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Tu renverses tout, espèce de folle — dit ma grand'mère, mais sans colère, car elle était toute à ce qu'elle faisait: elle tordait la serviette, elle ordonnait à Keka de se mettre à genoux, et de me faire asseoir sur ses genoux.

Ils ont dit que c'était tout froid et où donc vous êtes — dit Keka en passant. Elle me caressait les cheveux en répétant: y a pas de mal, y a pas de mal.

Qu'ils aillent se faire tout froid dans la tombe, je vous jure — gémit ma grand'mère; et levant les bras, elle tordit la serviette, si violemment que de grosses gouttes de vinaigre vinrent lui éclabousser la poitrine. Qui a inuité l'enfant en tentation, c'est pas eux, hein, c'est pas eux? ... Combien de fois j'ai dit à cet imbécile que l'enfant ne doit pas coucher avec eux dans la chambre ... Mais cause cause pas ... ah! — elle cria, et, interloquée, elle se donna un grand coup sur la bouche. Le diable m'a picoré la raison jusqu'au dernier grain ... à ta santé, Béalzébuth, patron de l'enfer, trinque avec le cerveau de la vieille Ana ... il doit les rouler dans la farine avant de les mettre à la poêle, hein Keka? ... Je n'en ai plus, voilà, ma tête résonne comme une coloquinte sur un filet de pêche, tiens — et elle faisait des clins d'oeil à Keka, elle branlait du chef et éclatait d'un rire amer. Quand je vois comme je parle devant un enfant ... Alors c'est tout froid: Sainte Vierge! Si y a pas de quoi tomber fou quand on entend ça ... Lave bien, que ça soit bien désinfecté ... Lave lui ses petites dents, tu vois bien qu'elles sont pleines de sang, ah Sainte Vierge, aidez-nous! Elles sont toutes bien à leur place? Ah, Sainte Vierge, c'est que la catin, elle a un beau morceau de main et quand elle te retourné une calotte ... pauvre petit enfant à sa grand'mère, on va tout bien nettoyer ... va t'en bobo, allez, va t'en ...

Keka m'a ouvert la bouche toute grande et la grand'mère s'est baissée en s'appuyant sur l'épaule de Keka, elle louchait et Keka lavait mes lèvres, humectait mes gencives ... Là, ça fait pas mal, là, pas mal du tout, là, là, un sucre d'orge, là — disait ma grand'mère, qui remuait les joues et les yeux dès que le vinaigre me mordait la muqueuse. Moi, je fronçais le nez, et elle me tâtait les dents du bout du doigt, l'une après l'autre, pour voir s'il n'y en avait pas une de déchaussée.

Va t'en, démon, allez, va t'en — cria Keka en jetant le reste de l'eau et du vinaigre dans le buisson.

Ça ne lui passera pas si vite, faut pas croire — dit ma grand'mère en se passant la serviette humide sur le cou et sur la nuque. Je lui tordrai l'échine comme à un chat et que sa mère ne vienne pas se présenter devant ma porte parce qu'elle verra ...

Nous nous sommes mis en route à petits pas, ma grand'mère d'abord puis moi, appuyé sur Keka.

Extrait du roman «Soirs d'été»

Traduit par Janine Matillon

VLADO GOTOVAC

## Elements of Silence

Introduction or the Network of Our Time

WE CANNOT say to what extent we depend on each other, but the interdependence is general. For, even the isolation that some attempt to achieve, is a form of dependence. This does not mean that modern societies are merely accidental results of that intricate network by which this age is to be distinguished from all others; when the network means danger, the age fights it in various ways.

Considerable uncertainty, naturally, causes, anxiety, and it is easy to understand the efforts directed towards controlling those elements which if, let loose, could threaten the modern world. The wish to bring at least the elementary security from annihilation into the spontaneous community, holding many discords and enmities, is growing ever more intense. And, although that wish might be taken for granted, it is in dispute all the time. The instinct for survival has been vanquished by the ideas about the organization of the world to such an extent that the very purpose of organizing it has been forgotten. Will our descendants, provided they are given the chance to live, be able to understand our present position? I doubt it, I greatly doubt it. The world can look as it now looks once only and then it must either disappear, or become a complete enigma to our descendants.

