An allegorical nonsense for three players

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An Allegorical Nonsense for Three Players by Phil Sawdon

For
Monsieur Âne
Affection and Admiration

The Players

René Hector, a well dressed hand-puppet, tick tock, (there is no mantelpiece), tick tock, he is in time …
Madame Pipe, a mouse, several years younger, she’s got time…
Monsieur Lièvre, a monkey, sur la branche, draws time …

The player’s directions are in italic and are referenced in the reader’s imagination (Sawdon ∞, Albee 1966).

The Scene

A white surface with a tree, a table and a box
There is the sound of a clock ticking
The year might be 1744

Act One

To be read aloud: On the white surface René Hector sits in a box with his head in the box. Madame Pipe stands upright on the table and Monsieur Lièvre is sur la branche, looking at his wrist. There is a metaphor close by.

Madame Pipe: [thumbing an exhibition catalogue, quite innocent, almost childlike.]: Do you tell the time?
René Hector: [after a small silence]: Oui, sometimes … now and again …what is outside?
Madame Pipe: [wistful, some loss]: … well … from time to time … time is outside … and now and then there is a little drawing [pointing] … next to it … followed by an exclamation mark.
René Hector: [a little patronising and a tiny condescending laugh]: Can you draw it?
Madame Pipe: [confused]: … draw what? … [Mutters] … humhyphenhum …
René Hector: [tight smile]: A little drawing … followed by an exclamation mark.
Madame Pipe: [cheerful laugh]: Non, don’t be silly. I’m a mouse.
René Hector: [*gently, as if to a child*]: Did you find it?

Madame Pipe: [*in a fog*]: What? When?

René Hector: [*firm*]: The little drawing … followed by an exclamation mark …

\[ \| \infty \| ! \]

*A clock strikes …*

Madame Pipe: [*dropping sugar in a cup*]: I found it, as you put it, when I was looking at another drawing … brush, pen and ink, coloured pencil brushed with water on paper, probably by René Hector, I’d guess at it being titled *Just a Few Words, 1744*.

René Hector: [*pouring sand and ink into a glass*]: That might be the one that’s inscribed *hickory* barrage erased on the warm memory timing the middle of the filmic lice inappropriate ping pong the final tick tack for a dead toasted window in their toupee on the right pink so plonk tinkle click rat a tat toe tomorrow blim blam flom trip pens scratch distance in *dickory* pencil and paper … is that you (?) 

Madame Pipe [*a little apologetic, confused as to where she is*]: Yes it is and there was a little drawing next to it, followed by an exclamation mark. The back … was covered in stuff … stuff like: picked up the pen sustained unbroken in the space as iii before iv stream me … strew a point there’s no point streaming *dock* thud fiction thud thinking alliteration to draw sunup chic long before crawling into all those things … do you (?)

Monsieur Lièvre: [*from outside the box, not explaining, and to none of them, really*]: No and a bitter yellow slopping dim shadow sits miming the keys are bored taken marrow blank paper mark thought in process of a two months off little heart heat drawing pitted patter and all aboard dirty bored dirty reflection digging dig deep to layer theories art response for push 4/4 rhythm off *the* teeny tiny ink scrrawl in the weight of head and tails a waiting head pick up at the mall before six … can we (?)

Madame Pipe [*knowing nodding of the head*]: Hmm … absolutely … and there are times when this *mouse* is automatic …

Monsieur Lièvre: [*Maybe slightly on the defensive, but even more … vague*]: The importance of automatic drawing cannot be overstressed; automatic drawing releases images in the psyche to the hand, it then enables the hand to free oneself from the dependence on those images … do it do it right spilling sketching towards seabird having flood beck and back spill adds ink to process and plate precess and plate dirty bored dirty reflection erased retrieval fragment on paper whether six or eight pitted *ran* one for another in mark on mark see-saw tempting as though it might be *up* … is it (?)
René Hector: [he judges the situation for a moment]: Probably. [Pause] How does narrative work in my time? Does a clock depend on representation, or are there ‘abstract narratives’ outside the face? The little drawing … did it have any magic numbers … a 4 or maybe a 6?

