

SERGE PEY

**Every poem is a decapitated
head
held up by a single hair**

**Translated by Yann Lovelock and Patrick
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Acknowledgments:

- Poems 1-10 (the first series) published online by Raunchland Publications, 2005, as "One is not the number".
- Poem 8 of the second series published in issue No. 5 of *Circumference:Poetry in Translation*, New York, 2006
- Poems 1, 7, 35 and 37 of the second series published in *Metamorphoses* 16.1, Northampton, Massachusetts, US, Spring 2008
- Poems, 26, 27, 29 and 36 of the second series in *LanguageandCulture.net* (US) Winter/Spring 2009
- Poems 10 and 19 of the second series in *Absinthe New European Writing Issue 11* (US)

1.

One is not the number
that the number begins with
We're for ever two
in number
each with the world's
mirror in our keeping

We are the Dual number
that projects its own mirror
into the infinity of a single mirror
that has no number

Simply to see ourselves
as the world
or not of the world
or as the number
that won't be added up

2.

The eye is an empty space
that spies the emptiness
of a glass undrunk

Behind the look
there's an emptiness
that looks at the look
encircling eye and emptiness

The look is a body
that makes itself a face
so as to strip away
the emptiness of glasses
drunk every day
and give what we're
looking at a drink

If now
we strip this face away
using a glass
broken by dint of never being drunk
we see the look
that is the bone cage
of what we don't see
and combs us

The look is that part
of death that sees us
without dying without living
and drinks us straight down

In a cupboard there's always
a glass we do not drink from
that we break one day by accident
when we're moving and give
the removals man a drink

What sees us
reflects what we drink
in everything
seen

3.

To look is to play a star's
part in the sky

The routes that see
in the dark put ropes
about our neck

The blood of eyes
that have seen things
forms the look that has kept
things back

The eyes that we turn
on the world
are holes that the world
explodes

Eyes are holes
rolled up
to go into a look
that is the big hole
that sees the world
by putting us
this once
to sleep against it
like a top

4.

The eyes don't look at the same time
at what looks at them

There is always
the look's weight on
the right and the left
scale of what sees

We are the centre
of the world that encircles us
when the scale is balanced
between our squinting eyes

Sometimes when looking
we make the world hesitate
between the holes it wants to enter
to see itself and make eyes
that want to see us

We are at the same time
what we do not see
and what we do see
for what we do not see
sees us
and what we do see
is blinded seeing us

Our eyes teeter
like feet
that drank the world
straight down

Someone always puts a full stop
at the end of this straight line
to make it seem that the world is a sentence
that stops when one wants it to

No one ever drinks the full stop
that no one's put at the bottom

5.

The look is a net
cast for the eyes of passers-by
so as to keep seeing

Thus every look
is the sum
of all the eyes that met
walking down one of infinity's streets

Thus every look
is the eyes' flock
caught in the net of the world
cast by a trawler of meetings

Death is the sum of all the looks
that look at the world
less our look
that looks at the world
at times from the other side of the world

The trawler's look is the look
that's lacking from the box of all that looks
like the hole in the game a child plays
pushing letters while writing his name
in a square
into which other small squares slide
to make up words

The eye that does not exist lets us
see the look
that glides over all the holes
in the world

Through seeing we see
what doesn't exist

6.

Look and eyes are
the knotted rope
of a starry acrobat

If on a rope that's knotted
a knot is missing between two handholds
it's impossible to pull oneself
right up to the crossbar it's tied to
The span between handholds
becomes too great
for us to be able to
touch the crossbar's ultimate knot

So if
with an inward look we close our inner eye
we can no longer climb
to the top of the look
that looks at us

The eyes are at once
the children of the look
and the fathers of the look
Eyes that see are seen
Those that do not see are not

We are the size
of a small infinite knot
between the rope and the knots
below the crossbar

We are not the rope
We are not the knot
We are the hand that burns ourself
because we slide between two knots

7

Behind the eyes there's a hole
that hails the holes
with the voice of a hole

Two equals One
like the two sides of an isosceles
triangle that rises to its peak
like a knife