The modern man looks at his own life, at his own fate as if it were something happening before his eyes quite independently of him. All aspects of an event seem to belong to a story which he merely has to estimate. The present situation, that absolutely incomprehensible position of man surrounded by danger from all sides, created by man himself, can be explained only by this alienation. He found himself unprepared: looking in the mirror he seems to see the face of a mighty apparition instead of his own features. And that is the riddle of his own heart, of his own being, the riddle he forgot whilst conquering

things. Everyone has his counterpart, but they do not recognize each other.

The ghost is in our hearts then: it has left its traces wherever man's cautiousness failed for a moment, where he hesitated, however briefly, withdrew, or gave up. When he learnt to recognize his own story in these traces, paying the price with the maximum of suffering, he easily came to believe that the story was finished for good. Let us say frankly: it is hard to get man to accept responsibility for his world. This explains the horror of fascism — and the irony directed towards the handful of those who, lost somewhere in the world, protest against nuclear weapons. We are not ashamed by our own helplessness, we admit to it because this sets us free of responsibility. But the peace we buy with forsaking, or giving up, that sacrifice of the world and of ourselves ends in a dangerous weakness which crime exploits quickly and ruthlessly.

The network of interdependence is also the net of danger. We have to accept it, for it is the way of existence of the modern world. We are all open to our personal as well as to the general weakness — and virtue. It is not possible to share only good with the world — no matter who created it. If we accept that co-operation as a responsibility, not as a anonymous expanse in which we can disappear free of any obligation, we must address the world and ourselves simultaneously. It would be ideal to carry out every plan as if it were part of a world-plan, no matter how insignificant it might be — and no matter how pathetic and false it might look (this remark is for the ironic and weary who pay attention to appearances...)

There are customs completely opposed to each other all over the world, and their first sign, a sign which attracts many as a promise of some good to come, is silence. Once more, it deludes many, its warmth causes once more man's heart to beat more slowly, deceiving the heart which so often believes in the gradual and life-saving expansion of that silence which, in fact, means a growth of danger. For silence is not a dream of passion; it is man's dream.

### Stage and Auditorium at Once

TODAY, the whole world is both a stage and an auditorium. But no one knows when they are actors and when spectators. The frontier is only within us, it is something happening in our own beings, and each of us is both actor and spectator at the same time. At the moment when we are watching a scene, we are, for others, its participants. And, vice versa: it comes down to the same thing. Each of us tries to oppose that uncertainty first of all by creating situations with single meanings. The art of acting is of little help in this attempt. That is why we try to transform the world, or as much of it as possible, into a spectacle of which we are merely onlookers. By putting uncertainty aside we abandon the world.

But the world in which we take no part is a fading scene turning into emptiness which destroys us in the end. Running away, man takes

the place of vanished gods, the place where he, too, disappears. For, the downfall of the gods began when they turned into spectators.

Coming so dangerously close to self-annihilation, man turns to things: by helping a blade of grass we are helping ourselves. The scene in which man finds himself enclosed is of his own choice and has no other meaning. For others it is a private game. Long ago homo ludens may yet have had some meaning in the face of God. But before an empty heaven his game is a sad display of impotence. The world does not disappear in it, but time disintegrates: the private man loses his contemporaries. He takes part in a scheme, made by others: he has a walking-on part in history. His pleasure is due to the fact that he has no responsibility. And, on the other hand, the fact of his being able to see who is the actor and to follow his fate which never involves him, is the basis of his illusion about his own superiority.

Yet, in spite of turning the world into a stage, we cannot escape its atmosphere: the doom of our time is in our hearts. And just as a flower cannot make the spring come before its time, in the same way we cannot build a finite certainty in our lonely hearts unless we turn to the world and seek certainty for everyone. But this is then no more a voice of a private individual, but the voice of the one crying in the wilderness, under an unknown sky which through his words becomes man's property for the first time. The private individual is no lonely hermit, he is a runaway. That is why only impotence blossoms in him, caused by his inability to accept uncertainty, the only way to beauty. That simile exhausts man's existence, but not his fate. The danger of running away lies exactly in making a final break with the only difference between us and all existence, for only man has created his world. That privilege, the core of his greatness, does not lead him away from the earth, but it does make his harvests from the earth taste bitter. And because of those crops and harvests he always dreams of flowers, birds, and of everything which receives its sky along with its life. The private individual goes back to that dream and quietly disappears into it.

