



Cold Fingers

I.

The cold came from the gut,
from the bones, from the fingers outwards,
it clutched the pen and
slid shivering onto the paper.

Several chilled letters,
undecipherable hooks
joined into words, which only
time elucidated, were written
for the needs of the moment
by a *corpus delicti*.

A criminal gestuary – later insisted
Alphonse Bertillon, the then famous
autodidact and antropometre,
farfelu et sidérant,
later much admired by Božo Škerlj,
the first Yugoslav doctor
of physical anthropology –
creeps into features, the anatomy of letters,
into their measurements and proportions.

The result of a bizarre judicial expertise.
justified by the spinning of hooked callipers,
which says that
Alfred Dreyfus committed fraud,
that he *forged his own*
writing and thus profited from the writing
of his wife and brother, includes the symptoms of all
feeble-minded regimes:
the swarming of phantasmal germs
and the fumbling arbitrariness of argumentation.

II.

Flakes of befuddled imagination,
scattered in the corners of the *Belle Époque*.

An open sanatorium of patients,
which seizes the world.
Patients connected
to a new perception of the world:
with a national tremble and
with carefully tended,
domesticated neuroses.

The biometric drama
of military personnel and the Catholic reaction
in consecutive swings between
cryptomania and cryptomachia.

Concurrent news from *our parts* contain
a specific epistemology:
there lies in them pragmatic evidence
of excessive deaths,
conspiracies *from the outside world* and of
internal profiteering practices:
in Trieste, *the apprentice Josip Cozzutti falls
onto a flipped chair, lands on one of the
chair's legs and dies*. In Kranjsko they are reporting
*on anarchist and nihilist conspiracies across the world,
on the witch at the stake in Biun at Laško,
and on how a bullet went through the head of a female gypsy and
hit a male gypsy in the chest*. In Dolenjska there
was a *pig exposition that showed good progress;
22 porsciutto pigs were displayed and 34 old ones*.
*Even better successes, feels the author, can be achieved by
ennobling the domestic herds with the Yorkshire tribe*.

Degradation (5th January 1895)

I.

*They will see on my face,
they will read in my stance,
they will assure themselves
of my innocence.*

They saw nothing,
they read nothing, and
they assured themselves
accordingly.

Alfred Dreyfus,
a captain in the French army,
the father of two small children,
upright as a menhir
in the morning sun, is
degraded before the
entire military assembly
of the École militaire.

Dark phantoms of the spirit
amass above the city.
Below, in their shadow,
stands a broken man
with the traits of a lonely
goat by Umberto Saba
on his face: inside him
echoes the lament
*ogni altro male,
ogni altra vita.*

II.

The body tenses forcefully
to bear the injustice that intrudes
like a poisonous storm
through the border of the skin.

The body extends forcefully
into a polygon of mindless collision
of two consistencies, two different tremors:
the lynching of rabble and the dignity of a person.

The photograph after the degradation portrays
Dreyfus like a suddenly wilted plant,
like a desecrated space of memory
after barbarous looting.

Can we really be certain that
the desecrators have been mastered, that the
exterminating hurricane has truly ended?

Or has it perhaps merely increased, and imperceptibly engulfed
the whole world, which now seems to live peacefully in
the sanctuary of its inner eye?

A Visit to the Fallen Master (Barrès)

I.

A rapidly rising
shooting star on
a journey through the patriotic galaxy,
an inspiration to numerous young writers.

The squeeze of his hands:
the dry left hand of the conquering march
of the hectic socialist years,
the metaphysical right hand of a feverish man
with categorical certainty.
Extreme left, extreme right:
the two hands of Maurice Barrès.

Léon Blum visits him
and offers him the opportunity
to declare for a revision
of the Dreyfus trial,
but Barrès' hands falter,
flux and reflux – until the right
grabs the pen and writes:
that Dreyfus was a traitor,
I deduce because of his race.

The bizarre attraction of circling
around one's axis, the loud triptych
Culte de moi, the sonar roof
of words with no commitment,
which in a moment scatters into
feed for xenophobic birds of prey and
the feathers of direct democracy.

And the cry of the arrogant starling,
We are never so happy
as when we worship,
collectively lengthens into the
worship of national consciousness.

II.

There follows a multiple progression
of racists and reactionaries:
to smooth life to the
blinding shine of skulls and bones.
Whipping up blood in dim
cellars of national energy,
anti-intellectualism and biblical exegesis.
Voted into all prestigious national institutions,
Barrès – the idol of apathetic poets
de la terre et des morts.
He melds the voices of ancestors with
a lecture on earth and roots,
with the instinct of death he orchestrates
the muffled sounds
of dark catacombs.

