

## 'André Breton,' Prose-poems on the death of Breton by Jean-Luc Nancy

Translated by Michael-Stone Richards

### ANDRÉ BRETON

#### OBLIVION

Oblivion flows back to its source, and our boredom turns light in the liquid name of André Breton where, with its silvered sheets, its droplets of mercury, it slips and roles on the light leaves of our pages.

What should it matter that winter may have frozen this source? Beneath the glassy ice the black stones shine – open mineral heart, beautiful dominion of no-possession. About it, the sand is penetrated by the dream of time-pieces, and there right to the thaw, fish make love.

Beneath the glassy ice, we are looked at, recalled. The century's weight bears the shadowed claw: only our terrors and feasts are pierced, the secret spasm of our failing hand. Faced out, disfigured, by the whip, the tamanoir and the uncultured rose.

#### PORTRAIT

Smooth memory of André Breton and of the starred ravens which, with him, were nailed to the doors of our night... What is their weight on our back – and already, imperceptibly, in the straight line of what will be? What solicitous assurance, and of what charge of dawn gives it confirmation?

Cornucopia of shadows – oh, jet of grey powder diffused by the photographs of André Breton, milky way of rare leaves of rare books, this head of hair, these cravats with large stripes, this size of mannequin, under the antique foliages, boarded up, bespeak the terror, joy, the time of glow-worms.



(The old magician, in his clean sleeve, was hiding the tarots, the eggs of Columbus and the pistols. And for the malice, here, take the scarcely believable chin, this sperm-whale bone in the vitrine of a parfumeur.)

And the eye more clear than the clearest night. The aurora borealis his daily bred.

### AT OUR SIDE

Gentler, more implacable, he shines beneath the earth amidst its forest of mandragoras, at the nadir of our hopes. The least hint of our steps wakens him; the least of our missteps triggers the ringing beneath the briar and the mushrooms of his laughter with silver folds. And when we lay this body down, arms outstretched, through the fields, over the tar of cities, there he is who pierces our side, he through whose earth-spring wounds and traps blossom and flower.

In order to invent the day, and all that invents itself, his cloud-filled fingers make us leap into rings of fire. Faithful dance where shall burn the too transparent skin.

Upon our calcinated bones mounts a greasy pole: imagination heaven-sent.

In the morning of his death, cattle and books are marked. There is no longer time to doubt any part of his dream. In the next night fall, our women will read the name of André Breton close to their stomachs, against these hips where the unlettered transport their children.

Jean-Luc Nancy

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