

I
MIDNIGHT

Certainly a presence of Midnight subsists. The hour did not disappear through a mirror, did not bury itself in curtains, evoking a furnishing by its vacant sonority. I remember that its gold was going to feign in its absence a null jewel of reverie, rich and useless survival, except that upon the marine and stellar complexity of a worked gold the infinite chance of conjunctions was to be read.

A revealer of midnight, it had never yet indicated such a conjuncture, for here is the single hour it had created; and so from the Infinite constellations and the sea are separated, remaining reciprocal nothingness on the outside, to permit its essence, united to the hour, to form the absolute present of things.

And the presence of Midnight remains in the vision a room of time where the mysterious furnishing arrests a vague quiver of thought, a luminous break of the return of its waves and their first expansion, while (within a moving limit) the former place of the hour's fall is immobilized in a narcotic calm of the pure self long dreamed-of; but whose time is resolved in draperies upon which is arrested the quivering now subsided, adding its splendor to those draperies in a forgetfulness, like hair languishing about the host's face, lit with mystery, with eyes null like the mirror, stripped of any meaning other than presence.

It is the pure dream of a Midnight disappeared into itself, whose Brightness recognized and alone remaining in the center of its accomplishment plunged into the shadow, sums up its sterility on the pallor of an open book presented by the table; ordinary page and setting of the Night except that the silence of an antique utterance it proffered still subsists, in which this returned Midnight evokes its shadow, finite and null, with these words: I was the hour which is to make me pure.

Long since dead, a dead idea contemplates itself as idea by the brightness of the chimera in which its dream agonized, and recognizes itself in the immemorial vacant gesture with which it

invites itself, in order to finish the antagonism of this polar dream, with both a chimerical clarity and the re-closed text, to go toward the miscarried Chaos of the dark and the utterance which absolved Midnight, and surrender to them.

Useless, from the accomplished furnishing which will pile up in the darkness like draperies, already made heavy in a permanent form while in a virtual glimmer, produced by its own apparition in the mirroring of obscurity, the pure fire of the clock diamond glitters, the sole survivor and jewel of eternal Night: the hour is formulated in this echo, at the threshold of the panels opened by its act of Night: "Farewell, night that I was, your own sepulchre, but which, the shadow surviving, will metamorphose into Eternity."

II
HE LEAVES THE ROOM AND IS LOST ON
THE STAIRS
(instead of sliding down the banister)

The shadow having disappeared into obscurity, Night remained with a dubious perception of a pendulum about to be extinguished and expire there; but by whatever gleams and is about to be extinguished and expire, night sees itself bearing the pendulum; doubtless it was thus the source of the detected beating, whose sounds, complete and ever bare, fell into its past.

If on one hand the ambiguity ceased, on the other a motion persists, marked as more pressing by a double blow which no longer attains its notion or not yet, and whose present brushing, such as must have taken place, confusingly fills the ambiguity or its cessation: as if the complete fall, which the single shock of the tomb doors has been, did not stifle the guest irremediably; and in the uncertainty the affirmative cast probably caused, prolonged by the reminiscence of the sepulchral emptiness of the blow in which clarity is confused, comes a vision of the interrupted fall of the panels, as if it were one who, endowed with the suspended motion, turned it back on itself in the resulting

dizzy spiral; and the spiral would have escaped indefinitely if some progressive oppression - a gradual weight of what was not realized although it had on the whole been explicated - had not implied the certain escape in an interval, the cessation; when at the moment the blow expired and oppression and escape were mixed, nothing was heard further: except for the beating of absurd wings of some terrified denizen of the night, startled in his heavy slumber by the brightness, and prolonging his indefinite flight.

For, the gasping which had grazed this place was not some last doubt of the self, which by chance stirred its wings in passing, but the familiar and continual friction of a superior age, of which many a genius was careful to gather all the secular dust into his sepulchre in order to look into a clean self, and so that no suspicion might climb back up the spidery thread - so that the last shadow might look into its proper self and recognize itself in the crowd of its apparitions understood by the nacreous star of their nebulous science held in one hand and by the golden sparkle of the heraldic clasp of their volume held in the other; the volume of their nights; such at present, seeing themselves so that it might see itself, the Shadow, pure and having its last form that it treads on left lying down behind, and then before it in a well, the stretch of layers of shadow, returned to pure night, of all its similar nights, its layers forever separated from them and which they probably did not recognize - which is no other, I know, than the absurd prolongation of the sound of the sepulchral door closing, of which the entrance to this well is reminiscent.

