

# **ÁGUA VIVA**

**clarice lispector**



**ficção**

**artenova**

Clarice Lispector

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**The**  
***STREAM***  
**of**  
***Life***

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It's with such intense joy. It's such an hallelujah. "Hallelujah," I shout, an hallelujah that fuses with the darkest human howl of the pain of separation but is a shout of diabolical happiness. Because nobody holds me back anymore. I still have the ability to reason—I've studied mathematics, which is the madness of reason—but now I want plasma, I want to feed directly from the placenta. I'm a little frightened, still afraid to give myself over since the next instant is the unknown. Do I make the coming instant? Or does it make itself? We make it together with our breathing. And with the ease of a bullfighter in the ring.

Let me tell you . . . I'm trying to capture the fourth dimension of the now-instant, which is fleeting it no longer is because it has already become a new now-instant, which also is no longer. Each thing has an instant in which it is. I want to take possession of the thing's *is*. Those instants that elapse in the air I breathe: in fireworks exploding silently in space. I want to possess the atoms of time. And I want to capture the present which, by its very nature, is forbidden me: the present flees from me, the moment escapes me, the present is myself forever in the now. Only in the act of love—by the clear, starlike abstraction of what one feels—do we capture the unknown quality of the instant, which is hard and crystalline and vibrant in the air, and life is that incalculable instant, greater than the event itself. In love, the instant, an impersonal jewel, glitters in the air, a strange bodily glory, matter sensitized by the shiver of seconds—and what one feels is at the same time immaterial and so objective that it happens as if it were outside the body, sparkling on high, happiness, happiness is the matter of time and the instant par excellence. And in the instant resides its own *is*. I want to capture my *is*. And I sing an hallelujah to the air, just as a bird does. And my song is no one's. But there's no passion suffered in pain and in love that's not followed by an hallelujah.

Is my theme the instant? my life theme. I try to keep up with it, I divide myself thousands of times, into as many times as the seconds that pass, fragmentary as I am and precarious the moments. I pledge myself only to a life that is born with time and grows with it: only in time is there space for me.

I write you completely whole and I feel a pleasure in being and my pleasure of you is abstract like the instant. And it's with my entire body that I paint my pictures and on the canvas fix the incorporeal—me, body-to-body with myself. One doesn't understand music, one hears it. Hear me then, with your whole body. When you come to read me you'll ask why I don't stick to painting and exhibiting my pictures, since my writing is coarse and orderless. It's just that now I feel the need for words—and what I write is new to me because my true word has remained untouched until now. The word is my fourth dimension.

Today I finished the canvas I told you about: round lines that penetrate each other in thin, black strokes, and you, who are in the habit of wanting to know why—and because it doesn't interest me, the cause is matter of the past—you'll ask why the thin, black strokes? It's because of the same secret that makes me write this now as if to you, for what I write is round, complicated, and tepid, but sometimes frigid like fresh instants, stream water trembling always on its own. Can what I've painted on the canvas be phrased in words? Just as much as the mute word can be implicit in musical sound.

I see that I've never told you how I listen to music—I rest my hand lightly on the turntable and my hand vibrates, spreading waves through my whole body: that's how I hear the electricity of the vibration, the ultimate substratum in the domain of reality, and the world trembles in my hands.

And so I realize that I want for myself the vibrant substratum of the word repeated in Gregorian chant. I'm aware that everything I know I cannot say, I know only by painting or pronouncing syllables blind of meaning. And if here I have to use words for you, they must create a

almost exclusively bodily meaning. I'm battling with the ultimate vibration. To tell you my substratum I make a sentence of words composed only of the now-instants. Read, then, my invention of pure vibration, without meaning except that of each bubbling syllable, read now what follows: "With the flow of the centuries I have lost the secret of Egypt, as I moved in longitude, latitude, and altitude with the energetic action of electrons, protons, neutrons, in the fascination which is the word and its shadow." What I just wrote you is an electronic design and has no past or future: it is simple now.

I also have to write you because your domain is that of discursive words and not the directness of my painting. I know that my sentences are primary, I write with too much love for them and the love fills in their gaps, but too much love harms a work. This isn't a book because this isn't how one writes. Is what I write a single climax? My days are a single climax: I live on the edge.

When I write I can't create as I do in painting, when, as an artisan, I create a color. But I'm trying to write you with my whole body, shooting an arrow that firmly pierces the tender nerve ends of the word. My incognito body tells you: "Dinosaurus, ichtiosaurus, and plesiosaurus," words with a merely auditory sense, without turning into dry straw but staying moist. I don't paint ideas, I paint the more intangible "forever." Or "for never," it's the same. Above all else, I paint painting. And above all else I write you hard writing. I want to discover how I can grasp the word with my hand. Is the word an object? And as instants pass, I take the juice from their fruit. I have to disown myself to reach the kernel and seed of life. The instant is the live seed.

The secret harmony of disharmony: I don't want what is already made but what is tortuously in the making. My unbalanced words are the luxury of my silence. I write in acrobatic, aerial pirouettes—I write because I passionately want to speak. Even though writing is only giving me the greater measure of silence.

And if I say "I," it's because I don't dare say "you," or "we," or "a person." I'm limited to the humble act of self-personalization through reducing myself, but I am the "you-are."

Yes, I want the last word, which is also so first that it's already confused with the intangible part of the real. I'm still afraid to depart from logic because I fall into the instinctive and the direct, and into the future: the invention of today is my only way of establishing the future. From now on the future, and any hour is an appointed hour. Anyway, what harm is there in my departing from logic? I'm dealing with primal matter. I'm after what's behind thought. It's useless to try to classify me: I simply slip away not leaving, categories pin me down no longer. I'm in a very new and true state, one curious about itself, so attractive and personal that it defies my ability either to paint it or write it. I like certain moments I had with you, when I loved you, moments beyond which I could never go since I plumbed the depths of moments. It's a state of contact with the surrounding energy, and I tremble. It's a kind of crazy, crazy harmony. I know that my look must be the look of a primitive person who surrenders completely to the world, primitive like the gods who only broadly accept good and evil and aren't interested in the good that's wound into evil like into hair, the evil that is the good.

I capture sudden instants that bring their own death with them and others are born—I capture the instants of metamorphosis, and their sequence and concomitance have a terrible beauty.

Now it's growing light and dawn is a white mist on the sands of the beach. Everything is minimal then. I hardly touch food, I don't want to awaken myself beyond the waking of the day. I grow with the day which, in growing, kills in me a certain vague hope and forces me to look at the harsh sun face in the face. A gust of wind blows and scatters my papers. I hear that shouting wind, rattle of birds in slanted flight. And here I force myself into the severity of a tense language, I force myself into the nudity of the white skeleton free of humors. But the skeleton is free of life, and while I'm alive I tremble all over.

will not reach the final nudity. And I seemingly do not yet want it.

~~—This is life seen by life. I may not have a sense, but it's the very lack of sense that a pulsing ve~~  
has.

I want to write you as one who is learning. I photograph each instant. I delve into words as if  
were painting not just an object but its shadow. I don't want to ask why, one can eternally ask why and  
remain eternally without an answer: will I be able to deliver myself over to the expectant silence that  
comes after an answerless question? Even though I may guess that somewhere or sometime the great  
answer exists for me.

And then I'll know how to paint and write, after the strange but intimate answer. Listen to me  
listen to the silence. What I tell you is never what I tell you but something else. Capture this thing that  
escapes me, and I nonetheless live off it and am on the surface of brilliant darkness. One instant takes  
me unthinkingly to the next, and the athenatic theme keeps unfolding without a plan yet  
geometrically, like the successive figures in a kaleidoscope.

I slowly enter into my gift to myself, splendor dilacerated by the last song which seems to be the  
first. I slowly enter writing, just as I have entered painting. It's a tangled world of vines, syllable  
honeysuckle, colors, and words—the threshold of an ancestral cavern which is the uterus of the world  
and from it shall I be born.

And if many times I paint caves it's because they are my submersion into the earth, dark but  
clouded with clarity, and I, nature's blood—extravagant and dangerous caves, Earth's talisman, where  
stalactites, fossils, and stones come together and where creatures crazy through their own evil nature  
seek refuge. Caves are my hell. Caves, dreamlike always with their mists, memory or longing,  
Frightening, frightening, esoteric, greenish with the ooze of time. Rats, with the crosslike wings  
bats, hang glimmering in the dark cavern. I see black, hairy spiders. Rats and mice run frightened on  
the ground and along the walls. Among the stones the scorpion. Crabs, unchanged since prehistoric  
times, through countless births and deaths, would seem threatening beasts if they were human-size.  
Ancient cockroaches drag themselves along in the half light. And all this am I. Everything is heavy  
with dreams when I paint a cave or write to you about one—out of it comes the clatter of dozens  
unfettered horses to trample the shadows with dry hooves, and from the friction of the hooves the  
rejoicing liberates itself in sparks: here I am, the cave and I, in the time that will rot us.