Every look is the infinite
point of this knife

A hole
is a look that sees the hole
that is the hole the knife makes

But the look we have
is lower down
in our belly where the holes' little sun
rolls under the knife that opens it

When we look at an eye
we see infinity
at the back of the eye
holed by the knife

We are made of infinity
as if all the eyes of the world
were gathered together
in the same punnet
of fruit beneath a knife
big as a tree and tiny as a knife

The look is the infinity
of the tree
and the eyes bits of this infinity
we strip from the tree with a knife

Thus the eyes are finite
since they're detached
from infinity

**To die is to attach one's eyes to infinity
and hiding one's knife become infinite again**

**The look is only
the infinity of the finite
and the eyes only
the finite's infinity the knife cuts**

8.

Every look is a fragment
of death
further out than death

The void fills with the emptiness it sees
until it no longer sees itself
for seeing us

A look cannot be added to a look
but empties what it sees into the sink of the world

The absence of what was seen
is revealed in the look like a theft

To look is to get back what
was seen then stolen

It's the way that any look
flies above our eyes
and that we exist behind our eyes
like birds

Our eyes are a meal
for things the small deaths
we sow in the ground

We walk on the dead
simply to get used
to looking

The earth is cake we push beans into
for the cake we'll eat
when we're under the earth

9.

To laugh
in this world
is to share the head between our two eyes

We come from the world
that can see
and we go back to the world
that sees still
with an eye gouged out
as if on a black flag

We go on weighing
our eyes on the scales
before seeing
what sees us
and what comes from seeing us

Every look has a weight that weighs
what is weightless on the scales
of its holes

We are the scourge
of all that sees
and we see with a hole
full of holes

To be the look is to see
through the zero that sees us
and that annuls what sees
our hole and all

10.

The eyes are controlled
by threads that come down from the sky
through our head
and the sky becomes the look that holds the thread
through all our holes

Our eyes go further down
through our belly and legs
Our eyes are attached to our feet
Our eyes are teeth
Our eyes are nails and knees

We walk upright
since the sky holds us up
by its threads

We are what walks
We are what stops walking
Our shoes are the eyes
we've torn from our heads
and stick under our feet
in order to walk

When we cry we
wash our feet with our head
like after a long
desert journey

The dust that falls
is what we've looked at
through the hole that encircles us
and hasn't moved

1.

Four houses open
it's the breeze

On thirsty days
we'll drink in the shadow of dogs
Everything that happens
your eye
the broken shoe of a cloud
a dead man's black watch
the fountain of lukewarm blood
from the first flower

You leave the night's change
on the counter and go home
as if you were the guest
with an open door
at arm's reach

At that very moment
as you pass out the bread
the door's put on the table

(Stick I, 1983, Toulouse, for Jean-Pierre Picard and Denis Pey)

2

You can't comb one hair alone

**The very eye that sees in things
a centre or a point
becomes itself centre and point
of the thing**

**But the eye that propounds the difference
between the point and the centre
is a centre more extremely centred
and the point it points out**

**When you eat a fruit
you become the double
of the tree that bears the fruit**

**When you break a bridge
you become the double of the river
that braces this bridge**

**But what about the tree
that eats its own fruit**

**What about the river
that breaks the bridge embracing it**

**What about the circle
that erases the point of its compass**

**The difference is the journey
between the point and the centre
or between knife and blade
for the real path
that throws us back on ourselves
like a pontoon over a point**

**You can't comb
one hair alone
on the hairless scalp
of the eye that sinks to the centre of things**

**Every point is the end of a hair
that you look straight at and tug to the very end
so as to know the impossible face
of the one whose hair it is**

**Every poem is a decapitated head
held up by a single hair**

3

We've seen the staircase that led
to the stairs
and the window that opened the window
and the cellar filled with flowers
as high as smoke from the hearth

The staircase
that helps us walk is disguised
as a child's toy gun
to remind itself of the eternal rent
it has to pay the dream

The top step
turns us round
magnifies the stairs we've just climbed
wakes up the whole house
then helps our shadow slide up to us

Behind our back
the shadow clasps our shoulders
shrouds our feet and our head
by becoming ourselves for an instant

