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The Entrance

APICULTURE

All Saints' Day was hovering.

And here's the conundrum I faced. Like every Monday for the last twenty years I found myself reluctantly driving to the psychiatric hospital where I worked. Yet I would always leave wanting to return again the following week. And that day, while my car waited in front of the iron gates, I was less inclined than ever to be carried inside. I'd just learned that one of my patients had died.

Was I a monster? Just before leaving home, I'd almost killed a clumsy insect—mechanically, without feeling—on the simple pretext it had no business being in my house. Looking closer, I saw a bee, who managed to get back to her feet after having messed up her landing and tumbled about. She was unable to fly away and she didn't touch the jellied biscuit she'd targeted. She just let me watch. I thought I could read in the prisms of her eyes: "What's the use?"

What's the use of these comings and goings required by the queen, these countless flying hours, these ceaseless transferences, especially in the blooming months when a worker's life won't last more than six weeks? And on this autumn day, what's the use of this completely unseasonal morning outing?

I had no idea how to answer and, in the same tone, upped the ante: "What's the use of my work as an analyst in a psychiatric hospital? Why should I work in a clinic; who's forcing me to do it? Who can explain the wasps' nest I've been plunging into for nearly twenty years without anyone

making me do so? I go there of my own free will. Did *she* know why? Let me tell you what I really think: They are right, those doctors with their shock treatments and tranquillizers. Psychoanalysis has lost its edge. It takes too much time, leaves itself open to too many questions, ends in brick walls, exhausting transferences, lame results, without locating the slightest nectar to nourish the queen.

Maybe, indeed, folly *is* our queen, and analysts and patients her worker bees and knights errant. This is Erasmus's Folly, the one who speaks like a woman: 'I know no one who knows me better than myself.' The words of a sovereign, but what kind of knowing are we talking about?"

The insect shot me a cross-eyed glance. What's the use of knowing oneself, she must have thought, when there are so many collective problems? Psychoanalysis is just excessive individualism.

I took that prejudice to task: "That's a completely unfounded rumor! Folly tries to create a social bond in order to escape winter's hibernation. What looks like a session with a shrink reveals a concentrated and busy society. There's no need to number in the thousands like you! Our work goes so much farther than the limits of the self that it exposes society's fissures. I paid the price to learn this through many sessions of crazy-making transference. The analyst often finds herself taking the place of a monster or a tyrant, or becoming the cause of horrors going back farther than her own birth: the First World War, the Second World War, the Hundred Years War. Are you surprised by all this? I bet like lots of others you don't realize how folly shows us the zones of social catastrophe. Yesterday, today, tomorrow, it's all the same to folly. Time gets confused, it stops, even reverses itself. . . . But what could you know about folly's time or ours," I whispered, "You're just a bee . . ."

To conclude, I wanted to take her down a notch. Missing its landing, my lecture flew off on its own wings: "You pride yourself on being a social insect, so be it. But in the matter of sociology, folly also has a lot to say. For example, to survive in case of danger she becomes a plural body, sometimes even becoming a thing. If you want to see what I mean, go visit those people who persist in speaking to patients in the obscurity of their own institutions. Some of them will remain objective, as if they personified science. Others will tell you that once back home, they find themselves exhausted and don't know who they are. They've paid with their person in building and rebuilding the frame of each session, in defending it from outside attacks, in reaping the harvest of the unconscious, in inventing language

games when the unconscious grows mute, and especially in finding dream food for subjects undergoing birth."

The bee raised her eyes to Heaven.

"You think I'm idealizing the profession and you're right. As is true of the hive's darkness, the secrets of analysis don't really eliminate pillaging hatreds, deadly rivalries, massacres of colleagues or suicide attacks against those who relentlessly hunt honey. But year after year, as I've said, all those hours spent talking culminate in a new social bond. At least in theory . . . because, today, you see, I'm not sure I believe anymore . . ."

I wanted to share my doubts with her. But as she was acting like a dumb animal, I had to explain: "The social bond has to be stitched back together when it gets torn on society's death zones. Folly entreats her agents to fix things up or to take off in a swarm. A lot of people get lost in the effort. They wander without rhyme or reason and end up being hospitalized. Sometimes an analyst travels with them, moving between dream and reality. And believe me, more than one person has recovered because they encountered someone to talk to in the midst of their hell."

