

THE OTHER TIME

Memories and Testimonies of the Wait – Keepsake of the International Surrealist Community under Confinement

Days and nights were distributed unevenly. The sun never reached its zenith but sank at about midday. The earth seemed to be limping around its orbit seeking balance in the new order (Leonora Carrington).

Marcus Varro writes, that there was a town in Spain undermined with rabbits; another likewise in Thessaly by moles. In Africa the people were compelled by locusts to leave their habitations; and out of Gyaros, an island, one of the Cyclades, the islanders were forced by rats and mice to fly away; moreover in Italy the city of Amyclæ was destroyed by serpents. In Ethiopia there is a great country lies waste and desert, by reason it was formerly dispeopled by scorpions; and if it be true that Theophrastus reporteth, the Trieriens were chased away by certain worms called scolopendres. Annius writes, that an ancient city situate near the Volscian Lake, and called Contenebra, was in times past overthrown by pismires, and that the place is thereupon vulgarly called to this day, the Camp of Ants. In Media, saith Diodorus Siculus, there was such an infinite number of sparrows that eat up and devoured the seed which was cast into the ground, so that men were constrained to depart from their old habitations, and remove to other places (Edmund Fillingham King).

There was a most ingenious doctor who seemed to be perfectly versed in the whole nature and system of government. This illustrious person had very usefully employed his studies in finding out effectual remedies for all diseases and corruptions, to which the several kinds of public administration are subject by the vices or infirmities of those who govern, as well as by the licentiousness of those who are to obey. For instance; whereas all writers and reasoners have agreed, that there is a strict universal resemblance between the natural and the political body; can there be anything more evident, than that the health of both must be preserved, and the diseases cured by the same prescriptions? (Jonathan Swift).

The snail does not build its house, it grows from its body (Lichtenberg).

Each man carries within himself a room. It is a fact that our own hearing confirms. When you walk fast and listen, especially at night when everything around us is silent, you can hear, for example, the tremors of a badly hung wall mirror (Franz Kafka).

Remedies for major illnesses are not always found in the pharmacy (Casanova).

Life is born, like illness, from a pause, from a limitation, from contact (Novalis).

In the midst of terror, against an imaginary or real danger, it is important above all to accomplish certain, of course absurd, rituals of protection, but whose virtue seems incontestable to me (Paul Nougé).

This is how the world continues as it has always been. But it would be better if you resigned yourself to what will soon be your destiny, rather than continue thinking about that poor cat that purrs while waiting for you by the fire, in a closed room where no one will ever enter (Pieyre de Mandiargues).

Rest at once when pain begins (Hippocrates).

Deirdre's no thought of getting old or wearied; it's that puts wonder in her days, and she with spirits would keep bravery and laughter in a town with plague (John Millington Synge).

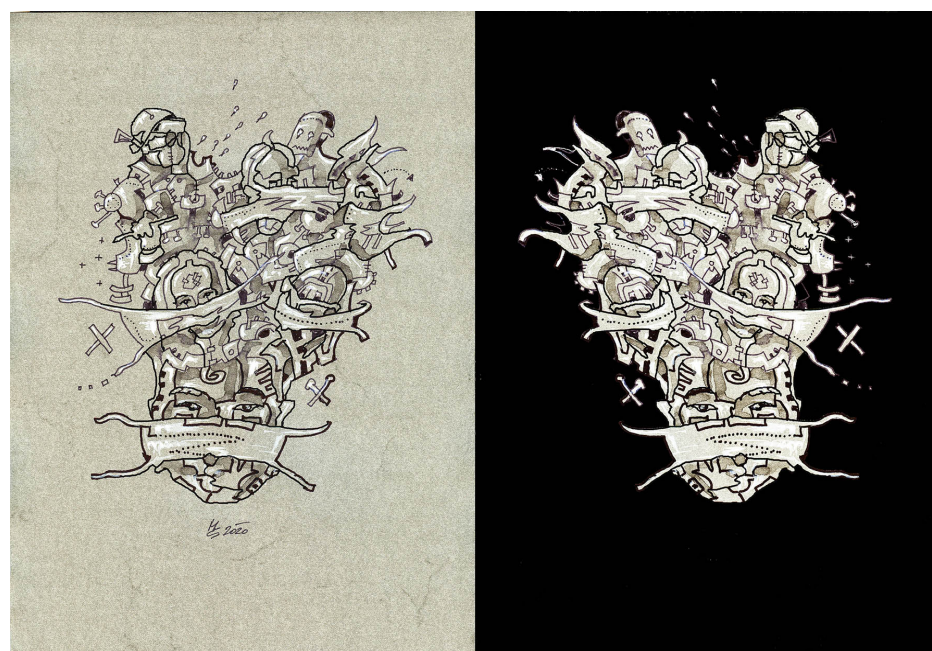
Solitude is very much to my taste. Nature evidently meant me for a Hermit (Lewis Carroll).