Heaven and earth have a mutually corrosive effect on our whole horizon. But, by opposing our private dream we do not doom ourselves to eternal unrest, but show our decision to create a world in which we can flourish without any loss whatsoever.

### The Private World as a Renunciation

THOSE WHO in their own loss see a possibility for the world's gain are fewer and fewer. We have come to long for peace, silence, certainty, balance. The desire is justified, but the way to achieve it is wrong: we do not abolish that which threatens us; we merely give up asking questions. To general uncertainty we oppose our private world believing that there is no use in meddling with things we cannot change. This is true, but only when proven. Every one of us has to undertake everything after all the others, regardless of their results. The modern world is a great theme not to be relinquished any longer.

We are no nihilists — though we have accepted many forms of life which only nihilism makes possible — because we do not negate anything. We are melancholic, we suffer from nostalgia. Great thoughts, great ideas are still respected in our world, but in a way as though we considered them obsolete and useless. Our reasons are not lacking in warmth, but in passion. We have the look of a man careful not to trip over something whilst a whole building totters about him. Men defend themselves from danger by living their private lives only.

Our world is becoming a contrast to our time, an ever increasing contrast. We have divided the world's fate from our own — and thus lost them both. Every one of us is creating his own peace only, his own safety, forgetting that the creation of an exclusively private world is the greatest danger of all. Turned towards our own centre we are lost to others.

Our feeling of helplessness has valid reasons: our hearts are still in our withdrawal. For, in spite of everything we still do not withdraw from life. This means that our trust in the world's fate is still alive in us, and that we are optimists who prefer not to act. But it is dangerous to exhaust one's confidence for private purposes only. The world needs a less reasonable energy, be it even darker by its attitudes: the future is real only for those who fight for it.

There is another equally great danger of abstract work for a world which does not really exist anywhere, of work for an idea, work which floats in a vacuum unrelated to anything. This only shows that we have grown impotent in a different way, but the result is the same. Each single one of us has to live the necessary forms of his own private world, of his own inevitable measure of loneliness. He who attempts to save the world without thinking of himself in that world is dangerous to both.

The basis of our world is reasonable, boring and dead. Every choice is made according to its practical value. The modern man is just sensible enough to save his own skin. The trivial optimism of a businessman, the egoism of ruthless sensuality, the paranoid imagination — they are all elements of this time of which sensible instruments in the power of irrational forces are characteristic. The decrease of ideals is accompanied by the increase of obsessions, by the loss of convictions — fanaticism, weakening of the spirit — strengthening of instincts. This contradiction leads to annihilation.

Reason cannot conquer the irrational. Its results are, inevitably, merely the means to an end. However opposed to instincts, it finally leads to their victory. Only in the world where reason is subject to spiritual aims, where it works with those aims in view carried by hostile passion, only there can it work in accordance with itself, for its rights and duties always lie outside it. The private with its material order of things as an exclusive realm of the human is in agreement with the realm of reason. It is there that forces which are quite opposed to it and stronger than it, come to life, for they are basic and general. To destroy man does not mean to destroy life. That is why we still are under the delusion that the reason can serve as the basis of the human. — Reasonable life is a life in which man disappears.

The adventure for the modern man begins on his own threshold. But by stepping over it he does not become a hero: the journey outside

is undertaken only as a requital for the freedom in his own home, for his own peace. — Loneliness weighs heavily on the private man who joins the others only in fun, in oblivion.

A nobler death, death better than that by anaemia, or playing about in the void, awaits those who live by memories. Looking at the world of the dead, at all that is living or dead in their works, like all beings to whom any time is the same time, they lose themselves gradually, holding on to the completed past, replacing by their own life the void. For there is no completed past for those who create: for them exists that which still is as well as that which never was. In every creation a new past emerges.

