

Poem and preface by

**A roll
of the dice**

Stéphane

Mallarmé

(1898)

will

A

never

new

translation

abolish

and

chance

typesetting by Jacob Siefring

PREFACE

I would like for you not to read this Note or that, after a quick skim, you forget it; it informs the competent reader of little besides itself: and, furthermore, it may confuse a first-time reader who is about to fix his or her attention on the first words of the Poem so that what follows after, such as it is, leads onwards to the end, a reading experience of which the novelty consists in the spacing. The “white spaces” rise to the fore, assume significance; traditional meter normally requires some white space, as a surrounding silence, such that a fragment, lyrical or of few syllables, occupies around a third of the page, typically the center; I don’t violate that convention, but I do spread it out. Every time that an image is interrupted or returns, the paper intervenes, welcoming the succession of other images. In question are not sound patterns or meter—but rather prismatic subdivisions of the Idea, the moment during which they appear and compete, in a singular spiritual setting, in various positions, near or far from the latent, dominant thread that the text imposes by its

verisimilitude. The literary effect, if I can make such a claim, of that simulation of distance mentally separating groups of words or words from each other, is of an abrupt acceleration and deceleration of movement, with various stresses conveying a simultaneous conception of the Page: the Page as unity like, elsewhere, the perfect line, or Verse. On the surface, fiction will appear and scatter, rapidly, according to the writing's mobility, around the fragmentary stops of a capitalized phrase introduced at the beginning and continued throughout. It all transpires, basically, as speculation; the story form is dodged. What is more, such a bare application of thought, with all its retractions, protractions, evasions, even its very outline, results in a partition for whomsoever chooses to read aloud. The difference in the printed characters spread between the dominant motif, a secondary, and adjacent ones, dictates the importance to the oral expression; and the position on the page, middle, high, or low, denotes rising or falling intonation. In a work that fundamentally lacks precursors, only certain very bold scatterings, encroachments, etc., form a counterpoint to that other prosody: not that I'm appraising the possibility of humble attempts; but it's not for me, save for an exceptional pagination or a volume of my own, to too forcibly go against conventional usage in a Periodical,

even a brave, obliging one, amenable to handsome liberty. In any case, more than a sketch of the Poem that follows, I will have actually given a "state" that hardly departs from tradition; I will have presented it in such a way that it could hardly offend anyone: just enough, to open the eyes. Today, without assuming anything about the future of art, let's simply note that the undertaking participates with originality in pursuits characteristic of and dear to our era, the prose poem and free verse. Their fusion shows an influence that is, I know, strange, that of Music heard at a concert; there are many means of achieving this that are characteristic of language, and I make use of them. Let the genre start to resemble that of the symphony which, along with solo singing, part for part leaves intact antique poetry, which I worship, and to which I attribute the empire of passion and dreams; whereas this would mean a bias for (so it follows) such subjects as pure and complex as imagination and intellect: there is no basis on which to exclude Poetry—singular source.

A ROLL OF THE DICE

NEVER

EVEN WHEN THROWN IN
ETERNAL CIRCUMSTANCES

FROM THE BOTTOM OF A SUNKEN SHIP

MAYBE

if

the Abyss

cleared

calm

furious

at a tilt

desperately floats

winged

its own

in

advance newly devastated and planning flight
covering over the leaks
cutting short the jumps

far inside restarts

by this unusual veil shadow is absorbed by depth

to the point of adapting
to the wingspan

its gaping depths like the shell

of a building

hung from one or the other side

THE MASTER

left out of the old calculations
where the manoeuvre forgotten by time

arisen

supposing

long ago he pounded his fists against the helm

from this conflagration

at the feet

of the unanimous horizon

that

gets ready

gets excited and stirs

in the fist that grasped it

like someone terrorizes

the winds and a destiny

the unique Number which cannot

be another

Spirit

in order to throw it

to the storm

rebind its division and proudly move on

hesitate

cadaver on the arm

separated from the secret he keeps

rather

than playing

the part of

a bearded maniac

for the sake of waves

invades the chief

a

his dutiful beard flowing

shipwreck that

direct from man

vesselless

doesn't matter

when proud

AS IF

*An insinuation simple
in the silence bound with irony
or
the screamed
precipitate
mystery*

in some nearby cyclone of hilarity and horror

*zigzags around the gap
without strewing it
nor fleeing
and rocks its virgin clue*

AS IF

lonely solitary pen

*except that one of midnight's pillbox hats skims or meets with it
and immobilizes
by some dark laughter in the tired corduroys*

this rigid whiteness

pathetic

*against heaven
too much so to not narrowly
mark
whomsoever*

bitter prince of foam

*should don the heroic guise
irresistible but restricted
by his little virile logic
in thunder*

worried

pubescent and apologizing

mute

laughter

that

IF

The stately and lucid egret
with invisible forehead
sparkles

dizzily

then shade

a cute shadowy stature
twisted like a siren

standing

by terminal impatient scales

time

to whistle

bifurcated

a foundation

false manor

right away

vaporized

it was

restricting the infinite

IT WAS

celestially ordered

THE NUMBER

MIGHT IT EXIST

other than as us a vague hallucination of agony

DID IT START AND DID IT END

deafening in denial and enclosed upon appearance

finally

in rarity's universal profusion

DID IT COUNT

evidence of the sum however tiny it be

DID IT ILLUMINATE

THIS WOULD BE

worse

neither

better nor worse

indifferently a lot like

CHANCE

Drops

the pen

the rhythmic suspense of the sinister

to plunge

into new foams

out of which its delirium formerly leapt up to a peak

withered

by the gap's identical neutrality

NOTHING

of the memorable crisis
where the event

was

accomplished in view of no human result

whatsoever

WILL HAVE TAKEN PLACE

an ordinary elevation pours out absence

EXCEPT THE PLACE

whatever inferior plashing to dissipate abruptly the hollow
act

which would otherwise abruptly
by its falsity
lead
to perdition

in these obscure

precincts

where all reality dissolves

EXCEPT

at the altitude

MAYBE

as far as a place

fuses with beyond

independent of
any interest

according to such obliquity by such declivity
in general
of fires

towards

what must be
the Northernmost Septentrion

A CONSTELLATION

cold in obsolescence and forgotten
not so much
as not to enumerate
on some vague and vacant superior surface
the sidereally successive
shock
of a massive register being formed

waking

doubting

tossing

thinking and excelling

before halting
at some final consecrating point

All Thought effects a Rolling of the Dice