People whose imaginative strength is more powerful than their understanding, should never travel alone and on foot (Oskar Panizza).

Public charity is easily excited when the safety of the wealthy is threatened. This is how in London, in times of cholera-morbidity, the mortality was lower among the poor than in ordinary times, due to the aid that was lavished on them. And what does this prove? that the plague plays less havoc than hunger. In summary, here is the general fact: two thirds of the population live in a precarious state of misery and suffering; and society is neither concerned nor informed of it, or if something is done, it is only to repress and punish some miserable people who, having received nothing from society, neither physical care, nor moral notions, nor means of subsistence, owe it nothing, and should not be victims of the severity of the laws. Freedom for the man of the people is to die on a pile of rotten straw, helpless as a dog; and equality for him is to be corrupted in the grave next to his fellow man (Charles Fourier).

My imagination rendered sensual by privation (Mary Shelley).

(JCO)



Two Sides of a Corona /MS

All Virus is Prodigal – Henri Michaux; Tranches de savoir (Face aux verroux)



The Parentheses /DS



The Bath /SV



The Exterminating Angel /SV

THREAT & SUPERSTITION



The Yellow Danger



or...

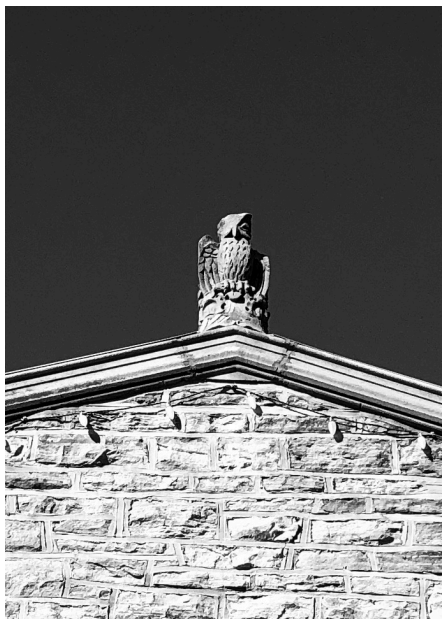


etc

The Magical Remedy /BJ



Danger of Infection /JB



Cyclops

I've had enough of chasing after poetry; I believe that poetry lies at one's very door or perhaps in one's very bed.
– Gérard de Nerval (trans. Richard Sieburth)

In the run of normal uneventful years that great eccentric, Time, begets sometimes other years, different, prodigal years which—like a sixth, smallest toe—grow a thirteenth freak month. – G.C. Lichtenberg (trans. Steven Tester)

WHAT, SO POETRY SCREAMS?

I live in an apartment made of aquariums. Every time I try to think through the ocean, I am really just relaxing in one of a thousand subplots, happily ignoring the false vitrines of the social distance.

TWO JS

The aimless plaguewalks I have been able to take since the pandemic hit have enabled me to find some new and mysterious details in my city. On March 28 I found two Js: one on the side of the national gallery and the other carved into a tree-stump on the edge of the river. They seemed (like me) to have no good reason to be there.

CYCLOPS OWL

In the middle of a pandemic, I met a stone owl perched on the church in a cemetery. Half its head was knocked off, so it only had one eye. It's curious to think how it might have happened. It seems to have a lot to suggest with regards to riddles, chambers, armor (all names on nearby tombstones).