In front of us
it breaks loose
wanting to catch
someone who resembles us
then turns round and tugs us by the hair
right up to the wall where it disappears

We grab it just once
like a lever to lever ourselves up
towards something we recognize

But just this once
not taking it in
since we've already become
a transparency
on the wall

4

When I get up
I say good day
even to those who do not greet me
so as to free them
from their night's wait for the light

The hour that lights the lamp
wakes day up
and moves the flight of two white flies
into the fire

Nothingness wakes
to love that starts to love itself

My right hand washes by itself
in the fountain
refusing my other hand

How can you wash one hand
without another
someone says

We have one hand of water for the day
We have one hand of earth for the night

But we have two hands
when we talk
to make in our mouth
a third hand
that washes the other two
in water and earth

The water left over erases your face
when you look at it
and its mirror reflects only another mirror
that goes on burning
even when you turn your back
leaving it alone to contemplate
penguin-like its infinity

5

The poem is an ear
and not a mouth
for man was born
of an ear that sees
and every ear copies the child
curled up in the belly of a star
in search of the sky it hasn't got

Only the mouth that can become an ear
is a real mouth

I speak
You speak
like a star
We conjugate the night

The poem not born from the ear
has no hands in its eyes
does not walk with feet
claws out tongues
and muzzles the mouths
kisses shut

The five ways of walking
from the foot to the mouth
from the ear to the eye
from the foot to the ear
from the mouth to the eye
from the foot to the eye
do not all lead
to the belly of the star

The fire's left and right
are linked
in the sky's heavy hand
and infold ears
that have not heard

6

So
we enter without eternity
the words
of the dead crone

In the garden
the B of a bull makes
a rose's centre burst
and judges its heart of black blood
against me against you

The star builds its own oven
where it cooks itself
and hides a mouth that resembles us
in its tempest

You ask me now
to measure your house
but I have no tools
and only an angle can measure an angle

When you empty your hands
of the angels it stole
a house is rebuilt in a house
by taking out its window frames
and opening only angles without sides

My only tool is a pure child
that I bed in a cradle of air
or a vapour between noon and midnight

My only tool is a ladder
that I burn in the hearth

7

The day will come
when we'll spell fruit
when the pit thrown in the lake
will mouth us
in the fountain

The speed of love
takes us from tower to well
and the centre suddenly becomes a man
who sustains emptiness by giving it
a new number

I stop for a moment
to drink a glass of early morning mist
with my father
whom I claw from among
the memorial's eroding names
the long list of fire

We talk about the garden
About the watch he lost

We talk of the holes to be dug
for the trees
of sand guarded by rifles

We go on about an old boat

The speed of love
takes us from tower to well
and the centre suddenly becomes a man
who sustains emptiness by giving it
a new name

(June 1983 - Stick-Memorial at the Argeles concentration camp)

8

We no longer heard the wind
or the frogs behind the hill

At the foot of the bridge a woman was sewing her lips
to the mouth of a drowned man
that she'd pulled from the river

You told me to come

The air had to be avenged now
by throwing cold sand from the bank

Someone set the ball rolling
with the brow of an endless shell

Then two men buried your fingernails
in the cellar of a star
and nets were set in the night
to catch planes and birds

(for Rigoberta Menchu, June 1983)

9

You'd hoisted a child's photo
onto the fountain's garrotte

A tree was asking directions
from the forest rides
as they strode towards the houses

On the doorstep
you cleansed the Meridian
by washing pebbles

Under the clouds
men became men
then changed into birds
showing the way
to the Junctions
of their children with the dead

Infinity retreated step by step
faced with a photo
and bumped into someone who mocked it

Man saves the dust
and borrows shoes
to walk
so that you don't recognise
his feet on the path

In his look
not the glint of an eye
but the print of a cut finger

The bare hand
they grafted
onto his chest
gestures its response
by revealing what's seen
even more

The man asks:

Who will live in the ruin?

Who will place sheets
over the rotten furniture
of those who have left?

Who will leave his jacket
hanging on hooks
in the corridors?

