

This mental mucus is driving me mad. The Japanese blow their noses on paper too. “Diary of life,” day by day; day-to-day life. Poor soul, you’ll end up speaking journalese. You already do now and then.

An encouraging little tango:

“Go on, don’t stop,
Just keep playing along—,”

And this line by Eduardo Lozano:

My heart, imitation moss.

What they tend to call “classic” is always a product achieved by the sacrifice of truth to beauty.

Waiting for a bus at Chacarita. Storm brewing, low sky over the cemetery. Keeping my place in line I spend a long time staring at the tops of the trees that lead up to the peristyle. A continuous line of crowns (deepened and purified by the gray sky), waving

gracefully as if at the edge of the clouds. High up on the peristyle, the enormous angel hovers among the silhouettes of trees; it looks as though he's resting his foot on the leaves. A second of perfect beauty, then shouts, shoves, climb onto the bus, move further back, fifteen or ten centavo ticket, life. Farewell, my beauties, one day I'll rest snugly wrapped in that delicate lace, which will protect me evermore from buses.

(The gentle idiocy of some sentences. Verbal sighs.)

I'm only interested in the primitives and my contemporaries, Simone Martini and Gischia, Guillaume de Machault and Alban Berg. From the sixteenth century to the nineteenth I have the impression that art was neither alive enough nor dead enough.

Rimbaud, "ambulatory" poet. Fatigue: stimulus for revelation to jump up and settle in. Idleness begets idleness, and so on. Yesterday I was going home on the 168, squeezing in among people and odors. Suddenly the visitation, the piercing happiness. *To have the wordless poem*, entirely formulated and waiting; to know it. Without a theme, without words, *and knowing it*. A single pure line:

Saintly, like a swallow.

But so rarely—Since the evening I heard that line (and another two the following morning), a deaf opacity, feeling myself full of

vivid matter, engaged with itself, satisfied pondering. I vegetate, I come and go, take refuge in reading. Eliot, Chandler, Colette, Priestly, Connolly . . .

I listen to Laurence Olivier's recording of *Henry V* again. It's always time to die, but these discs with their timeless spiral hold an instant of eternity. It's not in the words, it's not exactly Will or Larry, or the felicity Walton adds with his music. The eternal takes form through man's action. It was all necessary, and that a vocation should launch Olivier, and behind him England, cinema, the moment, the war, the atmosphere

that did affright the air at Agincourt—

And suddenly, as in the conception, or in the meeting of two words that ignite in poetry, the eternal: an attitude, a gesture, *and he babbled o'er green fields*, and the Constable, and that boy murmuring: some crying, *some swearing, some calling for a surgeon—* Everything met; the seven colors provide the whiteness that obliterates them in perfection, in *uncolored color, Eternity*.

When you're not an intellectual, the inconsistency and poverty of ideas makes you fear that everything written (except one poem, perhaps one story) is useless and ridiculous. Ideas, that is the establishment of relationships, bridgeheads, bridges. Surrounded by books, I lean over a flower left on my desk. Its blind translucent pupil looks at me; I think if it were really looking at me, it wouldn't see me.

Maybe this diary is an Argentine preoccupation; like the café—oral diary of life—strings of women, easy deals and tame sadness. How difficult a coherent construction seems here, any order or a style. Besides, to write a diary you *must be worthy of one*. Like Gide or T. E. Lawrence. A diary, the lacy froth that flowers on the surface of boiling syrup. *To seethe*, yes, but not in empty pans. If I'd lived well, if I'd died well, if this place where I exist were solid and not the self-pitying jelly I love to eat, then yes; then to put the things left unsaid into words, the little froth, surplus to the struggle.

Along the Santa Fe Trail—Bing Crosby sings and I'm struck once more by that surprise of any Spanish word stuck in the middle of an English or French construction. Suddenly, in just that instant, the discovery of the word in all its virginity; but then it's blotted out, then it's back to the thing I know (or rather that I don't know, that I just use).

I meet a friend who's bad-tempered and nervous because of a problem at work that's harrying him. From outside, from the edge of his desk, it's easy to measure the absurdity of this preoccupation about something that doesn't even touch him (vicariously living someone else's problem: misfortune of a good worker, of an honest manager). I wonder whether it occurs to him to suddenly consider the absurd, as a comparison with the cosmic, whether he some-

times takes a step back so the monster in front of his eyes turns back into the fly hovering in the air. Techniques, nothing more. Baruch Spinoza, what a swine. When someone died, an unmoved acquaintance said to me:

—I don't let things like this get the better of me; I take immediate refuge in metaphysics.

—The deceased was obviously not your lover—I answered.

If only . . . I've always admired Laforgue's exact, annihilating sense of *universal proportion*. The only French poet to look at reality on a planetary scale. Keeping an awareness of totality when faced with a missed train, a stain on a suit, reducing the incident to less than nothing. But it's clear the deceased was not your lover. Oh, Andrés, your head or your liver is starting to ache, and that insignificance blocks out *il sole e l'altre stele*. You lose a life like the ones already killed off, and to hell with the universe. The ego refuses to compromise, an eye devouring the world—without seeing it.