"Well, my friend, you must die!"

TARGET SHOOTING AT PAN

"She isn't dead, only fainted. Got some smelling salts in the house?"

Dream of April 1, 2020

I am walking to work and come across a frozen alleyway in Quebec city that looks very picturesque. An older lady acquaintance calls my name from behind. We shift to an outdoor art gallery or cemetery. She is a tourist. There are scattered alchemical sculptures relating to the preserved parts of a certain girl or nun. One is coloured and shows a bit of hand and eyes. The verse on it says "what is old shall be new". She snaps photos while I try to explain the alchemical significance. One other piece is more body part mausoleum of the same girl. It shows a full body sculpture of an older woman covered with strange boots or crows.

(News story)

Scientists uncover principles of universal self-assembly

April 20, 2020

Bilkent University Faculty of Science

"For years, researchers have searched for the working principles of self-assembly that can build a cell (a complex biological organism) as well as a crystal (a far simpler inorganic material) in the same way.

Now, a team of scientists in Turkey has demonstrated the fundamental principles of a universal self-assembly process acting on a range of materials—starting from a few atoms-large quantum dots up to nearly 100 trillion atoms-large human cells..."

Dream of April 24, 2020

There is a holiday called "duck day". I am walking down a popular street and I hear a british youth on the phone confused and exasperated about why we have such a holiday. I think it is so funny I tell the story to my british friend E.

Major rain. The parking lot outside has totally flooded. Somehow an overturned truck in the corner near the sinkhole amplifies the flooding since it contained waste liquid. I notice my roof is flooding a little and assume it is my upstairs neighbor. The ceiling is a mottled dark green stone. Little droplets are forming. I try to call the super but I cannot find his number anywhere. Outside, a pump truck is sucking up all the liquid.

(extract from an old children's book)

WHAT IS MY THOUGHT LIKE

"To begin the game, the leader asks each child in turn, "What is my thought like?" and each in turn mentions some object, such as a rose, a book, an orange, etc. Then the leader says, "I was thinking of Ethel." Turning to the first child he says, "You said my thought was like a rose. Why is Ethel like a rose?" The answer might be, "Because she is pretty."

The next is asked: "Why is she like an orange?" "Because I am fond of her."

So each in turn must give some reason why Ethel is like the object he named."

Extract from *Mother Lets Us Give a Party: A book that tells little folk how best to entertain and amuse their little friends* (1909) by Elsie Duncan Yale

SMALL GULL DICTIONARY

Screech A - "The curious key"

Screech B - "Donation of Constantine"

Screech C - "The head of an entity, fresh."

Screech D - "I am tempted by the rise in wizardry to look farther afield."

It's worth noting that gulls have over a hundred words for nourishing ideas.

AN INVERSION OBSERVED

During the period of confinement I stepped out onto my balcony and saw the mid-sized tree I am so used to seeing—with a coat hanger in it.

The coat hanger had a bright metal hook and a thick wooden base. It was very noticeable tangled up in the branches of this tree, which had not yet sprouted its leaves, for it was the 2nd of May in Ottawa and the buds hadn't yet blossomed. The coat hanger was facing downwards, slightly askew to the left, as if thrown into the tree from above. This was entirely possible as my apartment building towered well above the tree and any number of balconies could have been the source. Perhaps it was hanging and was blown off accidentally by the wind. At any rate, it was inverted. At certain times of day, it appears invisible, perfectly camouflaged.

What amazed me so much about this image was the conceptual inversion, too. That which is supposed to hang is itself hung. The tree branches, which serve as primordial coat hangers, a wild natural chaos of intertwining twigs and sticks, were contradictory to the domesticated and indoor functionality of the fancy coat hanger.

The two objects held each other in check. It was a kind of poetic stasis. It triggered a whole analogical train of associations on the concept of hanging, being hung, nature, technology, and above all the wild inversion of humanist domesticity.