11

To make a house
is to erect shadows
so they hold up the walls

To saw up smoke to make a fire

It's to take out the four-legged chair
in the morning
then put it back in the cellar at night
with the sun's two dogs

The growing beauty of silence
goes on throwing unending laundry
through a half closed window
emptying like a sink
over the bunch of roses

Under my shirt a shining crow
hits on a thought
that distorts that beauty
and summons it from the void
where it closes up

Write to me
on the stamp
or the gum
or the air
then leave a blank sheet
in the envelope
without the signature of a bird
of all birds

Shoot the messenger in the back
and shave his head

Burn a house in his mouth
before he speaks
then tear out his tongue

Break the bridge
Turn it over like a boat
and cross the river
without swimming

In the days to come
the star is an open knife
in the child with no path
and newly born

13

So I say unto you
welcome my mouth in your mouth

Scald the sky with coffee and salt

Lick the scabs of your new tattoo
that a ten-year old applied in the moonlight

We all have a sable heart
on our arms
inscribed with initials
and only our dogs know
they aren't all the same
as they sniff us out in the street

So I say unto you
welcome my mouth in your mouth
and tell me about the last thing
and the first word
and the last word
and the first thing

The ancient star will know us
on the path
as it pushes the dogs aside
with its clubfoot

14

The edge of the flower
is also the centre of the flower

I steal my own hands
to love you

The edge revolving around me
is turned into words
that I pronounce:
plate
river or ashtray
repeating rifle

I stay silent
in the continual collapse
of coincidences that rot
the edge of things:
the wind in its closed trees
or a new hand that grows
at my fingertips
to rob you again

I steal zeros
from the stall of a single number
where the seller could be
my mirror image

I steal my own hands
for the birthday of your hands
since there's no edge and there's no centre
and the seller's
not after me

(to Christine Valcke, 28 January 1995)

15

God yawns
and we come simultaneously
in his open mouth
and the edge of the sky
remains an eagle tracing
an ever-widening circle above us

This morning God
is the cinder pile of a zero
we burnt just like that
with a torch

In the memory of
his open mouth
we plant the centre where we were

We follow the centre
to the edge of the cinders
and hope alone is the consonant
that changes our speech
by looking at the edge
where nothingness never spoke

The point is the centre
of what we do not know
the centre is the point
we know around the edge
that encircles us and sees us

We don't know what we write
on the cinders
but we create as many centres as the fire
dying in the infinite points of its dust

16

**By saying
we must listen to the silence of doors
still asleep
in the trees**

**By saying
we must go through the centre of doors
even when clawed out
of their walls**

**By saying
tables are doors with syllables
for trestle**

**By saying
we don't eat but we're
right behind the bread that cuts the knife**

**By saying
we've found the door
that can open the key we carry
for ever slung about our neck**

**By saying
we don't know
which hand hung it there
one night when day was stronger
than night**

(Stick XVI, Toulouse; letter of 23 Sept. 1984)

Like this god that never arrives at himself
and no longer exists in the end
Like us between us
and almost us
Like this god between himself and his almost image
who no longer sees his statues as himself
Like this glass fish
that slips between our fingers
Like this woman who tears out her eyes
before the thin reflecting surface
of a mirror
Like us between us and almost us
who break this mirror
Like yourself who sticks the pieces on the other
side of a photo for collection by a small death in the
future
Like us between us
grabbing the sky by the hair
that hoists us up towards a cloud's retreat
Like this cloud fading between our fingers
when we grab hold
Like us who arrive at ourselves
until we always exist
even when no longer here

Death leaves very white steps
the beginnings of snowfall

Death vanishes outside into thin air

The *Dead crone*
goes on sitting at table
For a long time we forget she no longer exists
We serve her blood soup
Someone says she'll arrive
before the meal's over

A child puts her napkin away in the drawer

Often he thinks he can hear her saying softly

*"The sun's just a bit of noise,
right, my widowed child"*

19

To denounce the well
that steals the bird's song
by drawing it into its vaults

To denounce the line
that stops the bird's flight
against a clothes line full of sheets

To denounce the wind
that veers the bird
far from its mouth's spring

To denounce the bird
that saw the well

To denounce the bird that saw the line

To denounce the bird that saw the wind

To denounce the bird
that saw the bird

The soldier
that tortured us
went on suckling a dog
before our eyes
at the barrel of his gun