Monsieur Lièvre: [on his feet, moving]: dumb lime simple line forensic shape and scrutiny in the case and card for recent witness in the act response for push push the mark as record data entry note on paper plips register synchronicity … why (?)

The numbers 4 and 6 appear within the drawing as if from nowhere …

\[ \| 4 \infty 6 \| \]

René Hector: [Goes over to him, strokes his temple]: If Bernice were here then would the 4 be an allusion to the four-part Jungian life cycle? Does it universalise the apparent intimacy of the drawing, clarifying its symbols and centrifugal movement, while increasing its allegorical complexity? I’m also struck by the notion that the 6 might refer to the fusion of male and female … a narrative scene of private fantasies … rag essay rub rub rub and about time it mirrored the skin dirty bored dirty reflection erased blank paper again to repeat replies and pen scratch the streaming point there’s no point thud fiction thud thinking out faff little drawing of a heart it spots the rough … have you (?)

Madame Pipe: [as if the opposite answer was expected from her]: I have and what if we are in a delicate space, inside and outside, impotent time and tide, between a song lyric, certainly not track one, and a nursery rhyme …?

Monsieur Lièvre: [looking around a space]: … pigeon tourist has a smart car spider fright graph softly marks the card in pen and ink speaking of practice and theory in the space is infinite and perpetual doubt and tick tack pink clack bang carping paragraph on paragraph after rhythm verse to chorus click on the point there’s no point streaming thud fiction thud thinking boys don’t cry over spilt ink … shall I (?)

René Hector: [embarrassed]: Is there any more too it?

Madame Pipe: [unconcerned]: I’ll tell you later

Act Two

Five-thirty the next morning: same set. Madame Pipe (the mouse), is alone and awake. She is under the table, wearing pyjamas and slippers. René Hector enters from nowhere and proceeds to push the box uphill whilst earlier Monsieur Lièvre ran up and down the tree in a state of agitation. The box always falls back before René Hector can reach the top. For a moment we are in Tartarus. Now we are not.

Monsieur Lièvre: [looking at his hands] … coarse can sprung pool is quiet consolation aggravated dirty blank paper has no marks of recent ink at centre
erased again and again in theory as opposed to practice pearls wing dong oh me oh my ear wigging waggles sugar on the other side of this wall … can you draw it (?)

Madame Pipe: [confused]: … draw what? … [Mutters] … humhyphenhum …

René Hector: [tight smile]: A little drawing … followed by an exclamation mark.

Madame Pipe: [cheerful laugh]: Non, don’t be silly. I’m a mouse.

Monsieur Lièvre: [hardly able to speak from the laughter] … one in form and content adjusted and exposed curtains the nib in such a wag as to point there’s no point stay with line and lime tools flight frames fancy fuck fuckity fuck one after another at volume doing beauty pitted and patterned composition typical of its night style draws on in autumn long crawling into allthesethings … does it figure out (?)

Madame Pipe: [a silence on the space, soft tears, stirring coffee, but conversational]: Yes it does … cold call no thanks tin tim scratch upon my back design technique lie with marks in gesture it’s a gesture so there the image large thud fiction thud big crocodile caught between the ink and the paper warm sunshine stream me silly talk dirty bored dirty reflection erased retrieval fragment on paper … so (?) I’ll tell you later.

Act Three

Later that night on the same set, after dinner, they start out tentatively, seeing that all the others are merely staring at them René Hector begins to speak …

A clock strikes once

René Hector: [icy]: Hickory dickory dock the mouse ran up the clock

Madame Pipe: [small smile]: The clock struck one

Monsieur Lièvre: [relief peeking through the surprise]: The mouse ran down

All: [precise and pointed]: Hickory dickory dock

Madame Pipe: [thumbing an exhibition catalogue, quite innocent, almost childlike.]: Do you … her voice is drowned out by the sound off pens on paper

Curtain:15:15