The bee looked incredulous; she didn't like the word hell: wasn't her society a model of harmony and democracy, with a monarch whom Diogenes praised as needing no arms to rule?

"Your honeyed words are pure propaganda," I grumbled. "Your queen has a stinger and she uses it. Of course it's true she saves it for running through her rivals during a putsch. Drop the official line and let's face facts: for example, the Varroa epidemic that threatened to exterminate every last one of you in every corner of Europe, the civil wars, the summary executions of so-called useless males during the slow period before autumn. What do you do then about the Name of the Father? And what if your queen, who guarantees your survival and the language that unites you, disappears by accident? It's a calamity, isn't it? Doesn't the orphaned hive turn into a kind of hell, left to chance and certain death?"

WAR VETS

"Institutionalized people know best about zones of catastrophe, whose importance can impact not just a beehive, but also generations of human beings, their homelands, their jobs, and the way they speak. Thrown by necessity or by chance into those zones, regions where no one wants to go, such people try to survive by living negatively, offering as little as possible of themselves to the devastation threatening them. But, inexplica-

bly, even if shut up and gagged, they can't stop themselves from showing what shouldn't be shown and putting their fingers on what shouldn't be touched. Just like yesterday's Royal Fool, they're the Jesters of contemporary society.

You don't know a catastrophe zone? Ask your Slovenian friends, whose runways were real works of art. Are you trying to tell me war didn't drive them crazy? I bet you some of them are inventing a language right now to capture their experience. Unless their poets have all disappeared . . . in which case nobody, not even History, will believe them.

Sometimes the land of death has the last word. I didn't know what to say to hold on to that patient who just died. He wasn't Slovenian, but from Lorraine, where in the past a huge number of ordinary people from his own family died a violent death and where generations after them also died violently. He told me his grandparents and all their grandchildren were deported during the First World War. Some of them never returned from the concentration camp. It was apparently called 'Holtzminden.'

You say, 'delusional'? As you see, he probably had his wars mixed up. But what does any of it matter now? It's all in the past, disappeared, effaced, and he's just a disappeared person from the hospital, at one with what he used to call his nothingness."

The unmoving bee was paying attention.

"I can't tell you much more than that. Since public welfare is measured by statistics, nobody cares about the so-called handful of people deported in 1914. In terms of the millions killed in the trenches, they're insignificant.

You want me to stop these old vets' tales? Don't twist the stinger in the wound. It's all my fault, I know. I didn't figure out how to play my role in the theatre I called our sessions. I sat in my comfortable chair and watched history go by as though it had nothing to do with me. I know what you're thinking. I should have jumped on the stage and given the reply. I shouldn't have cared about historical truth. I didn't know the right gestures to save him. . . . And what gestures might those be?"

THE SHIP OF FOOLS

"You should go ask that question of somebody who really knows. Fly to Basel, to the city of Erasmus, Paracelsus, and Sebastian Brandt, the author of *The Ship of Fools.* It's best to go during Carnival. Go see the psychoanalyst Gaetano Benedetti. He knows how to decrypt the hermetic language of madness, a little like Von Frisch did in order to understand your bee's

dance. I don't know how your Nobel Prize winner proceeded. But Benedetti's method is to join the dancing in order to be with the patient in the catastrophe zone he haunts.

He dares speak to him about his own musings and even his dreams, betting they will register and resonate secretly with the traces of negative existence that absorb the patient. Of course the patient can't express this. Benedetti trusts the movements that pull him into the music of this particular ship of fools. It's a moment when the therapeutic unconscious can resonate with the patient's, like a double. I'm afraid I'm incapable of such a manoeuver."

The bee grew impatient; I could guess her objections.

"There's no witchcraft in any of this. When you return to the hive, the other bees have to decode your gestures so your dance doesn't appear to be a useless, even exasperating and dangerous spectacle, something they want to stop as soon as it starts. Preferably by a blow to the head, which you would have received a few minutes ago if I hadn't stopped myself in time.

Well, if no one listens and engages with it, madness pushes you to the limits; it takes a shot of some kind of 'trankillizer' to calm you down. Benedetti wants the analyst to become the pole of otherness that no one else dares inhabit. He resists panicking when he's hit by it and he can articulate his position in the danger zone. From there, much like the way your eggs hatch, analysis can offer the promise of a new bond."

