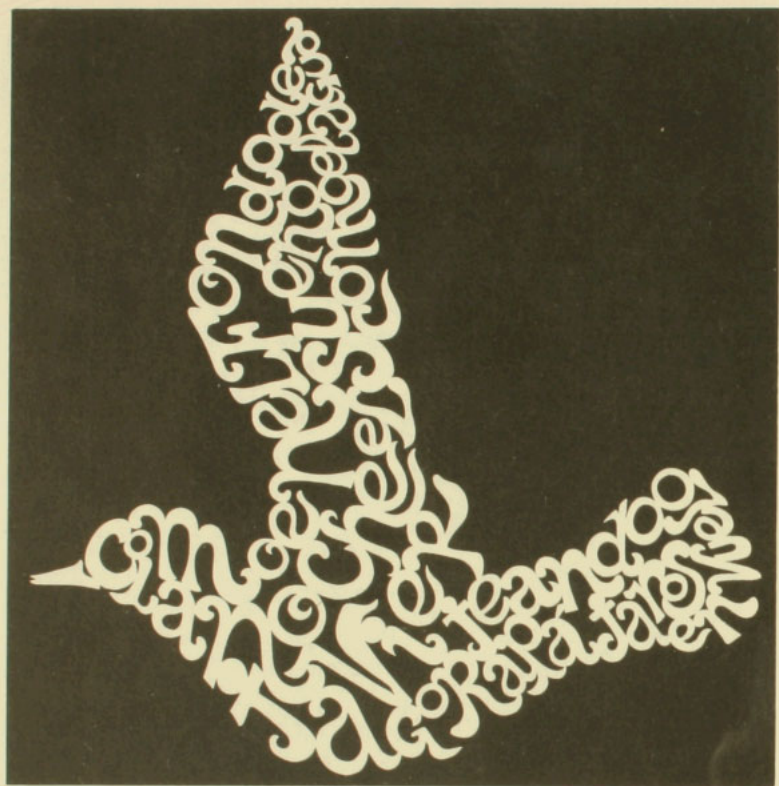


I see the enigmatic ancient bird renewed
 In the word that covers the facade in flames
 Then speak to me trilling your eternal leaves
 Your secret plumage that lives with dreams
 The black heaven streaked with meteors

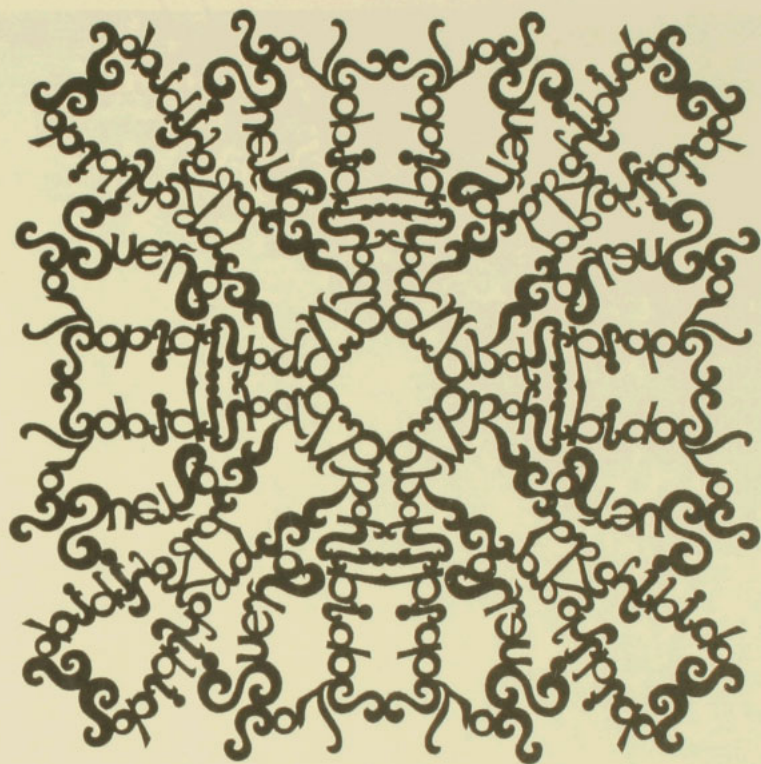


One must build a bit of the infinite for mankind

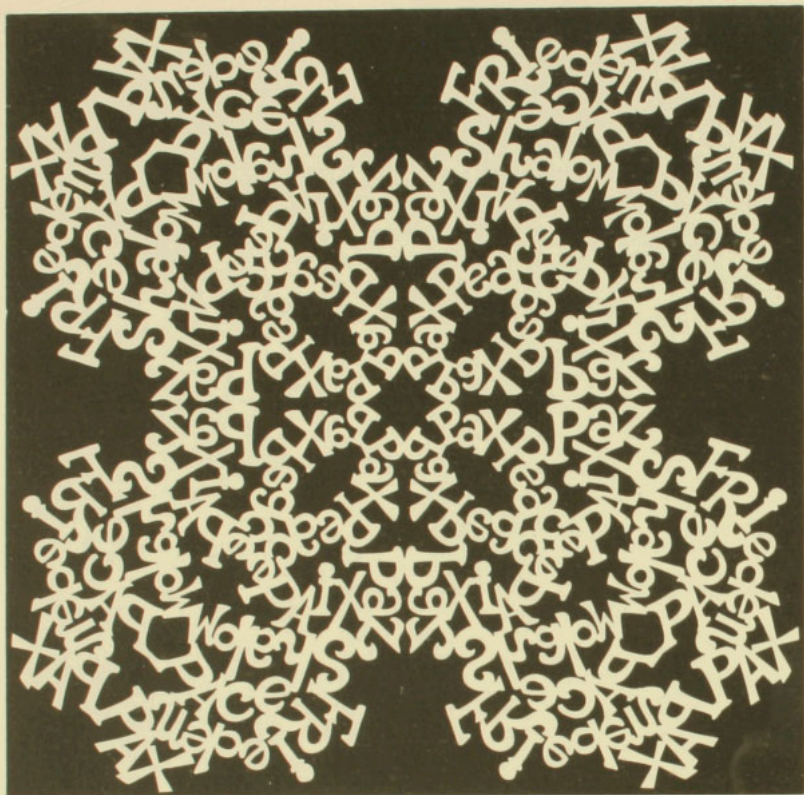
(Huidobro)



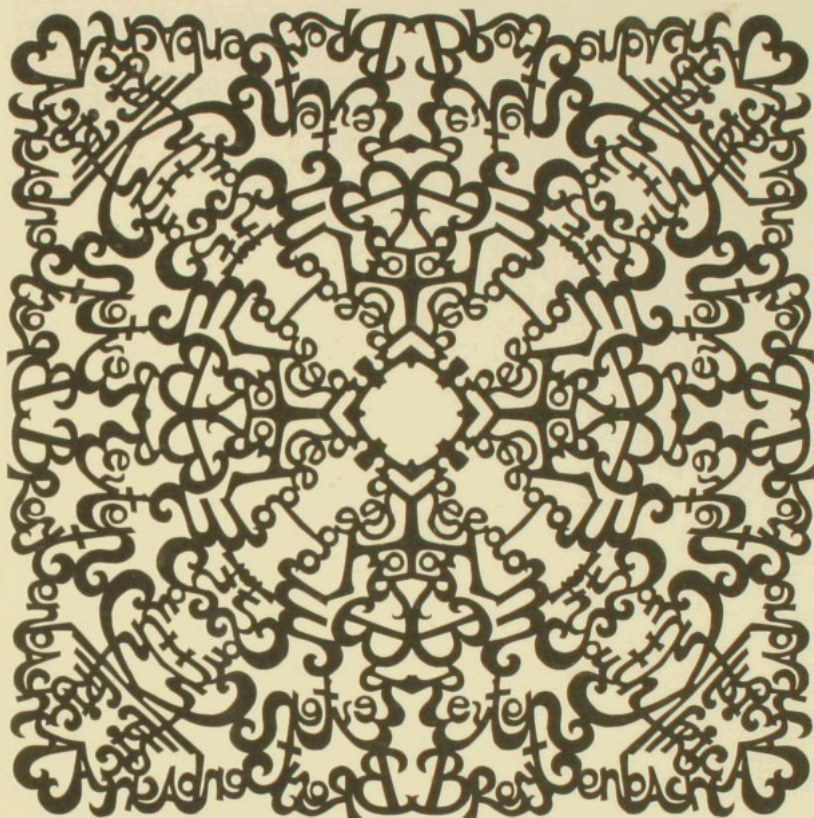
As in the depth of night a dream like water
Javier warbling to birds in flight



Forbidden dreams forbidden

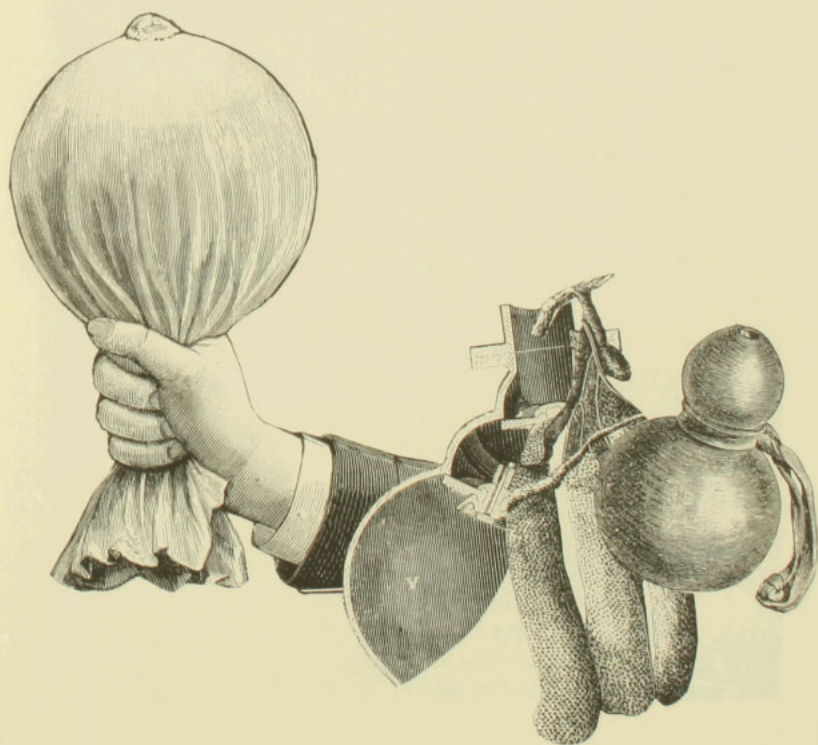


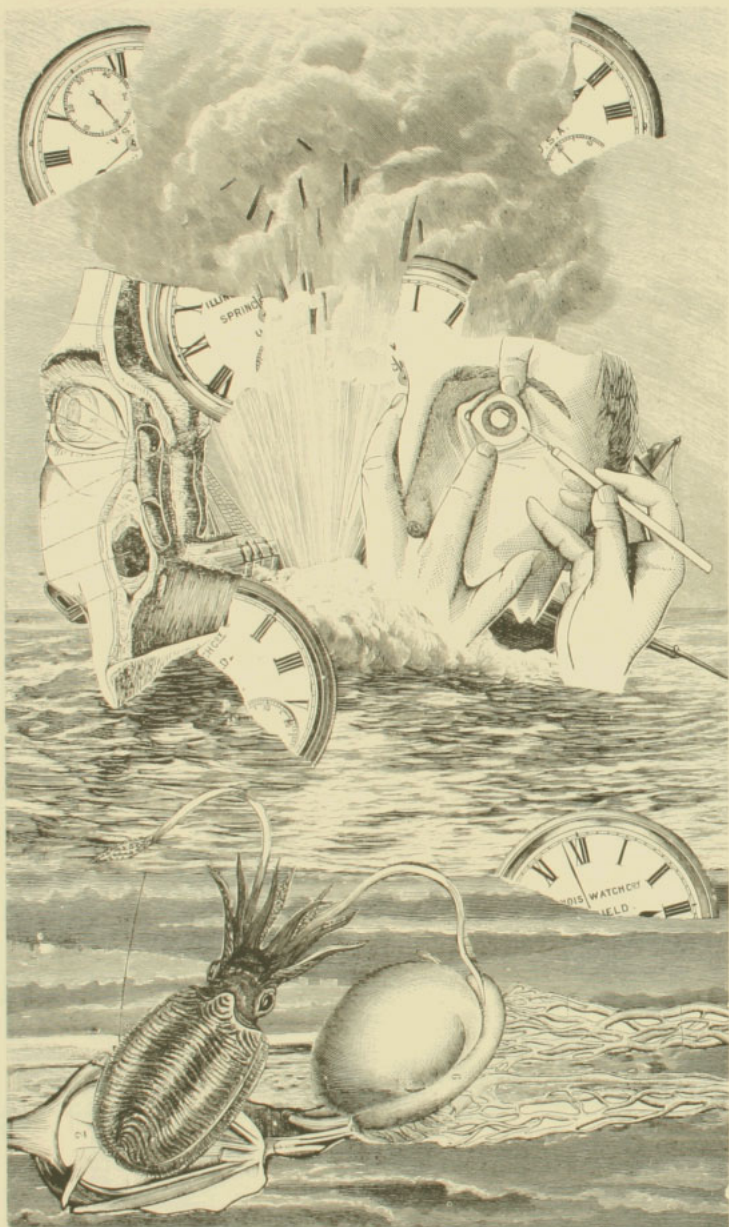
Pax, Peace, Paix, Paz, Shalom, Frieden, Pax



Freedom in South Africa
Freedom for Breyten Breytenbach

WHEN THE ANIMAL RISES FROM
THE DEEP THE HEAD EXPLODES





When the animal rises from the deep the head explodes

Today the ghosts are coming and across the table that swirls
I see the flowers spread over the parched crying
Of the eye that from the plate's center is watching
The jar of oil and its scorpion.

Suddenly the days closed, large leaves grew
Like skins of leopards lying in wait, they asked
My name in Aramaic, they broke the bottles
Of frozen lightning, those remnants of love polished by the sea.

Surely it is one too many, they said. The clock mismanaged
Its cogwheels and they turned those pulleys upside down
And among animals I wander — a warm-blooded being —
Along roadways I champ on my bit, loneliness.

Has the sun gone out? I ask. The children cry
And from all four corners I hear bubbles as they rise and burst
And lick without truce planks of wood, marinated edges
Of the Ark, under a canopy of fever follows the coal.

I do not want to see the guitar snap,
I do not want to see the pot overflow,
To see my claws, to ask again
If two and two make four, if the waters have truly boiled.

