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On the Order of Things translated by Elisabeth Hamilton-LaCoste

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ON THE ORDER OF THINGS

To Octavio Paz

Even desperation requires a certain order.
If I put a number up against the wall and
machine gun it, I'm a responsible individual.
I've freed reality of a dangerous element. I
have nothing left but to take on what's left,
the world with one less number.

Ordering creative material is no different.
There are many ways to approach this problem,
but in the long run they're all the same. I
get into bed or lie in an open field, look up,
and the machine is already functioning. A big
ideal or a small intuition swoops down, its
only purpose is to fill the natural sky, or the
false one. First you'll see shadows, and with
luck, a sparkle here and there, a premonition
of light, to be more exact. Color is a different
story, it's a matter of knowing your work and
persevering.

Putting a cloud in working order isn't
difficult, children do it all the time. The
problem is making sure it can't get away, so
that it's ready to play as soon as you whistle.

There are people who, at given moments, are
able to put it all up there, or all down here,
but can they keep it like that? This is the
problem.

You must learn to lose with order, this is
the first step. The ABC. You'll have gained
a solid footing, feet up in the air, or feet
on the ground, what's important, I repeat, is

that it's solid and permanent.

Back to desperation, real desperation doesn't develop from one day to the next. Some people need a whole lifetime to get it. We're not talking about that small desperation that flashes on and off like a lightning bug, all it needs is stronger light, noise, or a bit of wind to make it go away.

Now we're getting somewhere. We've learned to lose without changing our solid position, we believe in the efficiency of permanent desperation.

Let's start over: lying face up, (as a matter of fact the perfect position for creating is a drowned man's position half-buried in the sand.) we call that nothing, sky, the nothing we've already found. Let's put up the first spot. Stare at it steadily. Blinking could be fatal. This is an intentional and straightforward act, there's no room for doubts. If we can get the spot spinning, changing into a moving point, contact will be made. Repeat: desperation, assuming a position of failure and faith. Faith is the new and conclusive element.

Someone's knocking at the door. Don't worry, we can't lose hope. Naturally, the first little spots were erased, and the light over us went out. But we've got to answer, desperately, holding the correct position, (face up, etc.) and full of faith: Who is it?

Of course, the intruder will have left without waiting for us to answer. It's always

that way. There's nothing we can do but start
over in the given order.

*translated by
Elisabeth Hamilton-LaCoste*