I thought I heard my agitated companion buzz, "Analyst!" while she obstinately repeated her figure eights on the table. I tried to interpret what was happening: "Is this Möbius' strip, Lorenz's attractor? Don't get so excited; what you're doing is all Greek to me. You don't like the word 'analyst'? OK. So what about *annaliste*? A specialist of all those facts wiped out of the annals of history? Or what about *histrion*—the medieval name for minstrels who performed history through gestures?"

The bee continued her dance without comment.

"And what about 'therapist'? From *therapon* or 'caretaker' in the ancient Greek of your ancestors, the bees of Mount Hymettos; a ritual double like Patroclus for Achilles, Pylades for Orestes, August, the red-nosed clown, for the white one. . . . But I—I didn't even know how to be Sancho Panza for my patient."

Still turning and twisting, my therapist wasn't listening to me. Maybe she was trying to show me the path to melliferous flowers? I was in great need. All this talking was making me dizzy. Dire straits, indeed.

"It's worthless to talk, forget everything I said. This morning I believe in nothing. What's the use? The man who died was called Aristaeus—you know, like the god of beekeepers and cheese-makers. Did I kill him? Just who killed him?"

The bee's only response was to take off towards the heavens. Maybe she was returning to the neighboring hives in the apiary of the Luxembourg Garden. For over a century, her sisters had been teaching the ageless art of apiculture to countless veiled men and women.

FIRST ASYLUM

A hoary monk officiated at the school. He interpreted what was happening, swinging a smoker instead of a censer, to smoke out the bees. As soon as springtime came round, I'd stop by to watch his cabalistic gestures, mesmerized by the echoes of my youth. I could see myself dressed like a fencer, wire mask over my face, armed with only a smoker that I kept brandishing next to my grandfather, who was gathering the honey combs barehanded. My memory told me he was barefaced as well, going to battle with only the smoke from his pipe to keep a riot from happening.

One day my grandfather disappeared. Maybe he was hiding behind the veils in an enclosure, off limits to the public? It was a mystery! So I went on my way, always looking for signs of him: the monk's bushy beard resembling the beard of the Head Doctor who'd welcomed me to his hospital when I'd just begun practicing. That was in the north of France, some twenty years ago. The clues stopped there.

"You're getting warm," I should have told myself when I let myself be tickled by that psychiatrist's beard. (And an analyst to boot!) What pushed me to want to work in his ward? The carelessness of youth, the fire and smoke of beginnings? Why did I insist and follow him here, when he decided to move closer to Paris?

In front of me the sinister gates were still closed. What was the guard doing? At least the first hospital had enticing cast-iron ones we could open ourselves. Twenty years already? What had made me want to enter this place come hell or high water? Even in those days, analysts were leaving hospitals in droves. I should have listened to their good advice. They told me that analysis was incompatible with restraint.

And Sissi, the patient I left behind when I changed hospitals, the one who thought she was Empress of Austria. Was she still institutionalized? My ears were ringing with the goodbye she chose to throw at me: "Shit on

you, Davoine. You're stupid. You're a cretin. She's crazy! A nurse! A nurse! May Day!"

It was all too much. I'd had it. I swore I'd never again cross the threshold where Aristaeus had just died for good.

TORTURES

Last night the Head Doctor told me it was certainly an overdose. He announced over the phone that they'd found him outdoors in the early morning, face down, a few meters from the unit where he'd been demanding every day for the last ten years, in the name of God, his driver's license, registration card, and identity papers.

I hung up without saying a word. Among the staff, we'd soon be proclaiming in our quarters: "A hopeless psychotic." In the corridors, the patients would protest with fervor: "the best among us." Incapable of saying no, of refusing the slightest favor asked of him by his fellows in misfortune, Aristaeus had nonetheless managed to push back with all his might against several different therapies. Maybe it had something to do with his great soul; no one could match it.

Starting to deliver his eulogy in my head, I suddenly saw his face when he approached me for the first time in one of the corridors of the hospital: "They're torturing me, please do something, it's horrible, they're killing me little by little."

I took this at face value. Each week he talked to me of infinitesimal massacres, made apparent by the way he threw himself against doors, bracing himself to keep the torturers, predators, and poachers from entering.

