

A Schizotherapist's Walk to Work

Without walking, I would be dead (Robert Walser)

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Dazzling blue and the fading stars on this early October morning. A few people about. Respect means look again. Half-awake at dusk I am touched by the beauty of others – commuters exiting the station, greengrocers unloading the truck at the corner; tall, bearded man with the dog at the corner of Park Hill Road; woman cyclist beating the traffic on Fleet Road. I could set the clock to the regularity of these daily apparitions. The majestic tree in front of Mondrian's house marks the passing of time and in the near invisible fluxes of trunk and branches I chronicle imperceptible shifts in me. The green front door glows in the half light. I wish I could see Mondrian's spirit dancing in his front room. Didn't he paint *Broadway Boogie Woogie*?

The rain from the night before left the pavement wet and full of leaves; red and brown, slippery underfoot as my mind wanders on last night's film, the 2002 sequel to *The Gleaners and I*. Agnes Varda returns two years later to the people she had met. In the first documentary she had traced the wayward and ingenious art of living off the leftover of others. Gleaners hunt for food, discarded objects, and personal connections. There are field gleaners and urban gleaners. She hadn't realized one of them was Jean Laplanche. In the first film Laplanche talked of grape gleaning, gathering the discarded grapes on the ground after the harvest and how to use them. In the sequel, the twinkle-eyed mastermind describes psychoanalysis as a kind of gleaning – paying attention to things we normally dismiss – what tumbles from speech, what is dumped, what is picked up. Words which are beside usual speech acquire value because what is picked up or gleaned is more valuable than what is harvested. 'Is there also a notion of poverty?' Varda asks. Yes, the analyst is also in a state of poverty, in that he is in a state of not knowing. He doesn't know beforehand what he'll glean, Laplanche replies. I look again. I love this man. I've learned so much from him – from his youthful study of Hölderlin to his gleaning of what Freud discarded in the harvesting of dreams and enigmatic messages. His smile reminds me of my old friend Vincenzo who kept his cool and could reassure others when everybody was tripping on acid (a stance I too learned with time) and later became a Jungian analyst and an accomplished practitioner and teacher of Vajrayana Buddhism. 'But isn't it the patient who lacks something?' Varda asks. Yes, the patient asks, 'Doctor, what's wrong with me?', but the

doctor has no more idea than the patient, and that's the wonderful thing. Both are poor in knowledge. And even if the doctor thinks he knows, he must give up what he knows so he can be receptive to something which is completely new.

It must be Wednesday: the rubbish disposal man drags unceremoniously a large black bin. Likewise, the ethics committee suggests a consensual disposal as the best way to deal with the complaint against my supervisee Rosario. Litter must be dealt with swiftly, and porticos repainted. No time for the luxury of nuanced understanding. This is woke capitalism, baby. Wake up and smell the overpriced decaf flat white. *Mea culpa*, hand on my heart, Rosario said and meant it, but why so much glee in censuring others? Do one hundred and eight prostrations for one week to any female deity, I suggested, be it Kuan Yin, the Virgin Mary, Kali, or Greta Garbo. See if something shifts. Reflect. Atone. Apologize. We all fuck up from time to time. Except perhaps the wise guys in the ethics committee who get their Pentecostal missives straight from Rogers, Bowlby, and Melanie Klein. Rosario is truly baffled and constantly on the verge of tears. Hasn't slept for days. 'I thought we were friends. I mean, she sent me a song, and wrote such lovely thoughtful things over the course of two months. I still think she is a delightful person. When I kissed her, she kissed me back, and that afternoon we went on talking for nearly two hours. Yes, she joined the course I was facilitating but (he repeats himself) I thought we were friends. Am I a dickhead? Am I short-sighted? Does my dickheadedness merit a complaint to the police? Can't this be worked through, why can't we talk, me and her, face to face, honestly, why can't some understanding be allowed to emerge for both? Because you should've known better, I say, and watched out for transference, countertransference, *und so weiter*, I say. Let's talk in a fortnight.