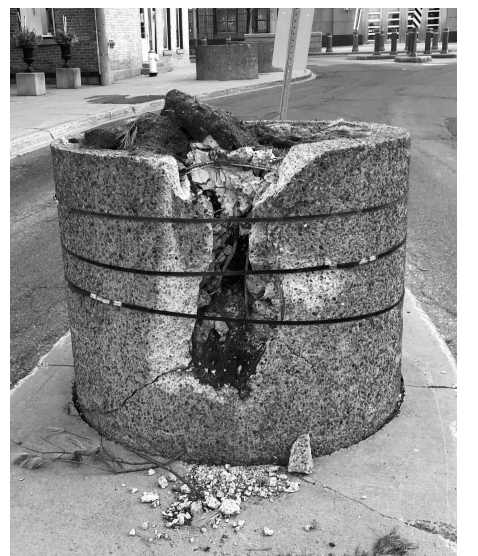
Unfortunately this has been impossible to photograph. The coat hanger is only really obvious at certain times of the day when the sun is just right. And the tangle of branches make it very hard to see properly in a photo. This refusal to be seen contributes to its riddle



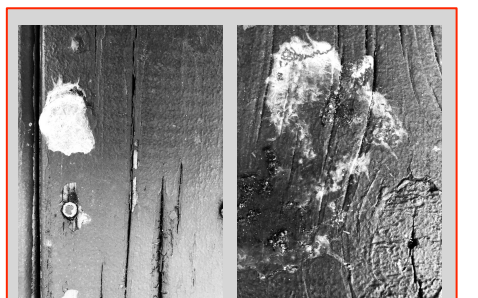
Playing with Time



Possibility of Emergency

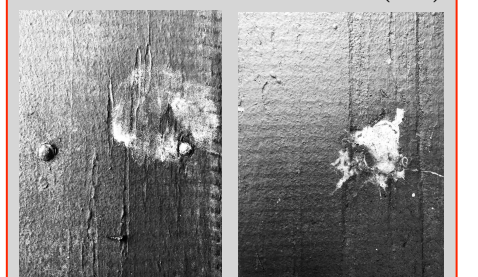


The Corset

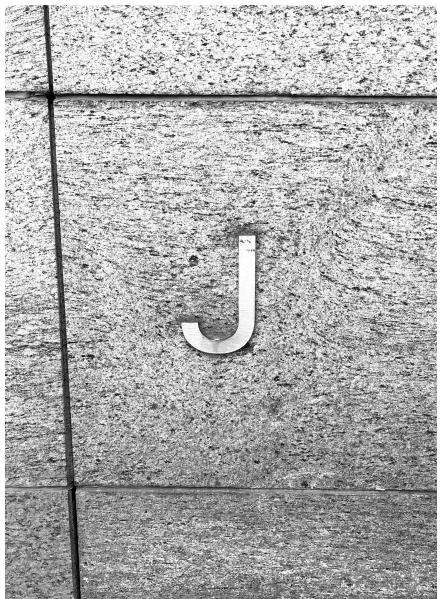


We do not talk -- we bludgeon one another with facts and theories gleaned from cursory readings of newspapers, magazines and digests. Talk is personal and, if of any value, must be creative.

– Henry Miller
(MV)



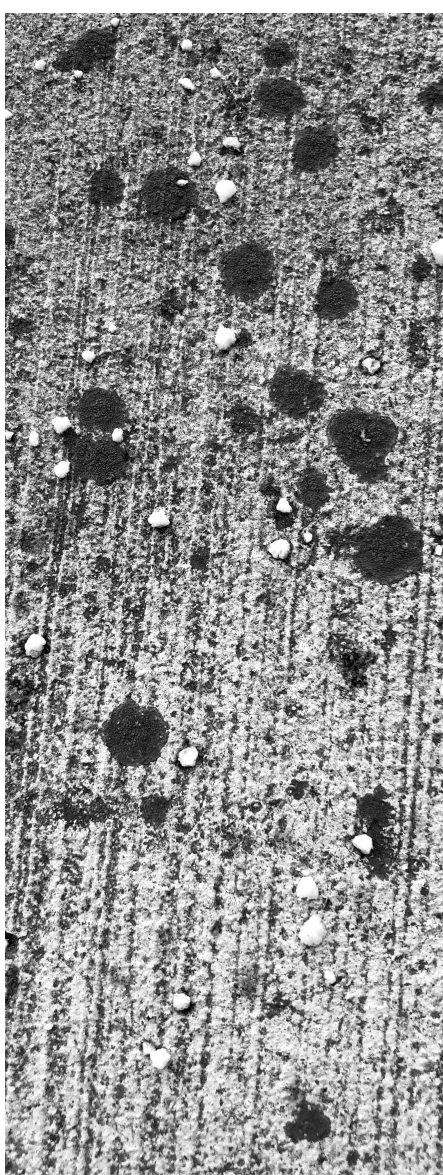
(JA)