Never denounce the speech
that has spoken

(for Hector, Santiago de Chile, October 1985)

20

**You see
the shadow lengthening
before the light comes**

**You know
that all joy is sober**

**That the open hand
has no fingernails**

**That a child
is the parent of your eyes
for you recognize yourself
when you look at him**

Rain runs past the dry fountain
and I drink a glass of cloud
held in the mountain's left hand

What eye could show its white in all directions
or fold itself over as blind skin does

The two eyes I carry in my hand
are the overflow of a face
I'm looking at and that does not see itself in the sink
lost among the knives and dishes

For infinity creates a simple man to see himself
the way a forest creates a simple tree for fire

For if the eyes walk
the feet know how to look
further than infinity suckled
by its own clouds

For to see you is to walk until I drop
and the night has naked eyes
to pick the star grapes
and my sex goes barefoot
to pick your love

For to live is to see
from only one angle of the finite house
thinking that one sees

For to die is to see
from all angles of the infinite house
till one no longer thinks one sees

22

No doubt they had trampled the night

Remember they invented a black water
that they drank standing up
in their horseshoes

Their implements:

Neither compass
nor knot
Neither skeleton
nor bird
Neither mare's tail
nor sheep's shank
Neither twot
nor tool
Neither infinity
nor the brisket
at infinity's end

For you they fastened a spring-head
solidly to the wall
beside a beast
they'd led down from the sky

You were
neither the Minced
nor the Emptied
nor the Filled

You were
neither the instant
nor the laugh
neither eye
nor arm

Nor the eye
at arm's length

23

By changing death
I uncross the directions
that the cross points to
on the closed mountain

To break a mirror is to photograph
yours in my amorous eye

God is double
in the void full of frozen panes
and razes his stony face
with a stroke of silence

Take the table to bits
to set the door

Take the door to bits
to set the table

The nails of the cross are the teeth
of a huge comb
that grooms the infinite hair
that imagines it's part of us
Yet nevertheless
instructions come written
on all the packaging
of the poem delivered with this cross

Break the comb if it makes us bleed
when we comb the single hair
of the love that lights us up

Unnail the man from the cross
and pick up all the hair
at the foot of the closed mountain

Burn the pieces of comb
that a little barber left
beside the body he couldn't make talk
and knew all

(1984 - poem for Rigoberta Menchu)

24

**Now you love the rain
that fires repeatedly at the river's corpse**

**You are skilled at grafting
tornado and shadow**

**You order back the alders off the road
when you see the countryside no longer looks the
same**

(February 1994, the Chiapas guerilla - Stick-poem for the Sub.)

25

**Air chips give fire a sex
with tiny sheep**

Ten thousand pipits on their tousled chine

**I turn over a bridge
like a boat on the river
to battle with a fisherman
who looks like me with his net**

**The neophytes of the word
gobble up the flies
hatched from the meat of books
then use the grub
to scribble lost signatures
on mirrors**

**The preceptors sign
breaking their names over the pages
to find much later the unknown name
that will lay hold of them**

Dying is the marriage of a moment to earth

**But today
you have to know how to mix signatures
for we must rise together
with those who sign and those who don't
and the flies make no distinctions
marching over mirrors
that verify the schemes our breath makes**

(Montségur, November 1987)

26

Despite the wind
I patiently fill
a bowl with dust
to give a sip to snake
and vulture

Fire had filled the house
then wrote a poem
that burned up all the poems
I'd yet to write

when you asked me to come
and look for you at the heart of the fire

when I found only riddled music
that fiddled solo
by flowing in the river's direction

(Chiapas, 1993)

27

Now the light has become
the sempstress of bad shadow

I've brought out a chair
to sit in front of the house
and got lost panhandling a star

Reason rains
like a storm in the street
where mirrors clap hands
spattering a half-erased
noise with light

I talk to myself
You fasten your return
and your dog to the door knob
You lay table over half of my death
and invite the doors I have not opened
to join in the meal

