Le premier venu…et les autres / First Comers…and Others

Andrée Paradis

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LE PREMIER VENU . . . ET LES AUTRES.

Il est indéniable, si l'on croit vivre en démocratie, que la culture, y compris la contre-culture et la nouvelle culture, comptent parmi les droits fondamentaux. Réduire la démocratie à ses traits essentiels, c'est établir le rapport de l'individu à l'État. En démocratie, l'individu vaut mieux que l'État. La Société est faite pour l'homme et non l'homme pour la Société. L'État doit mettre à la portée de toute personne qui tombe sous sa juridiction, en quelque lieu qu'elle se trouve, les outils éducatifs, culturels ou autres, nécessaires à son bonheur et à son épanouissement.

La démocratie s'oppose au racisme, au régime totalitaire; elle croit en une «étrange qualité de l'homme», à sa poésie, à son mystère. Une démocratie digne de ce nom admet que les hommes non seulement naissent et vivent égaux mais qu'ils soient capables de singularité. Elle favorise leur propre choix de vie dans un régime qui contient des modes d'action souples et variés.

La démocratie va loin dans le respect de l'homme; en retour, elle attend que l'homme aille loin dans le sens de la responsabilité, de la solidarité, «pour elle l'homme vaut par ce qu'il a de naturel, d'immédiat, de naïf plutôt que par ce qu'il acquiert». Elle lui donne les moyens d'acquérir, mais n'impose pas le grand savoir. Le premier venu vit dans un processus de culture aussi bien que le savant ou l'artiste, avec cette différence qu'en général, il ne le sait pas. Tenter de l'en convaincre, lui parler de son acquis réel, risque de le frustrer momentanément, mais le lent cheminement d'une civilisation ne se fait pas autrement. On a tellement galvaudé la notion de culture, qui est avant tout un état d'esprit, une attitude de la pensée et des sens, on l'a tellement confondue avec les outils culturels présentés comme privilèges des élites, qu'il ne faut pas s'étonner d'assister à une levée de boucliers contre la culture. Le phénomène est international; il est toutefois plus vivace, plus agressif dans les pays jeunes qui ont peu de culture traditionnelle.

Dans cet affrontement de la contre-culture et de la nouvelle culture avec la culture traditionnelle fermentent des bouillons de «création». Cette nouvelle phase-action semble aller du côté de l'engagement et de la prise de conscience. Il reste aux esprits justes à développer des pensées exactes! Il reste aussi à améliorer sans relâche la qualité du milieu ambiant.

Andrée PARADIS

English Translation, p. 73
JEAN-PAUL JÉRÔME
PAINTER OF COMMUNICATION

By Fernand CUELLETTE

What always saved me was that I never knew what I wanted. BRAQUE.

There is no more profound reason for confronting canvas than responding to Desire, to the necessity of the lofty music of the human being. If we wished to convince ourselves of this, the single work Apollon (1974) would be enough to seize our gaze. One cannot follow a trail without giddiness. Jérôme plunges us right into a labyrinth. He captures visible light the better to abandon us to invisible light. The great black resonance permeates us. The Novelistian night resounds like a summons. The earthly tissue of greenery, of solid brown, of love dense as a high vintage wine, of traces of fine blue, can only prepare the eye for the illuminating passage from gray to bold white, and what a violent vibration this isl but in order the eye should go, bewildered, into the abyss that black opens. Reversing a remark by Dufy, one might say that there are black backgrounds, equal in value to absolute white. "But we come too late, friend. Yes, the gods live, shut up that door tormented in the heart of another world." (Hölderlin). When he super¬imposes labyrinths, Jérôme sweats us along into the elsewhere of the gods.

Fundamentally, Jean-Paul Jérôme is a painter of communication. In this sense, there is no sensitivity more modern. When he paints he is indeed the organized. In each part of the picture, he abandoned the curve. The Sequences (1974) are very significant. No curve at all. And already, by its silence, the gray window of fine blue, can only prepare the eye for the illuminating passage from gray to bold white, and what a violent vibration this is! but in order the eye should go, bewildered, into the abyss that black opens. Reversing a remark by Dufy, one might say that there are black backgrounds, equal in value to absolute white. "But we come too late, friend. Yes, the gods live, shut up that door tormented in the heart of another world." (Hölderlin). When he super¬imposes labyrinths, Jérôme sweats us along into the elsewhere of the gods.

One can say that in the passion for perfection that distinguishes Jérôme, in his patience, one feels the presence of the long tra¬dition of European painting, one can also add that this painter of expanding galaxies and of molecules certainly has the generosity and the openness of American painting. A painter of forms rather than of gesture or sign, he pur¬sues in solitude the work of profound study undertaken by marvelling illuminators and the miniaturists of the Middle Ages.

Let us consider a few picture painted since 1972. Upon glancing at the series of Saint-Ours canvases (1972), we see that movement and form predominate. The black stroke expands, develops a form (as in Atlant’s work), defines clear zones. The linen canvas (for Jérôme always paints on a raw linen canvas) reduces the too vivid leaps from black to white. In this way, the repercussion is only stronger. Then comes the pure blue canvases (such as Nocturne (1972-1974), Escale (1972), Musique pour Neige (1972). In the last one, for example, Jérôme begins by dividing space, as if he needed windows. This division will support his whole composition. Each window breathes in tonalities. The weave itself widens more or less. The encircled parts have a visible autonomy, although they remain in correspondence with each other. Jérôme lets the black lines run free. Acute angles appear. The graphism resembles the visible threads of a vast, invisible aviary, as if the painter wanted to prevent his so light forms from flying away. But this blue does not modulate like music. Who is more of an improviser than Jérôme in Musique pour Neige, who elected to write for a woman. No one is more secretly admiring of the feminine enclosed in this canvas. (Schubert accompanies it with his wounded heart in the andantino of Sonata for Piano in A Major, it is perfectly beautiful. Worlds call each other, feed each other, grow like a virgin forest. But, in his vegetable chasm the joy of the conquest of a space is so great that it irradiates and all is spiritual. The works of the same period as L’Ange des moissons (1973), Les Héritiers (1973) and Voyage vers Amsterdam (1973), are beautiful. But up that light so related by one, two, or many lines. With this artist, all geometry is mobile. This goes from the complexity of Haut Pays (1974) to Matin de lumière (1974), where, in a blue triptych, spheres slowly drift while attracting each other.

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