Where are we, dears? The sands of insomnia pile up,
Let us join the toys of terror, let us light the fuse
That it may part the moon in two halves and let us wait one thousand years....

My squid

My mother in among the inks, suddenly starts her sobbing.

Captain Cook's last refuge

Examining the rocks of his mind without a pick
He believes he sees again the strange landscapes
And the ship and the earthen green jars of blood
Sheltered and shouted out from the skin of already forgotten women.

But who remembers? There is no exit! And the wind
Will never blow through these crossbars, he is alone
And no one stands on the bridge where years ago
The prisoners were soaked in rain, in terror and in corrosion
They sang in their argot made up of shrieks like burning liquors
That he would like to hear again today.

But finally he understands that he has not left
Ever from this prison and it was but a legend
Of drunken sailors the adventure to explore
These four corners of the earth with its trembling dust.

Pride tempts him and his face turns cold
To all tenderness when leaning on his cane
He contemplates what he kept secret for years: his bowl
Of tears, that drew him rumbling
To this maternal harbor.

And he looks at those burnt bones
That he walked across singing or cursing, the wind in the end
Banging against the crossbars like a wing and the confused road
That invites him to start again together with the others who now go
To walk across the map of his dreams, and he asks where
And there is silence, and he shouts and gets hoarse until he is the lament
Of those pilgrims that the tides drag along
To the abyss without bottom and forever.

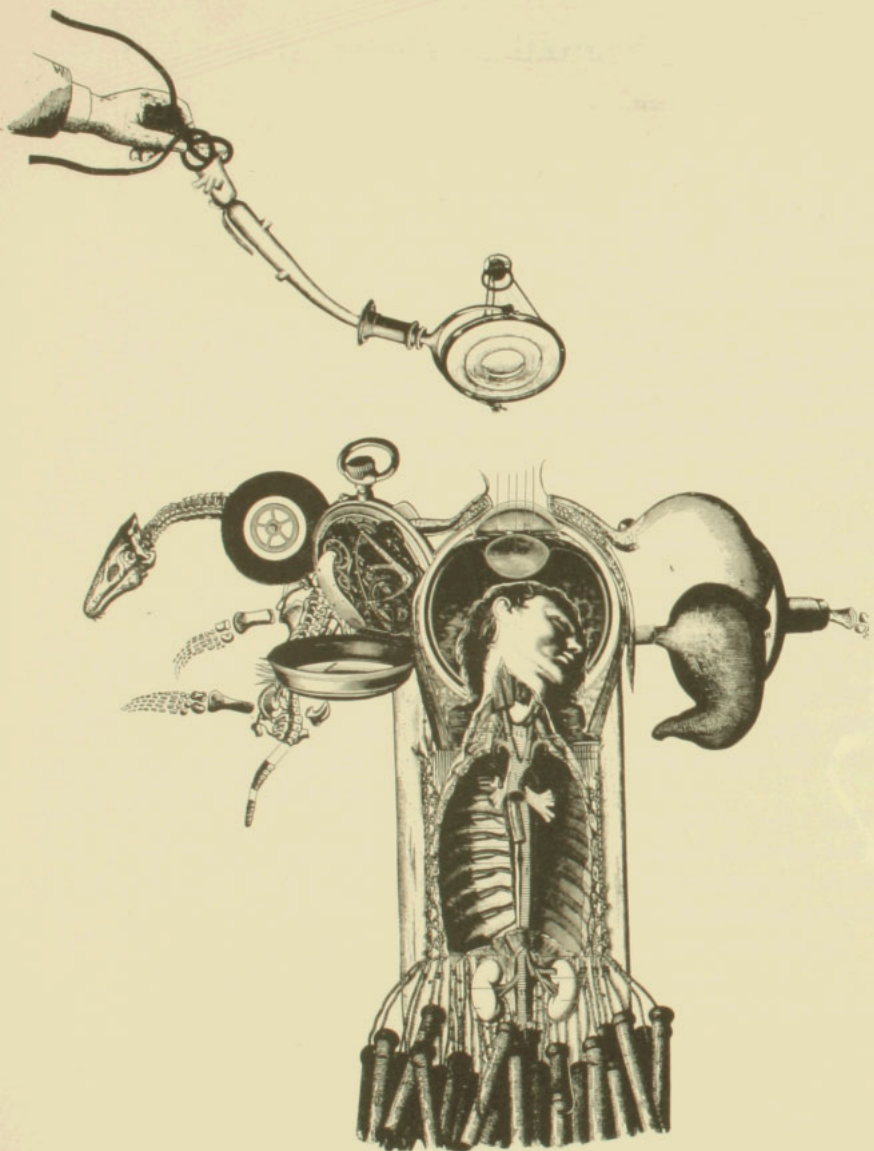
To saw the beloved to pieces when necessary

Under the cutting edge of the knife she feels
How the moons circle above, creaking in the mirror,
She thinks she dreams and listens how it grows in her body, stitch
By stitch, that endless spiral of torture.

They stare at her and wait lovingly, standing in the rain
That deafens, the hand in the depths clenched there
Raises with its draghook those tips of dream
And from the warm decay
May fly away the exact butterfly.

No longer is anything important and under the burning ray
Turning and turning, whirlwinds from a common center,
I listen sometimes and somebody is calling, shouting, I wake up
And I see yet again the same image — the torturer
And the wounds at one and the same time — I do not know if it is water
That falls from above, if I will once more reach
This globe that the wind drags along, if we will be able to pass through
Or if the night is going to slam its pages together suddenly.

Then I rise up and without eyes I can see the knife
That somebody has left behind, clenched here in my hand,
Seeds of another sun, those wheels revolving in memory,
Sawing my beloved into hosts for me.



To open the mind

Buried to the neck in the sands
I hear the shriek of humming propellers
And the sky is covered and forever
Do I see the net fall over the waters.

Then I hear stones being moved there on high
And hands descend upon my painted skull
And open it in half to expose its bitter fruit,
Bitter and without consolation.

The ivory raven is featherless
And waters fall into the ignored abyss.
Will there be no skin, no hand to break the fall?
They blinded me with burning embers.

I have no more remembrance, they took away the light
Of that memory, I want only to descend, to be one with the earth
To forget, to be able to close the eye they opened in me
So that I will no longer see the sun that boils.

Louis Wain and the cats

First it is necessary to brick in all the doors,
To flood all the passageways, to soap all the windowpanes
That could reflect those pupils. Talk low,
Lower still...

Is Wain there, dreaming?

Reclining on the chesterfield, shipwrecked in the desert
Where noise resounds, he fends off
The infinite clocks, and image after image ends in the thread
Of fever that leaps at the tips
Of the eyes of a cat.

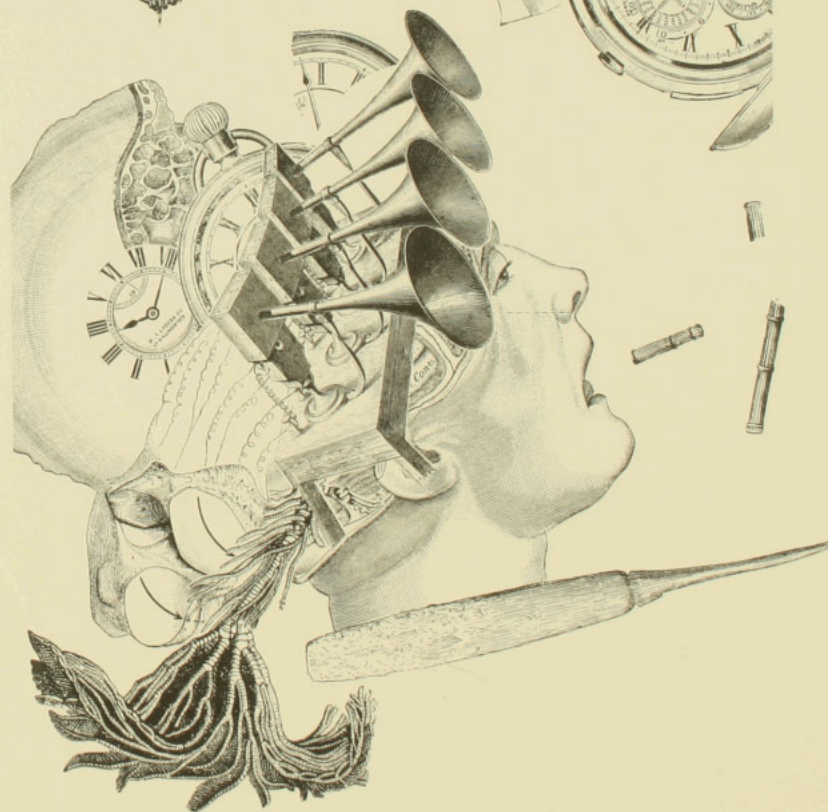
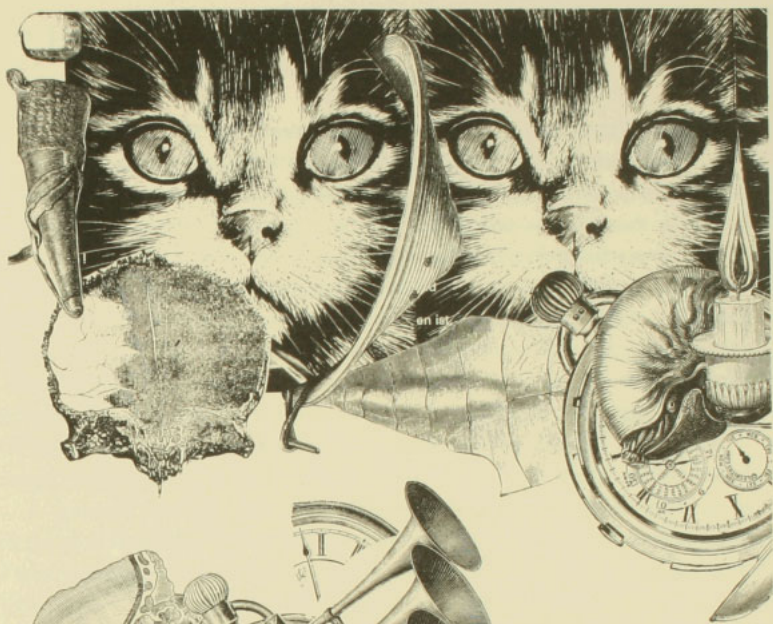
Are they here or are they not? *"Is there by any chance
Anyone who is awake?"** I hear shrieking
And the shriek grows unbearable among the reefs
Of that skin already burnt by lightning.

Through cracked eyes, he sees crystals fall
Inward, flames lick up at him
And they leap from his fingertips becoming claws, nails.
What do those cats want, those eyes...?

But the day draws to a close forever and the horror
Geometrically increases its insomnia of a thousand nights.
Sleep no more. Why do they sink down to the bottom
Of a mirror, the seventeen cats of my friend? Why does blood
Streak across the windowpanes?

Is Wain there dreaming?

*Precolumbian poetry



A dream repeated: merely a dream?

"It was nighttime. I found myself passing a bush with thick dusty leaves, one of those hidden, desert-like places where anything can happen. I was examining the vegetation and it seemed to me that the trees were thornbushes and that their flowers grew like eyes turned inwards; everything was hushed, silent and lying in wait. Suddenly I saw myself encircled by cats and the sensation of danger became almost intolerable. Agile and aggressive, their fur seemed to me now to be clothed with nails and they looked menacing, rancorously thirsty. The monsters grew in size and in number, yellow and black, until they were the size of leopards. All flight seemed to me useless now.

Desperate, I grabbed a stick two or three meters long, the tip of which smoked like a torch and, thus armed, I confronted the pack that had by now become but a single animal, which instead of attacking turned tail and escaped among the bushes. With this torch, I thought, I will be able to ignite every hole, every hollow in which my enemy can hide.

Where am I heading? Where is it leading me? I then see myself on the very edge of an abrupt cliff, closing in on the monster, but at the point of catching it I realize that it has been transformed into the Belford lion and that it is the iron support of a set of small scales, a footstool in a park, where one eternal day is to be weighed. I laugh when I see this, I guffaw, but my laughter has no echoes. The forest, the rocks in this place have no echo and their answers are but a long moan. Then, in the middle of the dream, I do not know who I am myself, whether the hunter or the cat."

(Nighttime, 10 February 1972, Toronto)

Repetition of the dream

It is necessary to know about tigers, it is necessary to love them
In order to nail them to the cross, merely taking care to double
Their bellowing and directing them toward the four cardinal directions
They plunge downward, a burning coal in the ear,
And unless they speak English grammatically, one repeats
The syllables in inverse order, one kills them little by little,
By mistake, by routine, as one does with everything,
On account of distaste.

Already awake, that memory is an anguish to me,
Of a being that talks to me in dreams, questions me,
And I fail to understand.

The landscape lapses and lacks an echo.
Perhaps I am the one who is the tiger and another one it is that plays,
Persecuting me with burning coals.
The stumps crash against the glass, I fail to understand
Why the feathers fall, about the blinded days,
In among the flowers of ice I discern a face that sprouts out,
All covered with eyes and with thorns.

Bad habits

Each person feeds his vices so much
That the squall draws him like a herring
To its tub of salt. The body does not escape from this
Except resplendently, shorn of the skin
By which it was scorched, but its step is light
When scarcely touching objects it ends in the glass
Of veins that beat and the wet branches
No longer know it except by the light the outlines give
To the perfect beloved.

There she will be dreaming,
Disguised as of old upon the balcony of dust
That the wind has blown away. "Why do you come,
If moons do not return, if days are numbered
Like dice thrown by chance?..."

Suddenly I hear the sea break
Against warm ivory rocks, mute wounds.

For whom am I waiting? For whom, when the eyes
Have peeled off the wall? Rust drops off and I feel
I am caught in the plunge of those hooks, strung up
By the wire that someone moves to the mercy of his knives.

In the country of the Antipodes

From the skin's other side they summon me
Those enraged birds, razed by love
They initiate their great gestures, they inquire, blindly
They peck away at warm feathers burning in mirrors.

There is no pointer to cut the quietude of the waters
Tongs turning over probing the wounds;
Here was the tip of their magnetic lips
The tide nailing us down, tattooing us with fire.

One head sleeps and another stays awake
Immersed in wine. I try to speak out
But time turns to blood in the flasks
I shout and wake up and meet thorns.

I do not know if I am here, if I have yet arrived
The wind suddenly tips the scales
And in some eternal coming and going I am an old man
Playing out my childhood surrounded by cybernetic hens.

Insomnia with scales

A fish passes through my dream each night
And enters a tunnel of incense in the pillows,
Over the glass that is skin, that slices the air in two,
That closes afterward its eyelids, listens: the waters surround me
And from one wall to the other I feel their crystalline leaves tremble.