Last night's thought tumbles me
to the top of what I see

Now the chair is seated on the chair
and thinks by concentrating on its feet

I sit myself on the deadest part of me

I look at light
tapping bad shadow

I coach myself conscientiously
to disavow the Star

He says

The counterpoint gives his body to time
and leaps into death

The counter fire sneaks his body from the fire
and extinguishes the blaze

The counter tide gives the tide its direction
and effaces the current

The counterplea is the second plea that verifies the
first

The counterattack gives its bodies to death
in order to rob death

The same goes for
countercharge
counterchange
counterpace
counterpoise
counterscarp

The same goes for
counteract
counterfoil
counterpart
countersign

The mad spy that chases papers
on windy days
has shoes without laces

He is a mad counterspy
that chases counterpapers
to add pages
to his hidden journal of the road

Before him the sun drains the fire
and its searching eyes
drink in the entire head
of a flower unplucked
from the vase of light

29

He does not know that his infinity falls silent

that even the mirror
no longer reflects his breath

that he has to use his lips
to leave
imprint or saliva

that his height is down

that he has to drag himself
up to the shadows of trees
to grow along with them

30

Getting through to the half outside
by leaving one foot inside the house
and your hands pocketed
in its heart's suit

Here
the dust is the last occurrence of the moment
on the theatre's silent step

I stay true to the resistance of dust
that makes love against the curtains
and masks

Here the Rod trembles when I beg him
and my mouth changes its first letter:
and I say God trembles when I beg him

What I offer you is this:
a logical window
a hand full of silent logic
a poker game of logicians

The illogical clown only raises the curtain
once the audience has left

The logical face
of death indoors
as against the logical face
of death outdoors

Our laughter sometimes backfires
baring its teeth at us
and we no longer know
what bread to feed
its passing which doesn't pause on our lips

(to René Gouzenne, November 1990)

I migrate into the sun's nocturnal thought
 and see my stationary bike
 careering its wheels like two zeros
 one against the other

That's zero against zero
 or spectacles to see the path's
 double

My bike is a metaphysical tool
 like a bow that with its arrow and string
 parts all the angles
 like a mallet of butterflies
 like a glass of water passed from hand to hand
 or tobacco smoke in your open sex

More particularly
 this morning my solitary bike is the last
 of the Presocratics
 on the motorway

Beside Heraclitus the black Beside
 Thales the Bear's determiner Beside Anaximander
 the boundless who played the sphere's game
 Beside
 Pythagoras master of two principles
 Empedocles preserver of the wind
 Epimenides the purifier and Abaris the pedestrian of
 Ether
 Beside
 Philolaos census taker of numbers
 and the motherless 7 Beside
 Archytas who invented the rattle and
 duplication of the cube and who gave birth
 to the mechanical dove Beside
 Parmenides Beside
 Zeno of Elea Beside
 Leucippus
 Beside Democritus Beside
 Anaxagoras Beside
 Protagoras Beside
 Georgias Beside
 Prodicos Beside
 Hippias Beside Etcetera
 Beside

The poet treads down on the pedals
unwinding the chain that reels the wheels
towards zero

The poet thinks of the anti-zero
by looking at the empty clock
that spins the two wheels of his bike

More particularly
this morning
my bike that pedals alone between the cars
is the last
of the Presocratics

The zero of the mouth that pronounces it
is only the circle that surrounds the hole

The sun's rays alone
pass us through the hole
to the wheel that replaces the zero
in the halted number the wheel recounts

I look at my bike
which speeds off down the road
and adds the circle of the sun
to the chain that joins its wheels

(February 1990, for Julien Blaine)

And we become the absolute
Wholly the one we pray to
no difference between the being of the tree
and the being of the sky
and the Being that does not spin
within our bones

And we pray like the blank void
we drink in our bowls
before filling them with fever for the snow

In the chisel's alphabet
the U and the V get confused on the stone
and we don't know
which is the consonant and which the vowel
pronounced in our presence

What term of fire stops short
in our saliva

God's letters
write those of the void
in the inchoation of our creations
in the inchoation of our quietus

The poem only prays for the sex of night
and the silent drum that ushers
the star in the dustbin
and the fly that lands late
on our laughter

Suddenly the letters mesmerise the World
and share it out in the poem confessing us

