

A man **is** always considered forewarned. In the blackened pages of the newspaper, a name, say Antonio Pigafetta. Not much more. In loving memory. A dentist at the time of his death.* Where was he when he saw it? Shall we say upon the throne? The **Grecian urn**. A word about mine. That one, to be precise, is a fine flusher.

Which is a great advantage. In most cases, two are required. It is best to be flushed and clear-headed, especially in public places, or when visiting an acquaintance. People will wonder.^x Someone said, what is going on in there? He'd slipped away.⁺ Now, he flushed and stood, flushed, waiting. It took forever. And left much to ponder.[♦] And furthermore. It was not in his hand. Yet another mute imperative. They also serve who stand and wait. What remains? A few flakes of money, **pigs**, leprosy.[∞] A swirling abatement. A shred of paper. And is there nothing else? Shall we let it stand? Do not let this enter your mind. Such an act is great. He **disagreed** with himself. He spoke too soon. A remnant spun. Or two or three. A severe case of hypotyposis. He had no remedy against the stubbornness of settlement. There is no mystagogy of matter. A matter having gone out from among him, there could be no retraction. There were objects. The event which happened, happened that way. Once again, he cursed and flushed it. An anamorphic aspiration. Because the imbecilic conservation of depth requires. Would sufficiency ever be sufficient? We have learned elsewhere. Something else.^α Rarely. A window. Freezing. And since we have come upon it. He had to face his hosts dripping wet in the lingering sound of flushing.[‡]

But we were speaking^ψ of Pigafetta. That dentist with too many teeth in his name. And how does an erstwhile revolutionary die a dentist? Gone back **home** to his parents, I suppose. Like so many of the rest of them.[§] Old nests. Prodigal lambs. But with conditions. Church wedding, shiny shoes, striped ties, Sunday meals, clean nose. A lawn. A decent citizen's

*A man who dies a dentist **is** a dentist forever more.

^xDoors are a cause for wonderment.

⁺To colour the waters.

[♦]O, let it rest.

[∞]Not to mention sexual relations.

^αAre you still at this? Yes, and in a sweat.

⁺Here some advice: before washing that face in your host's sink, check for a towel you dare to use, i.e. neither too clean nor too dirty.

^ψMore precisely, we were seated on the throne and reading, prior to putting them to another purpose, the blackened pages of a newspaper.

[§]And what about him? We are all subsidiary judges, each of us doing his or her **job** and, while doing his or her job, thinking I am only doing my job. Each one greases a small wheel. A dentist may wash his hands before and after every patient. How should we act in a symphony of delicate power?

lawn is a flag displayed: trimmed, rectilinear, straight-bordered and devoid of **FOREIGN** organisms. Neither animal, vegetable nor mineral.[‡] So lawn then, and church, shoes, nose. One more condition. Dental school. Soon it's buy a drill, a chair and insurance. Ten or twelve years in a Pigafetta practice.

Antonio Pigafetta. Suddenly. In loving memory. Beloved husband, loving father. Assorted pets. Large, sunny six-bedroom home. Oil and gas. Fireplace. Kitchen island. Convenient for commuters. Perfect lawn: rectilinear, green. No dandelions, clover, or crab grass. No birdweed, fireweed, chickweed, milkweed, knotweed, pigweed, pokeweed, stinkweed, tumbleweed, ragweed, smart- or locoweed. No scarlet pimpernel. No thistle, burrs, chicory, horsetails, buttercups, or lady's thumbs. No prickly lettuce, beggar's ticks, shepherd's purse, spotted spurge or skunk cabbage. No quackgrass. A dentist. Drill, chair, many tiny sharp prodding and poking instruments, a host of clean stainless steel imagery. Grateful patients. Frozen in grief, drooling sentiment. Services, following coroner's inquest, at St-Somebody-Did-Something-to-Someone Church. Closed casket::

the brain. Or disease. The blood, day after day, splattering up into his face. Volumes of foul breath, germ-laden. If not an accident or disease, a patient certain-ly. The chances. That one among them...

