

Francesco Pedraglio

THE VOICE OF THE ROOM

Not noon yet...

Not noon yet
and a sun like a blunted menace.

STYLE!

Style, you know...
Not asking that much, am I?

Style
and then silence...

Not said, just felt!
The silence I mean...
felt and obviously so.

Silence all through my precious rooms
my treasured spaces...
my rational soul...
the geometry of it all.

Still...
despite the control
despite the policing:
a gathering here
all around me...
a disruption to the Designer's plan.

People.

People intruding
encircling
surrounding.

My heavy draperies stained with sweat, semen and sun.

Pale greens
vanillas
crimsons
blues and ochres...
a colour field painting
that's what I am...

Washed out.

Everything ungracefully flapping at the granular wind.
EVERYTHING!

Not for long though.
Not the moving, the silence.
Obviously. Never!

Never too silent.
Or too long.
Never too much of anything around me.

And each and everyone of them
- these people -
each and everyone standing still...
dead...
almost...
or at least performing it
inside and outside of itself. (1)

Then each and every one moving
spinning around...

a parade
a ceremony
a wild cavalcade across my thought-through volumes
my well calibrated games of light...

A masturbatory manoeuvre indeed
and in my face!

So next...
next what?

Next come the buffoons
the charlatans...
there they come with their caravans
their carnivals.

Los barbaros!

They queue
on each others toes...
lined up
waiting for a signal
a loosen gesture
anything!
Awaiting their turn to enter the court.

They are trying to transform my symmetry
this stage to be admired
they are trying to turn it all into something about themselves...

Instead...

ME.

I.

Or...

I see the two things together:

movement and stillness

or

rationale and death.

Alternating

intertwining...

muddying MY waters

polluting MY fountains.

So...

- soon after -

soon they went on again...

spreading

sprawling

lounging

lazing around...

and talking...

A cancer!

TALKING!

Thunderous, cavernous barking...

barking and yelling at everybody and no one in particular.

THEM:

howling like mad dogs, like mating foxes, donkeys in heat.

THEM AGAIN:

groaning like crippled animals

distressed beasts...

like filthy torrents

rivers in full flood.

THEM ONCE MORE:

irrepressible

undirected.

Like a revolution

a violent outburst

a ricochet bullet.

Even better...

the red terror following one revolutionary day too many.

The guillotine day. (2)

Alla gogna!

Heads rolling and throbbing around floorboards

in baskets.

And me?

ME?

Me, simply cheering them, yes...

cheering them all.

The battlefield down there

a wooden table

in the garden

too far for my whispers
soon too dark for my glass eyes...

STYLE!

That's all I asked for, really...

STYLE!

To come...

or to go...

(which is the same thing)

but to do it with style.

THE CHORUS

A perfectly rounded, steadily solid sphere of unfired terracotta clay falling from the outer rim of the 13th sky. That's a beginning.

Now picture it - i.e. the sphere - perpetually wet to the touch and ungracefully dented across its irregular surface, as if a dumb child or a mad man had taken at hitting it savagely with knuckles and heels alike.

At a more attentive gaze, the sphere appears to have a diameter of approximately 18cm - the dimension of, let's say, a medium sized tropical fruit... possibly a mango, or a slightly oversized avocado - its exact extension varying of a non-drastring, at time risible width depending on A) the consequences of the different protuberances spotting the object's surface, and B) the equally different - endless? - perspectives you (or anybody else for you) would happen to be observing the item from.

At this point you should take into consideration how the sphere we're talking about - i.e. the slightly oversized avocado or mango or generic mid-sized tropical fruit - well, is in reality... a sex.

It's a sex and it's free-falling from the outer rim of the 13th sky. And that's our beginning.

Though not having being gendered yet - i.e. the sex not having being characterised (relegated, if you wish) by any male or female features - it shouldn't technically be referred to as a sex as such, hence the discreet persistency of the inappropriately-abstract word 'sphere', or 'object', or 'item', 'irregular spheroid' or 'globe' etc.

Still... it is a sex.

It's a sex, and it's slowly but unstoppably falling the most impossible of free falls: the drop through the 13 heavens all the way down to the waters... then through the waters all the way down to earth, to soil, to sand and mud and possibly beyond.