J the first



J the second



Geography of Hail and Lichen

Towards both Sides

Change changes
– David Byrne

To Lurdes Martínez



Ensanche Sur, in the Madrid suburb of Alcorcón, is a working class neighborhood of officially protected housing built during the second half of the 2000s. The 2008 real estate crisis left it partially unfinished, so that there are areas left undeveloped in its extreme southwest, despite the fact that the streets are finished and the infrastructure ready.

The entire neighborhood, peripheral within the periphery, has a certain limit character. This is accentuated when one reaches its southern area, which ends abruptly. Beyond, there is a wide extension of farmland crossed by trails that connect the municipalities of Móstoles, Fuenlabrada and Leganés, whose profiles are perfectly visible on the other side.

On May 4, 2020, the first day of the de-escalation after the great confinement caused by COVID-19, the spectacle of going out into the streets of this neighborhood is disconcerting. Spring has run its course, so nature, without the pressure of humanity to keep it at bay, has completely overflowed. Gens, poppies, lilacs, daisies, dandelions, and thistles have spread across the lots and easily reach a meter and a half in height. Sometimes they extend on the sidewalks, cutting off the way for passers-by. The landscape, which sometimes reminds one of certain cinematographic scenes, or in any case of the passing of the centuries, has only taken two months to become wild.

In the afternoon, when we are allowed to go out to “exercise”, this explosion of wild nature, the return of the repressed, invites you to tour the neighborhood from end to end to perceive it in all its splendor. The situation is unusual, exalting. Nature has taken streets and squares, entering from the south end and ascending to the north. And the closer we get to the edge of the neighborhood, the greater the exuberance of this lack of control.

Following the current in reverse, from north to south, we reached the United Nations loop. It is an authentic ring road that serves both to easily go round the neighborhood by car and to “close” it. At the last extremity, a small wooden fence marks the end. Beyond, a *rambla* emerges that, by sections, serves as a moat, and behind it, the farmland.

At that point, the evening show becomes even more puzzling. As the shops are closed and there is nothing else to do, and spurred on by the need to get out of the grim confinement of more than two months, a real crowd fills the loop. The safety distance between the walkers, in most cases, is testimonial. There is a clear atmosphere of celebration, pulsed in the bodies by the feeling of sudden freedom, of physical release from the weight of the dark days that we have just passed. A tension close to happiness, or at least pleasure, which implies the possibility of meeting. It is a question, and this can be perceived very clearly, of a *molecular* impulse to come together, which acts in their movements in a tacit way, and draws these bodies towards each other without anyone trying to avoid them. The following days I think that this same species impulse is the one that made itself noticed in a grotesque way in the fascist concentrations that took place simultaneously in the wealthy neighborhoods of Madrid.

Of course, this is not the Great Evening. Many of these people have simply gone out to exercise. But not only. Before the confinement there were runners everywhere, although not so much in this area, much less in this proportion. Along with them, many people have gone out for a walk alone, wear street clothes and seem to be in no rush to get anywhere. Finally, intermingled with these two groups, those who have never run before, but who, faced with the need to move and unable to accept the unproductive nature of the notion of a walk, need to endow their movements with capitalist validation as a sport. They are easily recognized. They wear old-fashioned sportswear that contrasts with the spectacular phosphorescent outfits of regular runners, they puff forward in a perpetual state of physical suffering, and their erratic trajectory arouses the concern of everyone who comes across them.