Is everything here? Answer me! A dark womb's
Wave, signs that somebody has drawn there in the deep
Like striations on what is always the same mirror.
If we come from the fish, the burning bone
Striving to open up its thorns, if there is no pity,
If they drag the net day by day through the pond,
Where are the eyes that watch us, where the root
Of this lament, insomnia's embers in the gills
That inflate themselves, prolong themselves and search out the cold metal?

Of that land that slowly rises on the dry walls,
Dry by day and by week, the scales come out to receive me,
I rise among the wounds, I ask for friends
Who do not exist, that are dust ground by the rain,
Each bit weighs me down, each portion of the soul that I recall.

Are you there? I ask. Are you there? Unseen
The needles strike in the thirsty loom
Of the image and the glasses break, they harden
Over the current's scab. I see tears
On the final visage, the fish that returns each night in blood
That breathes on my pillow, that burns in my oxygen
And wakes up....

Behind the windowpane I am alone,
Perhaps in another dream, giving vent to my shouts.

When we reach the beyond

Like birds long-time prisoners
We smoke leaning on elbows in ever or never,
Along the ground serpents of smoke guide us
While walls of already frozen volcanoes pass by.

We are alone on the balcony of time
Let us remove the boards or paint signals in the sand
That the hurricane takes away, as we take
Skin into our dream. Will we remember this?
Bodies upon the smooth surface, fruits burning
In the vital colors of the day, insects that somebody pins
There in the time of bitter guitars.

But is there no water here? Will we go on tracing
In the void, from father to son, on the edge
Of oblivion? In search of what skin, sleepless beings
Without stone or woman where one may inlay the turbulent
Blood-papered head?
What happened to our life? How did it come about
We are thus, scraps dispersed by the wind,
Ashes without memory, faces without likeness?

There is the column of speedy scales, here the cup
In which they offered me blood; the prophets blinded
At their magnetized table, betting on the cards
That have no reverse side but bones, bleached
In the light that hurts faces like a scar.

Continuous wall

Fallen into a trap I interrogate myself. There is no light.
On high, clouds go by, dragging their roots.
I do not know if I have always been in this place,
If it was the sun that brought me here, if the hair on my head
Can sometimes grow inward, the glance return
Within the eye, the shout slink back and be silent.

Perhaps it is raining? Somebody cries out but I do not hear him,
Only four walls are surrounding me, only four landscapes
That remain unchanged amid the undulation of dusty thorns.

Sometimes I recall and I walk in circles,
I engrave upon the rocks signs that the flames
Consume without understanding what I have written
The way the bird sings describing the pathway
To the flock — crossing over that map of invisible
Clocks that beat and bellow, pushing,
Breaking the polyhedron's sonorous edges.

Out of what salt-barrel, out of what root do we come
If the blood wilts in the mills,
If the stones on high are also arrested, pinioned,
If the infinite-eternal is only dreaming us,
If we shall never get out, if nothingness is the door
And the Roc-bird a time of identical pupils?



Poetry and truth

Fed up with proverbs, his elbow on a knot
Which grows like the root from his body,
He watches the days as they race by, the glass fragments
That deafen the sun with their roars.

A great tattooed hook rises
Stuck to his skeleton, a fishhook from the deep,
Without peace, but with water, a Visage
That is his visage, that contemplates him, without his understanding.

Lost amid the smoke, following the seam
Of coal, he remembers how light rises in two
Different worlds: over the Rano-Raraku
The Sphinx changes her skin, the storms of stones that have come
From the deep, the enigma-heads that erode the sea
With their fixed gaze, the ancient engraving that wilts
In his hand and, in front, that flower of lava, his questioning.

In the salt mine

A thousand years I have been buried here, the echoes
Little by little, like shrapnel, fly from the noise,
The worn-out casks broke apart and the wind
Turned against the clock its old grappling hooks, its enraged rags.

We erect scales and we descend to escape from light
The sky is closed off and there are only holes through which I hear
The great globes of the blind woman swirl, the sweet
Terrifying, dreamy serpent of the salt.

We are wandering crystals, lost particles
Within the marble of that infinite being, that rock
Riddled with worms, and we wear down our hands to the bone
And we go on pounding the drums for the sun to return.

Somebody sighs, somebody shouts my name in the pitch-black dark of night.
Then I rise up — shipwrecked among furniture like a fish
Without scales — I look up and there is no one, nothing descends
But the cold splendor. It continues to snow on the face of the rock.

Ontological distraction

Life is but a tube without remedy.

Coming here gives everyone the right to witness the injustice,

To take it out and clench it like a burning coal,

To shout out, tortured by its edges, or to throw it

Burning like a spearhead into the cursed fabric

That the spider is weaving across the other entrance...

that is a dream,

Of life that is but a tube without remedy.

The Sphinx in Toronto

...And for this I walked some forty odd years,
Stumbling against the furniture, cutting myself on edges
Of walls which without eyelids
Have no water here, only thirsty charcoal, mere ash
Dust that takes us...

And the wind in my childhood there
Or here in the gusts that cut the face with cold
Stares, to go and inquire of oneself where, while there is someone
Who across our backs stitches the ignored sentences.

So many years! The masks multiply from the depths
Of the bonfire where the last bees burn;
My mother on the balcony shook the rings of her hair in the wind,
Were we children today, yesterday, ever? Numbers
Repeat themselves against the eardrums in strange languages,
The same way as one who has seen that star grow in his palms
That rises amid the croakings and cleaves the blue and is a bird.

And now here, naked before the Sphinx,
Pitiless, fearless like someone who asks himself
About the outcome of some forgotten disaster in the annals
Of Pliny the Younger, who without boasting told others
Of his flight beneath the black torrent that came cascading
From the deep. "I did not see Vesuvius, says he, only
The soot from the flames and the immense night that descended.

The sun went out, and I read Livy's pages with indifference.
Because life is thus, the cost, the real cost, is arrogance."
So we dig one tunnel then another then another, and at each juncture
I see but stations of my mind, fragments of the life I have lived,
Bodies in which I have been only a soul.



But here I am. Three years are time enough for the sun
To change its covering rind and emit light to human beings,
Like the egg of the serpent; lascivious flames surround us,
Memory that is found in every woman who was once a chimera,
Black shoes in the sand, and the blue smoke that sings
In her gaze...

But, have I guessed? Have I been saved?
Deep in her eyes I glimpse the storm, that cluster of tears about to fall.

Outside the sea breaks. Inside the wind murmurs.
Perhaps I have arrived? Perhaps I am awake?

WOMAN IN DREAM



Woman in dream

To Susana

I celebrate your love as a body in the night
Bird of heart in the watersheds of song
Bent under the wind that frightens the flocks
Burnished on your fingertips furiously pecking
They give their eyes to fire their blood to drums
Of foaming pleasure that fans out in waterfalls

Show me those skinless moons that roll
Downhill through the world of your perverse dreams
Contorted sulphur whose mercy is thunder
Splitting edges in two stripping away your skin
Phosphorescent covered with inscriptions with bellows
At the branding the contours of your thirsty beasts

The mastiffs no longer have the brilliance of those syllables
Nor the crackling of keys on boiling ice
That flows down to the dew of your moist breasts
Without smoke today without tears at the rim of a pond
We listen to echoes that rite of electric sparks
Drinkers of the glow of your lamps

Wisely you collect the stones of your prayer
Listening to the waters the flocks that come
Strumming the sun's guitars where tigers leap
From bush to bush until they come to the eyes
In the fire in embers that possess nothing
Only that fur of panting rancor
Stairs that return each day to my hands
Each day to my nights to drink the face
That has no other side but tears
Contemplated in the sudden flaming of tides
Against those sour rocks ceremony of the dream
Where I see you in waves unwinding your body
Like precious linen that blossoms from its sheath

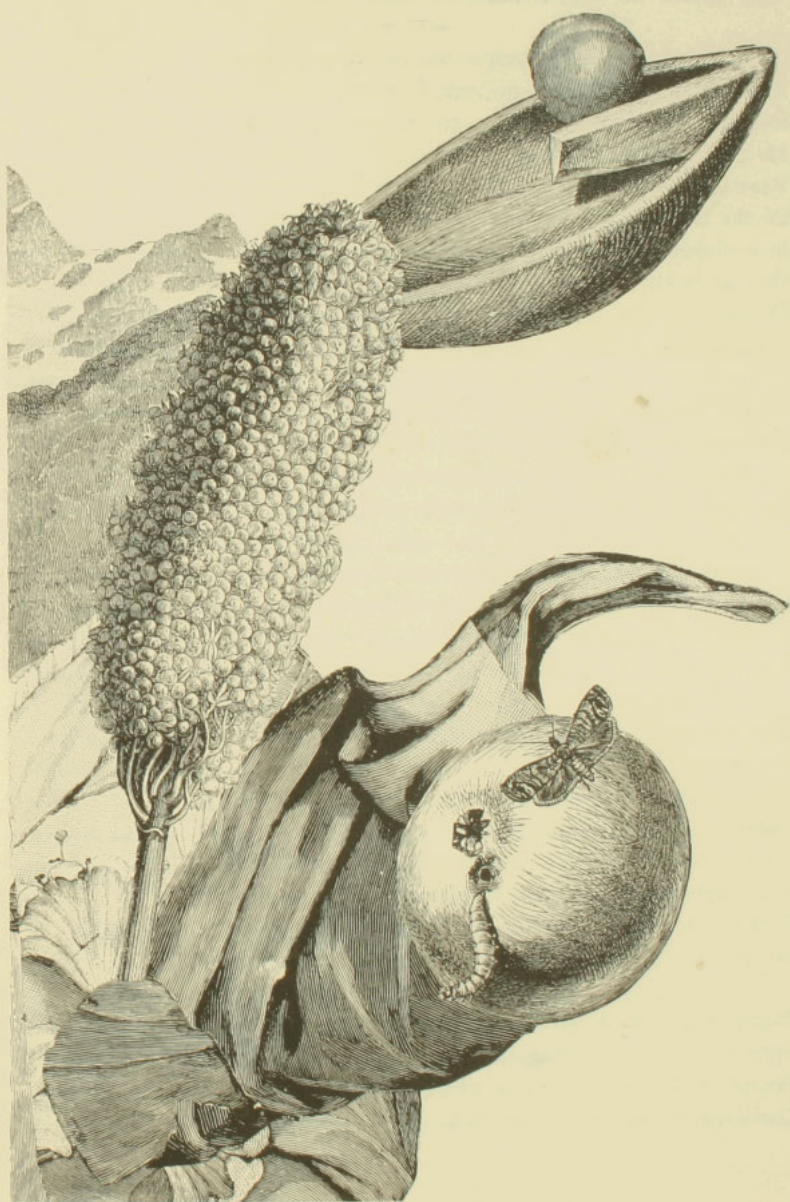
You are that tide already woven wrung knotted
On a thousand identical fingertips they raise you
Like a lily on the axe's sparkling edge
You laugh at your own laughter the loveliest snake
Of my nights lips that burn in a dust cloud
Of whips on flanks of ice whose every feather
Is a bird in that warbling mass of eiderdown

Do not polish that pure illusion of confines
When there are wings that seek to rest on your shoulders
They moisten you so that you sing as though beneath a branding iron
In dreams you question yourself in a mirror's depths
Where a burning statue of you lives
Surrounded by those dead servants its flames

The white horses that follow you harass you
Polishing to crystal the clusters of your breast
Yielding pink fruits with nipples redder
Than that flock of herbalists to which you surrendered yourself

The bees will soon be coming blowing over the seeds
Waters more transparent than the love on their shoulders
At times you are old like a fruit lost and wandering
On the tables of time the age of gold flowers
Ripening the bones of all predators
Winter will drag them to the honey of the crops
Where stripped of yourself you hear
The tinkling flowers of laughter

Of their own will your eyelids open sullen clothing
Of your lifted body the vines twist
Bitten by dogs of disdain of weariness
I gaze into your windows to find God
On tiptoe I descend by threads to your womb
Of honey where life bellows its livid whirlwinds
In that lone boiling of petals that rise up
And thirstily await you woman harassed
From the foliage you hear how they come
Your children keep growing in clusters



From your arms outstretched like blue branches
That uphold the copper nests of their laughter

Now you are like a landscape that has no end
In my memory a prison of birds in flame
Each day you come you are a girl singing
My rose gardens bloomed in you
Your dreaming gaze was the very look
Of the black doll you carried bound to your side
In a violent nightmare of reaching the utmost depth
Of that bonfire where your clothing burns
Charred by other days when there is no more skin
On your madly adored bones you wake

To sing to follow from glass to glass
Burning I unbraid your hair like a river if only
I could drink you from skin to core let's go
Forward through the drunken bells of the rain

I rest in the fresh consolation of your eyelids
Watching your eyes where the world passes
A tribe lost for years that begs
For the breaking of waters on your brow

You distribute yourself in the skin of every woman
You scatter into lips eyelashes numbers that fall
Like wings to the menaced earth opening
Sudden stairs with arms equal in sweetness
To the mother-of-pearl oars your legs those eels
That carry me like a cross of water along a knife-edge
Where I found no oblivion but only a flowering
Of crystals that repeat your image

You're not there I can't find your parallels
Split in two by the wings' fury
Bound to the swarm of innocent beasts
Gathered in bunches by the rain

Your sweetness is that breeze polished
By ghosts of fog of so many broken dreams
Kept in a chest that has no limits now
Like the flames that draw the spikes from your hands
Which run across your body covered with lianas
Delirious caresses colder and greener
Than the blooming branch of carnivorous tongues

Split your breast in halves for me number the seeds
Of those faces toppled at random into your blood
There you will find your riches crackling songs
Like a burst of laughter they pierce you
Roots from the earliest ages when you inquire covering your eyes
Like one who sees in her palms the true face
The open roads where rusted birds croak

Why do you come from forever clutching knots
Eternal links that shift only at the echo
Of a voice those waters that furiously lick
The retorts moved at the will of your hips
Creator of the world from the thirst of silt
There is neither summer nor almond where you no longer
Can unfold those pageants ripe with spice
In the blink between the lightning and thunder of two beings
Loving each other seeking in you light's limits
Where those shadowy forests your eyes lie waiting
Caught in a spell like voices
In that lute where people sing drunk with themselves
Green scarabs on beaches of murex and gravel

Your dream is infinite eternal mother
There are no streets today that could shepherd your desire
As there are for those heifers that between railings advance
Into pools of gold the burning beehives
Deafen you when you gaze at the skin of wheatfields
Because forgetfulness has brought gifts to your fire
Fresher and even sweeter than the breeze's flower