III.

In the spring of 1921, the dadaists, led by Breton,
accuse Barrès of *an attack on the certainty of spirit*
and sentence him to twenty years
of forced labour. But Barrès
has already done the work: his entire
legacy is like a forced
unloading of a limited mind.
It seems that he could be a successful
contemporary Slovenian poet.

IV.

*Do you prefer before, meanwhile, or after? I
prefer before, since it is later always meanwhile.*

But there truly was no time for observation
- not before and not after, but also not meanwhile –
Barrès' cult metamorphosis
from *sol invictus* into
sol victorieux.

Barrès overtook them: he was
an empathetic observer, with participation –
he was always meanwhile already there.

Heretics

I.

Women's struggle for entry into the public sphere
in the final decade of the 19th century:
Is the reason for transforming an intolerable
world any different from today?

Emancipation on the margins of anaesthesia,
the autonomisation of colours that the established
spectre conceals and suffocates. The exit of bodies from
warm places of memory and the separation of herds.

The sudden undressing of universal voices.
the baring and evidencing of their topography:
whose is it, to whom does it belong, the suddenly
woken continent of sleeping history?

II.

But this is not important,
what is important is understanding the relations and
co-relations, intervals and shades
of realisations in a far-off cry: a tiny
shift of the real in the imaginary.

To make visible the door and the doorframe
through which one must enter:
to perceive the sliver in the eye of the door's porthole.

Have women really stepped into the river, or
do they still wait on the banks
admiring the tympanum heralds?

Gender is an effect of the body, which arises
in a wrinkle and has the power to conceive a new land,
all else is the *mimesis of gender*, a varnished rim
of history that conceals the corrosiveness of universal places.

Séverine

I.

Cette femme ravissante

from the magma of life: somebody's
daughter, somebody's mother.

Renoir's view of her is sentimental,
reified, eroticised. The caress of the pen,
a tangle of longing. A bracelet with
a snake's head on the right wrist:
the presumptuous sign of seduction and sin.

The intrusion of floral decor
from behind the right shoulder
is the place of the symptom in the painting:
it must not surprise us that
Renoir turns into an anti-Dreyfusard,
and Séverine into a Dreyfusard.

II.

An overly hasty leap into marriage:
the following leaps are *transgressions of law*
or their anticipations:
a decade before the existence
of Naquet's law,
she demands a divorce from her husband.

A liaison with Jules Vallès,
revolutionary writer,
a communard twenty years her senior,
triggers familial ostracism, but
a failed suicide
curiously revives her,
as if in the proximity of death
she had shaken off the leprous scales
of an inorganic legacy,
the dead tissue of a collective:
*I am dying from that which enables you
to live off revolt and hatred.*

III.

The intertwining of grey (Vallès) and blonde hair (Séverine):
a thick rhapsody of whiteness without mourning
the crumbled walls and burnt-out chapters,
a cataract of prefigured freedom;
a fresco of common efforts in love, which
settles into the *Cri du people* and speaks of the anatomy
of the regime and the scars of communards.

Three years after Vallès dies is long enough
for the *frairie* of classified bodies to push her away
from the editing board, and a mere year later
the *Cri du people* finally slips into silence.

The chain reaction of scandals
runs smoothly onwards: What else can we
expect from people who called her
a red bitch, counting out
her lovers with the turns of a spinning top?

IV.

The international feminist congress in Paris, 1896:
an unexpected meeting of memorium and memory,
like a momentary revelation of high and low tides,
which have retreated from the coastal basins,
which we can no longer think in their original context,
like a reanimation of recognition
hibernating in the bodies of women.
And more than that – exit from the
old bodies into new realisations.

Persisting in a life which is not only linear.
Persisting in a life which
comes in unequal orbits and
melds into a defiant melody,
like the sliding of the needle
along the circular grooves of an old
vinyl record adheres into music.

But not the music of forgetting:
we are not addressed by emptiness,
but by exiled ingredients,

pain we did not cause
yet must accept and pass forward.
The strange and silenced voice expects us to
generously tune it with our own,
without equating the two.

*The independence of my opponents,
I love like my own, I understand
that the mind of my neighbour is not cast from mine.*

V.

La Fronde:

the first journal that is
wholly the work of women.
Marguerite Durand and Séverine.
No hunching, no hesitation,
the determined steps of women in
a land of unrest are like
a social metronome.