I want to put into words, but without description, the existence of the cave I painted some time  
ago—and I don't know how. Just repeating its sweet horror, a cavern of both terror and wonder, a place  
of anguished souls, winter and hell, an unforeseeable substratum of evil inside a sterile earth. I call the  
cave by its name and it begins to live with its miasma. Then I'm afraid of myself because I know how  
to paint horror, I, creature of echoing caverns that I am, and I suffocate because I am the word and  
also its echo.

But the now-instant is a firefly that turns on and off, on and off. The present is the instant  
which the wheel of an automobile going at high speed barely touches the ground. And the part of the  
wheel that has not yet made contact will touch in an immediacy that absorbs the present and turns it  
into past. I, alive and flickering like the instants, turn myself on and off, on and off, on and off. On  
what I capture in myself, when, as it is now, it's being transposed into writing, has the despair of  
words occupying more instants than a glance. More than an instant, I want its flowing.

Mine is a new era, and it ushers me to the present. Do I have the courage? For the time being  
do: because I come from long suffering, I come from the hell of love, but now I'm free of you. I come  
from far away—from a weighty ancestry. I, who come from the pain of living. And don't want  
anymore. I want the vibrancy of joy. I want the sovereignty of Mozart. But I also want inconsequence

Freedom? It's my final refuge, I have forced myself toward freedom and I bear it not like a gift but with heroism; I am heroically free. And I want the flowing.

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What I write you is not comfortable. I'm not sharing confidences. First, I steel myself. And I am not you and I'm comfortable as myself; my word shatters in the space of the day. What you will know of me is the shadow of the arrow that has pierced its target. I will only uselessly grasp a shadow which does not occupy a place in space, and the only thing that matters is the dart. I construct something missing in you as well as in me—here is my freedom which leads to death.

In this now-instant I'm enveloped by a drifting desire, diffuse with wonder and thousands of small reflections in the water, which runs from a spigot in the grass of a garden fully ripe with perfume, garden and shadows which I invent right now and which are the concrete means of speaking in this my now-instant of life. My state is that of a garden with running water. In describing it, I try to blend words so that time will come into being. What I tell you should be read quickly, as when one takes a glance.

The day is now advanced and suddenly Sunday again in abrupt eruption. Sunday is a day of echoes—hot, dry, everywhere the hum of bees and wasps, the cries of birds, rhythmic hammering at the distance—where do the echoes of Sunday come from? I, who detest Sunday because it's hollow, who want the most basic thing because it's the source of generation—I, who aspire to drink water from the fountainhead—I, who am all this, must, because of fate and tragic destiny, know and experience only the echoes of myself, for I do not capture my real self, I'm in stupefying expectation, trembling and marveling, my back to the world, and somewhere an innocent squirrel scampers away. Plants, plants, doze on in Sunday's summer heat that has flies circling around the sugar bowl. Sunday's flaunting colors, its ripe splendor. And all this I painted some time ago, and on another Sunday. And behold the once virgin canvas, now covered with ripe colors. Blue flies sparkle in front of my window, opening into the air of the torpid street. The day is like the taut, smooth skin of a piece of fruit that undergoes a small catastrophe when bitten, draining its juice away. I'm afraid of this accursed Sunday that liquifies me.

To restore you and myself, I return to my state of garden and shade, cool reality, I hardly exist and if I do exist it's with delicate care. Surrounding the shade is a teeming, sweaty heat, I'm alive. But I feel I've not yet reached my limits, bordering on what? Without limits, the adventure of a dangerous freedom. But I take the risk, I live taking it. I'm full of acacias swaying yellow, and I, who have barely begun my journey, begin it with a sense of tragedy, guessing what lost ocean my life steps will take me to. And crazily I latch onto the corners of myself, my hallucinations suffocate me with their beauty. I am before, I am almost, I am never. And all this I gained when I stopped loving you.

I write you as a rough sketch before painting. I see words. What I speak is pure present, and the book is a straight line in space. It's always present time, and the shutter of a camera opens and immediately closes, but keeping the flash inside it. Even if I say "I have lived" or "I shall live," it is present because I'm saying it now.

I also started these pages with the purpose of preparing to paint. But now I'm caught up with the joy of the words, and I almost free myself from the realm of paint; I feel a voluptuousness in creating what to tell you. I live the initiation ceremony of the word and my gestures are hieratic and triangular.

Yes, this is life seen by life itself. But suddenly I forget how to capture what happens, I don't know how to capture what exists except by living here each thing that may come, no matter what it is. I'm almost free of my mistakes. I let the freed horse run wildly. I, who trot on nervously, delimit myself only by reality.

And when the day comes to an end, I hear the crickets, and become full and unintelligible. The

I live the blue dawn that arrives with its gullet full of little birds—could it be that I'm giving you a idea of what a person experiences in life? I take note of everything that happens to me, to fix . . . Because I want to feel the quivering, vital nerve of the present in my hands and have that nerve of life interact with me like a pulsating vein. May it rebel, that nerve of life, may it twist and throb. And like sapphires, amethysts, and emeralds spill into the obscure eroticism of full life: because in the darkness the great topaz finally shimmers, a word that has its own light.

I'm now listening to savage music, distantly beating, rhythms reaching me from a nearby house where drugged-out youngsters are living out the present. One more instant of ceaseless rhythm, ceaseless, and something terrible will happen to me.

Because of the rhythm's paroxysm, I shall cross over—cross over to the other side of life. How can I make it clear to you? It's terrible and it's threatening to me. I sense that I cannot stop anymore and I'm afraid. I try to distract myself from fear. But the real hammering stopped a long time ago: I am the incessant hammering within myself. And I have to free myself from it. But I'm not succeeding: the other side of me is calling. The footsteps I hear are my own.

I'm writing you as if I were tearing the snarled roots of a colossal tree from the depths of the earth, and those roots were like powerful tentacles, like the voluminous nude bodies of strong women wrapped in serpents and carnal desires of realization, and all this is a Black Mass prayer and a groveling plea for amen: because what is bad is unprotected and needs the acquiescence of God. Behold, creation.

Is it possible that without noticing it I've slipped over to the other side? The other side is a throbbingly infernal life. But there too is the transfiguration of my terror: I then deliver myself to a heavy life of heavy symbols, like ripe fruit. I choose the wrong similes, but they pull me along in the web. A minimal part of the memory of my past's good sense still keeps me in touch with this side. Help me, because something is approaching and it's laughing at me. Quickly, save me!

But nobody can give me their hand so that I can escape: I have to use great strength—and in the nightmare I finally in a sudden convulsion fall prostrate back onto this side. I allow myself to remain splayed on the rough ground, exhausted, my heart still beats wildly, I take in air in huge gulps. Am I safe? I wipe my wet brow. I stand up slowly, I try to take the first steps of a faltering recovery. I'm beginning to steady myself.

No, all this is not happening in real facts but rather in the domain of... of an art? Yes, of an artifice through which there arises a very delicate reality that comes to exist within me: the transfiguration has happened to me.

But the other side, from which I barely escaped, has become sacred, and to no one shall I tell my secret. It seems to me that on the other side I made a vow in a dream, a blood pact. No one will know anything about it: what I know is so volatile and almost nonexistent that it remains between myself and me.

Am I one of the weak ones? a weakling who was caught up in the ceaseless, crazy rhythm? If I were solid and strong wouldn't I at least have heard the rhythm? I don't find answers: I am. This is a word that comes to me from life. But what am I? The only answer is, I'm the *what*. Although sometimes I cry: "I don't want to be me anymore!!" But I affix myself to myself and inextricably a tessitura of life is formed.

Whoever wishes may accompany me: the road is long, it's painful but it's lived. Because now I speak to you in earnest: I'm not playing with words. I embody myself in voluptuous and unintelligible phrases that spiral outward beyond words. And a silence arises subtly from the clash of sentences.

Writing, then, is the way followed by someone who uses words like bait: a word fishing for what

is not a word. When that non-word—the whatever's between the lines—bites the bait, something has been written. Once the between-the-lines has been hooked, you can throw the word away with relief. But there the analogy ends: the non-word, in biting the bait, incorporates it. What saves you, then, is not to write absent-mindedly.

I don't want to have the terrible limitation of the person who lives only by what can be made to make sense. Not I, no: what I want is an invented truth.

What shall I tell you about? I shall tell you about the instants. I exceed my limits and only then do I exist and then in a feverish way. I'm very feverish . . . will I ever be able to stop living? God helps me, I die so much. I follow the tortuous path of roots breaking through the earth, for passion is my talent, in the burning of a dry tree I twist in the flames. To the duration of my existence I give a hidden meaning which surpasses me. I'm a concomitant being: I unite in myself past, present, and future time, the time that throbs in the tick-tock of clocks.

To interpret and shape myself I need new signs and new articulations in forms which are found both on this side of my human history and on the other. I transfigure reality, and then another reality, dreamy and somnambulant, creates me in turn. And I, whole again, roll on the ground and as I roll I pick up leaves, I, anonymous creation of an anonymous reality justified only as long as my life lasts. And afterward? . . . afterward, all I have lived will amount to the experiences of a poor, superfluous being.