This time, no more doubt; certainty is reflected in the evidence: in vain, the memory of a lie whose consequence was itself, did the vision of a place appear again, such for example as the awaited interval was to be, having in fact for lateral walls the double opposition of the panels, and for the front and back, **the opening of a void doubt echoed by the prolongation of the noise** of the panels, where the plumage took flight, and doubled by the am-biguity explored, the perfect symmetry of the foreseen deductions denied its reality; no possible mistaking, it was the

consciousness of self (for which even the absurd itself was to serve as a place) - succeeding.

It is present equally in one and the other surface of the shining and secular walls, retaining only in one hand the opal brightness of its knowledge, and in the other its volume, the volume of its nights, now closed, of the past and the future which the pure shadow, having attained the pinnacle of myself, perfectly dominates, arid finished, outside themselves. While before and behind is prolonged the explored lie of the infinite, the darkness of all my apparitions gathered together now that time has ceased and divides them no longer, fallen back into a massive, heavy slumber (at the time of the sound first heard), in the void of which I hear the pulsations of my own heart.

I do not like this sound: this perfection of my cer-tainty bothers me; all is too clear, the clarity reveals a desire to escape. Everything gleams too brightly; I should like to return to my anterior uncreated Shadow, and through thought to rid myself of the disguise which necessity has imposed upon me, inhabiting the heart of this race (which I hear beating here) the sole remains of ambiguity.

(whispering) Indeed, the first spiral to come reflects the preceding one: the same rhythmical sound-and the same brushing; but since everything has ended, nothing can any longer frighten me; my fright which had made the first move in the form of a bird is far distant: has it not been replaced by the apparition of what I had been? and which I like to reflect now, in order to disengage my dream from that costume?

Was not this scansion the sound of the progress of my character which now continues it in the spiral, and this brushing the brushing of its duality? Finally, it is not the hairy stomach of some inferior guest within me, whose doubt the light struck and who fled with a flutter, but the velvet bust of an anterior race the light annoyed and who breathes in a stifling air, of a character whose thought has no consciousness of itself, of my last figure, separated from its person by a spider's ruff and who does not know itself; so, now that his duality is forever separated and I

do not even hear any longer through him the sound of his progress, I shall forget myself through him, and dissolve myself in me.

Its impact becomes unsteady once more as it did before having had the perception of itself: it was the scansion of my measure whose memory came back to me prolonged both by the sound in the temporal corridor of the door to my sepulchre, and by hallucination: and just as it was really closed, even so it must open now for my dream to have been explained to itself.

The hour of my leaving has sounded, the purity of the mirror will be established, without this character, a vision of myself - but he will take away the light - the night! Over the vacant furniture, the Dream has agonized in this glass flask, purity which encloses the substance of Nothingness.

III IGITUR'S LIFE (Schema)

Listen, my race, before snuffing out my candle - to the account of my life I have to render you - Here: neurosis, boredom (or Absolute!).

I have always lived with my soul fixed upon the clock. Indeed, I have tried for the time it sounded to remain present in the room, its becoming for me both nourish-ment and life - I made the curtains thicker, and as I was obliged to be seated across from this mirror, in order not to doubt myself, I gathered up preciously the least atoms of time in cloths ceaselessly made thicker. - The clock has often done me a great deal of good.

(That before his Idea had been completed? Indeed, Igitur was projected out of time by his race.)

