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CATALYSES

Voice

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Lysis

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Hörst du das Neue, Herr,
dröhnen und beben?

(Master do you hear the New,
droning and throbbing?)

Rilke, *The Sonnets to Orpheus*

To leave one's mark on the pages of history: yes, I did it, you did something, they're doing this and that; a special kind of presence that does not merely settle with what is being given, but might even change the conditions of possibility of givenness itself. The hand making such a mark, holding a historiographer's hand that writes, is guided by a sound droning and throbbing so loudly the body has no choice but to follow. Some hands and their bodies might even become markers of an epoch: as we are told, Western philosophy was never the same after Kant.

However, as evident as it might be, the books of history are not to be confused with the books of life, not to mention that history never really fits in books and books rarely, if ever, capture life in its entirety. The same can be said about what is to come: the wind spreads Kant's daughters and sons beyond the walls guarding the garden of knowledge, making it difficult to trace the afterlife of each possibility. If one hears a pulsating sound, it is because it reverberates from a dark abyss into which every glance – together with what it sees and promises – disappears for good. Then, a sound is just a sound, the Master is asleep, the historiographer's hand lifted from the page. One has to wait.

History teaches to nudge time if it pauses. There are examples. Tired of waiting, or, alternatively, for the love of it, early Christians awakened their dead Messiah so that he would bring the world to its end. What was perceivable only through a glass darkly became almost reachable, almost: not by reading books but by attuning oneself to the sound coming from the bright end of the tunnel. No glances back anymore; pillars of salt figuring the future.

In times like this, every givenness stands on a river shore trying to get a glimpse of its own reflection on the moving water. While the surface – glistering in the sun – protects from the abyss below, letters drawn on it make poor laws. Not knowing what to do, historiographer's hands wave furiously in the air as if to prevent drowning on a dry land. Hence this haste, perhaps.

So, what to say about catalysis? It is a name for an emergent bringing-together, breaking-apart, and pushing-forth. A perfect name for a time like this. In an after-glow of the present, things have moved forward, a mark has been made, history composed. Artists, researchers, educators: all composing, rapidly, water-music, drops of beat; a sequencer marking the time and keeping it. Adjusted to these components of time, the world opens itself as a composite: together, time and space make that throbbing, droning sound. And where there is rhythm, there is dance: hand leads the body through the tunnel, softly touching the pillars when passing by, gathers seeds floating on water, blows them toward the light.

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