But as for now I'm in the center of something that shouts and surges forth. And it's subtle, like the most intangible reality. As for now, time is how long a thought lasts.

It's that pure, this contact with the invisible nucleus of reality.

I know what I'm doing here: I'm counting the instants that drip and are thick with blood.

I know what I'm doing here . . . I'm improvising. But what's wrong with that? I improvise in the same way they improvise in jazz, frenzied jazz, I improvise in front of the audience.

It's so curious to have exchanged paints for this strange thing that is the word. Words . . . I move carefully among them, for they can turn menacing; I can have the freedom to write such as the following: "Pilgrims, merchants and shepherds led their caravans toward Tibet, and the roads were hard and primitive." With this sentence, I give birth to a scene, as in the flash of a camera.

What does this improvised jazz bespeak? It bespeaks arms entangled in legs and flames rising and I passive like a piece of flesh that's devoured by the sharp hooked beak of an eagle that stops in blind flight. I express to myself and to you my most secret desires and with the words achieve a confused, orgiastic beauty. I shiver with pleasure in the midst of the innovation of using words that form intense underbrush! I struggle to conquer more fully the freedom that I have of sensations and thoughts without any utilitarian meaning: I'm alone, I and my freedom. My freedom is of such proportions that it could scandalize a savage, but I know you aren't scandalized with the plenitude that I achieve and that is without any perceptible frontiers. This capacity of mine to live what is round and full—I surround myself with carnivorous plants and legendary creatures, all bathed in the coarse, awkward light of a mythical sex. I go ahead intuitively, and without looking for an idea: I'm organizing. And I don't question myself about my motives. I immerse myself in the near pain of an intense happiness—and to adorn me leaves and branches are born from out of my hair.

I don't know what I'm writing about: I'm obscure even to myself. Initially I had only a lunar, lucid vision, and then I clasped that instant to myself before it died and perpetually dies. I transmit to you not a message of ideas but rather an instinctive voluptuousness of what is hidden in nature and that I sense. And this is a feast of words. I write in signs that are more gesture than voice. All this is what I used to paint, probing into the intimate nature of things. But now the time has come to stop



painting in order for me to remake myself, I remake myself in these lines. I have a voice. Just as when I throw myself into the outline of my sketch, this is an exercise in life without planning. The world has no visible order, and I have only the order of my breathing. I let myself happen.

I'm in the great dreams of the night: because the now-instant is night. And I sing the passage of time . . . I'm still the queen of the Medes and the Persians and I am also my own slow evolution which thrusts itself out like a drawbridge into a future whose milky fogs I already breathe today. My aura is life mystery. I exceed myself by abdicating myself and then I am the world: I follow the voice of the world, I myself, suddenly, with a single voice.

The world ... a tangle of bristling telegraph wires. And the luminosity, albeit obscure: this I am before the world.

A dangerous balance, mine, the danger of my soul's death. Today's night looks at me with torpor, verdigris and enticement. I want inside this night which is longer than life, I want, inside this night, raw, bloody life full of saliva. I want the following word: splendor, splendor is fruit in all its succulence, fruit without sadness. I want vast distances. My savage intuition of myself. But my essence is always hidden. I am implicit. And when I begin to make myself explicit I lose my most intimate intimacy. What color is the infinity of space? It's the color of air.

Us . . . facing the scandal of death.

Listen only superficially to what I say and from the lack of meaning will be born a meaning, from me light, ethereal life is inexplicably born. The dense jungle of words wraps itself thickly around what I feel and live, and transforms everything I am into something of my own that remains beyond me. Nature is all-encompassing: it coils around me and is sexually alive, just that and nothing more, just alive. I too am savagely alive—and I lick my snout like the tiger after it has devoured the deer.

I write you in the very core of the instant. I unfold myself only in the present. I speak today—not yesterday or tomorrow but today—and in this very perishable instant.

My small, fenced-in freedom ties me to the freedom of the world—but what is a window other than a framed by a molding? I'm harshly alive. "I'm leaving," says death, without adding that its taking me along. And I tremble, gasping for air, at having to go with death. I am death. It comes within my very being—how can I say it? It's a sensual death. Like a dead woman I walk the fields in the tall grass stalks of green light: I am Diana, the Huntress of gold, and I find only boneyards: I live in a stratum underlying feeling: I'm barely living.

But these high summer days of damnation blow over me the necessity of renunciation. I renounce having a meaning, and then sweet, painful exhaustion takes me over. Forms round and round intersect in the air. It's hot like summer. I navigate in my galley that defies the winds of an enchanted summer. Crushed leaves remind me of the ground of childhood. The green hand and the golden breast . . . that is how I paint the mark of Satan. Those who fear us and our alchemy stripped witches and magicians seeking the secret sign that was almost always found even though it could be known only by a glance, since the sign was indescribable and unutterable even in the blackness of a Middle Age. Middle Ages, you are my dark underlying, and by the light of the bonfires the branded ones dance in circles, riding branches and leafy boughs which are the phallic symbol of fertility: even in the White Masses blood is used, and drunk.

Listen ... I let you be, so let me be in turn.

But "eternally" is a very hard word: it has a granite "t" in its middle. "Eternity": for everything that has had no beginning. My little head, so limited, bursts at thinking about something which has no beginning and no end—because the eternal is like that. Happily, this feeling lasts only a short time because I cannot bear for it to continue, and if it persisted it would drive me mad. But my head already

bursts at imagining the opposite, something that had a beginning: but where would it begin? And something that was over: but what would happen after it was over? As you see, it's impossible for me to delve deeper into life and possess it, it's aerial, it's my light breathing. But I know full well what I want here: I want the unconcluded. I want the profound organic disorder that nonetheless triggers the intuiting of an underlying order. The great power of potentiality. These, my stammered sentences, are made the very moment they're being written and they crackle they're so new and still so green. They are the now. I want the experience of a lack of structure. Although my text is transversed from beginning to end by a fragile conductive line—what is it? the submersion into matter of the word of passion? An exuberant line, a breath warming the flow of syllables. Life barely eludes me, although I get the conviction that life is other and has a secret style all its own.

This text that I'm giving you is not to be looked at up close: it takes on its secret, previous, invisible totality only when it is seen from a high-flying airplane. Then it's possible to discern the interplay of islands, see canals and lakes. Understand me: I'm writing you an onomatopoeia, a convulsion of language. I'm transmitting to you not a story but only words which live off of sound. Thus, I say to you:

"Exuberant trunk."

And I bathe in it. It's linked to the root which penetrates through us down into the earth. Everything I write you is tense. I use loose words that in themselves are free-flying darts—"savages, barbarians, ignoble decadents, marginal figures." Does this say anything to you? It speaks to me.

But the most important word in the Portuguese language has but a single letter, "é," 'is'. It is.

I'm in its marrow.

I still am.

I'm in the soft, living center. Still.

It flickers and is elastic. Like the gait of a sleek black panther I once saw which paced softly and slowly, dangerously. But not caged—because I don't want it that way. As for the unforeseeable—the next sentence is unforeseeable for me. In the core where I am, in the core of the *Is*, I don't ask questions. Because when it is—it is. I'm limited only by my identity. I, an elastic entity separate from other bodies.

Truthfully, I still cannot completely discern the thread from the skein of what I'm writing you. I don't think I'll ever see it—but I welcome the darkness where the two eyes of that soft panther glow. The darkness is my cultural broth. The enchanted darkness. I go on speaking to you, risking disconnection: I'm subterraneously unattainable because of what I know.

I write you because I do not understand myself.

But I continue following after myself. Elastically. This forest where I survive in order to exist is so great a mystery. But now I think it's really going to happen. That is, I'm going to go in. I mean, into the mystery. I, myself mysterious, and inside the core where I move by swimming, protozoan-like. One day I childishly said: "I can do anything." It was the foresight that one day I would be able to let myself go and fall into the abandonment of all laws. Elastically. The profound happiness: secret ecstasy. I know how to invent a thought. I feel the tumult of newness. But I'm well aware that what I write is only a tone.

In this core I have the strange impression that I don't belong to the human race.

There are many things to say that I don't know how to say. The words aren't there. But I refuse to invent new ones: the ones that already exist should say what can be said and what is forbidden. And what is forbidden I can divine. If I have the strength. Behind the thought there are no words: it-itself is. My painting has no words: it stays there behind thought. In this territory of the it-itself, I'm pu

crystalline ecstasy. *It is itself. I am myself. You are yourself.*

~~—And I'm startled by my apparitions, by what is mythical, fantastic, and gigantic: life supernatural. And I walk holding an open umbrella on a tightrope. I walk to the limit of my great dream. I see the fury of visceral impulses: tortured viscera guide me. I don't like what I've just written—but I'm forced to accept the whole passage because it happened to me. And I respect very much what I cause to happen to myself. My essence is unconscious of itself, and it's for that reason I blindly obey myself.~~

I'm being antimelodic. I delight in the difficult harmony of harsh contrasts. Where am I going and the answer simply is: I'm going.