And the revolution? Did you count the years? **Tracts**, organizing, late nights plotting for the new world, did you march your lungs through the streets, under the nightsticks. Forgotten? And the tenements of hunger outside the pink-skinned suburbs? Skeletal caravans trekking across African deserts? Rag-horses begging for scraps with their backs against the shop windows? Gun-toting children at each other's throats?^ο Did a dentist sometimes catch a glimpse of his shame gnawing at the tiny mirrored instrument as he removed it from the golden mouth of privilege? Shall we ask a closed casket? Too late. A small blackened square in the newspaper of deliverance. Beloved husband. Loving wife and child. So that too. Drilling teeth and home to the family, the supper table, television, a game of Parcheesi, and to bed. The whole works. And a green lawn. All right, good for him. A lot of good it did him. Dead. Drilled. Frozen

[‡]O, perfectly contained, perfectly gaping eco-system.

[∇]A coroner **is** a failed policeman.

[∇]Must you go on like a ped-dler?

^οToday mad scorpions tearing away at each other; tomorrow they'll tramp your blood all over your deep-piled carpets and **pristine** sheets.

Story. **Act**. Deed, event, precedent. We interpret beginnings. We speak in the language of **men**. Fall back onto the soft cushion of common denominators. As though two events could not occur at the same moment. (Two!? Why do I need two?) As though this did not merely resemble **this**. But this aspect is not like that aspect and that aspect is not like this aspect. If there is difficulty, this is the difficulty. Generalization. From **fiction** we learn only this. But perhaps you say: if you take hold of the larger, you do not take hold; if you take hold of the smaller, you do take hold. Generalization and detail. Detail and generalization. A generalization that needs a detail and a detail that needs a generalization. A detail and a detail and a detail makes a generalization makes a detail and a detail.

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detail detail detail detail detail **detail**, detail.

Detail.

Story? Who would tell it? There are some who say. A story **is** a fiction, a mistake. We add and subtract and expound. We say it thus and we say it thus.

When we take the first part, we take the end as well.[∞]

This is in and this is in. But this only resembles this.

Still, we cast one **man or woman** against another.

The heart in conflict with itself.

When? A story teaches an exaggeration. It is possible to refute. If there is a difficulty, this is the difficulty. Better to be **silent**.

[∞]There is no chronology in a sacred text.

And if you say:
but what
then? A house
is not a home, some
(too many) say. Still,
one resides there, in a
room and a half of
turpitude. One does
not go out if at all
possible. One remains
perfectly still, if at all
possible. And perfect-
ly silent, which is always possible. But perhaps you are
thinking: how does he eat, pay the rent, for thus do we move
through time toward death? This itself is not difficult: he ate
rarely, paid no rent, let time move him. He lay on the cot of
desolation in a room and a half. Do I teach an exaggeration?
Certainly it is possible to refute. Did he regret abandoning a
struggle? Or rather those sins committed in the name of the
struggle? What remained in the wake of [failure](#)? The body,
the thing itself. This is ours and [this](#) is theirs.

What is this? We incubate lust and something else. Sexual relations, money, pigs, leprosy. Here, suddenly, a word about my mother: no mute imperative driving me across [the countryside](#) to find

her. He sought something else, something more. How can you find it? I am still looking. Now that we have come to this. The question, the difficulty, returned to its place. How should we act?♦ And are we still at it? And he who asked it — why did he ask it? Some will say: Go this way! Others say: Just the opposite! Perhaps it is a case of go read it in [the teacher's house](#).

♦A Halakhah for the Time of the Messiah.

♦This perpetual dis-orientation is responsibility.

E. Levinas

^ΩThey add and subtract and expound. They wipe their pink hands.

How should we act? Wondering if I could. Writing here and writing there. Continue in this way. But if so, what then?♦ Just the knowledge that, in one's solitude, the length of which and were not for, one might write one's **solitude**. Would he withhold exactly that? And to have come all this way, only to discover. But what did or could he expect. Otherwise. Yes, and how should we act? Shall we assemble a clause. And sign it.

But it is not in our **hand**. For his part he was silent. On Monday mornings he went out to confront the shopkeepers.^Ω He sported a visible expression. On the clothesline, he suspended a device of surrender. This is ours and this is theirs. Can we stretch a breeze? He thought: Je suis un homme malade. Is he the only one that way? They were drilling **teeth** in the street. This is in and this is in.[∞] He sought the repose of self within self. It escaped him.

