

CATALAN INTERNATIONAL VIEW

A EUROPEAN REVIEW OF THE WORLD



VISIONS FROM A NEWLY-EMERGING STATE

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THE LAST LIGHT

by Martí Peran



'Darkness visible' is the celebrated oxymoron with which John Milton characterised the deepest hell into which the living were cast after losing Paradise forever. Since then the suspicion has grown that our time is nothing more than the prolongation of the Hour of the Devil. Anyone who starts to speak will have to acknowledge, even if only for a moment, this unsettling suspicion (*Silencio* [Silence], 1999; *Cenizas* [Ashes], 2006).

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sight that it has been born blind*)

Milton's inferno has also been described from even more rhetorical perspectives – *what would you say if the devil offered [you] the possibility of living the life you*

are already living eternally? Or conversely, in a literally impeccable way; the dark light reveals, above all, *our poverty of experience*.

Poverty of experience, our inferno, is the apotheosis of banality. We have never had as many tools as we do today for amassing situations and events while, at the same time, these episodes have never been so vacuous. Countless experiences, but all of them unsubstantial and forgettable. A deficient surplus. Two extreme stances have arisen to counter this filled vacuum; the histrionic one consists of forgetting about the poverty by multiplying the experience, while at the opposite extreme lies impossible resignation via a perpetual silence and inaction. Either accumulate more situations or try to avoid them all. The first makes the hell worse, and the second, in spite of itself, only manages to be a mute lament. In either case, it seems that an agreement has been arrived at to forget the real task at hand; to persevere in the capture of the instant of sense, although to do so the usual direction should be reversed and its radical instability



it is prior to language and is part of man's infancy, in which, precisely, the urge to speak and to name has not yet awakened *Corredores de luz* [Corridors of light], 2001; *En la nada* [In Nothingness], 2007). Sublime experience, on the other hand, is that which takes place in the face of boundless and mighty nature (the mathematical sublime and the dynamic sublime) provoking the cancellation of language as too frivolous before the magnitude of the vision *Frágil* [Fragile], 2007; *Al otro lado* [On the Other Side], 2007). In either case, both experiences, pure or sublime, equally aim to define and protect the instant of sense in its function as the absolute moment.

For protecting the instant of sense there is only one methodology; the gaze that accepts that it will return to the darkness (*discover through sight that it has been born blind*). The instant of sense, dispossessed of all duration, is as fleeting as a simple real act. A pure image

be accepted (*I chase after that precise moment in which the light is about to go out, just before complete darkness*). The complete instant that may not occur as an opening but as a simple glimmer that goes out. However, this inversion itself is its only opportunity.

The instant of sense is not the decisive instant. While this performs a narrative function that accumulates different moments (it is the crucial moment capable of containing the before and after that completes the story of an event) this is the pure, qualitative moment (Kairos), the absolute instant without duration, faced by which, when nothing more embarrasses us, its impossible suspension is sought, *Stop instant, you are so beautiful!*

This full instant, irredeemably elusive due to its completeness (without any possibility of being dissected into different parts or sequences) is that which, in any of its clumsy formulations, has to recognise that there can be no language. It is an instant that is contentedly mute, since it is identified with pure experience or sublime experience. Pure experience (*Erlebnis*) says nothing since

that occurs simply, as an unrepeatable concretion, close to the precise tone of a haiku. In opposition to *durée*, pure time that opens the space of difference and dispersion, the instant of sense is a simple intimation, mute and, once again, dark.

The Bodies of Light are not part of the darkness visible mentioned by Milton, so continual and diverse in the interior of our poverty of experience. Instead, these glowing bodies are from a radically different sphere, of *l'intuition de l'instant* that Gaston Bachelard so precisely described, the moment of a vertical time. The instant of sense is, in effect, a sort of cut from deep within that allows the appearance of a beam of light that results in a vision. The last light which originates from and fades into what will never occur again.



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