When I die I will then never have been born or have lived: death erases the traces of seafoam on the sand.

Now is an instant.

And now, already, is another one.

And another. My intent: to bring the future into the present. I move within my deepest instincts which carry themselves out blindly. I feel then that I'm close to fountains, lakes, and waterfalls, all overflowing waters. And I'm free.

Hear me, hear my silence. What I speak is never what I speak but something else. When I speak "overflowing waters" I'm talking about bodily strength within the waters of the world. Capture that something else of which I truly speak because I myself cannot. Read the energy that is there in my silence. Ah, I'm fearful of God and of His silence.

I am myself.

But there's also the mystery of the impersonal that is the "it": I have the impersonal within me and it's not rotten and corruptible by the personal that sometimes drenches me: but I dry myself in the sun and I'm impersonal, made of a dry, germinating seed. My personal is humus on the earth and lives off what has rotted. My "it" is hard like a pebble.

The transcendent in me is the living, soft "if," and it has the thoughts an oyster has. Is it possible that the oyster, when it's torn from its root, feels anxiety? It becomes uneasy in its eyeless life. I used to be in the habit of squeezing lemon juice on live oysters and seeing with horror and fascination how they would recoil. And I was eating the living *it*. The living *it* is God.

I'm going to stop for a while because I know that God is the world. He is what exists. Do I pray for what exists? It isn't dangerous to approach what exists. Deep prayer is a meditation on the void. It's the dry, electric contact with self, an impersonal self.

What I don't like is when they squeeze lemon on what's deepest in me and make me recoil. And the facts of life the lemon on the oyster? Does the oyster sleep?

What is the primal element? soon there had to be two to create the secret, intimate motion from which milk pours forth.

I'm told that after a cat gives birth it eats its own placenta and for four days doesn't eat anything more. Only after that will it drink milk. Let me speak just about nursing. They talk of the milk letting down. What does that mean? It wouldn't do any good for me to explain because the explanation requires another explanation which would lead to another explanation and which would arrive again at the mystery. But I know about the *it* things of nursing children.

I'm breathing. In and out. In and out. How does the naked oyster breathe? If it breathes, I don't see it. Does what I don't see not exist? What moves me most is that what I don't see exists nonetheless. Because then I have at my feet a whole unknown world that fully exists brimming with rich saliva. The truth is somewhere: but it's useless to think about it. I won't discover it and yet I live off it.

What I'm writing you does not come softly, rising little by little to a climax, then to die soft afterward. No: what I write you is made of fire, eyes glowing like coals.

There's a full moon tonight. Through the window the moon covers my bed and leaves everything a milky blue- white. The moonlight is awkward. It stays on the left side of whoever comes in. Then I flee, my eyes closed. Because the full moon is of a light insomnia: it's torpid and sleepy like after making love. And I had decided that I was going to go to sleep so I could dream ... I was yearning for the novelty of dreams.

Then I dreamed something that I'm going to try to reproduce. It's about a film I was watching, it there was a man who was imitating a movie actor. And everything this man did was in turn imitated by others and then others. Every move. And there were ads for a drink called Zerbino. The man would take a bottle of Zerbino and raise it to his mouth. Then everyone would take a bottle of Zerbino and raise it to their mouths. In the middle the man who was imitating a movie actor would say: "This film is an advertisement for Zerbino, and Zerbino really isn't any good." But that wasn't the end. The man took the bottle again and drank and drank. And all the others did the same ... it was awful. Zerbino was an institution stronger than man. The women at that time all looked like airline stewardesses. Airline stewardesses are dehydrated—you have to add enough water to their powder to make them into milk. It's a film about automatic people acutely and solemnly aware that they are automatic and that there is no escape. God is not automatic: for Him, every instant *is*. He is *it*.

But there are questions I asked as a child that were never answered, they remained, plaintive and echoing: "did the world make itself? but where was it made? in what place? And if it was through the energy of God—how did it begin? Could it have been like now, when I'm being and making myself at the same time?" It's because of that lack of answers that I'm so lost.

But 9 and 7 and 8 are my secret numbers. I'm a novice without a cult. Avid for the mystery. My passion for the essence of numbers, in which I divine the essence of their rigid and fatal destiny. And I dream of teeming grandeurs submerged in shadows: I become excited at the abundance in which the velvety carnivorous plants are we who have just sprouted, sharp love—slow swoon.

Could it be that what I'm writing you is behind thinking? What it definitely is not is rationality. Anyone who can stop reasoning—which is a terribly difficult thing to do—should come with me. But at least I'm not imitating a movie actor and nobody needs to raise me to their mouth or become an airline stewardess.

I'm going to confess something to you; I'm a little frightened. It's just that I don't know where this freedom of mine will take me. It's not arbitrary or libertine. But I am free.

Once in a while I'll give you a light story—a melodic aria and cantabile to interrupt this string quartet of mine: a figurative passage to open a clearing in my life- giving jungle.

Am I free? There's something that still restrains me. Or am I fastening myself to it? Either way it's like this: I'm not completely free because I'm tied to everything. In fact, a person is everything. I'm not a heavy burden to carry by yourself because it isn't simply carried: one is everything.

It seems to me that for the first time I'm gaining in understanding about things. The impression is that I don't try anymore to come closer to things so I won't go beyond myself. I have a certain fear of myself, I'm not to be trusted and I distrust my false power.

This is the word of someone who cannot.

I don't control anything. Not even my own words. But it isn't sad: it's humble happiness. I, who live to the side, I'm to the left of whoever comes in. And within me trembles the world.

Does my language seem promiscuous to you? I would like it not to be, I'm not promiscuous. But I am kaleidoscopic: my sparkling mutations, which here I kaleidoscopically register, fascinate me.

I'm going to stop for a while now so I can delve deeper into myself. I shall return later.

~~I'm back. I was existing. I received a letter from São Paulo from someone I don't know.~~  
suicide note. I called São Paulo. There was no answer . . . the phone rang and rang and rang as in a silent apartment. Did he die or didn't he? This morning I called again: still no answer. Yes, he died. I never forget it.

I'm not frightened any more. Let me speak, all right? I was born like this: tearing from my mother's uterus a life that always was eternal. Wait for me, will you? At the moment of painting or writing I'm anonymous. My deep anonymity, that no one has ever touched.

I have something important to tell you. I'm not joking: *it* is pure element. It's the material of an instant of time. I'm not objectifying anything: I'm in true birth-labor with the *it*. I feel dizzy like someone who's going to be born.

To be born: I've seen a cat giving birth. The kitten comes out enclosed in a water sac and a shriveled inside. The mother licks the water sac so many times that it finally breaks and then, behold an almost-free cat, held only by the umbilical cord. Then the cat-mother-creator breaks the cord with her teeth and one more fact appears in the world. This process is *it*. I'm not joking. I'm serious. Because I'm free. I'm so simple.

I'm giving you freedom. First, I break the water sac. Then, I cut the umbilical cord. And you are alive, on your own.

And when I'm born I'm free. That's the root of my tragedy.

No. It isn't easy. But *it is*. I ate my own placenta so I wouldn't have to eat for four days. To have milk to give you. The milk is a *this*. And no one is me. No one is you. This is solitude.

I'm waiting for the next sentence. It's a matter of seconds. Speaking of seconds, I ask if you can stand it that time is today and now and this very instant. I can stand it because I ate my own placenta.

At 3:30 this morning I woke up and, immediately elastic, I jumped out of bed. I came to write to you. That is: to be. Now it's 5:30 in the morning. I don't feel like doing anything: I'm pure. I don't write this solitude on you. But I myself am in the creative darkness. Lucid darkness, luminous foolishness.

There are many things I can't tell you. I'm not going to be autobiographical. I want to be "bio."

I write as the words flow.

Before the mirror was invented, people did not know their own faces except when they were reflected in the waters of a lake. After a certain time everyone's responsible for the face he or she has. I'm going to look at mine right now. It's a naked face. And when I think that there's no equal to mine in the world, I'm happily frightened. Nor will there ever be. Never is the impossible. I like never. I also like always. What is there between never and always that links them so indirectly and so intimately?

At the root of everything there's the hallelujah.

This instant *is*. You who read me *are*.

It's hard for me to believe that I will die. Because I'm bubbling in a frigid freshness. My life is going to be very long because each instant *is*. The impression is that I'm still to be born and I can quite manage it.

I'm a heart beating in the world.

You who read me, help me to be born.

Wait: it's getting dark. Darker.

And darker.

The instant is total darkness.

It continues on.

Wait: I'm beginning to get a glimpse of something. A luminescent form. A milky belly with navel? Wait—for I shall get out of this darkness where I'm afraid, darkness and ecstasy. I'm the head of the shadows.

The problem is that there's a defect in the curtain in the window of my room. It doesn't draw and so it doesn't close, either. So the full moon comes in, and the room becomes phosphorescent with silence: it's horrible.