8b² Murder

He sought a consolation. He returned to the **asylum of self**. He had not moved toward the other, because, once he moved, he knew there would be no return to the self. You wanted Ulysses; you got Abraham. (With Abraham, there was no return.) What is there to say to someone else? What do you have to say? "Comment toi ici, Qu'as-tu à faire? toi, ici?"^φ The violence of an empty phrase. The pure and immediate ethic in the face-to-face of the other's face. He tossed himself **back** into the world like a stone. There was no being there. Grain of sand by grain of sand, he had built a Sinai between them. He was done with Messianic politics. That was a Halakhah for (the time of) the Messiah. He busied himself with the accomplishment of his solitude. He banished hospitality from his house. He banished language. He produced on a regular basis less than excellent excrement. He would neither sleuth nor struggle for solutions. He would wrap his legs with the daily newspapers. (If he continued to read the **obituaries**, it was idly.) He would not say, the event that happened happened that way. Act, deed, event, precedent. Solve this, solve that. A **mystery** was a small brown pigtail trailing behind its solution. From this it was impossible to learn ::

^φKings I, 19

Antonius said to Rabbi:
Seemingly, a person's body
and soul are each able to
excuse themselves from judgment
after death. The body says: It is the
soul that has sinned, for from the
day that it has departed from me,
I have been lying, unable to
sin, like a silent rock in the
grave. And the soul says:
It is the body that has

sinned, for from the day that I have departed from it, I have
been flying in the air like a bird, unable to sin. Rabbi said
to him: A king owned a beautiful orchard which con-
tained beautiful early figs. And he stationed two
guards — one lame, the other blind. The lame one said
to the blind: "I see beautiful early figs in the orchard.
Come, mount me on your shoulders and together we will bring
the figs here to eat them. The lame mounted the back of the blind,
and they brought the figs and they ate them. The owner of the
orchard came and said to the guards: "The beautiful early figs — where
are they?" The lame one said to him, "Do I have feet with which to trav-
el to the figs? I certainly could not have
taken them." And the blind one said:
"Do I have eyes with which to see
where the figs are? I certainly could
not have taken them." What did the
king do? He mounted the lame
one on the back of the blind,
and he **judged** them as a unit.

"All is not assemblable."
-E. Levinas, *The Time of the Nations*

+I meant that literally until it cried out.

*Here we did not intend a soteriology.

The truth is not satisfied with people. I may not be looking for it. Is there a refusal to pursue the mystery of the other? And why would people want it? Is this desire to share our pain a generosity? Not everything is in our power. One labours under the weight of one's options. We produce a fiction, an invention of mind; we call it "I". It may be necessary to make this happen. When? Daily. In order to get out of bed. Hence: boys, dentists, grocers. And we discuss the colour of our water. This itself is difficult. Such is, unfortunately, my case. In my solitude. But perhaps I am not alone in suspecting I am not alone.+ Let us say or shall we say: we are nevertheless, in our suffering, always alone?*

The nature of this case is not like the nature of this case and the nature of this case is not like the nature of this case between a door and the self? What can be added or subtrac-ted? Not only this but also this. The order of things to come. And what is this thing we are calling "this"? A mistake.

°After a good meal one may well feel grammatically complete.

+One belongs to the Messianic order when one has been able to admit others among one's own. That a people should accept those who come among them — even though they are foreigners with their way of speaking, their smell — that a people should give them an akhsaniah, the wherewithal to breathe and to live.... Simple tolerance? God alone knows how much love that tolerance demands.

-E. Levinas, *In the Time of the Nations*

When the revolutionary soteriology died, he sought to attenuate. We are easily pleased to worship [sausage](#). Meanwhile, the French had reinvented corner-flanking. We call it theory. He plunged that way, his reticulated life a very heavy stone. Trudged through enormous language. I do not doubt we're into injury time. He took revenge on language (he brandishes a savage solecism). The slight wheel makes life easier for the runners. Attenuate was a momentary tactical overhead. And is there nothing else? Things from which benefit is forbidden. And is there truly nothing else? Those damned [oneiopompists](#) did their worst. In measured amounts. He awakened too early (the damp tee-shirt) to change the world. Such is the way of things. Since he took the first part, he took the end as well. He learned to take long walks proleptically. He learned to be silent. The body, the thing itself. And is there nothing else?^ø He said his own. The grocers. They subtract and add and expound. Le visage de l'autre. The question, the difficulty returned to its place. And he to his. A [Halakhah for \(the Time of\) the Messiah?](#)

^øThere is something
that cannot be said.

*Did you remove Tannaim from the world?

ØHow he trudges through enormous language...

×They were drilling teeth in the street.

≠The quality of mercy is a pedestal upon which a judge perches his power. We have learned this elsewhere.

+This word is free.

