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The Predator in Love¹

Olivier Marboeuf

Translated by Samuel Lamontagne

“Oh! I am about to die! Come closer to me and warm me! Not with thy hands! No! with thy whole body.”

Gustave Flaubert, *The Legend of Saint Julian the Hospitaller*

Barely had I recovered from another exhilarating victory of the French soccer team against the valiant Croatian team that I suddenly found myself back in current affairs without any transition. No time to enjoy the freshly printed second star on the jersey, right above the ghostly silhouette of a rooster. No time to meditate on this strange World Cup finale. It happens. While the rain spoils the photogenic aspect of the globally broadcast ceremony, it happens. Without warning. At first it comes slowly, but very quickly becomes disturbing.

The President of the French Republic, Emmanuel Macron, takes the players of the French team in his arms, languorously holds their necks with a little too much insistence. It lasts; the grip is firm and friendly, loving and delicately authoritative. Immediately in their ears, his mouth lets out burning secrets. The national territory enfolds the winners. Yet it is no longer the abstract body of the State, it is a body open to all intimacies, that no one can counter with boundaries and secret places. The deployment of a narcissist apparatus, of which we don't know whether it is an outrageous *mise-en-scène* or simply the expression of an integrated capitalist system that has made of the affects its new object of extraction and of the body its exerting ground. I didn't remember seeing that before. But since the advent of the new French neoliberal realm, there is no more before, no more history of reference in which a young president could feel imprisoned.²

There is, however, an old tradition of politicians visiting soccer locker rooms on nights of victories and national celebrations. But there is something else here. A genuine appropriation: the emotional capture of a body laden with value, covered in renown and triumph.

I hold you in my arms even though I don't know you. You are now my great friend because I need you to give me what you have. I have no comfort to offer you; I only come to feel your warmth and make it mine.

The president lays bare the strategies of the love emotion within the economy of capture, self-love in the body of the Other, a matter seized, pressed, excavated, as much as flattered. It is simple and direct—it should alert us; it should signal a social project whose goal is to capture the Other before they run away to their own history, their own autonomy, their glory and their complexity, before they escape a national narrative without memory, before they can point out a difference, a gap.

Notes

¹ Originally published in 2018 on Khiasma's blog under the title "Le Prédateur Amoureux." This is the second translation of this piece. The first one was translated by Louis Henderson.

² During his December 2017 trip to Algeria, President Macron declared that he doesn't feel imprisoned by the colonial history of France.