

## Francis Schmetz

*'Everything has been done except by you'*

The man in the woolen hat never leaves.

He lives in a land where early mornings mingle with the smell of coffee, the launch of a sleepwalking stroke, the strangeness of street noises, saying: lullaby, lullaby - I'll tell you again, all about you, little cosmos.

In his eyes, the full moon becomes a talking sphere, chattering with a thousand calligraphic breaths, and the man in the woolen hat acknowledges this dialogue with the light, puts on his fisherman's jacket, looks at the brown wrinkling of his own retina, now with silver reflections, and says: moon, go to sleep, go to sleep. Follow the movement of a departure, of an arrival. I know, thanks to you, he says, that it's not the sky that's blue, it's the blue that's blue.

In the street, the man in the woolen hat wanders. He's not alone in the street. He brushes against the golden leaves on the wings of the three sparrows pecking at crumbs on the ground, he leaps over abysses with Aristotle's sandal, and he meets himself in a taller figure, sometimes diaphanous, sometimes palimpsest-like, looking like Venus, with black hips broken, with hips full of desire. Perhaps this is where the decorated births of destruction can be found.

All along the way, dream stones, vineyards, Greek beaches, a white calla, and the odd number, hand in hand with the even number.

Only by appearance, the amaryllis greets him. He greets the amaryllis in return, takes off his woolen hat, greets a second time. Salute-salute. There follow, at the edge of the garden, strange dialogues with undulating syllables, with geometric triangles, with crosses brushing against the rays, until the Christ borrows a few appearances from Giacometti's shadows.

The man in the woolen hat, when he comes across a body, of an epidermal reality, he bends himself in the fold of his resistance of flesh. A kneecap capsizes the top of a mountain. From a throat, the stammering dialect of German is pronounced. Then he looks at the sex of the woman in the blurred direction of the hands of time. Then he looks at the sex of the man, in the confused sense of his human condition.

In the hours of silence, the pencil is placed on one palm and the brush on the other, and adorned in fiery red, acrylic grey and deep blue, he climbs the Dolomite mountain range. There he finds sacred sticks, simple rituals. He laughs, laughs in the laughter until the mind opens to the new harvests, to the buds and the breaths of tomorrow. Tomorrow, the man in the woolen hat, he will enliven the leaf, the austere frankness, with a cloud of mother-of-pearl.

A charcoal pencil stain on his finger, the task of the meeting, black, black, pearled, charcoal sediment, slowly, against a sky stained with lees.

Thursday, Friday, Saturday, then. Wander. Rub your cheeks against the reef. Blink at the cigarette seller. Open the door, close the door. Make a useless gesture, then a second time, a more serious-looking gesture. But, above all, don't contemplate the serious without its own escape. Persist, especially in the details. Start again. Leave again. Digest. Resume. Trace. Continue. It's his voice. It's the voice of the man in the woolen hat.

No, the man in the woolen hat, he never leaves. He throws into your hand, open, melodious, the repertoire of scales, he offers you bread, milk and chalk. He addresses the traces of your sensuality, the Sunday on which you walk, in length and in width, and he tells you, to be or not to be, perhaps that could be the question, but above all: go.

And you, enriched by him, will go. So be you, surrounded by rhombuses, by great dances and by laughing monkeys.

Original text in French by Aurélia Declercq.

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