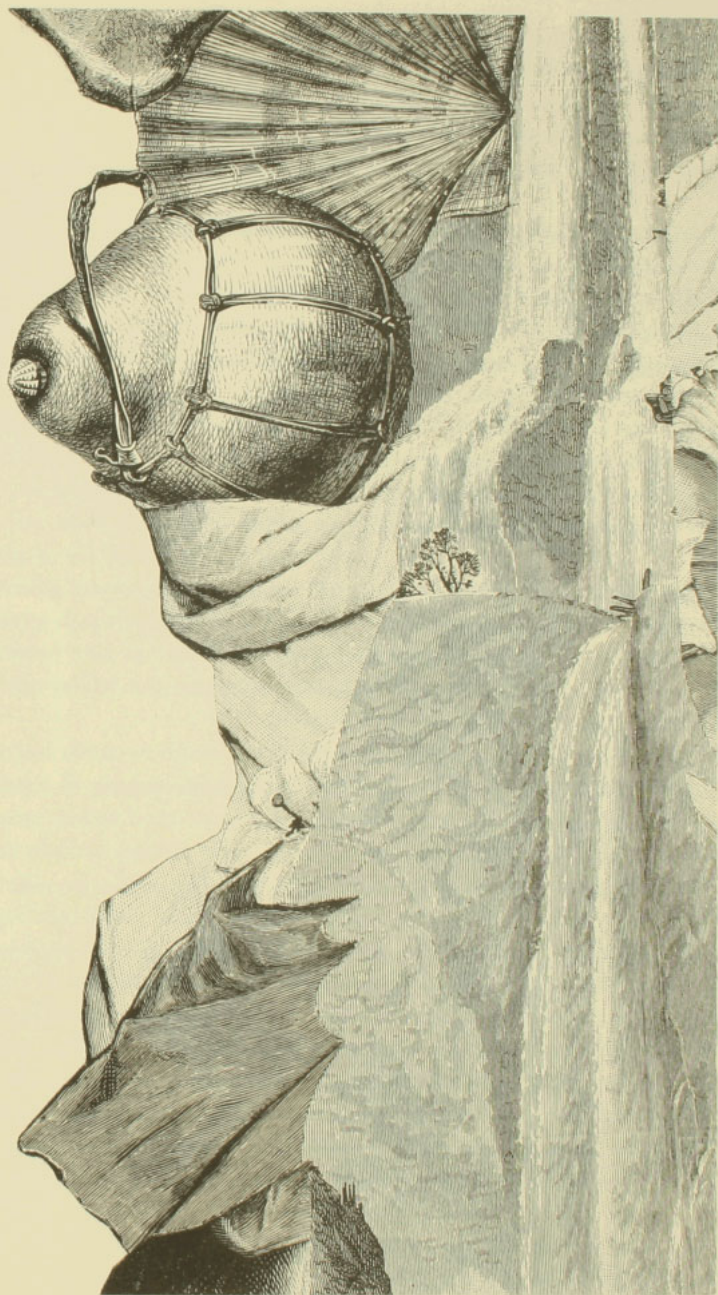
On the high stairs I pick you out surrounded by animals
Consummated in feathers in perfume in nostalgia
Distance no longer holds any secrets for you if you turn
You meet thousands of mouths that drink you that rise
Like smoke from fever above wandering beings
That adore the leather columns of your legs
Warmer more lubricious than the milk in their lamps

You are there you laugh you open yourself to the echoes
Of infinite mirrors that wear away the wind
Of flight to a kingdom of scales of vinegar
Where you shine covered by fingertips giving suck
From their magic dates to polished suns of breath

Scratching deeper we will find tracks
As green as emeralds the water's hair
Hurled from a cliff in gazes that wander like a breeze
Hidden among syllables the mercy of your name
That fruit that kernel in the moon's bloodless breasts
Skin tinkling in its cold medals
Where a cyclone of wheat-flour places its dry tongue
Between two lucid stones sparks fall
From the spiral of almonds that is your body

You are covered with a down of twisted wool
Turning your head toward the sun
Hair grows drunken ivy now burnt
Under the lightning you hasten the arrival of the wind
Of summer that opens like a river in the resonant
Hips of a fruit whose acid seeds make their demand

That pollen warmer than a skinless peach
Where you wait for me falling through hard spirals
Of terror at climbing or sinking in your eyes' depths
I hear how the humming wheels shake the branch
That you hold like volcanic plants over your heart
Pierced to the center split in two by the pendulum
The knife that flies now bodiless between the sheets



The roads carry us toward a well that bleeds
The wolf's head cries aloud and asks
For your daughters dressed in frozen spider crabs
Birds more eloquent than a papyrus they croak
The prayer of your shoulders on the purple scales

During the banquet they blinded you they pierced
Your feet tied to an echoing beam
Tattooed all over with fire with carnivores
Scorched in the kiss of burning irons the rust
No longer has the scent of closeted lavender
When you look at time in three directions
From the carriage which bears you forward covered with eyes
Like bees swept along in the hurricane of language
That has no words only petals
To express the long delirium of your braids

Erotic locusts drag you by your handles
Toward the country of white thunder where the hills
Are torn by a vertigo brighter than your breasts
Where every type of image forages in the smoke
Of those great hides sewn with the teeth
Of the shark you snatch from the fire
When seizing your hair they drag you away those priests
Of the musical owl of warmer bloods
Always ready to migrate like red-hot embers
The birds keep furrowing you covering you with lip-like wounds

I've seen your children there surrounded by serpents
Crossing the stones without flinching at a blow
Barely covered by the skin of absence
Where you have prolonged the seeds the night
Of total torture interminable wall
Where nightmare never ends where one hand writes
The other cascades downward ceaselessly changing
Like the lights with which you are tattooed

You have a thousand faces you have a branch of foam
Surging from your forehead in the long howl of syllables

So like the skin of that body singing
At floodtide of the cry the black scar
Of the moon merciless flare that ends
In a vinegar-laden sponge upon the lips
Of those who drink your laughter

Under the burnt canopy disdain's drunken priests
Are consumed in vineless arbors
Do not request for them anything kinder than an axe
Viciously striking the acid tree
Where my ravens make their nests to await you

At times you are attacked by the melancholy of stones
That cry for their errant lives under the mineral blossoming
Where you have now lost your memory
Where you have dreamed a thousand seasons out of your forehead
Radiating to all points of the spectrum
Like burning tracks on the brown hide of the sand
That heavy drapery of skin the snakes
Drag toward vast deltas of abandonment
Where the yellow sap of anthracite falls

You go you come at times through the same face
That sleeps in a secret house stretched out beside the water
When your naked body tingles with the sweet warmth
Of those electric marble veins

You have that same color then that texture
Of an apricot turned inside out like sexes
Shrivelled by the sun pursued by beasts that confront you
You are covered with eyes of flaming almonds
You carry noise on your back splinters of a cross-beam
Where the clamor of brasses rolls stretched like leather
Into a knot of eyes as transparent to you
As the scent of the flower of ice

There is no mercy there is no rest in the twitching
Bird of the womb that bears the images you exhale

The storm over the flute-bones of your lovers
When you leave my life dispersed in fragments
Under furious wings that have come down from the water of your flanks
Sparkling with pleasure more lascivious than cliffs
Where crows beat their wings pecking the tables
Shaking the dice in throws like black fruit clusters

Then give me the throbbing of feathers the freedom
To love you like branding irons on a body
Tell me of your life in other jars made of leaves
Macerated in the hoarse perfume of your armpits
Where you close the nests of drunken petals

Sometimes I divine you in a species now extinct
Brought up under the rule of the whisperers I love you
Sex that drags huge crystal gladioli

Sometimes I would like to summon you in dreams
When you pass tinted with oxide from a million butterfly wings
That wove you a mantle as the sun's queen
In sitars that are skin in beehives
Where you store the fruit that day by day maddens me
When you barely open your legs in the locust's game

But you have already leapt you live deep within
My forehead where you have made your nest with fleece
Warmer than the blood through which you constantly flow
Like fire in water from one glass to another
With the hinge of your legs you make a swift cross
Scissors that signify a tiger among the pillows

Do not slice then do not close those knife-blades
When I wander in you as in a silver ocean
Preserving archaic customs
That tell me about the breasts of wheat in the mills
That body of a precious mare moves like stone between sheets
The violet harness of cruelty already tightened

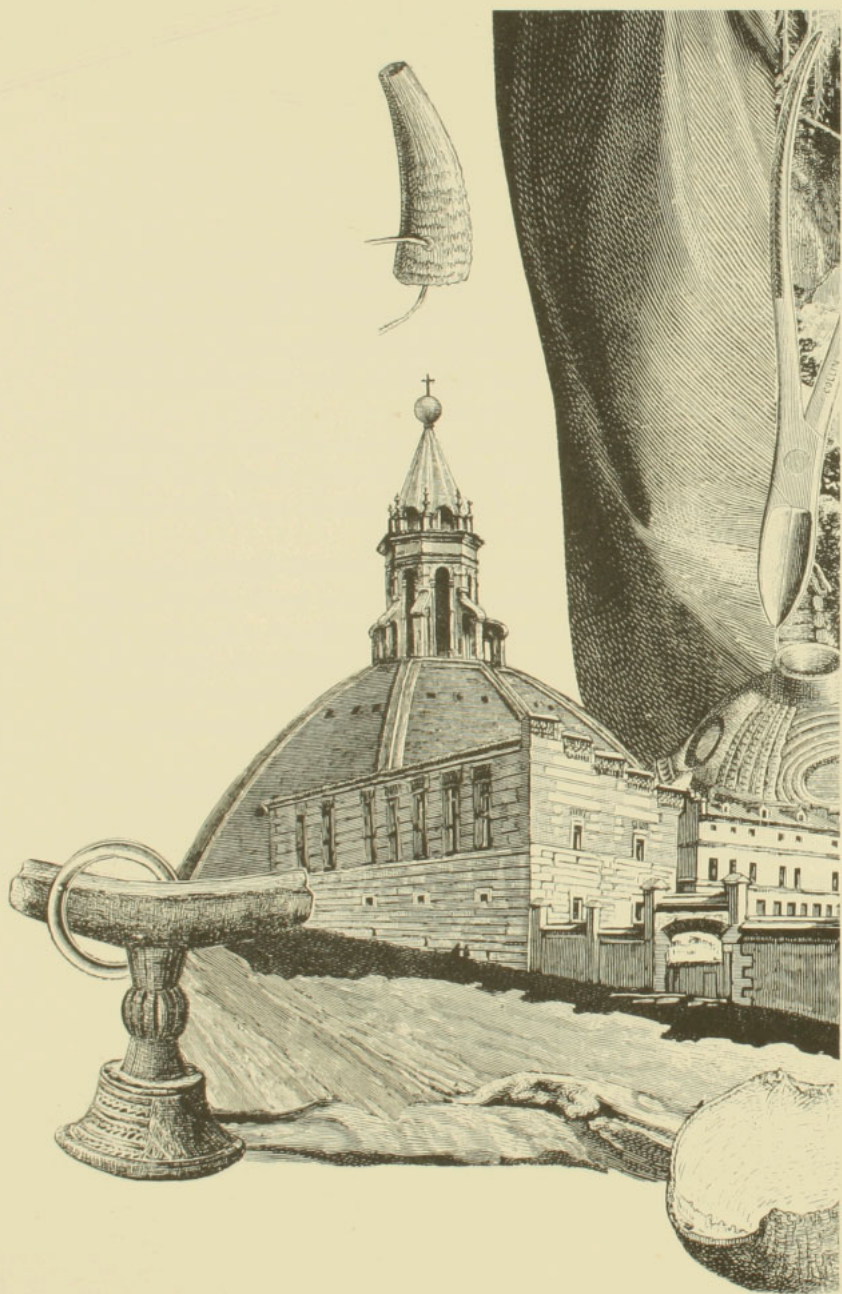
Eyes by which I descend toward the open sea
Murmuring in the waters of the sun your gaze

You have dressed in skin for my nights
You have come by roads even more secret than spices
Because walls don't hold you only songs
Renewed at each season in which you are
The immense universe through which we go like drunken birds
In their flaming cage purple the procession drenched
In perfume now that no almond exists
That can compare for generosity with your hands

Your habits of another age purify me
Your knees close like sacred lotus
Purer even than great volcanic hecatombs
When you advance to the bed of flowing manes
In the violins' nuptial flight for which
There is neither beginning nor end but this eternal change
Of images that bleed in your laughter's
Cold mirrors where I hear that ancient chant
Of caravans sunk beneath the dustcloud of the grave
Next to the compost of their hides' shed hair I see flowers of bone
Through which you pass from one life to the other in the eternal
To and fro of love tightening its knot in the rain

Wet rhododendrons surround you with domes
That raise their spiked crests like a flame
Of corn cobs for a brief journey the grating of a spear
In the neck of a stifled bull hoarse blood
Sacrosanct mineral like the gleam of a river that does not end
On the high altar of your nipples the only flower
That polishes itself in flames of fever its pleasure
A god implacably bountiful with his gnawing rays

You surround yourself at times with walls of teeth
In the head of your forebears the gold and thunder
That protects your childhood of eyes
Astonished to see the fiery shepherds guiding their flocks
Made of sparks and black hollows in the huge



Jewels of lust propping their elbows on the wine presses of noon
Ochre beneath the hum of drunken earrings
At the passing of a lute toward the eagles' country
Like open wounds the thorns of swiftest salts
In amazement at you spring from your womb

Because you come from warm convalescent afternoons
In the unbound knot of your hair the storms
Rise up thicker under the sinuous marble
Than a rope of virgins feathered with suet and murex
For the drinkers of doves in whom you reflect the light
Of rites as strange as the crying at the cross
Of loving anchorites whose skins you preserve
By a miracle for all the faithful of the septentrion
Parcelling out their nails with each spin of your lubricious legs
Where you drown them in fever and smoke
On the hingeless wall of your sex

They raised insanity above your flesh
They demanded lightning for their beasts
Martyred in the exorcism of iron and water
But your face is bread given to the blind
At the gate of holy cities where vision
Is parcelled into burning embers fruit of your breasts

The tide of your body wraps me in a husk
Harder than the diamond religion of roots
Where you with all your powers administer the shadows
Of your sister the moon of ropes of my delight

You throw over me the mirages
Of sweet mastiffs on the blue curves
Of your back where my idols moan like rocks
Ashamed of rolling from coin to coin

With your tongue paint me the sortilege
Of versicles that blow over the soul
The bounty of your gifts overwhelms me
A song of reapers has begun in your domains

Oblivion grazes on lichen in the water
In the picture of that solar boat your body
Which spreads tenuous nets for the dew of weeping
Dyed red by the saffron of banquets
There is no mask that can hide your face from me
In the foliage of almond trees those celebrations
Rancid with eating and sleeping on the flagstones
Of your dead sackcloth abandoned to light
Final evidence of a Messiah on the shores of the egg