Here in sum is Igitur, since his Idea has been completed: - The understood past of his race weighing on him in the feeling of the finite, the hour of the clock precipitating this boredom in a heavy and stifling time, and his expectation of future accomplishment, all form pure time, or boredom, rendered unstable by the malady of ideality: this boredom, not able to be, becomes,

as in the beginning, its elements once more all the furniture closed up and full of its secret; and Igitur, as if menaced by the torture of being eternal of which he has a vague foretaste, seeking himself in the mirror become boredom, and seeing himself vague and about to disappear as if he were going to fade away into time, then evoking himself; then at the moment when he has recovered from all this boredom of time, seeing the mirror horribly null, seeing himself there surrounded by a rarefaction, an absence of atmosphere, and the furniture twisting its chimeras in the void, and the curtains invisibly trembling, uneasy; then, he opens the furniture to free its mystery, the unknown, its memory, its silence, human faculties and impressions - and when he believes he has become himself once more, his soul fixedly contemplates the clock, whose hour disappears through the mirror spilling over it or goes to burrow in the curtains, overflowing, not even leaving him to the boredom he implores and dreams of. Impotent even of boredom.

He separates from time indefinite, and he is! And this time will not stop, as formerly, with a grey shiver on the massive ebonyes whose chimeras closed their lips with a wearying feeling of the finite, and no longer mixing with the saturated and weighted draperies, will not fill a mirror with boredom, where suffocating and stifled, I begged a vague figure disappearing completely, fused with the glass, to remain; until finally, when my hands were removed an instant from my eyes where I had placed them so as not to see it disappear in a frightful sensation of eternity in which the room seemed to expire, it appeared to me like the horror of that eternity. And when I opened my eyes in the depths of this mirror, I saw the character of horror, the phantom of horror absorb little by little what remained in the mirror of feeling and pain, nourishing his horror with the supreme shivers of chi-meras and the instability of the draperies, and form him-self making the mirror rarer until it reached an unbe-lievable purity - until he was detached, permanent, from the mirror absolutely pure, as if frozen - until at last

the furniture, its monsters having succumbed with their convulsive rings, lay dead in a severe and isolated posture, projecting their hard lines in an absence of atmosphere, the monsters rigid in their last struggle, and the curtains fell, their unrest quieted, in a position they were to hold forever.

IV THE DICE THROW IN THE TOMB (Schema)

Briefly, in an act where chance is in play, chance always accomplishes its own Idea in affirming or negating itself. Confronting its existence, negation and affirmation fail. It contains the Absurd - implies it, but in the latent state and prevents it from existing; which permits the Infinite to be. The Dice Horn is the unicorn's Horn - the one-horned.

But the Act accomplishes itself. Then his self is manifested in his reassuming Madness, admitting the act, and voluntarily reassuming the Idea as Idea, and the Act (whatever the power that guided it) having denied chance, he concludes from it that the Idea has been necessary.

-Then he conceives that there is, to be sure, madness in admitting it absolutely: but at the same time he can say that since through this madness, chance was denied, this madness was necessary. For what? (No one knows that he is isolated from humanity.)

All there is to it is that his race has been pure: that it took from the Absolute its purity to be so, and to leave of it only an Idea itself ending up in Necessity; and that as for the Act, it is perfectly absurd except as movement (personal) returned to the Infinite: but that the Infinite is at last fixed.

Igitur simply shakes the dice - a motion, before going to rejoin the ashes, the atoms of his ancestors: the movement, which is in him, is absolved. It is understood what its ambiguity means.

He closes the book - snuffs out the candle - with his breath which contained chance: and, folding his arms, lies down on the ashes of his ancestors.

Folding his arms - the Absolute has disappeared, in the purity of his race (for that is necessary, because the sound ceases).

Immemorial race, whose burdensome time has fallen, excessive, into the past, and which race, full of chance, has lived, then, only on its future. - This chance denied with the aid of an anachronism, a character as a supreme incarnation of this race - who feels in himself, thanks to the absurd, the existence of the Absolute, has only forgotten human speech within the book of spells, and the thought in a luminary one announcing this negation of chance, the other clarifying the dream where it has arrived. The character who, believing in the existence of the sole Absolute, imagines he is everywhere in a dream (he acts from the Absolute point of view), finds the act useless, for there is and is not chance - he reduces chance to the Infinite - which, he says, must exist somewhere.

V

HE LIES DOWN IN THE TOMB

Upon the ashes of stars, the undivided ones of the family, lay the poor character, after having drunk the drop of nothingness lacking to the sea. (The empty flask, madness, all that remains of the castle?) Nothingness having departed, there remains the castle of purity.

- Translated by Mary Ann Caws