All of this human fauna, which seems to have spread out equally among almost all the territories that have started the deconfinement phase, crowds into this limit-avenue, filling it. It is a great fair, in which the individuals take characteristic roles, sometimes caricatural ones, but in which a certain sense of ensemble is also perceptible.

However, there is something else. An overflow. An extension. It is soon perceived that along with all these people who roam the avenue, there are others who go beyond that edge and resolutely enter the paths that surround the fields.

It must be specified, in any case. Those roads have always been more or less deserted. I have visited them

myself on other occasions and the feeling of solitude under the celestial vault was very intense and gave it much of its beauty. Now the situation is completely different, and the very narrow trails flanked by genistas are full of people who walk, run, or bike in both directions. Encouraged by the show, I decided to join the exploration. The most obvious point of entry into this kind of imaginary *Terra incognita* is marked by an imposing electricity tower, which marks the end of the wiring and with it, in a way, also that of civilization. Huge stick that guards the portal to nobody knows which domain. Passing next to its base one enters the new territory.

So I wander through these fields, roads and trails. For the next three weeks I will come every day at eight in the evening to mix in all this overflow, unable to imagine anywhere else. Because it is not in any case an individual experience. What makes it unique, despite all the inconvenience it brings, is its collective nature, that gregarious drive that has made it easier for us to pass after the imposed separation. Although I always walked alone, I never really have.

Thus, every afternoon hundreds of people go into that outer region, in that outside that before the pandemic was tenaciously ignored, since they lived with their backs to it, with their sights set on the north. I am a part of them, with the clear understanding that this extraordinary situation will pass, and that once the shops are reopened, the vast majority of these people, if not all, myself included, will not return to this area more than sporadically. But also with the certainty that something has been irretrievably truncated at this limit.

* * *

In 2011 I wrote a text entitled “The city outside the walls.” (*) In it I spoke in the following terms of the mental impossibility of leaving the capitalist system, reflected in the physical difficulty of escaping from the urban environment as a spatial planning system.

The open field has thus been eliminated from existence to the extent that even the old points of reference that could make it known have disappeared or have become truly extraordinary, leaving in its place a void that prevents the understanding of that existence. Outside the city, of capital, there is nothing. Communication has been interrupted.

And a little later, I concluded:

Because of and beyond the fact that those areas which don't really pertain to the economy have been neglected, the problem seems to extend to these places, according to the logic of capitalism *avant la lettre*, and subsequently they cease to have their own existence, becoming more and more trivial until finally disappearing from the imagination and becoming impossible to conceptualize in their real existence. Thus everything leads us to think that *they cannot exist*.

But the gap took place. And what seemed impossible ceased to be because it was there, once capitalism was forced to stop. The overflow of nature entering the city and the overflow of human beings leaving the city, extending, spreading out not as a plague or a conquest but as freedom. Those who ran the old-fashioned way, who simply put their bodies in tune with a concept of utility proper to capitalism, could do so just as well elsewhere, to which they will undoubtedly return when it is all over. This was not what drove this kind of “great exit” in which the interruption of capitalism allowed nature to take its course in both directions.

In any case, whatever the value that this experience may have among the set of situations that we have lived through and that we will have to face in the immediate future, one thing seems to shine with a particular light. The text quoted above ended with the following phrase: “The day will come when all of us will end this great comedy and, upon making a theatrical bow to the audience, we will leave *that* reality in order to find what relates to our own life outside of it”. The passing of the event is never indifferent. The interruption is enough for the physical and mental dynamics to be disrupted, and for the gaps to appear, the portals, which in reality were always there. The limits are exceeded in both directions. The change changes. This has happened. Once we have crossed a limit, we become others, because our possibilities are different.

Alcorcón, May 25, 2020
(JM)

(*) First published in English in the collective surrealist book *The Exteriority Crisis – from the city limits and beyond* (Oyster Moon Press, Berkeley 2008).