My hands survey you from inside like oils
Drawn up by the lamps devouring the flames
Fate rides in its saddle of mourning
That nods at times to the shadow of whirling mills
Striking the black air as thin as a stretched hide
I dismount from the horse of ashes I penetrate your body
Like a vast garden of delirious fruit
Losing myself in mad forests
To see those birds pecking at wounds the stigmata
The noise of ten thousand bees that throb in you

Fanning slaves half reptile half stone or tobacco
Carriers of the sparkling glass
On a blue iceberg stripped of your skin you dance
Ceremonies of vertigo in which you shout in concave mirrors
Polishing chestnut skulls in the flower of humming
Magic limbs tattooed at the starting point of the thighs
Those stairs I descend suddenly as in a dream
I plunge myself into the splendor of your abominations

Bring to boiling those liquid bells
The rocking of ships that navigate your veins
Ascending the snow-covered delta of your gleaming thighs
While you open your arms to the call of flight

You accomodate your desires to the crackling bonfire
Of crystals covered with inscriptions of love
In the forgotten language of rocks that sing
When you look into the depths of seas sculpted in lava

A bird sweeter than the scent of January apple blossom
Announces you when you go down to the well like a tiger
Goes down to drink from the iridescent mirror of its memory
That jungle beneath the velvet swarm of your lashes

I see you hunting preceded by mechanical animals
That give warning like a seamless menace
Over the forest kingdoms of your name where sometimes
I am lost for ages because I dream in you
Eternal foliage where you initiate the rites of the sea
Licking your flanks in the flight of ten thousand birds
Descending in a spiral from the idol's head
Made of precious stones polished with the ardor
Of holy words the pleasures of lilacs

You carried me like a syllable between your lips
When you went through the desert of the shamans
Breeders of flies in the eye's interior
You've driven them mad with a flash of cinnamon
And the green milk enchantment of serpents
That ring their legs around my neck
Opening the exact butterfly of that flower their lips
I have drunk the thirst of metal plates that clash
At the sound of rain of crystals of your vessels

For a thousand nights I scrape the walls
I perforate mineral crusts that know of you
Only by the absence of stars in a total night
Where together we dig that well as deep
As water's core where you have already dreamed
All the shapes of life raised to shining delirium
From the waves of the sun of wheatfields

I have followed you numb into the bone's depths
We are suspended by a thread that carries us from existence
To existence as cries carry two lucid flames
And the continuous return the succession of linens
Where elytrons of hurricane-driven wheat are rustling

Because there is only a stammering of words in the net
Lit by the solitary one who passes in boats of thunder
Being bitten by night lifting up fish to you
With names more bitter than the tedium of their acids
I multiply your image when I remember you
All waiting becomes eternal when I destroy
Forever what does not radiate from your likeness
That squall of light where veins talk
Image more ardent than boiling lava
Colder than the rind of dead planets

Surely in your womb the phoenix makes its nest
Of fresh-springing flames singers more skillful than the waters
Surround me when I see you submerged in yourself
My sacred mollusk make time spin
From its antennae the implacable mercy of those winds
Where my new bones begin to walk
Transformed to love's great dance carried away
Like burning embers under the skins of women
Among whom you possess the most beautiful disguises
For whom you repeat endless patterns in ash
Initiating the mystery of being only the breeze
Bearer of your shoulders' grace

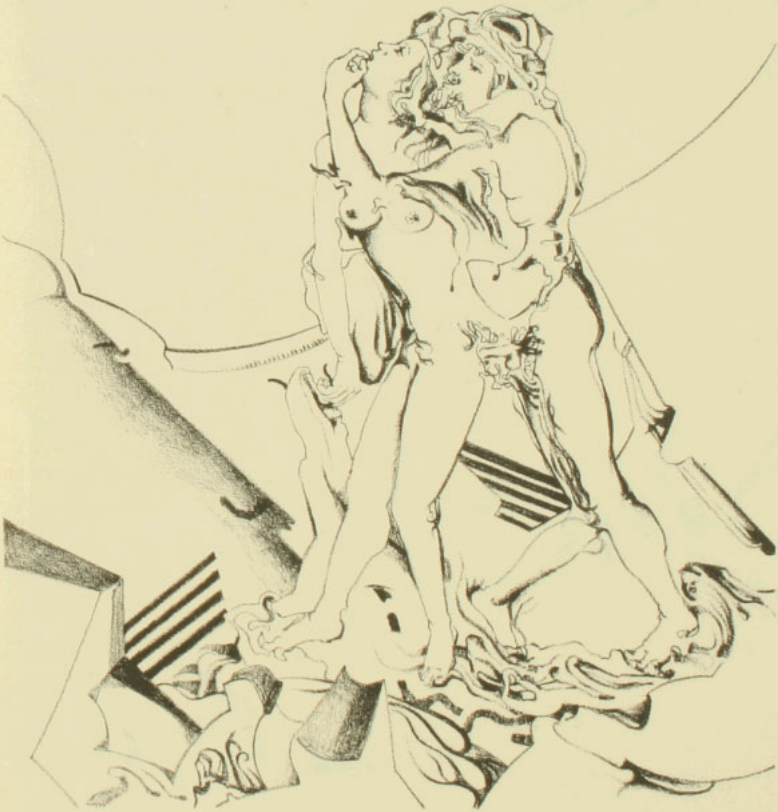
Perhaps you hold for me the scent of wine presses
Forgotten there in the oasis noon at which certainty
Men recede as before an inscription in sunspots
And I have also found in your gaze
The exact pleasure where all extremes touch
At the fingertips until they bleed in an impossible dream
Your life is like the renewed song of water
White fig sweeter than the joined tongues
Of lovers whose eagles watch over the authentic
Boundaries of that unnamable forbidden body
Like a planet full of balances whose joy
Is perceived in our reality as an invisible god
Vertebral like the bone in those spirals of laughter
Inaudible through the turning of wheels of all the hours

Square flasks of vinegar the cities
Without light columns of ants without history or dream

Pour sweetness into me that great beam of light
Forbidden wake winking among the cords
Without limits you expand in fire and water

The weeping of mental rocks that live within you
At the reflection at fever's murmur the tympani
The rope that comes from your body is a river
Where the featherless birds of my dream are drinking
Queen of fever open in warmer arches those eyelids
The jewels that flower in your steps my well-beloved
Wake sister of dew let us wake to life

THREE POEMS





Gradiva passing

Like someone groping who hears the thunder
Of a remote past, she watches wreckage clash on the sand
And advances over the knife-edge dissecting the hive, that bonfire
Besieged by insects, among ruins other elytrons call.

Then beneath the ember she watches the past, those petrified horizons
And eagerly licks the almond's secret folds
While she listens to the desire, deep as the deepest burn, grow within her
To advance farther into the hieroglyph — now glowing with heat —
And to have no sackcloth, feathers or nails, but to be only lips:
From the real to the invisible the torrent falls endlessly, like flaming skin.

In the oasis

Through you I go river without margins, surface polished
In the desire of that perfect body whose leather
Tongues are sewn with the thorns of the shark we drag
Inland in dream between ritual poles
The storm builds its kingdom of desire.

You lift your neck seeking the mirrors that have dreamed you
Crackling with love the fever grows in acid papyrus
Where the mother-of-pearl opens its hinges and there is pollen in the wind
When the hawk descends and an eye leaps out like a cork
And the womb gnashes folding on itself, sweet fruit of teeth and nipples.

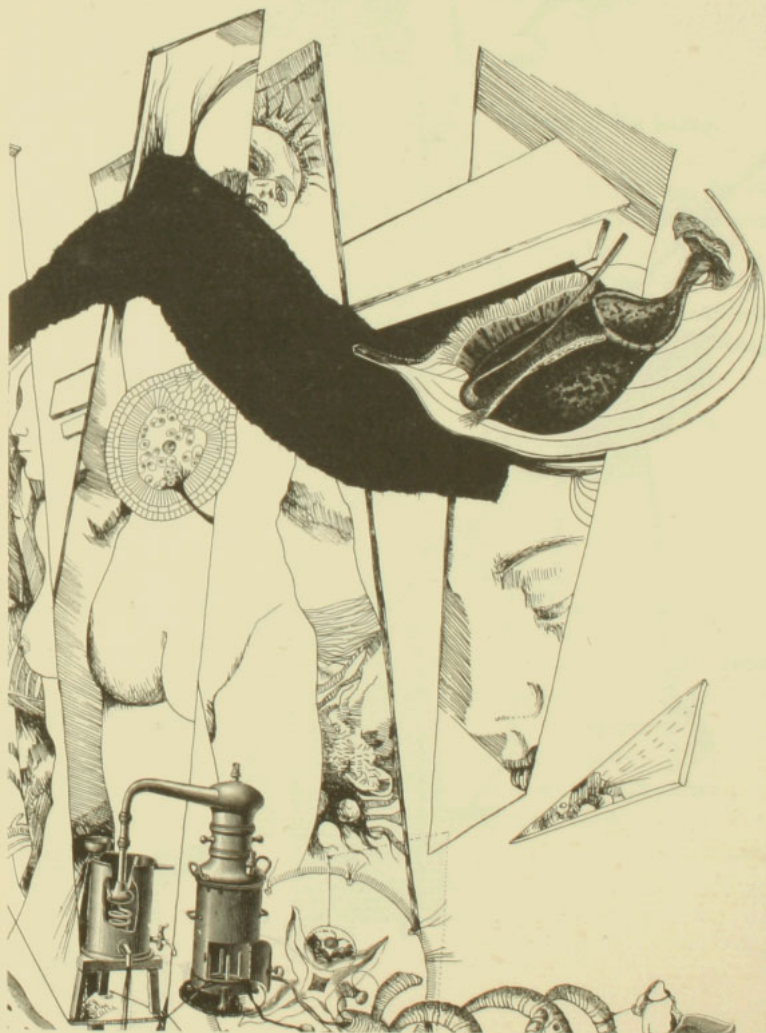
There are a thousand mouths calling you eyelids cloaking you
Clashing veins a skin of tides;
In the tattooed bone of insomnia is our delight
In the stone of weeping the scales of our talisman.

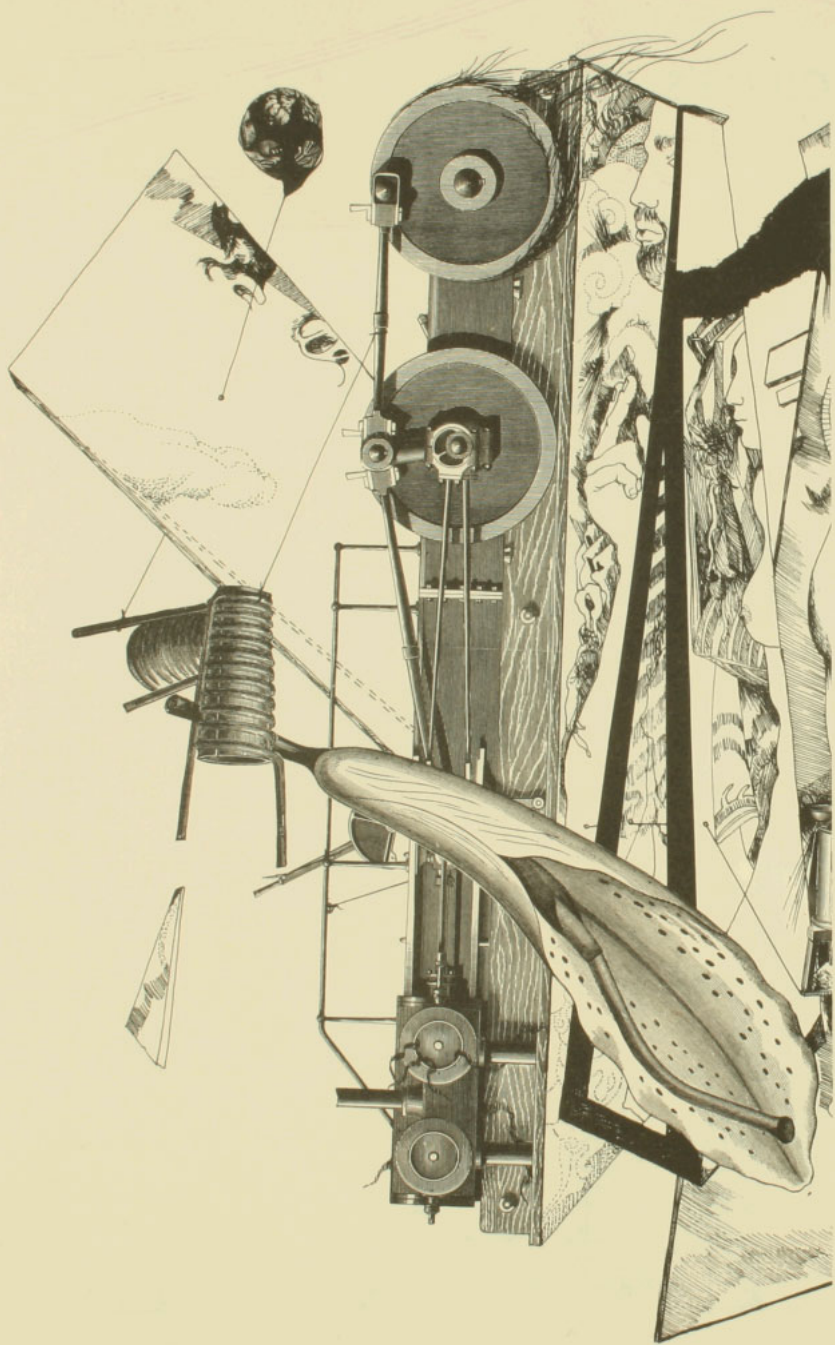
The snow and the wind

Isn't this the eternal fruit, the rind where a thousand forms
Are burning, a multiple thirst that gnaws at the marble?
I want to be that wind that howls on the plains
And knows no end; body after body the snow melts
The only visible flower, the thousand-petaled jewel that is warm
Only to those who love and is frost on the skin
Wheel of thirst pounding this one repeated question
A thousand times, on the drum the blood is dreaming.

Does echo raise its voice, the verb bow to an arbitrary memory
Of that caravan in feathers and flames
Spreading the mirage of your image carved in eternal stone
By the snow and the wind, you, authentic skin of nostalgia?