Now the shadows are dissipating.

I was born.

Pause.

Marvelous scandal... I am born.

My eyes are closed. I'm pure unconsciousness. They've already cut the umbilical cord: I'm loose in the universe. I don't think but I feel the *it*. With eyes closed I search blindly for the breast: I want thick milk. Nobody taught me to want. But now I want. I remain lying down with eyes open, looking at the ceiling. Inside is the darkness. A pulsating I is taking shape. There are sunflowers. There is tall wheat. I *is*.

I hear the hollow rumble of time. It's the world deafly taking shape. If I hear it's because I exist before the formation of time. "I am" is the world. World without time. My consciousness now is light and is air. The air has neither place nor time. The air is the non-place where everything will exist. What I'm writing is music of the air. The formation of the world. Little by little what will be approaches. What will be already is. The future is ahead and behind and on the sides. The future is what has always existed and always will exist. Even if Time is abolished? What I'm writing you is not to be read—it's to be. The trumpets of angel-beings echo in the timelessness. The first flower is born in the air. The ground that is earth is formed. The rest is air and the rest is slow fire in perpetual mutation. Does the word "perpetual" not exist because time does not exist? But the rumble exists. And my existence begins to exist. Does time then begin?

It suddenly occurred to me that it's not necessary to have order to five. There's no pattern to follow and there's not even pattern itself: I am born.

I'm still not ready to speak of "him" or "her." I point to "that." *That* is universal law. Birth and death. Birth. Death. Birth and . . . like the world breathing.

I'm pure *it* that was rhythmically pulsating. But I feel that soon I'll be ready to speak of "him" or "her." I don't promise you a story here. But it has *it*. Who can endure this? *It* is soft and is an oyster and is a placenta. I'm not joking because I'm not a synonym—I'm a proper noun.

There's a line of steel traversing all of this that I'm writing you. There's the future. Which is today.

My vast night takes place in a primary state of latency. My hand rests upon the earth and listens intently to the beating of a heart. I see the large white slug with a woman's breasts: is it a human entity? I burn it in an inquisitorial fire. I possess the mysticism of the shadows of a remote past. And I leave these tortures of a victim with the indescribable mark that symbolizes life. Elementary creatures surround me, dwarfs, goblins, gnomes, and genies. I sacrifice animals to take from them the blood I need for my occult ceremonies. In my fury I offer up the soul in its own blackness. The Mass terrifies me—I who perform it. And the turbid mind dominates all matter. The beast bares its teeth, and horses of allegorical chariots gallop through the distant air.

In my night I idolize the secret meaning of the world. Mouth and tongue. And a loose horse running free. I keep his hoof as a loving fetish. In the depth of my night there blows a crazed wind that brings me threads of cries.

I'm feeling the martyrdom of an inopportune sensuality. I wake at dawn full of fruit. Who will

come to gather the fruits of my life? If not you and I myself? Why is it that an instant before things happen they seem to have already happened? It's a question of time's simultaneity. That's why I ask you questions and why there will be so many of them. Because I am a question.

And in my night I feel the evil that dominates me. What they usually call a beautiful landscape only wearies me. I like landscapes of parched, dry earth with twisted trees, and mountains made of rock, and a dull, motionless light. Yes, that's where the hidden beauty lies. I also know that you don't like art. I was born hard, heroic, solitary, and on my feet. And I found my counterpoint in a landscape lacking all that is picturesque or beautiful. Ugliness is my battle standard. I love the ugly with the passion of equal for equal. And I defy death. I—I am my own death. And no one can go further than that. What is barbaric within me seeks the cruel barbarism beyond me. I see in shades of light and dark the faces of people who twist and sway in the flames of the bonfire. I am a tree that burns with hard pleasure. A single sweetness possesses me: collusion with the world. I love my cross, which I painfully bear. It's the least I can do with my life: accept compassionately the sacrifice of the night.

The strange overtakes me: then I open the black umbrella and become agitated at a gala ball where stars shine brilliantly. The furious nerve within me that makes me writhe. Until the dead of night comes to find me bloodless. The deep night is vast and it devours me. The wind beckons. I follow it and break apart. If I don't join the game that unfolds as life, I'll lose my own life in a suicide of my species. I protect with fire my life game. When my own existence and the world's become no longer tenable through reason, then I'll free myself and pursue a latent truth. Would I even recognize the truth if it revealed itself to me?

I'm making myself. I'll make myself until I reach the core.

About me in the world I want to tell you of the force that guides me and brings me the world, the vital sensuality of clear-cut structures and of the curves that are organically linked to other curved forms. My graphicness and my circumvolutions are powerful and the freedom that blows in the summer bears its own fatedness. The eroticism inherent in living things is scattered through the air, in the sea, in the plants, in us, scattered in the vehemence of my voice, I'm writing you with my voice. And there's the vigor of a robust trunk, of roots buried in the living earth that responds by giving the abundant food. At night I breathe in the energy. And all this in the fantastic. Fantastic: the world for one instant is exactly what my heart requires, I'm ready to die and form new compositions. I'm expressing myself very badly and the right words escape me. My internal form is finely distilled and yet my connection with the world has the naked rawness of free dreams and great realities. I know no limits. And my own strength frees me, that full life that overflows from within me. And I plan nothing in the intuitive labor that is my living: I labor with the indirect, the informal, and the unforeseen.

Now, at dawn, I'm pale and panting and my mouth is dry in the face of what I achieve. Nature sings a choral canticle and me dying. What does nature sing? the final word itself which is not I never more. The centuries will fall upon me. But for the time being a truculence of body and soul manifests itself in the rich avalanche of heavy words that knock each other over—and something savage, primary, and angry rises up from out of my swamps, the accursed plant which is about to deliver itself to God. The more accursed, the closer to God. I've looked into myself and discovered that I want raw, bloody life and the occult meaning is so intense that it has light. It's the secret light of a knowledge of destiny: the bedrock of earth. It's more a presentiment of life than life itself. I exorcise it, excluding all that is profane. In my world little freedom of action is granted me. I'm free only to carry out fateful gestures. My anarchy subterraneously obeys a law where I deal clandestinely with astronomy, mathematics, and mechanics. The liturgy of dissonant swarms of insects that rise from cloudy and pestilent bog. Insects, frogs, lice, flies, fleas, and crabs— everything born of a corrupt, noxious gestation of larva

And my hunger feeds on those putrid, decomposing creatures. My rite purifies my strength. But malignancy lurks in the jungle. I take a draught of blood that satiates me. I hear cymbals and trumpets and drums that fill the air with noises and tumult, muffling then the silence of the sun disc and its prodigy. I want a cloak woven with threads of solar gold. The sun is the magical tension of silence. In my trek to the mysteries I hear the carnivorous plant that laments times immemorial: and I have obscene nightmares buffeted by sickly winds. I am enchanted, seduced, tossed by furtive voices. The almost unintelligible cuneiform inscriptions speak of how to conceive and give formulas for feeding on the strength of the darkness. They speak of naked and groveling females. And the eclipse of the sun causes secret terror that nonetheless proclaims a splendor of the heart. I place the bronze diadem over my hair.

Behind the thought—back even further—is the ceiling I looked at as an infant. Suddenly, I was crying. It was already love. Or maybe I wasn't crying. I was keeping watch. Scrutinizing the ceiling. The instant is the vast egg of warm viscera.

Now it's dawn again.

But at sunrise I think we're contemporaries of the next day. God help me: I'm lost. I need you terribly. We have to be two. So that the wheat can be tall, I'm so solemn that I'm going to stop.

I was born a few moments ago and I'm dazed.

The crystals tinkle and sparkle. The wheat is ripe: the bread is broken. But broken softly? It's important to know. I don't think, just as the diamond doesn't think. I shine, totally clear. I'm neither hungry nor thirsty: I am. I have two eyes that are open. Open to the void. To the ceiling.

I'm going to make an adagio. Read slowly and peacefully. It's a large fresco.

To be born is like this:

The sunflowers slowly turn their corollas to the sun. The wheat is ripe. The bread has a softness that devours itself. My impulse merges with that of the roots of the trees.

Birth: the poor have a prayer in Sanskrit. They do not ask: they are poor in spirit. Birth . . . the Africans have a skin that's black and opaque. Many are the children of the Queen of Sheba with King Solomon. To lull me, recently born, to sleep, the Africans intone a simple chant, monotonously singing about a mother-in-law who, as soon as they leave, comes and steals a bunch of bananas.

There is a love song of theirs that tells, also monotonously, the lament that I make my own: why do I love you if you don't requite? I send messengers in vain; when I compliment you, you hide your face; why do I love you if you don't even notice me? There is also the lullaby for elephants on the way to bathe in the river. I am African: a sad and long and savage fibre of lament is in this voice of mine that sings to you. The whites used to beat the blacks with whips. But just as the swan secretes an oil that waterproofs its skin, so the blacks' pain cannot penetrate and hurt. It's possible to transform pain into pleasure—one "click" is enough. A black swan?