“The spatial restrictions of this 'lock-down' have, for me, resulted in a greater familiarity with nearby locations, not least in taking notice of details, whether the complexity of a Horse Chestnut blossom or the inscriptions on a war memorial, and, through the sometimes necessary deviation in routes taken on a daily walk, of what might otherwise have been never encountered. The nearby cemetery is populated with peculiar offerings to the dead, the most popular being soft toys, many weathered and faded, as well as multi-coloured plastic windmills, kitsch angels, teddy bears, photographs, candles, birthday cards, religious figurines, Christmas decorations, fairy lights, football memorabilia, scarecrows... shrines that are thronged with such objects or perhaps poignantly sparse.” (Photograph taken in Armley, Leeds on Thursday, 30th April 2020.) /KC



The Crucified Pachyderm /KC



Reconstruction of a Dream — *The Waiting*, night of April 22, 2020. /JCO



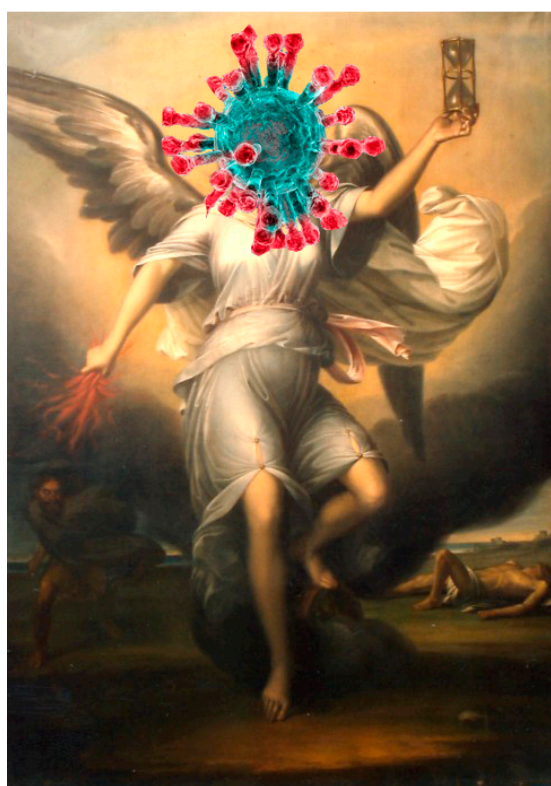
Human Proliferation /Gustave Doré -BJ

One person is eternally on the road but has never left home. One person has left home but is not on the road. Which one is worthy to receive the alms of human and heavenly beings?