Suddenly the letters open our eyes
to our final work as man
that hesitates stumbling
between term and terminus

I'll carry your photos in my mouth

The knot of grass
encloses its own rain
in a bag of beans and boons
or the small pebbles
I put on your windowsill

I tire my wrist out
under the submissive lamp of dawn
then I repel the plate's emptiness
for another emptiness to take its place
next to the knife

Nothingness doesn't make good the mistake

Nothingness envelops
the pale blade of the propeller
that touches me

Nothingness breaks its fingers
and grafts its hand to a knife retrieved
on the path

The tongue is a horse
that gallops in the star's belly

Here the eye is possible
and insists on the well that reckons
the verbs of the serpent
twined about its stick

Listen:
Love is the orphan son
of the High subtraction
Hate is the orphan daughter
of the Low subtraction

In the columns of the stellar
schoolboy's sum
identities add up to signatures
without ever a reckoning
for their sign is made of two lines
that face each other and neither knows
who holds the mirror the other sees itself in

34

A distant star
turns back time
when I penetrate your eyes
up to god's virgin sex

The difference awakes for the sleeper
in his slumber and opens him a poppy
in his head

The look that remembers its eye
wakes the vision where we are written
but the eye that remembers its look
sends the face that effaces us to sleep

The compass vomits North
in the little eye hidden
behind the bone of a dove
we've killed

Smoking makes
us see the fire that observes us
solely to reverse its smoke
to its paper breast

We are the wind
and once again we penetrate
our eyes to the infinite sex that recites us

35

After his death
the coffin lid
was a mirror laid flat like a table

With glasses and plates
scarf
ashtray and pebble

Those holding the ropes
saw their bodies descend
slowly with him
and gently buried their faces

(We loved him
We shaved him
we dressed him and he didn't know)

He once said that life
was a white spider
that unstitched the bare fabric of our clothes

that it was a password
for doors and ears
told from table to knife

that the first one who'd betrayed its secret
brought death to the dead
by removing the living from the first supper
and from the last the dead

(We loved him
We shaved him
we dressed him
but he didn't know)

The night relies on me
to light the fire
The day relies on you
for me to put the fire out

Who knows breath apart from death
that blows up a child's balloon
above our heads

I'll be the tread that halts the foot
I'll be the breath that your mouth breathes
I'll be the dream that the eyes inspect
I'll be the laughter that trips off his lip
I'll be the dead man who buries his death

No rehearsal repeats itself
not even the dead's music
or when I again say softly to you
with a knife gently placed
against your ear
"No rehearsal repeats itself"

Who knows breath but
death's balloon
up above us
replacing our heads

I broke eggs
filled with the hair of noon into the fire
and I consume your clothes
so as to knot what remains of our death
into the flower where we're asleep

Outdoors the moon
goes on a bender
a light in winter
and a bird crosses a hoop of birds
not silently and with no return

(for Gherasim Lucas, Cogolin, August 1984)

37

To become a man
is to go on from the needle that turns
and points out the figures
to the number that moves around the wheel
and freezes the needle

I lay you down on the snow
I send you to sleep in the fire
I hatred you with love

So as to live
you call the dead
yet to be born
out of the earth

To become a number
is to rehearse the single hair
that links the motionless movement
of all the hair of two who've died
to the infinite number of the dead

(for André Velter, 1995)

1

(M-C. Bâton I, 1983, Toulouse, à Jean-Pierre Picard et Denis Pey)
(*Stick I, 1983, Toulouse, for Jean-Pierre Picard and Denis Pey*)

2

(M-C. Bâton II, Toulouse, Janvier 1983)
(*Stick II, Toulouse, January 1983*)

3

(M-C. Bâton III, 15 février 1983, Toulouse, Saint Cyprien)
(*Stick III, 15 February 1983, Toulouse, Saint Cyprien*)

4

(M-C. IV, Toulouse, Saint Cyprien, 4 mars 1983)
(*IV, Toulouse, Saint Cyprien, 4 March 1983*)

5

(M-C. V, Toulouse, Avril 1983)
(*V, Toulouse, April 1983*)