Whittling. The struggle: to be released from subsidiary judgment.* Someone has been convicted and sentenced at a higher level. What discretionary power remains? Over whom? We are all subsidiary judges, each of us doing his or her job and, while doing his or her job, thinking I am only doing my job.Ø They say in the west, each one greases a small wheel. We squat with rolled sleeves to wash anonymous linen by the well. A dentist may wash his hands before and after every patient. The way of things. How should we act in a symphony of delicate power?× Will you languish in some quiet place? There is no question of non participation. We can learn but not refuse. Who are the judges? Those that speak the seventy languages of the nations. The mystagogues. Those who decide which ones are **strangled**. Of course, the strength of leniency is preferred.≠ He whittled, whittled away at his own subsidiariness.+ Was there absolution in retraction? Still conscious (red-faced) of his needless size, he whittled a **definition**. We are all subsidiary judges. Foot-soldiers. Hence the hand-washing. The addition and subtraction. The whittling::

אִישׁ־שֶׁתִּיק¹

¹He was silent.

- "Hello," he said, "and after all these years."*

"Mouvement vers l'autre qui ne revient pas à son point d'origine comme y revient le divertissement incapable de transcendance. Mouvement par-delà le souci et plus fort que la mort."

E. Lévinas, *Quatre Lectures talmudiques*.

- "And still, does the you I am thinking of remain you as I speak to the you I am speaking to, or do you remain you?"

- "And the me you might recall, does it remain me?"

- "Is there no memory?"

- "Did you read? Did you hear? Did you know? That man Pigafetta is dead."

- "But what kills a dentist?"

- "In the newspaper, some things remain unsaid. Well, I say, the event which happened happened that way. There was no accidentist. Hear from this, learn from this, conclude from this. I tell you, he was not the first. (Here some names, perhaps two, no more, dimly recalled. A list of tombstones).+ In either case, no matter what. And the common denominator is. (Here, something about the old days.) And if it were a case of the four deaths of the Bet Din? Those 60s again. Our rebellious youth. Our engagement. Commitment. A cause. The teleology of revolution. Were we so young? Now this? In the beginning we were few, now we are few again. And which of us will be next?"

- A sign of age advancing, you say? The glancing at the obituaries? Death introducing himself. But when death comes without footnotes, how do you understand? There was and is a [cloud](#) or sense of lack."

- "Which is a reason for calling. The telephone is an instrument of convenience, not to be squandered on the living. We should meet flesh to [flesh](#) in each other's presence."

- "And so to reverberate our fears and mount a tension worthy of release."

- (Here a time and place were mentioned.)

+Shall we say, a clue? They were all three — the caller, the one who regretted having answered his phone, the dead man called Pigafetta — once, in their youth, together in a group, radical, left-wing, revolutionary. Go ahead, laugh, those days were full of hope, where were you?

- "Well, so be it," I replied.

- "If you prefer."

- Here a suspension. I held my tongue between my [knees](#).

- "None that I cherish."

- "Drilling teeth."

- "A very heavy stone?"

- (There was time to think here. And he tried. He thought, something learned from its end. Act, deed, event, precedent. There was remembrance of something. This is not from the same name. This aspect is not like that aspect, and that aspect is not like this aspect. He teaches an [exaggeration](#).)

- "We interpret beginnings.

- And is there nothing else?"

- "And is it necessary?"

- Here, once again, a suspension.

- (And a promise was made; nevertheless, with not the slightest [intention](#) to honour it)::

*The phone punctuates. It is a chink in one's armour. It requires a body. Does it encircle the heart? Does it bring you to your feet? History. Bad memories. Too late, having lifted the receiver, to retreat.

A pikoros: Those of us who say, the Torah is not from heaven. Those of us who interpret the word of the Torah in a way contrary to the halakah. Those of us who profane the covenant inscribed in the flesh. Those of us who profane the holiness of the sacrifices. Those of us who disdain the half-holidays. Those of us who say the whole Torah comes from heaven, except this deduction, except this *a fortiori*, or this proof by [analogy](#). Those of us who have the opportunity to study the Torah and do not do so. Those of us who study the Torah, but only from time to time. Those of us who cause the face of their fellow to pale with shame.

All these have no share in the world to come: even if they know the Torah and have performed charitable deeds, all these have no share in [the world](#) to come::

Morning is the time
to hide. They wake
up, hale and hearty,
their tongues hanging
out for order, beauty
and justice, baying
for their due.

Samuel Beckett,
Molloy