I had asked him: "Who are these people? Where are they coming from? From outside or inside?"

"From outside and from inside, from outside inside, your question is idiotic."

This morning I saw too late he was demonstrating an invasion, the violation of a territory. And I'd taken myself out of that space. I thought he was the only one concerned. I didn't recognize his efforts not only to fight the monsters swarming in his hospital bed—all those snakes, rats, hornets—but also to show me a dangerous zone I didn't want to see. I should have understood by the dread in his eyes that he was trying to make me grasp the shape of a world starting to disappear, both for him and for me.

The resident who was following his case, keen on René Thom's theory of catastrophes, told me it was a "general catastrophe" from which we'd

probably all be effaced. And there would be no trace of us because the outside and the inside would no longer be differentiated. I hadn't understood what he'd said nor gathered the slightest hint of how I could think about it. All during this time, Aristaeus had kept saying: "Don't you see they're trying to kill us?"

Who was this "us" he was talking about? "Of course not," I spat back like a coward (and as an aside): "My work is to banish madness, not end up its prey." Yet I was the prey of my own stupidity; I understood nothing of his riddles.

He would say: "You're like all those totalitarians who think that ghosts work for them." And then he'd hum: *Of the past let's make a clean slate. . . .* And he'd ask me about what the slate was hiding.

Snakes, rats, hornets, and many other unnamable things squirmed there. Was he hallucinating? Was it the unburied corpses of those people who had disappeared in the deportations that haunted his imagination? I didn't dare put myself there. Faced with my neutrality, he fell into the chasms of horror I thought I'd neutralized. That's where my blindness led us.

Yet he seemed to get better and better. The disgusting beasts had given way to a couple of caged birds placed in his room, meant to be a prelude to opening his own cage. His leaving was right on the horizon, but always out of grasp, like the horizon—not enough money, no lodging, no luck, no family he could count on.

"My family doesn't give a damn." That's all anamnesis could get from him. The only thing that came back like a ghost from time to time in our conversation was the enigmatic Holtzminden. "A splendid resort for mothers and especially grandmothers deported in 1914," he'd ironize again.

"And where is that?"

"Near Poland maybe . . ."

"We're not going to see the light at the end of the tunnel any time soon," he told me one Monday, looking up the tunnel of my sleeve. He couldn't find a trick card, a rabbit, a duck, the least little bit of magic that would let him keep on playing. Mastering the game, he decided: "That's it. I'll see you later, at the clinic, after I've been released for good."

I'd been had once again. Since then, he'd given me cursory hellos and goodbyes when we passed each other. Except once, not so long ago, he'd asked for a French literature textbook from the tenth grade, the last time he'd been good at school. It covered the Middle Ages through the Sixteenth Century and featured a buffoon on the cover. I'd picked up the

book as soon as I could, but kept on forgetting to give it to him. Last Monday when I got home from the hospital, I'd put it in my bag so as not to forget. Too late.

SPRING WATERS

Aristaeus had kept his word. Hardly out of our world for good, he came back to see me last night in a dream. He was leading a cohort of buffoons. The jesters were all seated around a table, but I was on a low chair: I couldn't rise to their height. They wanted me to talk. To say what? That I'd killed him? I protested to the jury: why not accuse the isolation cell where he'd been recently locked up in his piss and shit after having raided, with a few rowdy and rougher others, a doctor's medicinal spirits? Should I be condemned for treason? For having collaborated out of exhaustion with the usual refrain: too late, too difficult, too crazy? For not having stayed by his side?

In my dream, he didn't listen to my whining and demanded his inheritance. A spring-fed plot he'd inherited somewhere up north at his father's death. Where was that? A mystery. Was it a mythical terrain, like Holtzminden? My disbelief was not lost on him: "Madmen are very convenient when it comes to inheritance. They don't count. I see you don't believe me. You're not worth much either."

How did he know? "You're really not worth much!" my grandmother used to say to keep me in my place. He added, as she did: "We were doing just fine all by ourselves; we had plenty of our own."

All his own had evaporated a long time ago. From giving up on his own, he'd even opened the cage with the one surviving bird in it. (What was the use of keeping it, if the other was gone?) Me, too, I'd allowed myself to stop being the other. So he'd followed the path of the bird, free, he said, to return to his forefathers' country, even if he knew that the morning's autumnal cold would carry his soul off to the land of eternal springs.

