

## READY TO THE NAKED EYE

"I'M OLD-FASHIONED AND THINK THAT READING BOOKS IS THE MOST GLORIOUS PASTIME THAT HUMANKIND HAS YET DEvised. HOMO LUDENS DANCES, SINGS, PRODUCES MEANINGFUL GESTURES, STRIKES POSES, DRESSES UP, REVELS, AND PERFORMS ELABORATE RITUALS. I DON'T WISH TO DIMINISH THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THESE DISTRACTIONS — WITHOUT THEM HUMAN LIFE WOULD PASS IN UNIMAGINABLE MONOTONY AND, POSSIBLY, DISPERSION AND DEFEAT. BUT THESE ARE GROUP ACTIVITIES, ABOVE WHICH DRIFTS A MORE OR LESS PERCEPTIBLE WHIFF OF COLLECTIVE GYMNASTICS. HOMO LUDENS WITH A BOOK IS FREE. AT LEAST AS FREE AS HE'S CAPABLE OF BEING. HE HIMSELF MAKES UP THE RULES OF THE GAME, WHICH ARE SUBJECT ONLY TO HIS OWN CURIOSITY. HE'S PERMITTED TO READ INTELLIGENT BOOKS, FROM WHICH HE WILL BENEFIT, AS WELL AS STUPID ONES, FROM WHICH HE MAY ALSO LEARN SOMETHING. HE CAN STOP BEFORE FINISHING ONE BOOK, IF HE WISHES, WHILE STARTING ANOTHER AT THE END AND WORKING HIS WAY BACK TO THE BEGINNING. HE MAY LAUGH IN THE WRONG PLACES OR STOP SHORT AT WORDS THAT HE'LL KEEP FOR A LIFETIME. AND, FINALLY, HE'S FREE — AND NO OTHER HOBBY CAN PROMISE THIS — TO EAVESDROP ON MONTAIGNE'S ARGUMENTS OR TAKE A QUICK DIP IN THE MESOZOIC."

WISLAWA SZYMBORSKA

## **Idleness**

**“The code of life in the High Middle Ages [held] that it was precisely lack of leisure, an inability to be at leisure, that went together with idleness; that the restlessness of work-for-work’s-sake arose from nothing other than idleness.**

**There is a curious connection in the fact that the restlessness of a self-destructive work-fanaticism should take its rise from the absence of a will to accomplish something. Idleness, for the older code of behavior, meant especially this: that the human being had given up on the very responsibility that comes with his dignity...**

**The metaphysical-theological concept of idleness means, then, that man finally does not agree with his own existence; that behind all his energetic activity, he is not at one with himself; that, as the Middle Ages expressed it, sadness has seized him in the face of the divine Goodness that lives within him.”**

**-Josef Pieper**

## A Love Story

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*There is something in it as of a newly conquered domain,  
one whose boundaries are still out beyond one's ken, its  
compass extending farther than one could walk: one senses  
more terrain;*

*senses many trails and long wanderings along paths that  
until now had always been shrouded in fog. And adding a  
little daylight, just enough so that one can see where to take  
the next step, would be, from one poem to the next poem,  
like a real advance of footsteps, one never as yet achieved,  
on grounds where (in contrast to "mere" art)  
illumination and action are still as one; this  
domain can indeed only be made into poetry insofar and to  
the extent that one has conquered it and thus made it part of  
a new experience.*

*Somewhere in this realm, deep down, all art begins again  
with renewed force, arises as from its primordial origin,  
where it was magic formula, incantation, — a  
calling forth of life in its still concealed  
mysteriousness, — yes, where it was at once prayer and  
the most intense breaking-forth of power.*

“

Andreas-Salomé

## **Pride**

**"When I think of Frida Kahlo, I think of orgullo, pride. Growing up in Mexico, I wanted to know more about this woman with her mustache and unibrow. Who was this artist who had unapologetically filled her paintings with old and new symbols of Mexican culture in order to tell her own story?"**

**I wasn't always so taken by Frida. When I was younger, I often found her paintings tortuous and difficult to understand. The more I learned about Frida's life, the more her paintings began to take on new light for me. I finally saw that what had terrified me about Frida's images was actually her way of expressing the things she felt, feared, and wanted.**

**[...]**

**Her work was proud and unafraid and introduced the world to a side of Mexican culture that had been hidden from view.**

**As a child, while learning to draw, I would often study my own reflection in the mirror and think about Frida. Did she know how many artists she influenced with her courage and her ability to overcome her own limitations?"**

**- Yuyi Morales**

# Sontag on Literature

*"Literature tells stories. Television gives information."*

*Literature involves. It is the re-creation of human solidarity. Television (with its illusion of immediacy) distances — immures us in our own indifference.*

*The so-called stories that we are told on television satisfy our appetite for anecdote and offer us mutually canceling models of understanding. (This is reinforced by the practice of punctuating television narratives with advertising.) They implicitly affirm the idea that all information is potentially relevant (or "interesting"), that all stories are endless — or if they do stop, it is not because they have come to an end but, rather, because they have been upstaged by a fresher or more lurid or eccentric story.*

*By presenting us with a limitless number of nonstopped stories, the narratives that the media relate — the consumption of which has so dramatically cut into the time the educated public once devoted to reading — offer a lesson in amorality and detachment that is antithetical to the one embodied by the enterprise of the novel. "*

*-Susan Sontag*