But there are those who are dying of hunger and all I can do is be born. My long, monotonous narrative is: what can I do for them? My answer is: paint a fresco in adagio. I could suffer the hunger of others in silence, but a contralto voice makes me sing—a dusky, black song. It's just my message to a person. A person eats another from hunger. But I have fed on my own placenta. And I'll not bite my nails because this is a peaceful adagio.

I stopped to drink a glass of cool water: the glass in this now-instant is of thick, faceted crystal with thousands of sparkles of instants. Are objects time stopped?

The moon is still full. Clocks have stopped and a hoarse chime slides down the wall. I want to be buried with a watch on my wrist so that something can pulsate time under the earth.

I'm so vast. I'm coherent: my canticle is profound. Slow. But growing. It's growing still more.



it grows enough, it turns into a full moon and silence. . . and a phantasmagoric lunar surface. Witness to the stopping of time. What I write you is serious. It will turn into a hard, imperishable object. What comes is unforeseen. To be uselessly sincere, I must now say that it's six fifteen in the morning.

The risk—I'm risking the discovery of new territory. Where human feet have never trod. First, I have to pass through the perfumed vegetation. I was given a bridal wreath, which now sits on my terrace. I shall begin to make my own perfume: I'll buy the right kind of alcohol and the essence of what has been dissolved, and above all the fixative, which has to have a purely animal origin. Heaven and musk. That's the last austere chord of the adagio. My number is 9. It's 7. It's 8. All behind thought. I am all that exists, then I am. But why this uneasiness? Because I'm not living the only way that there is for a person to live and I don't even know what it is. Uncomfortable. I don't feel well. I don't know what the matter is. But something's wrong and it makes me anxious. Nevertheless, I'm being frank and my game is clean. I begin the game. Only I don't tell the facts of my life: I'm secretive by nature. What is it, then? I only know that I don't want deception. I refuse. I've looked into myself but I don't believe in myself because my thought is invented.

I can now prepare myself for the "he" or "she." The adagio has come to an end. Now I begin. I'm not lying. My truth sparkles like the prism of a crystal chandelier.

But it's hidden. I can stand it because I'm strong: I've eaten my own placenta.

Even though everything is so fragile. I feel so lost. I live off secret, radiating, luminous rays that would smother me if I didn't cover them with a heavy cloak of false certainties. God help me: I have no one to guide me and it's dark again.

Will I have to die again in order to be reborn again? I accept.

I'm going to go back to the unknown within myself and when I'm born I'll speak of "him" or "her." For the time being, what sustains me is the 'that' which is an "it." To create a being from oneself is something very serious. I'm creating myself. And walking in complete darkness in search of ourselves is what we do. It hurts. But it's labor pain: something is being born that is. It is itself. It's hard like a dry stone. But the core is "it," soft and alive, perishable, in danger. The life of elemental matter.

Since God does not have a name, I'll give Him the name of Simptar. It doesn't come from any language. I give myself the name of Amptala. As far as I know no such name exists. Perhaps in a language earlier than Sanskrit, an *it*-language. I hear the tick-tock of the clock: so I hurry. The tick-tock is "it."

I don't think I'll die in the next instant because the doctor who gave me a detailed examination said that I'm in perfect health. There, do you see? the instant passed and I didn't die. I want them to bury me directly into the ground, though inside a coffin. I don't want to be closeted in the wall, as at the St. John the Baptist Cemetery that has no more room in the ground. That's why they invented those damned walls, where one is filed away as in an archive.

Now is an instant. Do you feel it? I do.

The air is "it" and has no perfume. I like it too. But I also like the bridal wreath, leavened with musk because its sweetness is a surrender to the moon. I've eaten jelly made from small, scarlet roses and its taste blesses us at the same time that it assaults us. How to reproduce taste in words? Taste is single and words are many. And as for music, after it's played, where does it go? The only concrete feature of music is the instrument. Well behind thought I have a musical core. But even further back there's the beating heart. The deepest thought is, then, a beating heart.

I want to die with life. I swear I shall only die taking full advantage of the final moment. There is a profound prayer within me that will be born I don't know when. I wanted so much to die of health.

Like someone who explodes. *Éclater* is better: *j'éclate*. For the time being, there's dialogue with you. Later, it will be a monologue. Then, silence. I know there will be an order.

Once again the chaos readies itself, like instruments tuning up to play electronic music. I'm improvising and the beauty of what I improvise is a fugue. I feel throbbing within me the prayer as yet unformed. I feel I'm going to ask to have the facts merely trickle down me without getting me wet. I'm ready for the great silence of death. I'm going to sleep.

I'm up again. Ready for the coup de grâce. Because I'm tired of defending myself. I'm innocent. Even ingenuous, because I give myself without guarantees. I was born by Order, I'm completely calm. I breathe by Order. I don't have a life style: I've achieved the impersonal, which is so difficult to do. For a little while the Order is going to command me to go beyond the maximum. To go beyond the maximum is to live the pure element. There are people who cannot stand it: they throw up. But I'm used to blood.

What beautiful music I hear deep within myself. It's made of geometric lines crisscrossing in the air. It's chamber music. Chamber music is melody-less. It's a way of expressing silence. What I'm writing you is chamber music.

And what I'm trying to write is a way of debating with myself. I'm terrified. Why on this Earth were there dinosaurs? how is a race extinguished?

I see that I'm writing as if I were between sleep and vigil.

Suddenly I see that there's much I'm not understanding. Is the blade of my knife going dull? It seems to me that most probably I don't understand because what I see now is difficult: I'm entering surreptitiously into contact with a reality new to me that still doesn't have thoughts that correspond much less a word to signify it: it's a sensation behind thought.

And, behold, my evil dominates me. I'm still the cruel queen of the Medes and the Persians and I'm also a slow evolution that extends itself like a drawbridge toward a future whose milky mists are already breathe. My aura is the mystery of life. Renouncing my name, I go beyond myself, and then I am the world. I follow the voice of the world with my single voice.

What I write you has no beginning: it's a continuation. From the words of this song, a song that unites mine and yours, there arises a halo that transcends the lines ... do you feel it? My experience comes from the fact that I've already been able to paint the halo of things. The halo is more important than the things and than the words. The halo is vertiginous. I shove the word into the barren emptiness ... a word is like a fine, monolithic block that projects a shadow. And it's a heraldic trumpet that proclaims. The halo is the *it*.

I need to feel the *it* of the animals again. It's been a long time since I've come into contact with primitive animal life. I have a need to study animals. I want to capture the *it* in order to be able to paint not an eagle and a horse but a horse with the open wings of a giant eagle.

I tremble all over when I enter into physical contact with animals or with the mere sight of them. Animals fantasticate me. They're the time that one can't count as it passes by. I seem to have a certain horror of the living creature that is not human and that has my own instincts, although free and indomitable. An animal never substitutes one thing for another.

Animals don't laugh. Although sometimes a dog laughs. Beyond the panting mouth the smile is transmitted by eyes turned brilliant and more sensual as the tail wags in happy anticipation. But a cat never laughs. A "he" I know doesn't want to know anything more about cats. He had his fill of cats forever when a certain she-cat he had went into periodic fits. Its instincts were so overpowering that when it went into heat, after long and plaintive meows, it would throw itself off the roof and land

wounded on the ground.

~~—Sometimes I'm electrified when I see an animal. I'm hearing the ancestral shout within myself now: it seems I no longer know which of us is the animal, I or the creature. And I become completely confused. It seems I become afraid to face the suppressed instincts which I'm forced to assume in the presence of the animal.~~

I once met a "she" who humanized animals by talking to them and giving them her own characteristics. I don't humanize animals because it's a crime—one has to respect their nature—what I do is I animalize myself. It isn't hard and it comes easily. It's a matter of not fighting it and simply surrendering.

There's nothing more difficult than to surrender yourself to the instant. This difficulty is human pain. It's ours. I give myself over in words and I give myself over when I paint.

To hold a bird in the half-closed palm of your hand is terrible, it's as if you had the trembling instants in your hand. The terrified bird beats its thousands of wings frantically and suddenly its fin beating wings are in your partly closed hand and suddenly it becomes intolerable, and so your hand opens quickly to free the fragile prisoner. Or you return it quickly to its owner so he can give it the greater relative freedom of the cage. Birds ... I want them in trees or flying, far away from my hand. Perhaps one day I'll become intimate with them and enjoy their ever so light presence of the instant. "Enjoy their ever so light presence" gives me the sensation of having written a complete sentence by saying exactly what it is: the levitation of birds.

It would never occur to me to keep an owl, although I've painted them in the caves. But in San Teresa thicket, a "she" found a baby owl, all alone on the ground and needing its mother. She took it home. She sheltered it. She fed it and cooed to it and finally ended up discovering that it liked raw meat. When it became strong, it seemed natural that it should immediately fly away but it delayed in going to search for its own destiny, which would be to rejoin those of its own wild species: the fact is that diabolical bird had become crazy about the woman. Until in one rush—as if it were struggling with itself—it freed itself in a flight into the depths of the world.