The fall, as each and every fall does - or at least each and every fall that entails a considerable amount of consequences - appears to happen backwards: from the 13th and 12th skies - the twin skies - downwards. Meaning it undertakes a reverse journey from the space of the dual Gods, of the innocent children - Goddess and God - from the two heavens where sex is not gendered but nevertheless exists as such - as an idea, or a sphere, as an item, as wet, unfired terracotta clay spotted with lumps and bumps across its sorry surface - all the way down to cold waters and dusty plains, dead calm oceans and wind-bitten plateaus.

It continues - i.e. the fall continues - stable and undisturbed through the three skies of the unknown Gods: the absent-minded 11th, the self-obsessed 10th, the quick-tempered 9th... three unknown skies where not a thing happens and nobody is aware of anybody else, of nothing at all. The purest of the skies, if you'd like. A happy place if there's one. Yet three lonely, silent and hollow spaces indeed. Three cavities where our object - i.e. the sex - passes undisturbed and unnoticed; where nothing and nobody perverts its descent, yes... yet where nothing or nobody perverts or engages or even confronts anything anyway, anything at all. An attitude revealing a form of primordial loss. A lack of living *ante litteram*.

Still, the fall continues through the forging tempests, with hails like fists and rains like darts, both working the object's surfaces with their unmethodical carving just like a drunken man would do with the bluntest of knives. The 8th heaven, the tempests' heaven, is brutal and blind but it breathes the air we breathe, it shits the food we eat. It's human. It's the sky where the sphere begins its slow transmutation, its unstoppable engendering.

And then comes the cold dusty nights and the ever so much cooler days of frozen air. 7th and 6th. In one go. The globe goes down like the stone that it was and still is. It goes down through shooting stars double, triple, ten times its modest size... shooting stars the colour of burning hay, viciously slithering through the hard surface of the 5th heaven like fiery snakes at its passage.

Finally: Venus.

Venus the sister... her boiling splendour just about indenting the corrugated surface of the free falling object, of the sphere, the unsexed sex, the ungendered genital.

Heath melting. Heath shaping. Heath reconfiguring.

And the birds... birds concealing, with their large wings, the perimeter of the 4th sky - wings featherless and warm like a flying Xoloitzcuintle, a sterile progenitor of an undeveloped species. They end up shaping an involuntary, first outline, an uneven profile of the object as we know it - i.e. a sex as we know it - their flapping and scratching the work of a naive sculptor, an ingenuous designer.

Also, with their circular motion around their endlessly melting, endlessly restoring heaven, the birds seem to protect the skies below from Venus' furious breath, its acid mixture of perfume and bile.

In the meantime: the object is still free falling.

The last three skies are home to the producers, the fabricators.

The Sun is the heaven of labour. 400 men tightly cramped in there. 400 human bodies created by a single game of reflection, a magician's trick: 2 figures mirrored in an obsidian black mirror, the resulting image doubled into yet another mirror, and so on and so forth until reaching the desired number.

Now... 400 men and just enough space for the object - i.e. our previously spherical item, now roughly chiselled into a yet undefinable shape, a sex to come - just enough room for it to slide past, from hand to hand, all the way down through the 3rd sky, through shoulders and stomachs, knees and ankles, through feet and fingernails. A measured descent until the last pair of feet, the kicking feet... until the falling rhythm is reestablished, allowing the object to cross straight into the 2nd sky.

This is the Milky Way avenue, a route demarcated by the female skeleton... by whites and vanillas, silvers and pearls. This is the sky of the varnishes and the glazings, the heaven of the gloss, of the enamel. It's the toxic sky of beauty, of blind attraction, of erection and dilatation.

Here, a pause.

Suddenly, after the pause and with no previous signals suggesting what might be about to happen, our object - our sex, becoming - appears to have grown into a puzzling conjunction of

female and male characters, both theatrically portrayed by a clumsy succession of masculine and feminine clichés and stereotypes. We could almost hazard saying that, in this precise moment, the item seems to embody a sex at its purest stage: confused, intuitive, irrational, polysexual. (3)

The falling through the last sky, the 1st sky - the sky of the moon and the clouds, the sky marked by both female and male stars - is nothing but a formality: the left side of our object - now a fully recognisable sex - finally displays clear, noticeable marks of femininity, while the right, of masculinity.

At this point all previous spherical attributes have been lost, gone once and for all, transformed into an undefinable entity - undefinable by our limited language - which is half male, half female... an hermaphroditic realness that, even when dominated by a simple duality - left/right like female/male, day/night, life/death etc. - appears to defeat meaning and significance.

