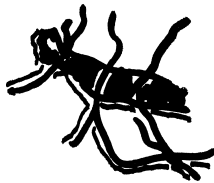


*To Micheline Phan Kim Chi,
first witness, preferred to any other,
first corroboration.
I saw her eyes liven, receptive to the signs.
The journey could continue.*





As for living creatures and things, who has not wished to get a fuller, better, different grasp on them, not with words, not with phonemes or onomatopoeias, but with graphic signs?

Who has not wished at some point to create an abecedarium, a bestiary, or even an entire vocabulary, from which the verbal would be entirely excluded?

What if I tried my hand at it once again, opening myself in earnest to the creatures of the seen world?

Start with the bestiary. And movement too, for I loathe immobility – or at the least get at motion within immobility. And yet keep it simple, manageable, easy to manipulate, for I'm also thinking of fabricating a language . . .

I wasn't there yet. I had no idea just how far away I was from it and that I would have to give up on the whole idea. Just with the vocabulary alone, there was too much to deal with. The bestiary was coming along though. All sorts of animals were turning up. In no particular order, haphazardly, cutting school. Despite the plentifulness of these initial drawings, problems were arising, difficulties.

Things would slow down, mysteriously go into retreat, there would be stoppages of unknown origin, unexpected slammings on of the brakes when it came to familiar animals observed time and again in nearby or distant locales.

The obstruction would grow even more pronounced when it involved local animals, dogs, crows or sparrows seen ten or a hundred times a day. Cats and horses likewise eluded reconstitution.

If I forced things, the resistance would reach such a pitch that certain animals, interrupted by a huge hole, lacked even a half a body to show. An unbelievably absurd accident depriving them of their basics.

I was more at ease with wildlife species, but without realizing soon enough that I often kept on reverting to the same animal type.

These unwarranted reversions to the same zoological species proved to be just as enigmatic to me as were my aversions to other species.

One has made an inner choice of which one was not aware, which does not coincide with our known predilections. As to our vision of creatures and things, what we see is just as much a matter of exclusion as inclusion.

There are no innocent gazes.

In my state of inner agitation, certain creatures were turning up without having been asked, others were obstinately refusing to appear. I could not annex them by drawing.

Insects, especially insects, were happening to me. Intrigued, I became more and more of a bug. Even though I thought they had completely slipped my mind.

Distant by nature, here I was forcing myself to allow myself closer and I was surprising myself, at times more focused on getting a grasp, at times more recalcitrant.

My various efforts to maintain a grasp, to seize on things, soon aggravated my oppositional bent and the more I was determined to draw an animal the more I would refuse it. My desire to “render” these animals worked at cross-purposes with a whole series of refusals – refusal of representation, refusal to make them resemble, refusal to submit myself to resemblance in general, refusal to see myself as alike. At another level, initially unnoticed, there was my old refusal to “assimilate.” A mounting vehemence, all these graspings after, all these impulses to capture, alternating with all these rejections. Without knowing it, without even noticing it for a long time, I was returning back to the primordial split act of “yes” vs. “no,” of acceptance vs. the horror of acceptance. I gave myself over now to one, now to the other, and the animals that were chaotically submitted to my conflicted representation were traversed by sudden cross-outs – like grand negations. Which in reality they were.

Images at once displayed, negated and erased.
Weren't they more complete this way, more satisfying?
That's how it felt to me.
My projected nomenclature was falling by the wayside, into oblivion.

Wanting as I did to grasp these insects, *grasping had become the main thing*, grasping being something that does not come naturally to me (a late acquisition), grasping having as its contrary "contemplation," disinclination, an attitude of reserve.

In the end, GRASPING was nothing more than a dynamic, an *abstract* kind of grasp, or tending toward that.