- Lin-Chi; *Lin-Chi-lu*



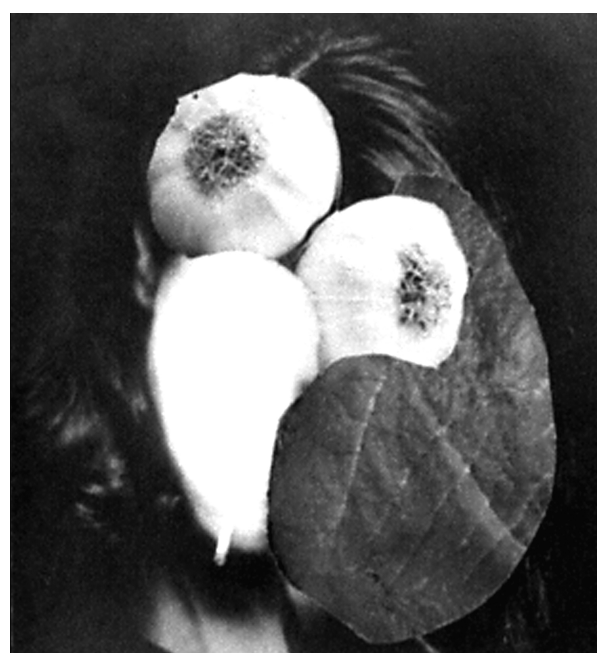
Social Distance /BJ



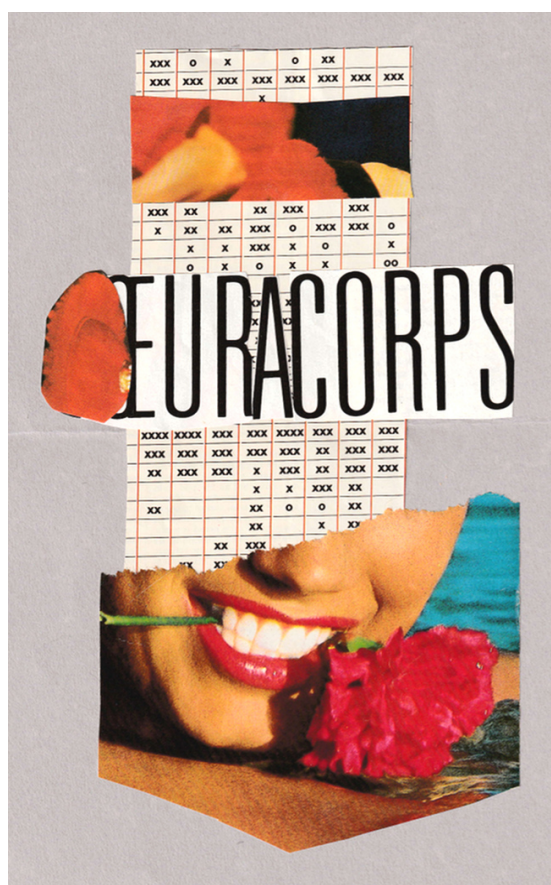
Nemesis; Gheorghe Tattarescu /JGR/LV

Poetry and confinement, or the Ivory Tower socialized and massified, short-circuiting Nerval's words.

The only refuge we had left was the poet's ivory tower, which we climbed, higher and higher, to isolate ourselves from the crowd. - Gérard de Nerval



The Invisible Woman /JG



My Sister Sticks Out Her Tongue /AÖ

CASTOR AND POLLUX

I // The dream and waking state hold hands. / The cord succeeds the chessboard. / The astral body takes three steps forward. / The knots reconcile. // The Dioscuri separate the radiant darkness. / Alternatively, one of the two Pelasgian heroes comes back to life while the other dies.

II // The knot is the antithesis of the rhombus. / The two priests of Samothrace deny the intertwining of the constellations. / A serrated tassel delimits the borders of the manifested world. / Day and night decipher mystical symbols. // The heavenly brother reconciles contradictory opposites. / The darkness is dynamic.

THE SLEEPING OCEAN

to Louis-Robert Bouchard

Between the dream and the waking state, the prophetic vision of the initiated Magdalena encompasses all the metamorphoses, past and future, of the etheric energy field in which the physical world is bathed. A whole “cycle of cosmic manifestation” is thus recapitulated from its Genesis to its Apocalypse and also in its correspondences with the phenomena of the interior life.

THE LOST ARTIFACT

Anonymous creators unpack Desire.

Fernando Pessoa documents the secret history of 'Pataphysics in New France': symbolic objects, medals of the Fifth Empire, surrealist magazines, masonic jewelry...

The poor poet compulsively searches for emblems that could have a special meaning for him.

THE WOUNDED MYSTERY

I // eternal courtesan with the heart of a perverse and pure child, / his delicious pupa in the augural silence / storm sanctuary / the entwined sarcophagi / the ritual game / the dawn shows us the lantern of the eagles, / the philosopher's chamber in the invisible fire of woman / the arched moon

II // heal the human soul... one stroke at a time / nothing vulgar; even obscenity is sacred / loving gnosis sublimates a / melancholy at the end of the cosmic cycle

(DN)

In the agony of time, a time that marks the present, a white dress floats. The clock on the wall is off but the hours are running out. The dress approaches me. The dim light deprives me of the ability to distinguish the body that wears it. There is no body in it, it does not matter that it is only the silhouette of the fabric whose white color dazzles everything that has never been buried. The clock on the wall is off but the hours are running out. The day that has just begun, a past that I never forgot, visits me. Hidden in the present, a wish, a sigh, a mad love, a life in my life. The clock suddenly starts working. Its indexes are now running, trying to make up for the lost time. But I am defenseless, I don't breathe, I don't speak. I let the white dress embrace me. I let myself sink into its arms, I drown but it does nothing to save me. I sin ... I sink deeper and deeper into its silk... Who left the window of my mind open so that it left me? (TT)