I suppose the idea is that, instead of being an object, or a physical characteristic - or a concept to grasp, to digest - the sex has become nothing but the state of being needed to understand its own existence. A circular matter indeed... and the free fall hasn't even finished yet.

To complete the transformation, the sex has to cool in the frozen waters of the Northern Hemisphere - its indefinable qualities finally calcified by the thermic shock - then land, all in one piece, regularly functional, onto the dusty earth where its fall, once and for all, is brought to a closure.

And that would be the end of it.

Then again, there are rumours... pure conjectures really. People talk, it's no crime. They talk and they hypothesise. Not the most scientific path to accurate theory-making... not always, no. And that's precisely what happened with the whole free fall story: the guessing, the gossiping. About the sphere and the skies. Mostly about the sex. Nothing that would contradict what has been said until this very point. Nothing able to cast any doubt on what has been proven absolutely accurate. It's more... more about the after. The ending. Or the suspension of it.

We said it: the cool waters, the dusty earth and... and that might not be it. For sometime. For someone. Not all of us. Somebody saying something else happens, maybe... possibly. The idea being that the fall from the 13 heavens, albeit necessary, doesn't end on muddy fields. At least not immediately... not before having travelled the 9 underworlds. Not before having experienced the yellow greed of dogs and the black desire of wild beasts, the all-consuming pride of peaks and the exhaustion of never-ending mountains, the danger of poisoned arrows and the logic tests of narrow places... until experiencing the final quietness of total rest.

So, for those who believe in rumours, that's precisely how the fall continued.

After the warm waters of the south hemisphere:

the river of yellow dog

the two mountains

the obsidian peaks

the bitter winds

the banners

the arrows

the wild beasts

the narrow place

and the soul at rest.

Here the sex, now at total rest, seems to fiercely ricochet all the way back up... all the way through narrow places, wild beasts, arrows and banners, bitter winds and obsidian peaks, two mountains and the river of the yellow dog, just for then being purified once more in the warm southern waters and reaching, safe again, the dusty plateaus of earth.

And that's an ending.

Another beginning. (4)

THE VOICE OF THE NIGHT

I'm over you, people.

I'm over you all
like a filthy blanket
the earthly twilight I'd just become.

This time is MY time.

And you
sitting there, smoking
feeling at ease
pretending the end will be something similar...
an almost-darkness
a just aboutness.

But your stiff legs
and arms
stiff
hands and feet
still frozen...
they betray you.

You...
lazing here in the order of the dozens
with yawns like screams and angry as fuck!
You perform my sublime cacophony, a composition of sorts...
ready for the last supper and scooping for more
right at the bottom... scraping...
exhaling warm breaths the colour of NOTHING
chewing on sand the colour of dust
and the whole thing reeking of intoxication
of exhaustion.

You can smell me, can't you?
You can smell me for miles on end!

I've been the worthless soil you mindlessly paced (5)
you ungrateful bastard...
the dirt you kick, carelessly.

I've been the land you spit onto
the bush you split open at your passage
the sky you dirty with your drains, your gasses...

So when I reach your side of the table
slowly
the earth beneath you will shake
like the fur of wild animals.

And when I move in a circle
bounding you
a roar!
a quake!

I AM NIGHT you sonofabitch...
darkness drenching your pretty clothes.

I am the uninvited guest you should be shitting yourself about...
the unavoidable
against the carefully staged.

And the cameras are ready to roll
and the dim lights are ready to shine
on you
the whole thing looking like a damn movie from up here.

A parody
comically silent when bodies start
falling
failing...
when heads start
rolling.

Twilight is a far off memory now.

I'm falling all over again...
all over you, motherfucker.

I'll make you march the blindest of marches
with MY rhythm as your rhythm
and a syncopated one indeed...
a hiccup... gagging
with split feet
and lips
and dry eyes like
white marbles.

I will not leave you behind...
oh no, I will never leave you alone...
or in peace.

I will drag you down with me... (6)
all the way down
to the bottom of this forgotten feeling
to the heart of this hollow mountain
a rotting cavity
down
till the bare nerves
exposed
till you will drag the others to the same end...

a chain I started, yes
yet I will soon barely command.

And this hell
of a voice
might be the voice of
your mutinous
sunken in stillness.