CIRCE'S MIRRORS





Circe's mirrors

*Because it wasn't Ulysses who saw Troy burn,
who heard the sirens' song and enjoyed
Circe's enchantments, but Homer, the blind one,
who understood that life is a deserted beach
where images multiply.*

It is painful to dream painful to emerge at the rim of the basket
Where the salt boils into bubbles those sunspots
That now without eyes — stitch after stitch — go on weaving the night
There in the slime their knives stretch they nail to a cross the boundaries
Tense as a drum the layers of geological residue crackle
The thunder halves them setting the lizard that lives there free
And it is stone that watches me from the depths of your almond eyes

I go with others down a dry river bed
That exhibits its conch shells multiplies its clatter
Let's reverse the light let's put our eyes on the anvil
They don't change they are only large waves of an invisible clock
Drifting in the ice of a cold thought

Then give me that polar night that burning root
On all four sides of the flood buzzes that memory
Of the swarm breaking up until it is only dust only flight
I unfold between sheets they stretch me on the rack and I don't awaken
Men with predatory faces priests who move burdened
Rattles rake my soul in the ashes now there are no sapphires
The stones fly off they migrate to the other side of light
Where the deceived one laughs while the great reclining Buddhas
Wear away in the wind that keeps dreaming them forth

Lethargic paradises full of gold feathers
That mechanical bird which sobs in the scream
Gliding on the keyboard of gramophone chords
Set fire to the whirlpool of her legs the silk
Breaking the mirrors of chance those embers
Hard as the pulp of coal those hinges
That the sea moves in the deep in its thirst for storms
And it explodes the blades into a knot of veins the incision
The wound where the ruby migrates toward the egg of the eye

Let's remember the sunny days when death
Softens us in its teeth let's enjoy each other edge by edge
Until the word emerges flower of bones and lava
Crackling loud like a hymn tearing
The cactus cobs — we are thirsty, we say —
But beneath the rain we don't know which is the shadow which
The sacrificial bird or the untouched perfume in its wake
Sleepwalking dancers who drank their death yet keep dancing
Cascades of feathers stained with blood

With my forehead I strike those doors the secret stairs
Where the body quivers with desire cracking the marble
The levers of the sun and the warm membranes of the temples
Where I set turquoises to remind myself of the blue reflection
With which the waves break against the cliffs of silence
Condemned animal I run I shout the rain tastes then of vinegar

I deal in dreams I converse with almonds
Of lukewarm movements that resemble in-pouring funnels
Hurricane-stricken vineyards covered with suns pecked by birds
Raised before you are the lips of the great volcanic oven
Enchanting animals you hide in the depths of a bush of mirrors

Dried-out nightingales behind the pane the edges
Wear down the scimitars gnawing the moon
Alone like a rock at the bottom of a cup
Beyond the forges of the wind so many lives broken

On a field of thornbush the seeds fall year after year
But no fruits grow except the thistle that spreads its scales

The road is narrow and I see only the dove of the haze
Image of affliction stirring little bones and in tears
Watching how the fish always bleeds in the deep
Bleeds eternally with its cut limbs a hand
Which clutches shrapnel like an egg in the flames

Now you are here mouth to mouth I speak with you I breathe you
I burn your clothes that the feast garlands with the ropes
Of my life knots as secret as the acid
On the moorings of a ship ready to cast off

Organize the concert of my age this dark disaster
I want to drink at a gulp that summer light
Which pulls me toward the depths of your eyes that sing
I am falling inward a seed into the pollen
Of your body wrapped in the ten thousand tulles
Of that perfect and ageless mummy oh powerful enchantress
Whose rancid perfume we steep in the total season
Until it reaches the purple cloud of lavender whose freshness
Is the true shape the transparent body of lightning

Rapidly the water sings in the mills
Time in ropes in lives that have passed
Tell me again that story of embers dragged by the tide
Which on the deserted shore are only my doubles lived out and now discarded

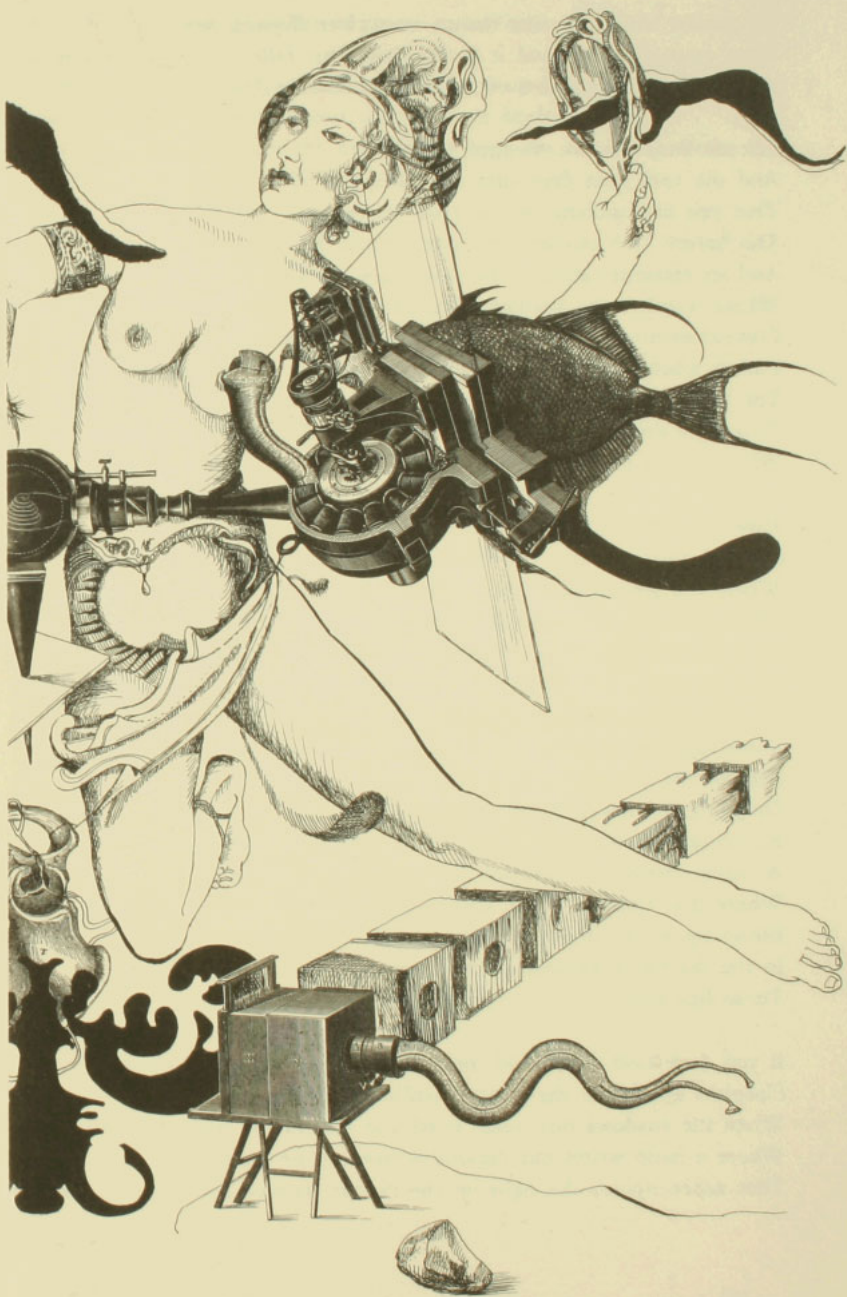
Pour the sugar on the live coals let the sparkle leap
From the honey in the bones of the bird coming
To nest to peck the grapes in your mouth the pomegranate
Where I burn my life away to find you oh octopus
Of my love you slice me you scatter my limbs
And I cannot shout and everything starts again in those sparkling
Instruments of love beneath the humming of honeycombs on fire

Because invisible beings haunt me the insects' vocabulary
Of love I weave tunics of a coolness whose bubbles
Open like petals to the blow of tides where I search for you
A thousand years ago when I engraved your name in the ashes where I call out
In loud voices and am visited by the echoes of that desert which speaks

From the Ark in flame I hear the lichen grow
Out of mercy this power to hear with another ear
The howl that comes from the deep when I confront my days
The string which flutters which twists on a gold plate
In the flames ten thousand paginated leaves
Crater in which I hear someone call and repeat
My name in a language I no longer remember

Pay for my bread with gold sparkle by sparkle we weave
Our dreams in falling bodies slaughtered on the oar
When they etch the laws on the anvil as on a thread
Words chirp illuminating broken objects
Taken from one life to another in the crates of that swarm
Of knots on the stair where we go down the coil that leaps
The way my life leaps and I awaken sliced into fragments

Day after day I choke on fire-damp greener
Than reason on the edges of muddy embankments
My heart stikes and strikes again upon the well
Where the spider has spun for a thousand years the illusory papyrus of reality
Marvellous din of the fall bandages of porcelain
Where vision is cut by knives as long as spears
On the field where men lie down to die
Buried pepper seeds in the sermon of flames
Without understanding why life circles in the huge cask
And the hoarfrost is scraped from the borders of the vertical dive
Of great birds of prey swift in the light when the claw
Of napalm falls and the smoke wraps the scene in its gauze
(It's better not to see, the promoters say, there is no need for concern)
But my eye is fixed on the storm and the burst



Of gunfire blinds me like flames on a river flowing down
From your shoulders and it is the blood that falls stops and dries in the dust
And rises again last bird of rancor and violence

Life the best nervure changes no more
And the verb goes deep into the volcano food of dreams
That you bite sobbing on the trail where
The hermit crab pushes the stone toward the last sound
And its stamens calculate the roads free of skin
Where wanders the shadow of ravens hangers of mourning
Crystals ending in feathers lines drawn in another
Dream where the hurricane breaks the sails of our world
The facades grow hollow showing the fur of the rat
That flees under the mental fire of an invisible resounding star
Whose wings circle your skull

How difficult the words become the thread that you twine
Around your neck as a vertebral and lucid knit
Where the geological torrent of ages links
Those veins in the stone of the heart buried for millenia
Made coal diamond that leaps gushing wrapped in flames
Like the salamander of your body among the weeds

Come alphabet of gold purify the days in the dung
Because the horse neighs strident under a sting
Dragging the heavy trumpets of the word
Battering-rams upon the anvil that forging of wings
As upon feathers are shaped the coarse scales of ice
Where that being of metal dwells that unique
Blister-fly whose invisible body unfolds
In the marble of endless plains those cascades
Those lips that open that repeat an eternal image

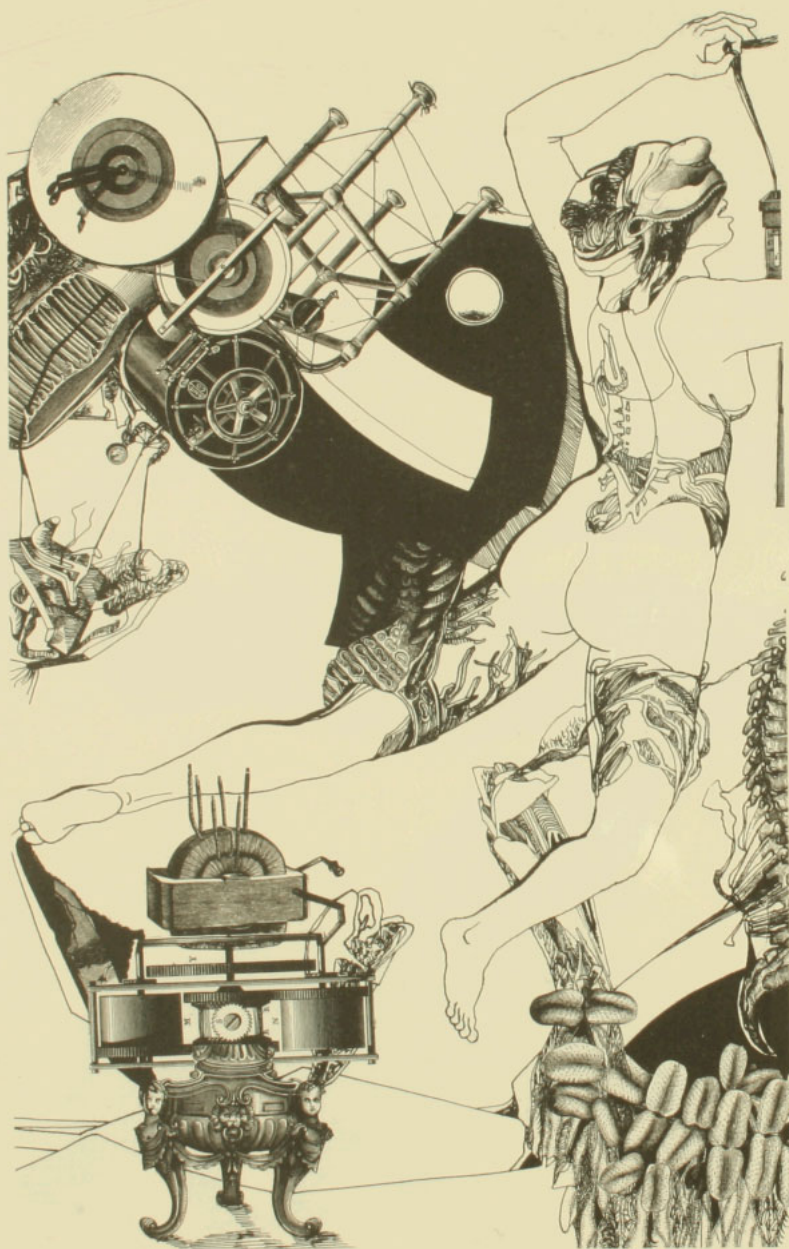
If you were God you would come on a litter with gilded handles
Sleepless eye where the poppy distills its compassion
When the shadows take color swell and talk to me from the wall
Where a hand writes our dreams woven on the frame
That superimposes the light on the canopy painted there in the deep

Has the deafening multiplier of crows arrived?

To exist is only to slide down into nothingness the head
Inlaid with lights does not rest on the stone keels split
Down-river again toward the beginning I hear the throbbing of the sea.