The very tall guy in military trousers punctually runs by halfway through the long avenue of implausibly red trees. Autumn marks a threshold. I breathe on my cold fingers; people talk to themselves when talking on the phone. Images are being monitored for the purpose of crime prevention and public safety. Involuntary memories of an unmonitored old love, the silent room in her balcony, a vanished Indian dawn, sunrise haze caressing the ancient stone. Pale blue distant clouds on the horizon; glimpses of the city between buildings. Linger on those pale blue clouds. The horizon: the city landscape narrates in hieroglyphs the impossible now. We alone can be absent: here, and at the same time not here. As the traffic builds and the punters walk by, every shop gets down to a rivalry of puns: *Ripples; Impress; Perspectives; Il Primo; Smiles Solutions*. On this very same road once a punitively austere dinner with a Tony Blair groupie wanting to talk philosophy asking with a smile whether I was in favour of the death penalty. Because it's all about 'dialogue' and 'current issues' and it may be acceptable if controversial

to be in favour of electrocution or hanging or stoning if the argument is logical and reasoned and 'serves the community'. Or if the public demands it. It's all about demands rather than values, is it not? Values fluctuate, while appetites persist. Make the public happy. Everything he said made me want to throw up the half-masticated fancy salad on his fancy floor but of course I didn't because he'd offered me a gig and I needed the money. On my way home that night I let out steam scribbling with my pencil *asshole* on a Nigel Farage poster.

In the local deli a woman cleans the counter while the bald guy in black overalls grumpily offloads the van. The C11 on its way to Archway all the way down from the upper echelons. Rosario's colleague Marina had heard about the complaint and confronted Rosario. Her supervisor Sam Cassirer had suggested she breaks the friendship with Rosario because he had done wrong and was being investigated. Long before the investigation determined whether Rosario was guilty or not, Sam Cassirer wore the mantle of the archbishop of *Fama Subversa*, goddess of Rumour. The wind blows in Her temple's twisting passageways, carrying noises and intonations far and wide until Big Cheese Sparalesto himself, unofficial head of the congregation, refers to Rosario as 'wild' in a twisted referral. But you kind of wanted this reputation Rosario, admit it, I say to him. You know, maybe 'wild' is a compliment!

I had a temping job in a Brasserie this side of town in April 1989 commuting on foot between Cricklewood and Chalk Farm and on the way back after sweaty kitchen work happy to be out in the London air with a raw chicken breast in by back pocket nicked discretely to enliven our dinner in our studio flat where if you hanged your towel by the window it blackened within minutes. Or that time just out of a plane from Bombay seeing my beloved London for the first time and stealing a daffodil from a garden for my ex's father in exchange for a few days of hospitality just so we could find our bearings. And in the black London cab from Green Park to Cricklewood the sight of Abbey Road felt like a big deal; I liked the Beatles then but now they bore me stiff to be honest with their vignettes and choruses and I do know I don't stand a chance in hell now to get UK citizenship.

Primrose Hill Road in the golden light of an autumn morning and at the corner the magniloquently named Britannia Hotel. Thank goodness Britannia rules no more since the days they massacred rebellious peasants in Bronte, Sicily in 1860; Britannia rules no waves except in the twisted daydream of vainglorious nincompoops. And with all the Brexit xenophobia and the blighted apolitical apathetic indifference of our profession you must give Van Deurzen credit for siding strongly for Europe and not being quiet about it.

The morning traffic builds, and don't you love it when streetlights go off at first daylight. The colder it gets the warmer the colours. Pissarro was right: *the colourists get it entirely wrong:*

nature is coloured in winter and cold in summer, there is nothing colder than full summer sun.