6

(M-C. VI, Toulouse, Janvier 1984)
(*VI, Toulouse, January 1984*)

7

(M-C. VII, Toulouse, Juin 1983 - Bâton-Mémorial Camp de
concentration d'Argeles)
(*VII, Toulouse, June 1983 - Stick-Memorial at the Argeles
concentration camp*)

8

(M-C. VIII Pour Rigoberta Menchu, Juin 1983)
(*VIII, for Rigoberta Menchu, June 1983*)

9

(M-C. IX Toulouse, Février 1983)
(*IX Toulouse, February 1983*)

10

(M-C. X, Toulouse, 1984)
(*X, Toulouse, 1984*)

11

(M-C. XI , Toulouse, Décembre 1983)
(*XI, Toulouse, December 1983*)

12

(M-C. XII, Toulouse, Mars 1984)
(*XII, Toulouse, March 1984*)

13

(M-C. IV, Toulouse, Mars 1983)
(*IV, Toulouse, March 1983*)

14

(M-C. XIV, Toulouse, à Christine Valcke, 28 janvier 1995)
(*XIV, Toulouse, to Christine Valcke, 28 January 1995*)

15

(M-C. XV, Toulouse, Juin 1995)
(*XV, Toulouse, June 1995*)

16

(M-C. Bâton XVI Toulouse, Toulouse lettre du 23 sept 1984)
(*Stick XVI, Toulouse; letter of 23 Sept. 1984*)

17

(M-C. XVII, Toulouse, avril 1985)
(*XVII, Toulouse, April 1985*)

18

(M-C. XVIII, Toulouse, Décembre 1983)
(*XVIII, Toulouse, December 1983*)

19

(M-C. XIX, A Hector, Santiago du Chili, octobre 1985)
(*XIX, for Hector, Santiago de Chile, October 1985*)

20

(M-C. XX, Toulouse, Juillet 1983)
(*XX, Toulouse, July 1983*)

21

(M-C. XXI, Toulouse, Février 1990)
(*XXI, Toulouse, February 1990*)

22

(M-C. XXII, Toulouse, 1983-1996)
(*XXII, Toulouse, 1983-1996*)

23

(M-C. XXIII, 1984- Poème pour Rigoberta Menchu)
(*XXIII, 1984- poem for Rigoberta Menchu*)

24

(M-C. XXIV, Toulouse, Février 1994 , Guérilla du Chiapas- Bâton-
poème pour le Sub.)
(*XXIV, Toulouse, February 1994, the Chiapas guerilla - Stick-poem for
the Sub.*)

25

(M-C. XXV Montségur, Novembre 1987)
(XXV, Montségur, November 1987)

26

(M-C. XXVI, Chiapas, 1993)
(XXVI, Chiapas, 1993)

27

(M-C. XXVII Toulouse, Mars 1986)
(XXVII, Toulouse, March 1986)

28

(M-C. XXVIII, Toulouse, Mars 1991)
(XXVIII, Toulouse, March 1991)

29

(M-C. XXIX, Toulouse, Novembre 1983)
(XXIX, Toulouse, November 1983)

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(MEC. XXX, Toulouse, à René Gouzenne, Novembre 1990)
(XXX, Toulouse, to René Gouzenne, November 1990)

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(M-C. XXXI, Toulouse, Février 1990, A Julien Blaine)
(XXXI, Toulouse, February 1990, to Julien Blaine)

32

(M-C. XXXIII, Toulouse, Février 1984-1996)
(XXXIII, Toulouse, February 1984-1996)

33

(M-C. XXXIII, Toulouse, 1983-1996)
(XXXIII, Toulouse, 1983-1996)

34

(M-C. XXXIV, Toulouse, 1983)
(XXXIV, Toulouse, 1983)

35

(M-C. XXXIV, Toulouse, 1983)
(XXXIV, Toulouse, 1983)

36

(M-C. XXXVI Toulouse, A Gherasim Lucas, Cogolin, Aout 1984)
(XXXVI Toulouse, for Gherasim Lucas, Cogolin, August 1984)

37

(M-C. IV, Toulouse, A André Velter, 1995)
(IV, Toulouse, for André Velter, 1995)