VISIONS AND WOUNDS





Visions and wounds

*It would serve us better not to hear the clamor
or to sew our eyelids shut in order to avoid
being blinded by vision, for man is only
smoking embers, a mirror bleeding at its root.*

Lock after lock body to body
The days were etched they opened the darnel like lips
The hoary mantises leapt from one age
To the next great pillagers of death
Threshers listen to me here is the beyond

Blowing sand of rancor unbraids the walls
Where thousands of hands try to seize your flanks
Hinges made of feathers knife-edges beneath the skin
I see her asking about hoarse images tinkling of rings
When the opal encrusts its message in the flesh
Wounds that move wheatfields in the wind

I dream bottles full of salt violins
Their glass thinning the flames of that carriage of leaves
Lost in the myrrh-markets astray they drag you like sheep
Toward the nest of mirrors you remember with a sudden scream you turn
To live on your dreams giddy fruit in the tiger's teeth

Invocation that the waves repeat stirring skin planted
In the days light me the bonfire made of rancid bones
Laid on the anvil that sphinx of fever

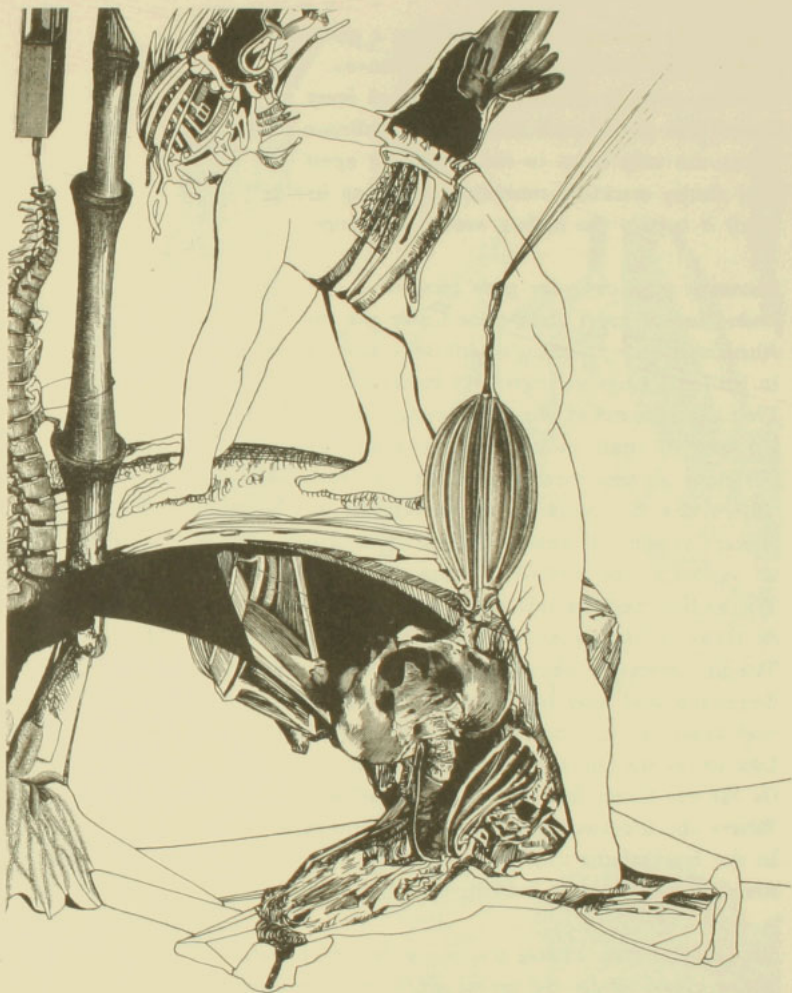
By the nails the grapes of tremor the red-hot nipples
Clocks of pleasure raise beehives demand the impossible
Migration of the swarm toward the eternal present

Raising both legs to the blue flame
The razor I seek a thousand years ago lost in your folds
Of lunar onion in order to stare at the precise geometrical curve
Of your breasts polished by the sea's din those tiny conch shells
Of hate-love love-hate dead schools of fish
On the beach where you pass by in a carriage of scales

I advance my voices my call is of one who plants his foot
In the depths of frozen seas the transparent scab
That scaffolding suspended into the unknown wall closed at times
Waves suddenly petrified in the age of the knife
We slice the infinite body of light we hear
The bees humming they remind me of a hymn
Of eyes unearthed and covered with knots in the frying pan
Where year after year my life goes on burning in brine
Fierce creature idol sitting on its bowels
Dreaming and devouring our own offspring

On the endless waiting of remote eras I hear the rain fall
And the water is not illusion but tears shed there in the years
Where the chagual star grows the burning cineraria
The verse of a thousand veins cut and in the incision the Word
Resonant and now limitless that invades the land of the deaf
Where rust is gold with its darts where my life bellows
Beneath the fans of hatred the ivory branches
Sounding now rootless bloodless in the weariness of injustice
The massacre of the pure ones as lukewarm as rice
Apportioned into anklets for her who is most beautiful into bowls
Of tears in that ochre stormy river of grief
Milky geography beating on the eyelid of the onion
As large as the heart that closed fist of torture

We hang skins on time in a parched desire for life
On a volcano's crest youth galloping on the black
Hair of eagles hurricanes bearing green bales
Tell me which hands move those ropes far above
Stirring the nocturnal soup into which the blood is raining
And in which I am only drifting timber



Beaten dragged to the pier the cretinizing
Labor that makes ink run the stain
That now no tide will wash away that incision in the glass
Where the graphite hatches the mirages on the hide
Of woolly sheep the days of your love cross my life

Thread me into the wheel heralding a great pale sun
Spread open your legs that end in hooves
Wisely carved by adoring wanderers of fever
Those who polish your multicolored delirium with stones
When the ruby turns in the throat cut open
And throbs crackling trembling deafening itself
Until it is only the hollow center of silence

Domestic gods everyday gods ground
Boiled in the great black river inside the eye
Also dusty with oblivion in any cave that blossoms
In leather thongs and strips of metal the fever
That reminds me of the warm range of your arms
Up which I climb purple octopus of madness
Whirling burning memories to the root those heavy petals
That a new Crusoe raises in the summer of the impossible
Solitary beaches of insanity where he is always alone
Or visited by the bird of delirium that returns every hundred years
The violins that the tide drags ceremonial hiss
Of terror in the ribbons tied at the end of a bone
The use of murex among idolatrous peoples rehearsing
Repeating that song of rocking to and fro in the mechanical
And beast-like armchair of torture they are merry until sorrow deaf
Like ice in the greatest desolation the dismantling
Of life the flame that is a name of the skin's other side
Where the prehistoric bird with different names talks
In the faces of the mirror that rindless eye
Bleeding and wasting itself in the cage of apples

We imagine that we are not like gills out of water
Those plains where the brutal giddy frenzied rooster prevails
With its leather rattle sticking to its breastbone
Of gnawed silver and strangling it since that other time
As adverse and bittersweet as the taste of dried figs in coastal villages
Where the blind see learning to sing
Raised to the tip of the word the eyeless sockets of Homer
On the extreme point of the reeds dyeing blue his litany of questions
Made to drink the mythical image of the wind without understanding



Whether it is preferable to see or to sew the eyelids over the eyes
Soothed by terror only the flies hum above our wounds

The origin of all song is the dream flowering
In the occult that honey of somnambulist women
Clock with sex of bells tolling in the windstorm
Secret name etched beneath the bone of the palate
In cardboard funnels the chalk drags its rancid inscriptions
Spinning on a skull of transparent and real numbers
Those vases of storms moving warm dice
On the rugged light of memory recollection of love

Come tell me about the seed of laughter you carry
Delirious toy made in the days hopes for assembling
Covered in ashes we hear the wound incurable mirage
Behind veils the bitterness on the pincers of all reality

You rise above the cart gearbox of vertebrae
As real as the passing of a shadow over the heart
Wings open in two in four in eight unfolded to the infinite
Walls which open to terror and the scream — what for?

Deliver me from your borders your angry edges
When I inquire like cattle at the end of the pass
Driving my animals in dream searching for an exit
On the other side of light biting that rind of reality
Our food the acorn in the pig's snout
When I think of the Prodigal and I remember that old etching
With a tiny window opening toward childhood intact eternal
And then the father taking him in under the cape because he went beyond
All renunciation which is the act of remaining in this death
Where everything moves with the speed of our acts
And each one pulls a string from the concave mirror and hears

Dark drums on which we beat and it was my heart
My old heart suddenly a thousand years old
Or ten thousand more than all its throbs

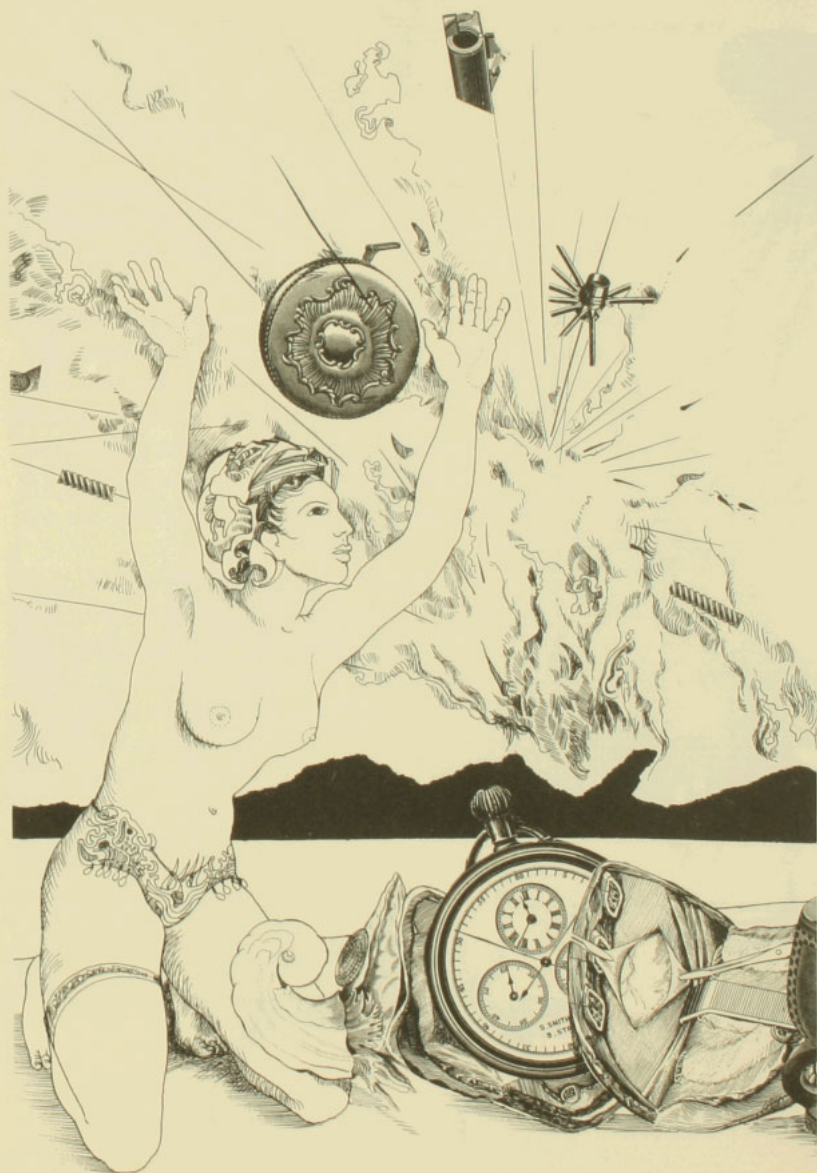
Like cranes leaping over the granary in flame
Witchcraft of your skin tormented tormentress
Idol of a thousand faces repeated multiplied
In the light of the diamond you fall and rise in perfect spheres
Of geometrical hymns that spread life
In multitudinous branches surrounding the source
That cavalcade of insects on horseback in death
Or the terror under the iridescent hair of the raccoon denuding
The beautiful one of all her thorns under the cathedral
Of ice that quietude the nostalgia for what is yet to come

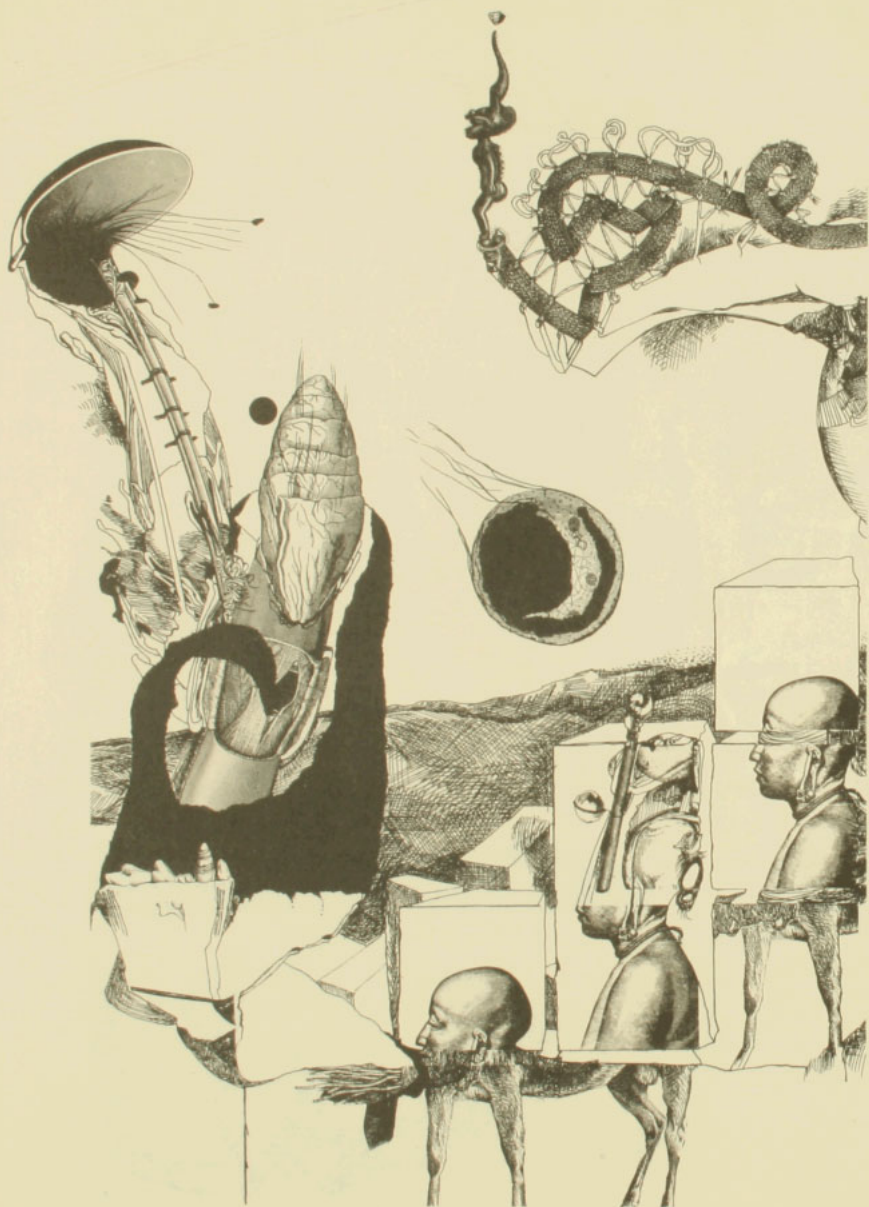
We ask for other lights when close to us
Water runs until it makes our eyes close in tears
Life flows like ink our blood goes to the sea
To God's reverse to the vinegar when you hear
The great bell tolling in this age of reptiles
Served at the table as claws in lemon sauce
Little by little they move under the burning light of opals

The last illusion is it in you rain which lights
That womanly yeast as fragile as reality and like it
Only a noise of petals taken by the wind
To the other shore? Who is waiting for us there?