I've seen horses running free in the pasture where, at night, the white horse—king of nature—would fling into the air its long whinny of glory. I've had perfect relationships with them. I remember myself standing there with the same hauteur as the horse, running my hand along its naked skin. Through its rough mane. And I felt like this: the woman and the horse.

I know history that is past but that also repeats itself. The "he" once told me that he lived for a while with part of his family in a small village high in a valley in the snowy Pyrenees. In the winter the famished wolves would come down from the mountains to the village to forage for prey. All the inhabitants cautiously locked themselves indoors to shelter in their houses the sheep and horses and dogs and goats, human and animal warmth together—all alert to hear the scratching of the wolf's claws on the locked doors. Listening. Listening.

I'm melancholy. It's morning. But I know the secret of pure mornings. And I relax in the melancholy.

I know of the story of a rose. Does it seem strange to you that I speak of a rose when I'm concentrating on animals? But it behaved in a way that reminds one of animal mysteries. Every other day I would buy a rose and put it in water in a vase made especially thin to hold the long stem of a single flower. Every other day the rose would wilt and I would replace it with another. Until one particular rose turned up. Rose-colored but without artificial coloring or grafting, the most vivid rose color in nature. Its beauty filled the heart. It seemed so proud of the swelling-out of its wide-open corolla and of its petals that it proudly held itself almost erect. Because it did not remain totally erect

it bent gracefully over the thin, fragile stem. An intimate and intense relationship was established between myself and the flower: I admired it and it seemed to feel itself admired. And so glorious did that apparition remain and so great was the love with which it was observed that the days went by and still it did not wilt. The corolla remained wide open and swollen out, fresh as a new-born flower. It endured in beauty and in life for an entire week. Only then did it start to show signs of some weariness. Then it died. It was with great reluctance that I exchanged it for another. And I never forgot it. The strange thing is that the maid asked me one day right out of the blue: "and that rose?" I didn't even ask which one. I knew. This rose, long lived through constant love, was remembered because the woman had noticed the way I looked at the flower and in waves transmitted my energy to it. She had blindly intuited that something was happening between me and the rose. It—I felt like calling it the "jewel of life" because I always give names to things—had so much instinct for nature that it and I had been able to live each other profoundly, as only happens between animals and human beings.

Not to have been born an animal is one of my secret nostalgias. Sometimes they call from the distance of many generations and I cannot answer except by becoming uneasy. It's the call.

Through this free air I fall, this wind that hits me on the soul of my face, leaving it anxious and in an imitation of a constantly renewed, anguishing ecstasy, plunging once again and continuously into something bottomless, falling endlessly until I die and finally reach silence. Oh, sirocco wind, I do not pardon you for death, you who bring me a memory battered by things lived which, sadly, always repeat themselves, though under other and different forms. The thing lived frightens me just as the future frightens me. The latter, like what is already past, is intangible, mere supposition.

This instant I'm in a white void, waiting for the next instant. To count time is merely a working hypothesis. But what exists is perishable and that forces one to measure immutable and permanent time. It never began and it will never end. Never.

I learned of a she who died in bed, but shouting, "I'm turning off!" Until she was blessed with a coma in which she was freed of her body and had no fear of dying.

To write you I first cover myself with perfume.

I know you through and through by having lived you completely. Life runs deep in me. The dawns find me pale from having lived the night of deep dreams. Even though at times I skim over an apparent shoal which has beneath it a dark blue, almost black depth. That's why I write you. For the sake of the soft breath of the thick algae and in the nascent tenderness of love.

I'm going to die: there is this tension, like that of a bow ready to release its arrow. I remember the sign of Sagittarius, half man and half animal. The human part, in classical rigidity, holds the bow and arrow. The bow can let fly at any instant and hit the mark. I know that I'm going to hit the mark.

I'm going to write now as my hand moves: I won't interfere with what it writes. This is a way of avoiding any gaps between the instant and myself. I perform in the core of the instant itself. Nevertheless there are some gaps. They begin like this: as love impedes death and I don't know what I'm wanting to say by that. I trust in my incomprehension, which has given me a life free of understanding, I've lost friends, I don't understand death. The terrible duty is that of going all the way to the end. And without relying on anyone. To live oneself. And in order to suffer less, grow a little dull. Because I can't bear any longer the pain of the world. What's there to do when I feel totally what other people are and feel? I live them, but I have no strength beyond that. There are certain things I don't want to tell even to myself. It would betray the *it-is*. I feel that I know some truths. That I already anticipate them. But truths do not have words. Truths or truth? I'm not going to speak of God. He is my secret. It's a sunny day today. The beach was windblown and free. And I was alone. Without needing anyone. It's hard because I have to share what I feel with you. The calm sea. But on guard and

suspicious. As if that calm couldn't last. Something is always about to happen. The improvised and  
fateful unforeseen fascinates me. I've entered into such strong communication with you that I've  
stopped existing. You have become an I. It's so hard to speak and say things that cannot be said. It's so  
silent. How do you translate the silence of the real encounter between the two of us? It's extremely  
difficult to do: I looked at you fixedly for a few instants. Such moments are my secret. There was what  
is called perfect communion. I call that an acute state of happiness. I'm terribly lucid and it seems I'm  
achieving a higher plane of humanity. Or of inhumanity—the *it*.

What I do by involuntary instinct cannot be described.

What am I doing in writing you? I'm trying to photograph perfume.

I write you seated by an open window in my studio.

I write you this facsimile of a book, the book by someone who doesn't know how to write; but  
the most ethereal realms of speech I almost don't even know how to speak. And above all, I don't know  
how to speak to you in writing, I, who have become used to your being the audience, though  
distracted one, of my voice. When I paint I respect the material I use, I respect its primordial destiny.  
So when I write you I respect the syllables.

A new instant in which I see what is going to come next. Even though to speak of the instant  
seeing I have to be more discursive than that instant: for many instants will pass before I can unfold  
and exhaust the single, rapid complexity of a glance.

I write you to the degree that I am able. Am I being hermetic, as in my painting? Because  
seems one has to be terribly explicit. Am I explicit? It matters little to me. Now I'm going to light  
cigarette. I might go back to the typewriter, or I might stop here for good. I, who am never adequate.

I'm back. I'm thinking about turtles. Once I said out of pure intuition that the turtle was  
dinosauric animal. I later read that it really is. I have the strangest intuitions. One day I'm going  
to paint turtles. They interest me very much. All living things, man notwithstanding, are a riot of  
wonderment: we were formed and there was a lot of raw material left over—*it*—and then the animals  
were made. But why a turtle? Perhaps the title of what I'm writing you should be something like this  
phrased as a question: "And turtles?" You who read me would say: "It's true that it's been a long time  
since I thought about turtles."

Suddenly I've become so restless that I'm capable of saying "This is enough" and ending what  
I'm writing you, which is based mostly on blind words. Even for unbelievers there is the instant of  
despair which is divine: the absence of God is a religious act. In this very instant I'm asking God  
to help me. I need it. I need it more than human strength. I'm strong but also destructive. God has  
to come to me since I've not gone to Him. Let God come, please. Even if I don't deserve it. Come. Come.  
Perhaps those who are the least deserving are the most needful. I'm restless and harsh and despairing.  
Although I do have love inside me. I just don't know how to use love. Sometimes it tears at my flesh  
like barbs. If I can hold so much love within me, and nevertheless continue to be uneasy, it's because  
I need God to come. Come, before it's too late. I'm in danger, as is everyone who's alive. And the only  
thing that awaits me is precisely the unexpected. But I know I'll have peace before I die and that one  
day I'll experience the delicacy of life. I'll perceive—just as one eats and lives the taste of food. My  
voice falls into the abyss of your silence. You read me in silence. But in this limitless, mute field  
I'll unfold my wings, free to live. Then I accept the worst and go into the core of death and for this I'm  
alive. The sensitive core. And the *it* thrills me.

Now I'm going to speak of the sadness of flowers in order to feel more fully the order of what  
exists. First, I gladly offer you the nectar, sweet juice that many flowers contain and insects avidly  
seek. The pistil is the flower's female organ that generally occupies its center and contains the

rudiments of its seed. Pollen is the fertilizing powder produced in the stamens and is contained in the anthers. ~~The stamen is the flowers masculine organ. It consists of filaments and anthers in the inner part of the flower and encircles the pistil.~~ Fertilization is the union of the two elements of generation—the masculine and the feminine—from which springs the fertile fruit. "And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed." (*Gen. 2:8*)

I want to paint a rose.

The rose is the feminine flower that gives of itself all and so completely that the only joy left it is to have given itself. Its perfume is an insane mystery. When its scent is deeply inhaled it touches the intimate depths of the heart and leaves the inside of the entire body perfumed. The way it opens into womanhood is very beautiful. The petals taste good in the mouth—all you have to do is try them. But the rose isn't *it*. It is *she*. The red ones are highly sensual. The white ones are God's peace. It's very rare to find white roses at a florist's. The yellow ones are happily alarming. The pinks are in general more fleshy and have color par excellence. The orange-colored ones are the product of grafting and are sexually attractive.