Life obviously, in our time at least, goes on regardless of any knowledge. No one can say that this age knows little, yet there was no world in which knowledge meant so little. I am not speaking of solutions which were suggested, but of a generally agreed opinion of evaluation of the facts. As for the solutions, there are so many of them just because none of them was carried through to the end. In the general lack of stability man decided to undertake a total experiment. All plans offer the minimum of safety and were made, one could almost say, only with the purpose to show what was wrong in them or how long they were going to last, if they were arbitrarily made. The most clear-sighted among us are the least cheerful. They often dream about the renewal of the myth and so, through their passion for man, lose touch with reality. That contradiction results in the hitherto unknown impotence of creative people. Great ideas are without exception proclaimed beautiful, in other words futile.

The modern creative minds are threatened by the worst of all dangers: to remain without a task. The dilemma between play and work is the dilemma of a choice of deaths. To create today, comes ever more to mean to live a worthwhile life. All forms of individual defense of worth show that it is still being looked at from a vanishing world. We cannot justify any work by itself. Instead of turning to creation we turn to facts; we live in the certainty of individual experience, of collective awareness of practical, reasonable activity.

Along with the dying or already dead world dies a part of us. We are the last survivors of a past time and the first of the future — a generation on the brink of the abyss. With a new consciousness appearing on the horizon, trained to guess its presence but unable to see it with these eyes looking from a great distance (of the past), we are justified in our anxiousness, for the end of this history may also mean the end of man himself. For the first time this is no mysticism of apocalyptic visions, but a real possibility of modern technological means. The laying of blame on the tools shows how great the danger is. That unrest, removed at a certain distance from everyday forms of life on which it throws trembling reverberations through apprehension, is the cause of the present denial just as it will become, when it really reaches every life, death or the driving force of a future world. That is why we have to find at this moment not the image of things to come, but a way to become familiar with all the dangers.

The only task is to make everybody face the same question. What cannot be seen or understood, cannot be avoided. I believe only those who help our time to become what it really is for everyone, which means

I believe those who understand that a private world leads to annihilation, to that from which we ought to protect ourselves, and that the private is a death trap, which, again, means I believe those who are ready to overtake the world's fate by their own fate in a passionate, violent dramatic way accessible to everyone — if such a possibility exists in this time.

We can be saved only by the poignant emptiness appearing there where greatness was. The sight of those who have taken upon themselves the «sins of the world» like saints and children, has never made the world happy, but it always reminded it of greatness beginning at the point where privateness ends. For: everyone is responsible for everything — only this attitude leads to salvation.

### The Need For Truth

ONE DOES NOT die for truth any more. Pilate's question lost its dramatic effect by the dint of different interpretations. In the past, the argument lead to conviction, and that was enough for acting and dying. The world was activated by righteousness and freedom, the two greatest discoveries of truth. Stretched between the endless poles of eternity and of the everyday, the independence of truth lost its efficacy, not its meaning. Indifferent towards those who possessed it, the same in every service, it finally became part of policy. That is why there were no more those who were willing to die for it regardless of other aims. Man responded to truth by indifference.

The long story of that cold association begins to kindle again: as the world becomes more just and free, truth becomes more and more a question of man's climate of opinion. But its one time dramatic ways return no more, for the part it plays in our fate is based only on its relation to eternity. The return of passionate desire for truth does not necessarily mean the return of the danger that passion brings.

The first sings of this development are overshadowed by our time shattered by hitherto unknown threats to human existence. But annihilation can never be a substitute for pain and suffering in man's creation. Death results in impotence, suffering in action. That is why the modern man withdraws replacing the private expanse of his own creation, which comes to cover ever more increasingly his whole existence, with the general uncertainty. Within this area lies the scope of his own truth. There are fewer and fewer of those who accept the new position of truth in the world, and so the gap between the individual fate and the fate of the world grows wider all the time. The apparent authenticity of man's existence without responsibility towards the world, created by his renunciation of it, is a fertile soil for the horrors to which we are exposed. Instead of a person, appears the dual man who is an empty space between two different shores: the shore of authentic existence and the shore of the world. The more his being is corroded by a feeling of futility, the more are his actions deprived of hypocrisy, and they become more and more indifferent. On losing his responsibility, he

awaits commands. This readiness, opposed to freedom, this passive nihilism of man without a world, threatens in its basis existence itself. Horror becomes a part of man's heart.