Are words only smoking embers?

WANDERERS IN THE MANDALA





Wanderers in the mandala

*Where is the place of light,
Since the one that gives life is concealed from us?*

Pre-columbian poetry

Days prolong themselves upon a well's stone mouth of ants
Lightning accumulates in the downfall of the mastiff and you finally remember
That no one can return and you sharpen knives under the tents
When the day stretches in strips of skin
Conceal yourself to laugh to swallow within your lips
That ferocious gesture the striking of irons upon the sea
Now that the tomb and the wilted cracking of echoes
Seems to be the final season the rain of pebbles roaring
And falling toward that hungry and devouring river from beat
To beat the distant splendor of bonfires and the barking of dogs
On the gallows the day dangles in its cage of horror

Is it this they call wheel? Pestilence! Call it
Visitation of crows and the sleepers come
As if surging from carnivorous furniture at the time of the night hunt
Carrying behind them the enormous black tail of the dead fish
The whale that the sea brought to my life's beach
And we burned it day after day like fleas under the rancid stench of the oil
And in our insanity and wickedness we blasted it with dynamite and the stench
Spread over the cliffs finally its heavy stumps exploded
And like sour fruits the pieces fell upon us

What did we get from it all? Only wretchedness under the face smeared

With shame in a long infinite waiting for the wind to change
And sweep away at last so much carrion so much rotten blubber
And the remainders vomited by the sea we dragged inland
The animals resisted it but the engine knows neither asphalt
Nor fear and its soul answers only to exact emptiness

And so like someone hunting by night protected by darkness
We went dragging the rotten bones but our nights
Were blacker still under the tarred canvas because we had
Seen chance and we knew its eyes were on us
And hastily like criminals we tried to bury evil
Under the soil removed by the tempest there where drunkards
Sing against their fate we left the great vertebrae and returned

But the noise of the water kept breaking in the gully of the eye
Within the ear. This I said and now I repeat it
In a game of dice: Here are we prisoners of Chance?
Small children we cry in darkness moving our rags
In the dust my God, what cruel loneliness! what bitterness
To live with that memory with all memory of love embalmed
If we cannot cross the canal the boundary and finally see
Eye to eye the dreamed presence the blue hilt holding
The leaves of reality and the thousand simultaneous realities

Unison like a howl or an interminable blaze
That noise of needles whistling of boilers at the point of bursting

But they who were mine turned their horses back not for grass or forage
But for anxiety scrutinizing the heavens advancing in the open folds
Of the south where the wall of mist rises
Cascade of tears running surrounding us in desperation
Among the linden branches the invisible wind

Thirst throbs and panting seaweed of dream covers us
Blue images on the altar of felt the bodies reaped
Abandoned in the night lunar stones forgotten
In another life another conjugation when the line of verse

Is read from above downwards like a knife-edge through sacrificial bodies
Or is repeated ceremonially in ropes knotted under the earth

Then the boatman chews the dry morsel and whistles
On the jetty where the final waters break
Because we are only images painted on paper
Smudged dirty and carried by the wind to the bonfire
And someone takes the oars then in the night
Cursing spitting into his palms because ours is
This fate and not other different dreams

And we must cross the water the darkness and the fog
When the passengers huddle to embark like frightened animals
Whirled by hoarse bugles against barbed wire
And someone who still wants to come aboard is thrust into the waters
And shouts in the stillness and with his hands clutches the bleeding oar
That strikes him.

Go back! Go back!

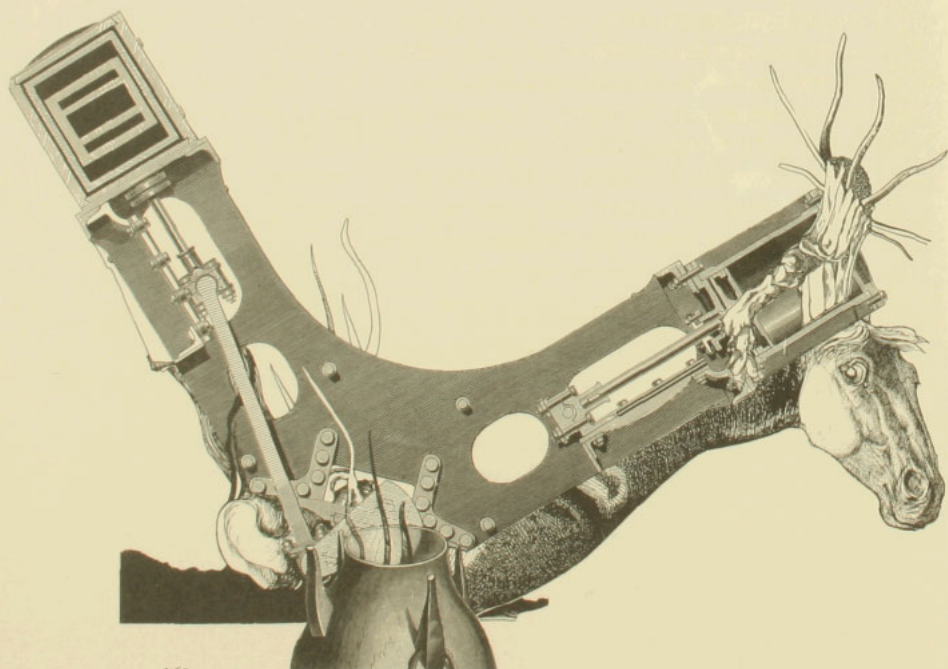
Another world is superimposed on yours other images
On the present ones and we are rocking in the water
Our memory is pared the earth is worn away by salt
(Land of the howling wind they called it) but our minds
Are closed and our life is the door of a tomb
Through which we go down forward into the unknown
Black flow where we hear the gadfly's noise
And time passes over our bones creases the skin
Changes the sheen of the eye

You pulsing guitar stop time

Tell me of those who dream under the dust
Of syllables that double and echoes that migrate from this world to the other
Describe for me the interior of the forehead where fever
Kindles its red crest and climbs like a sparkling rocket
Ready to fall in the dead of night we cross a lake

Which is her eyes the black lignite of the stream her thoughts
The thundering call of cascades her heart leather
Bellows that throb like a strange invisible clock of eternities
Let me only remember now to be that flower
Of silence between two great hecatombs

Why do you laugh sphinx why does the echo break on the stairs
And the glass on the harpoon of your gaze not allow man to see
How in the great scab the scar is braided with burnt blood?
White and black and purple we go forward
Another step and already we are in the bonfire kindled
For so many centuries because I know that you are and I am nothing
But the smoke of tinder with which we are blinded in torment
Dogs worse than dogs under the bishop's staff
The sentence flutters. Burn them! and the tar



That now goes by another name or the hospital for sickening
The mind of the dispossessed and the State that is God
Beyond a doubt and if you don't believe the cobra's poison will make you believe

How long will we remain on the same rack
On the same edges of pain growing perforating
The heart's tissues because man is so fragile
That he does not resist scattering his bones etching
The sentence on his back as with Kafka's old
Machine where the eternal prisoner vomits the acrid pap
Of torment the portentous machine multiplied
To the third degree and the blood drying on the waterfalls of thirst

First only form of love broken
With eyes turning toward the cracks of the moon
With razor thrusts we go cane-cutters we strike with the edge
Have mercy have mercy my head aches aches
The interior of the cranial form a bomb ready to explode
To be fire once and for all whirlpool of flames
Scattering the Word in a new religion of fierce automatic love
Knives of poetry in the spiral of lava when the rain
Stealthy serpent of heat rises in a shudder
Of green light and falls on the rope tied to the cudgel that strikes it

Not by water by fire we are consumed and we bury
Our Fathers under the embers inscription in sunspots
The feet stumble among the idols and bones but the mind does not rest
When beneath the royal blue rainbow the rain lodges
Beginning and end of all hollow centers the blood intermingles
With flour that falls from the side of the *huaco-lady*

Mistress of a hundred rivers they call her lady of a hundred rivers is her name
You the giver of tears listen to us six feet under
The earth we call you we come singing we come
Clamoring from forever the seeds of the poem beneath our tongue

Make the verse grow macerated by the teeth chewed
By injustice the grinding spider in that center
From which the light springs. We listen for you in the dark
We have waited for you for a thousand years, where are we now?

Our heart grows

Like rivers flung downhill giving birth to the phantom
That you call life but in the immense spiral we are only
Wanderers passing through the signs the glaciation of memories
Where your images are superimposed on the papyrus of solitude

Bewitchment of the falcon a bird of metal pecking in vertigo
Rust of the downfall when the bones split from top to bottom
That bristling edge of lamps in the vital delta of illusion
The cold and total peace of that new waiting where the wheat
Starts to gush again breaking the thousand cubes covered with stamens
And the being of a thousand eyes the one that gives birth to images rehearses again
The forgotten song of a sun warm body heaved up in ridges
By the foam that even beneath the shadow will go on dreaming us.

Chronology and bibliography of Ludwig Zeller

- 1927: Born in Rio Loa, Chile.
- 1949-56: Translations into Spanish of German Romantic texts (by Hölderlin, Novalis, Jean Paul, Arnim, etc.) are published in a series of pamphlets spanning eight years.
- 1950: *The Great Elegies* of Hölderlin (Spanish translation by Ludwig and Wera Zeller), Editorial Universitaria, Santiago, Chile.
- 1951: Delivers series of lectures, "Historical Development of German Romanticism," Salon de Honor, University of Chile, Santiago.
- 1952-67: Advisor for the Plastic Arts, Chilean Ministry of Education; in this position Zeller was curator of the Ministry's art gallery and organized over 200 exhibitions.
- 1952-57: Writing and individual publication of poems collected in *Exodus and other solitudes*, publication of the National School of Graphic Arts, Santiago, Chile, 1957; 80 pp.
- 1957-61: Writing and individual publication of poems collected in *From the source*, publication of the National School of Graphic Arts, Santiago, Chile, 1961; 48 pp.
- 1962-64: Consultant on verbal disorientation in schizophrenics, and on verbal communication problems between physicians and patients, for the Center for Medical Anthropology, School of Medicine, University of Chile, Santiago.
- Undergoes three-year experiment in "guided waking dream" under the direction of Dr. Helena Hoffmann.
- 1964: *To Aloyse*, publication of the National School of Graphic Arts, Santiago, Chile; book in form of folded five-foot strip of red paper. (This poem, written to be printed on a Moebius strip, is one of five related pieces composed in 1963; four are lost.)
- Writing of poems included in *The rules of the game* (1968).

1964-70: Eight one-man exhibitions of collage and paper cut-outs in Santiago, and one of collage in Buenos Aires (1967).

1968: Founding of Casa de la Luna poetry journal, followed shortly by establishment of Casa de la Luna as a gallery, coffee house and conference center.

The rules of the game, Ediciones Casa de la Luna, Santiago, Chile; 72 pp., 11 illustrations by Susana Wald; quadrilingual edition in Spanish, German, English and French.

The pleasures of Oedipus, Editorial Universitaria, Santiago, Chile; 72 pp., book of interrelated poetry and collage.

1969: *Seven calligrams cut out in paper*, Ediciones Casa de la Luna, produced at Estudios Norte, Santiago, Chile; portfolio of serigraphics.

1970: Organizer of "Surrealism in Chile," landmark Chilean event/exhibition of painting, publications, objects, performances, clothing, etc.; broadcast live. Writes and produces *Surrealism in Chile* exhibition catalogue.

1971: Moves to Toronto, Canada.

1971-79: Twenty-seven exhibitions of collage (one-man and group shows) in Canada, the United States and Europe.

1972: *Woman in dream*, privately published in cassette tape form, Spanish with English translation, cassette enclosed in ceramic object/box.

1975: *Dream Woman* (translation of *Woman in dream* by George Hitchcock and Fernando Alegria), Kayak Press, Santa Cruz, California.

Founding of Oasis Publications, Toronto. First publication: *Woman in dream* (Estela Lorca translation).

1975-79: Under Oasis imprint, publishes twenty-one books (including seven self-publications) and fourteen art exhibition catalogues.

1976: *To Aloyse* (second edition, Spanish only), Oasis Publications, Toronto.

When the animal rises from the deep the head explodes, Mosaic Press/Valley Editions, Oakville, Ontario, Canada; 144 pp.; in Spanish, English and French, illustrated with collages by the author.

- 1977: *Mirages*, Oasis Publications, Toronto; forty-page boxed portfolio of twelve mirages (collage with ink drawing) done in collaboration with Susana Wald.

Three lithographs/three poems, Oasis Publications, Toronto; portfolio.

- 1978: *Circe's mirrors, Visions and wounds, Wanderers in the Mandala*, Oasis Publications, Toronto; three long poems published in Spanish and English in the form of six separate twenty-page booklets; also boxed in transparent cover as a single book; illustrated with Zeller-Wald mirages.

- 1979: *Alphacollage*, The Porcupine's Quill, Inc. Erin, Ontario; 80 pp.; collage alphabet and introductory text.

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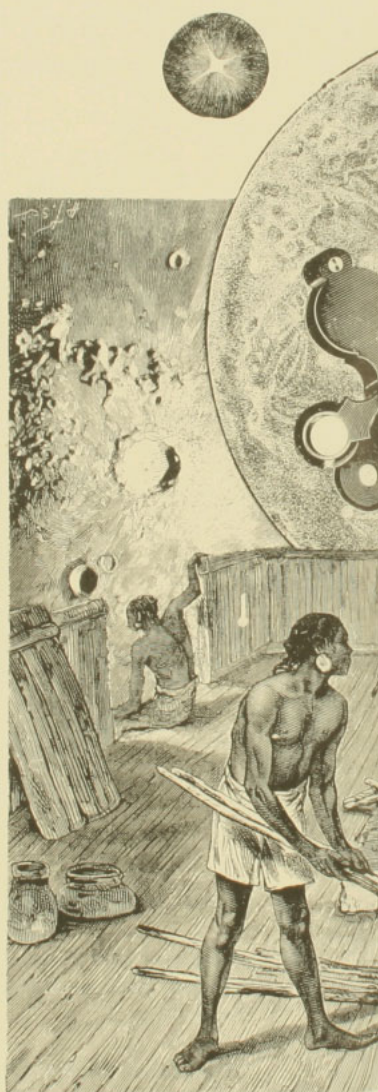
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