I am covering you...
everything, everyone.

Now
look at me!

Just look at me...
a rug
reeking of malady
of drunkenness.

I am your own very personal darkness...

a night like the night
of reason.

1)

Using Lawrence Weiner's 'Inside and outside of itself' (normally: ca. 7 x 28 x 0.2 cm, mirror glass, 12/99, 2006) and typeset it as the rest of this text.

2)

Marcel Dzama, Whatever you do, don't throw me into the void, Indian ink, watercolour on paper, 34,3 x 27,9 cm, 2000

3)

In the Mixica room of Mexico City's Anthropology Museum, all the way to the end of the tour - given you decide to visit the room anticlockwise, moving from your right hand side all the way down to the bottom of the room, then back through the left side towards the top exit door - you might notice a terracotta sculpture installed at approximately two metres, two metres and a half from the floor. At first sight the object appears to be a generic portrait, an abstract visage. And indeed it is a portrait, and it depicts a face bearing some of the most common lineaments and features you've been recognising all the way during your wandering through the room. Yet this time something might arouse your curiosity. Something unsettling in its simplicity, perturbing in its essence: a simple line perfectly dividing the object in two hemispheres... a dash crossing the whole portrait through its central axis from forehead, through nose, straight to chin. The object embodies and it's simply described by its dual essence: half life, half death... half female, half male... half light, half darkness.

And now let's imagine this other object... something produced a couple of centuries after the first one, and almost 10000 kilometres away. An object as small as to fit in the palm of our hands, yet as unsettling and as evocative as the previous one. The dualism is now doubled: a 3cm high spherical and revolving item fragmented by four portraits of Christ and Death. Once again: an object embodying and described by its dual essence.

4)

A formal pairing:

Beuys	Dual Gods: Innocent Children
Brehmer	Triple God (nobody knows)
Brock	Tempest
Dietrich	Night and Day
Hödicke	Shooting Stars
Giese	Venus
Knoebel	Sun
Lohaus	Milky Way
Lueg	Moon and Clouds
Palermo	Water and Earth
Polke	River and Yellow Dog
Richter	Two Mountains
Rot	Obsidian Mountain
Ruthenbeck	Bitter Wind
Rühm	Banners
Schmidt	Arrows
Vostell	Wild Beast
Wewerka	Narrow Place
Wintersberge	Soul at Rest

“En Bloc”, 1969 1970, 115 x 45 x 39 cm, roll-fronted cabinet with 14 drawers with works of 19 artists / 13 heavens and 9 underworlds as imagined by the Nahua cosmology

5)

A 27.9x35cm black and white gelatine silver print - now yellowed by time - portraying a man - a soldier - standing still, rifle in hand, almost at the exact centre of the shot.

This first man is depicted while lowering his gaze towards a second individual - possibly the enemy... even if, from our perspective, it's difficult to identify any relevant detail in this sense - lying dead, head first, just a few feet from him.

Indeed the body of this second man is positioned at such an angle that, from our position - the position of the eye of the camera - the only elements we can positively recognise are the top of his metal helmet slightly tilted right - our right - and the man's right arm - a dead man's arm - languidly projected forward as if in a frozen greeting.

At a more accurate observation though, the two figures - the first and the second man... one alive, one very much dead - seem to become two interdependent mechanisms inside a more complex apparatus of gazes, a horrific triangle of vacant stares conferring to the shot its unique steadiness: indeed at the bottom right corner you can just about discern what appears to be a third figure... a human head barely emerging from dust, mud and rubble. It feels inappropriate to list, or even mention other details of such an individual. Let's just say his human features - now lifeless - appear to dramatically blend back into Nature, into edgeless landscape, dull scenery.

The dreadful apparatus is closed: the first man - a body - watches the second dead man - now a corpse - that, in turn, watches the third - an almost nothingness, almost Nature.

On the top left corner we can see a fourth figure - a soldier kneeling near something unrecognisable... an object, or another corpse - but this presence seems secondary and scarcely interesting in the composition of our apparatus of gazes.

A caption on top of the image - onto the white, smoky sky - reads:

"Kill the bastards. Combined operation clean up, Sgt. H. Ohio, Battle of Hill 268, North Korea"

6)

Marcel Dzama, Untitled, watercolour on paper, 35,6 x 27,9 cm, 2002.