Clara and Juan remember Abelito sometimes, but I forget more easily now that I so rarely run into him. Instead another comes to mind,

and that's just how to say it because that's how it happens: the guy opens the door and there he is,

an Abel I saw a couple of times in Mendoza who gave me a fright. I think I write in order to have a hedonistic experience of exquisite fear; then it was marred by a feeling of danger and repulsion. I rang the bell (I was looking for a room, saw an ad, it was a house of several stories towards the north end of Avenida San Martín, in that part that pretties itself up with poplars and Syrian shops) and the door was opened by a being who hadn't been born to open doors. He had blue pyjamas and the palest face I'd ever seen, a terrifying *pierrot* standing firmly out against the darkness of the vestibule. Dilated pupils, light eyes (but I don't remember the color, or never saw) looking at me with a bland intensity, lapping up my face in a silence that I guiltily lengthened. Then I mentioned the ad, and the being stepped aside to let me in and

said: “Go on up.” The voice was the eyes, as if algae could speak: as inhuman as a parrot, but at the same time containing the being; voice of the witness who says the revealing word. I went up, certain I wouldn’t stay in the house. Upstairs was an old woman in the very corridor for her French accent and hands full of rings. I was taken to my possible room, she talked and the being followed us, watching me; now I remember his amusing body, the blue arc his pyjamas outlined in the doorframe: dancer in repose.

The woman cut in to send him away curtly: “Off you go, Abel.” The being disappeared slipping away sideways, watching me until he was gone. My feelings must have shown because the woman lowered her voice to tell me: “Abel will clean up your room, and you just give him a tip each month. You don’t have to pay him any mind because he’s a bit sickly—” (I don’t think she said “sickly” but I forget the word, there’s a censoring that erases it from the center of this clear memory.)

I agreed to let her have my answer that same evening and said goodbye. As I was going down the stairs, Abel appeared at my side. He slipped along a step ahead or one behind, *watching me*. It was horrible how he laid me bare. At the door I said, “Good afternoon,” but he didn’t answer. (Years later, seeing Barrault mime Pierrot, I felt again the atrocious weight of that silence. But Abel was threat, a swamp in the air, waiting.)

Time went by, I was living in another rooming house. One night I was returning very late, delaying the moment of sleep; it was hot, the moon was up, the streets fragrant. Halfway down an almost entirely dark block, I heard laughing, singing and shouting all at once, a throng of words and hysterical shrieks, quick outbursts were cut off only to start straight up again. I saw Abel come leaping and pirouetting, the bright white of Palm Beach beneath the moon, his face a white mask with shadowy craters. He was unleashed, erupted, the absolutely inverted Abel running his amok through the city. A group of people must've laughed at him when he passed; so he broke away, came along proclaiming himself, crazed and free, perhaps on drugs; he didn't even see me as he passed, he hopped and hummed happily, laughing as he leapt, finally began a song and turned the corner.

I never saw him again, maybe that's why I remember so well.

The incalculable function of certain books in a life still porous, attentive, expectant. I'm thinking of the *Anthologie des poètes de la NRF* I bought in 1939 (perhaps before), which instantly became pivotal, a delegation of the unknown clamoring and gnawing night and day. The dazzle of unsuspected poems, prestige of names still unattached to any biography or portrait (Jouve, Saint-John Perse; and later, in 1945, to see a photo of Perse, that face of a jovial shopkeeper, like the face of Rouault that I only just met in a film . . .). And Kra's anthology too, read in 1935, badly understood because my French was so deplorable then. Double magic, madness: Rimbaud, Anne, Anne, *fuis sur ton âne*; I can see myself copying out *La comédie de la soif* before returning the book; and all of Mallarmé, absolute mystery with sudden delight: *un sens trop précis rature ta vague littérature*—And the others, soon isolated from so many poems without resonance: Valéry, Apollinaire, Carco (and this one, afterwards, entirely discovered with *Jésus-la-Caille* and *La bohème et mon cœur*). Nights of plazas, cappuccinos, ardent nothings; crying with Léon-Paul Fargue: *Et peut-être qu'un jour, pour de nou-*

veaux amis . . . Love looking up from a cup of coffee; the price of a silence, the walk home past tree-lined avenues and cats. Reverdy, whom no one in my group liked, and Michaux, and the exquisite Supervielle—I just think of the book, the big letters *NRF*, and up jumps Perse, up jumps Jouve. And when I say Kra (with the orange of the cover) then Rimbaud, fulminating and rabid, Cendrars and Laforgue—later in those two yellow volumes from *Mercure*, then Laforgue, such a sweet clown, tickling, moaning, a cat rubbing up against your legs, gentle scratching, curling up into a ball and then they bring you the newspaper and she has died, but in any case tomorrow the temperature will continue rising gradually.

Definition of mystery: The cage was empty with the door open, and when they came to look there was a rose at the back, with its stem in a little glass of water, and you could tell it had just been cut.

Certain caresses, gentle grazes—Colette speaking them, and also Rosamond Lehman when they're more furtive and distant. And gestures . . . *For such gestures, one falls hopelessly in love for a lifetime* . . . Wasn't that how it was, Rose Macaulay?

Certain caresses, the barely material very tip of a finger brushing the nape of a neck, where the sweetest kind of tingle resides.

Return to the fold. — Greek antiquity or the obsession with return. The great tragedies detonate *upon return*: Odysseus, Agamemnon, Oedipus.

Quand ce jeune homme revint chez lui
Et digne don don, et digne dondaine —

Whereas the biblical tragedy is leaving: Moses, Joseph — and Jesus, the one who leaves, the one who doesn't lock the door on the way out.

Joy is saved for the return, for the prodigal son, Abraham and Isaac, David —