"Help me find my spring-fed plot," he insisted in my dream. "It's urgent."

I woke up with a start from this very telling dream. I couldn't question his demand. But how was I to find a land of springs?

INSIDE AND OUTSIDE

The electric open sesame of the gate finally did its job. My car slowly made its way towards the hospital. I recognized from a distance one of

my ward's patients, as usual silent and bent over. His pathetic silhouette seemed to yearn towards an impossible freedom. He gestured for me to enter. Closer in, I knew I must stop commiserating. His usually pale and pope-like face swelled red from laughter. I wondered what this serious man found so funny: seeing me return to my psychotherapy work? I lost my bearings. I saw him outside and me inside. From outside the asylum, psychoanalysis and psychiatry look like a zoo, where we normal folks circle behind bars.

"Life rages out there," Sissi, the Empress, would say to me twenty years ago in my old hospital, pointing to the street with her imperious finger. "How can you live in it?" An avalanche of remorsefulness chased away that long-forgotten vision. By way of consoling myself, I attempted some theory. Wittgenstein exclaims in his *Notes on Private Experience,* "Inside and outside! It is as if now we have an insight of something which before we had only seen from the outside." I'd let myself be seduced again by an image of interiority that always trapped me. I'd imagined Sissi and then Aristaeus haunted by internal torturers of which the rest of us were mere projections. But they never stopped telling me there was always an outside on the inside, a public domain in the privacy of their family, and especially in our own rapport.

"It's the war that drove me crazy," Sissi would say without further details. "Don't you see we're at war?" Aristaeus would sing from *La Marseillaise*, as if they'd communicated with each other from hospital to hospital: *There's still blood watering the furrows.* It's now obvious to me that the furies, those goddesses of revenge, were screaming through them, demanding their tribute of human sacrifice to make up for ancient crimes. I'd been hoodwinked. Was Sissi, that great Empress, that great curser, even among us anymore? I needed to know right away.

Basta! Don't think about it anymore, walk towards the door of the ward. Stumbling along, I couldn't stop pleading my case before the court set up by my dream's jesters. OK, I was a monster, no doubt of that. But in my defense—and many nurses reported it—Aristaeus had often "thrown himself around like a bear, roared, climbed on the furniture, acted like an ape, and alarmed the night watch."

When I asked him about the weirdness of his behavior, he always answered that his monsters were political. It was his right to act the wild man, he'd say, another one of his enigmatic proclamations that left me hanging, like the bird in his cage.

IN BUFFOONERY ALL IS MADNESS

"For he was a right fool, ready to play and perform—farcical singing or rhetorical poetry; he burned to expose through any allegorical means." Where did that refrain come from? Maybe I'd seen it in the French book Aristaeus had asked for. In the section on the Renaissance, in the chapter entitled "Buffoonery or Political Theatre," I'd read that this particular literary genre had first appeared in the second half of the Fifteenth Century and reached its height in the Sixteenth. Its extraordinary success wasn't without connection to the chaos of the Hundred Years' War. Jesters were recruited from circles of intellectual protest and organized themselves in joyous fraternities throughout the north and center of France. There were the Enfants Sans Souci in Paris, the Infanterie Dijonnaise, and the Conards de Rouen. . . . They mounted and performed farcical sketches, and some of the authors are still known to us: Clément Marot or Pierre Gringoire, whom Hugo made famous in *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*. On the trestle tables set up in public squares, in the Basoche or Law schools or in the colleges of the Latin Quarter to which they belonged, they ended their preshow come-ons with the phrase: "In buffoonery all is folly." They shielded the virulence of their satire beneath the immunity of the fool's cap.

All of a sudden I wanted to read huge bits of this book, hoping, I guess, to find Aristaeus there on his own turf, at the origins of the oral tradition, at the confluence of my own foolishness. So I sat down on a bench in the honor court, my feet on the lawn, facing a bed of purple and yellow chrysanthemums, and once more put off going to work. In the garden's center, a statue of Mercury pointed the way to the exit to a swooning Beauty. Nobody was around. A ray of autumn sun sheltered me. I opened my book.