Pay attention please: I'm inviting you to move to a new kingdom.

Now, the carnation has an aggressiveness that comes from a certain irritability. The tips of the petals are sharp and turned up. The carnation's perfume is somehow mortal. Red carnations scream violent beauty. The white ones recall the small coffin of a dead child: the smell becomes pungent and people turn their faces away in horror. How can one transplant the carnation to canvas?

The sunflower is the great child of the sun. So much so that it knows how to turn its enormous corolla in the direction of its creator. It doesn't matter whether it's mother or father. I don't know. Is the sunflower masculine or feminine? I think it's masculine.

The violet is introverted and its introspection is of the deepest sort. They say it hides because it is modest. That's not it. It hides to be able to find its own secret. Its almost-not-perfume is muffled glory but it demands that people seek it out. It never ever shouts out its perfume. The violet says frivolous things that cannot be said.

The immortelle is always dead. Its dryness tends to eternity. Its name in Greek means "golden sun."

The daisy is a happy little flower. It's simple and skin-deep. It has just one row of petals. Its center is a child's game.

The lovely orchid is exquisite and unfriendly. It's not spontaneous. It requires keeping under glass. But it's a splendid woman and that cannot be denied. One also cannot deny that it's noble because it's epiphytic. Epiphytes are born on other plants without, however, taking away their nutrition. I was lying when I said it was unfriendly. I love orchids. They are born already artificial—they are born already art.

The tulip is a tulip only in Holland. A lone tulip simply isn't. It needs an open field to be.

The wheat flower blooms only in the center of the wheat. In its humility it has the daring to appear in diverse forms and colors. The wheat flower is Biblical. In Spanish crèches it's not separated from the shafts of wheat. It's a small heart, beating.

But the angelica is dangerous. It has the perfume of a chapel. It bears ecstasy. It recalls the host. Many people have the urge to eat it and fill their mouths with its intense, sacred scent.

The jasmin is for lovers. It suggests coyness. They walk hand in hand, swinging their arms, and they kiss each other softly to the aromatic almost sound of jasmin.

Estrelita is masculine par excellence. It has the aggressiveness of love and healthy pride. It seems to have a cock's comb and its crow. But it doesn't wait for dawn. The violence of your beauty.

The bridal wreath has the perfume of a full moon. Its phantasmagorical and a little frightening and it's for someone who loves danger. It only comes out at night with its dizzying scent. The bridal wreath is silent. It secrets itself in deserted, shadowy corners and in the gardens of darkened houses with closed windows. It's very dangerous: it's a whistle in the dark, which nobody can stand. But I can stand it because I love danger. As for the succulent cactus flower, its large and fragrant and brilliantly colored. It's the juicy vengeance that makes a desert plant. It's splendor springing from despotism and sterility.

I'm too lazy to tell you about the edelweiss. Just that you find it at an altitude of three thousand four hundred meters. It's white and woolly. Rarely seen: it's aspiration.

The geranium is a window-box flower. It's found in Sao Paulo, in the neighborhood of Grajaú and in Switzerland.

The victoria regia is in the Rio de Janeiro Botanical Gardens. Enormous, almost two meters in diameter. They are aquatic flowers, they take your breath away. They are Amazonian: the dinosaurs of the flowers. They spread deep tranquility. They are majestic and simple at the same time. And even though they live on the surface of the water, they offer shade. What I'm writing you has a title in Latin: *De natura florum*. Later, I'll show you my study transformed into a linear design.

The chrysanthemum is profoundly happy. It speaks through color and dishevelment. It's a flower that impetuously controls its own savagery.

I think I'm going to have to ask permission to die. But I can't, it's too late. I listened to *Firebird*—and passed utterly away.

I have to interrupt this because—didn't I tell you? didn't I tell you that one day something was going to happen to me? Well, it just happened. A man named Joao just spoke to me over the phone. He grew up deep in the Amazon jungle. And he says that there's a legend there about a talking plant. It's called the *tajá*. And they say that when the Indians perform a magic rite on it, it actually speaks a word. João told me something that has no explanation: that one night he came home very late and when he was walking along the corridor where the plant was he heard the word, "Joao." He thought it was his mother calling him and he answered, "I'm coming." He went upstairs but he found his mother and father fast asleep.

I'm tired. I tire easily because I'm an extremely busy person: I take care of the world. Every day I look out from my terrace at that bit of beach and ocean and I see the thick, whiter foam and see that during the night the waters have advanced restlessly. I see this from the marks the waves leave in the sand. I look at the almond trees on my street. Before I go to sleep I take care of the world and I see that the night sky is starry and indigo blue because on certain nights, instead of black, the sky seems to be an intense indigo blue, a color I've painted on glass before. I like intensities. I take care of the boy who is nine years old and who is dressed in rags and who is extremely thin. He'll get tuberculosis, if he doesn't have it already. I become exhausted at the Botanical Gardens. I have to watch over thousands of plants and trees and especially the victoria. She's there. I watch her.

Notice that I don't mention my emotive impressions: lucidly, I speak of some of the thousands of things and persons I take care of. And it has nothing to do with a job because I don't earn money with it. I just end up knowing what the world is like.

Is it a lot of work to take care of the world? Yes. For example, it forces me to remember the inexpressive and therefore frightening face of the woman I saw on the street. I also watch over with my eyes the misery of those who live up above on the hillsides.

You'll ask me why I take care of the world. It's because I was born with a mission.

When I was a child I took care of a line of ants: they walk Indian file carrying a tiny piece

leaf. Which doesn't keep each one from communicating something to the ant coming in the opposite direction. Ants and bees are not *it*. They are *shes*.

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I read the book on bees and since then I've taken special care of the queen mother. Bees fly and deal with flowers. Is that banal? This was my own reaction. Part of the job is to note the obvious. There is, in the small ant, all of a world that escapes me if I'm not careful. For example, it has an instinctive sense of organization, a language beyond the supersonic and sexual feelings. Now I can find a single ant to watch. They weren't all killed, that I know, or I would have heard about it.

Taking care of the world also requires a lot of patience: I have to wait for the day an ant will appear.

I just haven't found anyone to account to. Or have I? For I'm accounting to you right here. I account to you right now for that spring that was so dry. The radio bristled with static. Clothing crackled and curled with electricity from the body and the comb made your charged hair stand on end—that was a hard spring. It was exhausted from the winter and burst out all electric. From any point you were at, you seemed to be heading into the far-off distance. Never before were there so many roadways. We spoke very little, you and I. I don't know why the world was so angry and so electrical. Poised. But poised for what? My body was heavy with weariness. And our big, inexpressive eyes were like the wide-open eyes of the blind. On the terrace there was the fish in the aquarium and we had drunk at that hotel bar looking out at the countryside. With the wind came goat dreaming: at the other table a solitary faun. We looked at the icy cold drink and dreamed statically inside the transparent glass. "What was that you said?" you asked. "I didn't say anything." Days and more days went by and everything in that danger and the geraniums so bright red. One instant of tuning in was enough to get the barbed static of spring in the wind all over again: the shameless goat dream and the fish all empty and our sudden urge to steal fruit. The faun crowned now in solitary leaps. "What?" "I didn't say anything." But I noticed an initial rustle, like a heart beating under the earth. I quietly placed my ear to the ground and heard the summer open up a roadway deep inside the earth and my heart under the earth—"nothing, I didn't say anything!"—and I felt the patient brutality with which the closed ear opened inside, giving birth, and I knew the sweet heaviness with which the summer was ripening a hundred thousand oranges and I knew the oranges were mine. Because I was in love.

I pride myself on always being able to sense a change in the weather. There's something in the air—your body warns you that something new is coming and I become agitated through and through. I don't know for what. During that same spring I was given a plant called a primrose. It's so mysterious that in its mystery it contains what is inexplicable in nature. Apparently there's nothing unusual about it. But precisely on the first day of spring the leaves die and in their place closed flowers are born that have a feminine and masculine perfume that is extremely intoxicating. People are sitting close by and looking absent-mindedly. And see, they are slowly opening and surrendering themselves to the new season right under our astonished gaze: it's spring settling in.

But when winter comes I give and give and give. I bundle myself up. I cradle broods of people to my warm breast. And you hear the noise of someone having hot soup. I'm experiencing rainy days now: the time for me to give is close at hand.

Don't you see that this is like a child being born? It hurts. Pain is exacerbated life. The process hurts. Coming-into-being is a slow, slow, good pain. It's a full stretching to the point where the person can stretch no more. And the blood is thankful. I breathe, I breathe. The air is *it*. Air with wind already a he or a she. If I had to force myself to write to you I would become very sad. Sometimes I can't stand the force of inspiration. Then I paint oppressed. It's very good that things don't depend on me.



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