Overcoming obstacles
for some people means a lightening;
not for the hordes and not the for sects.
Stepping out from statistical tables
returns dignity to some people;
not to the herd and not to the masses.

It is because of the people that I lower myself into the mine.
It is because of the poor that I join strikes.
It is because of the sugar crumblers that I change into a worker's clothes.

VI.

The struggle for the rights of living beings,
human, woman, animal,
unfolds on a jetty that the sea,
foaming in the storm, tries to swallow.

Pacifism, suffragettes, *L'Humanité*,
the years of Dreyfusard meetings in *Les trois marches*,
three steps of social legitimacy.

Coco bleu – a parrot
and three small dogs – Rip, Tiote, Megot:
a community of subjects of furred being,
and a donkey – Cadichon, also
an equal member of the household,
who willingly pulls a picnic basket
along the Montmartre boulevard.
A procession of non-depilated memory
of an era, overgrown with sharp grass.

I want no more than that they should persuade me.
If they command me, I defy them.

VII.

Rebellion is a majestic spreading of the mind:
words unfold and
breathe in air like parachutes.
During the fall it is necessary to
notice them, to attach to them and
travel part of the way with them.

The only possibility
that human life is not only
the blind headlong crash of hope,
hastened by free fall.
Rebellion is the military mobilisation of emancipation,
which unfolds synchronically in
all areas of life.

VIII.

The sick diatribes of fascism
bounce off Séverine like
a league of threatened interests,
fears, privileges.
grudges, prejudices,
routines and misunderstanding
... which have collectively taken up
wild Medea's cry:

Only us,
and it is enough!"

In the first days of July 1927, when
my mother first
takes in the world,
Séverine supports
Sacco's and Vanzetti's struggle.

Before death she demands
to be buried on a Saturday, so that
workers would be able to attend her funeral.
With a swallow at her grave she leaves
the world in the year that *The Blue Bird**
flies into the sky in Ljubljana.

* *Modra ptica*, which translates into *The Blue Bird*, was a Slovenian literary journal launched in 1929.

The Old Furnace (Zola)

I.

The dark strand of the collective
drags behind me.

All the things I have been:
emptier of cesspits,
uprooter, empty bellows,
Lahon, pornographer, lover of Prussians, and
finally greedy Jew, as if
being human is the worst crime of all.

In some photograph they gouged out my eyes,
but even so blinded I
bore into them unsettlingly, so that
they preferred to scrape me
from the walls and shelves.

Witnesses at my
trial stood silent
before the obstruction of law,
the crowd outside had
an attack of rabidity.

In actual fact I was
only ever interested in the angle
under which
light is
deformed as little as possible, but
I also knew how to sense
the dark flame of the collective.

II.

I did not build
defensive barricades, it did not
seem necessary.

Rubble from the chimney
was the weapon
of somebody else.

Now I am merely a thought.
an internal outburst of the body,
which refuses to be broken.

Plans flew
from me
like water.

The final intake of breath
wandered off
with the morning breeze.

And *Justice*, which remained at the
halfway point, history fulfilled
according to its means.

Proof (Jaurès)

I.

What a summer!

The puffed up honour of the military, which demands
the appanage of justice for itself.

My eyelids are swollen from
dogmatic manoeuvres and
the harmonies of a mechanical world,
full of emptiness and discipline.

Cavaignac and his
heraldic eugenics,
then Henry's admission:
a slashed throat of lies.

And then a sudden turn:
a phalanx of officers, expert witnesses and
officers of the main headquarters
are replaced by Chartists, historians
and paleographers.

The historical method is
the reference for this fearless mission,
très hygiénique pour l'esprit.
What a summer!

Is this landscape political,
legal, or ethical?
What figure am I within it?

II.

I saw the trees bent, broken,
a cypress cleaved in half.
It is not in my power to call forth a new,
upright poetic figure of the cypress,
which would defy the storm.

It is in my power not
to collapse and not to relent until
they have been gathered,
all the arguments and all the artefacts that testify to
the uprightness of trees,
to the innocence of Dreyfus.

So many events,
piled into a single fate,
one single life, which quietly burns
like a fresh handful of ash. To go farther
and even farther – with the red eyes of the republic
and with the unbearable rustling of paper.

I was not among the first, I needed some
time, which I used to be here now:
Proof is a patient,
illegally suffocated act
of words beneath words,
which struggle for breath,
which cannot reach air.

I will help them.