The old habit of relinquishing the world to those who act without asking themselves how much they really can influence events or to what extent they can direct them, who wonder about their ability to direct them, still creates a pleasant haze of irresponsibility. By ceasing to worry about the world, man feels secure. This is a paradox of every outlook which claims that human existence has a meaning outside itself. But the atmosphere of that dream has vanished: we are awake and doomed to the world. Who does not find reason for rejoicing in this, will never find it.

The position of this greatness without hope is simultaneous with the ever greater anonymity in man's work: there is an increasing number of fields of activity in which the subject is a group of people. Collective work is not, and cannot be, a sum of individual work; it is that which is common to all individuals, that is impersonal. And the spreading of anonymity brings an increase of irresponsibility. This suppresses the individual person who then resist through collecting stamps, nursing rabbits, making excursions in the country, or in some other similar fashion. The private world becomes a sterile toy and man becomes a childish amateur taking part in a specialized field of activity. He is the ideal representative of a truth which may or may not exist. Awakening from one dream, man tends towards another: to material well-being which makes fewer and fewer demands on him. A haze of oblivion rises between a purposeless world and our mutual requests. That anaesthetizing of the need for truth is the result of our progress, of the truth of its discoveries, of its achievements. But they are completely indifferent to man and to whatever might befall him in his search for them or in his use of them, they do not care what man is and what he wants. Progress is in the final analysis an increase of known facts. That accumulation is connected with a growing wealth which becomes the basis of life's values. There is an ever increasing number of instruments in the orchestra which plays us to sleep.

The opposite to the dream surrounding us can be only the question about the meaning of truth, not the question: what is truth. And that meaning always claims to possess the dignity of truth about any other relevant fact. By limiting the choice of truths which he evaluates, a person shows what man represents for it in the world. From the moment the choice has been made those truths have become different from what they were before: they acquire their meaning within an outlook on life, a meaning which that outlook attempts to prove true. The individual who does not need such a relation to truth, the individual indifferent to the meaning of truths forsakes the world and himself by such an attitude. For truths may be in the service of justice and freedom, but they also may be used for servitude and lawlessness. And only when man puts an end to this last possibility through the awareness of a certain meaning of his own existence, only then will truth return to its original place: it will affirm that the world has no purpose and that it is us who must create it. The command inherent in the first, original, position of truth has once revealed justice and freedom; today that command reveals that man has nothing left but man himself and that this is the only help we can reckon with in surviving within the limits

of our own aims. The meaning of each one of us is equally unprotected. And we can keep it only by constantly struggling for it. Every indifference, every dream is a loss.

The modern man has sense of his own place in the world. Where once upon a time his hope lay there is a corrosive emptiness now. He lives resisting it, not because he believes that he would conquer it, but because only thus can he achieve greatness and dignity in his existence, his only answer to meaninglessness. That is why he needs truth which forces him to face constantly all the dangers of his position. And truth only thus has a meaning for him. The moment he loses it, dreams catch hold of him and everything becomes possible.

Those who forsake the burden of danger forsake also the burden of responsibility. In everyday life this means acting to the extent required for the realization of a private scheme. Truths which have no bearing upon this scheme leave such men indifferent just as lies do. The world has been lost in their scheme, and other people are merely more or less fortunate circumstances in it. All man has created becomes for them a quiet, tame hunting ground. What others do in it has no importance provided they make no disturbances. This frail consumer of the fruits of man's labours is not dangerous to his neighbours. He is dangerous to man, for man is decaying in him.

The world in which justice and freedom are truly realized leaves only one question to man and if he should escape it this would mean the end of him. The Earth becomes too quiet when disaster does not threaten it — but seen as danger, not as pleasure.

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