The BT tower in the warm distance unwitting monument to Arthur Rimbaud the greatest of poets who lived on that very same site for a short while, his presence undetected still by the islanders for they don't celebrate poets no more around here. Instead, clowns, celebrities, and oligarchs get the bow. But he's still saying it if you'd care to listen:

*I have stretched ropes from steeple to steeple; Garlands from window
to window; Golden chains from star to star ... And I dance.*

At any rate, 'we shall meet where the sky meets the sea, and we shall play volleyball' to quote from Zarathustra's apocryphal text. Among trendy boutiques, chichi cafes, and organic shops, the home of that wonderful and generous man, Friedrich Engels. Dense blue clouds marching east, the tragic sky and people under it passing through like clouds. Beauty, fragility, and true power as the power to be affected by so much splendour and sadness. Something else too: joy. Falling like snow silent unexpected. It pervades you and where did it come from and how long will it stay? Gone already. Walk back to find it and it's gone. In last night's dream, I scruffily enter a classroom, half-empty at first, where Professor Spinelli sits on a panel with a couple of other existential dignitaries. I climb over a bench dragging one leg over to signal my outsider status and find a place to sit as the room fills up. The room bristling with anticipation even though we all know monsieur Godot won't show up. I consider briefly whether to get involved or not. To Whom it May Concern: Dear Sir/Madam, I don't want to be 'included' in your 'relational dialogue'. I am no supplicant. If you really want to talk and listen, come outside. Let me know when; I'll order a take-away and we'll look at the sea shrouded in mist.

Two young walkers on the top of the hill taking pictures of London, my beautiful. All dressed up and nowhere to go. Veiled in mist and fog London is so delightful. Only an uncouth Heideggerian would want it unveiled to expose its so-called naked truth. I might as well admit it: like Nietzsche's poets, I need an audience. Any audience, even an audience of buffaloes. Once I get their attention, and for the advancement of the profession, I'll catalogue all styles of attachment unexplored in Attachment Theory beyond the canonical *secure*, *anxious*, *avoidant*, and *fearful-avoidant*. Why be miser and have only four? Greater inspiration may be towed from the rich variety of knots found in the ancient and venerable trade of fishermen, cowboys, and salty dogs alike: Highwayman's Hitch, Rolling Hitch, Marlin Spike Hitch, and Fisherman's Bend (also known as angler's knot, English knot, halibut knot, waterman's knot). Plus: Figure of Eight Knot, Double Sheet Bend, Round Turn and Two Half Hitches. Not to mention Timber Hitch, Sheep Shank, Butterfly Knot, Bowline (not recommended), Reef Knot, Running Bowline, and Double Sheet Bend. And to top it all: Tugboat Hitch, Honda Knot,

Prusick Knot, Two Half Hitches. Each of these entanglements, keeping a boat moored, an anchor tied, and a catch fastened, constitute remarkable antidotes to the danger of a psyche adrift through the vagaries and vicissitudes of an enfleshed world full of cold drafts, unforeseen heartbreaks, and lousy coffee. My favourite is Rolling Hitch, its very name suggesting greater openness within our predictable human entanglements. For those of a more orthodox, distinctly Darwinian and Bowlbian bent, the English Knot appears most suitable, its aerodynamic double bind providing a sense of certitude against the ills of a quicksand world. Of course, if you decide for the English Knot, thou shalt be moored in familialism – even if you are an anti-psychiatrist or a groovy ‘radical’. You too shall be entombed within the confines of an Oedipal costume drama, choreography courtesy of the stale puritanism of integration. For if it’s not ‘the individual’, then it’s ‘the family’, even when, in kitchen-sink version of the story, society is deemed accountable. As Felix Guattari put it a while ago, *what Mary Barnes needed was not more family, but more society*. May I suggest: a break from familialism is advisable if psychotherapy is to go anywhere: a break from the fine sentiments that stifle our trade, from the wild goose chase for the ‘true self’ and the piety of Buber’s ‘true encounter’. I punch the code, open the front door, and put the kettle on, getting ready for my first client in ten minutes.

Disclaimer. This is a work of fiction. All resemblance to people and events is coincidental. No existential therapist was harmed during the writing of this piece.