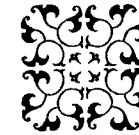


I



“*STULTIFERA NAVIS*”

At the end of the Middle Ages, leprosy disappeared from the Western world. In the margins of the community, at the gates of cities, there stretched wastelands which sickness had ceased to haunt but had left sterile and long uninhabitable. For centuries, these reaches would belong to the non-human. From the fourteenth to the seventeenth century, they would wait, soliciting with strange incantations a new incarnation of disease, another grimace of terror, renewed rites of purification and exclusion.

From the High Middle Ages to the end of the Crusades, leprosariums had multiplied their cities of the damned over the entire face of Europe. According to Mathieu Paris, there were as many as 19,000 of them throughout Christendom. In any case, around 1226, when Louis VIII established the leprosy law for France, more than 2,000 appeared on the official registers. There were 43 in the

diocese of Paris alone: these included Bourg-le-Reine, Corbeil, Saint-Valère, and the sinister Champ-Pourri (Rotten Field); included also was Charenton. The two largest were in the immediate vicinity of Paris: Saint-Germain and Saint-Lazare:¹ we shall hear their names again in the history of another sickness. This is because from the fifteenth century on, all were emptied; in the next century Saint-Germain became a reformatory for young criminals; and before the time of Saint Vincent there was only one leper left at Saint-Lazare, "Sieur Langlois, practitioner in the civil court." The lazar house of Nancy, which was among the largest in Europe, had only four inmates during the regency of Marie de Médicis. According to Catel's *Mémoires*, there were 29 hospitals in Toulouse at the end of the medieval period: seven were leprosariums; but at the beginning of the seventeenth century we find only three mentioned: Saint-Cyprien, Arnaud-Bernard, and Saint-Michel. It was a pleasure to celebrate the disappearance of leprosy: in 1635 the inhabitants of Reims formed a solemn procession to thank God for having delivered their city from this scourge.

For a century already, royal authority had undertaken the control and reorganization of the immense fortune represented by the endowments of the lazar houses; in a decree of December 19, 1543, François I had a census and inventory taken "to remedy the great disorder that exists at present in the lazar houses"; in his turn, Henri IV in an edict of 1606 prescribed a revision of their accounts and allotted "the sums obtained from this investigation to the sustenance of poor noblemen and crippled soldiers." The same request for regulation is recorded on October 24, 1612, but the excess revenues were now to be used for feeding the poor.

In fact, the question of the leprosariums was not settled in France before the end of the seventeenth century; and the problem's economic importance provoked more than one conflict. Were there not still, in the year 1677, 44 lazar

houses in the province of Dauphiné alone? On February 20, 1672, Louis XIV assigned to the Orders of Saint-Lazare and Mont-Carmel the effects of all the military and hospital orders; they were entrusted with the administration of the lazar houses of the kingdom. Some twenty years later, the edict of 1672 was revoked, and by a series of staggered measures from March 1693 to July 1695 the goods of the lazar houses were thenceforth assigned to other hospitals and welfare establishments. The few lepers scattered in the 1,200 still-existing houses were collected at Saint-Mesmin near Orléans. These decrees were first applied in Paris, where the Parlement transferred the revenue in question to the establishments of the Hôpital Général; this example was imitated by the provincial authorities; Toulouse transferred the effects of its lazar houses to the Hôpital des Incurables (1696); those of Beaulieu in Normandy went to the Hôtel-Dieu in Caen; those of Voley were assigned to the Hôpital de Sainte-Foy. Only Saint-Mesmin and the wards of Gagnets, near Bordeaux, remained as a reminder.

England and Scotland alone had opened 220 lazar houses for a million and a half inhabitants in the twelfth century. But as early as the fourteenth century they began to empty out; by the time Edward III ordered an inquiry into the hospital of Ripon—in 1342—there were no more lepers; he assigned the institution's effects to the poor. At the end of the twelfth century, Archbishop Puisel had founded a hospital in which by 1434 only two beds were reserved for lepers, should any be found. In 1348, the great leprosarium of Saint Albans contained only three patients; the hospital of Romenal in Kent was abandoned twenty-four years later, for lack of lepers. At Chatham, the lazar house of Saint Bartholomew, established in 1078, had been one of the most important in England; under Elizabeth, it cared for only two patients; it was finally closed in 1627.

The same regression of leprosy occurred in Germany, perhaps a little more slowly; and the same conversion of

the lazar houses, hastened by the Reformation, which left municipal administrations in charge of welfare and hospital establishments; this was the case in Leipzig, in Munich, in Hamburg. In 1542, the effects of the lazar houses of Schleswig-Holstein were transferred to the hospitals. In Stuttgart a magistrate's report of 1589 indicates that for fifty years already there had been no lepers in the house provided for them. At Lipplingen, the lazar house was soon peopled with incurables and madmen.

A strange disappearance, which was doubtless not the long-sought effect of obscure medical practices, but the spontaneous result of segregation and also the consequence, after the Crusades, of the break with the Eastern sources of infection. Leprosy withdrew, leaving derelict these low places and these rites which were intended, not to suppress it, but to keep it at a sacred distance, to fix it in an inverse exaltation. What doubtless remained longer than leprosy, and would persist when the lazar houses had been empty for years, were the values and images attached to the figure of the leper as well as the meaning of his exclusion, the social importance of that insistent and fearful figure which was not driven off without first being inscribed within a sacred circle.

If the leper was removed from the world, and from the community of the Church visible, his existence was yet a constant manifestation of God, since it was a sign both of His anger and of His grace: "My friend," says the ritual of the Church of Vienne, "it pleaseth Our Lord that thou shouldst be infected with this malady, and thou hast great grace at the hands of Our Lord that he desireth to punish thee for thy iniquities in this world." And at the very moment when the priest and his assistants drag him out of the church with backward step, the leper is assured that he still bears witness for God: "And howsoever thou mayest be apart from the Church and the company of the Sound, yet art thou not apart from the grace of God." Brueghel's

lepers attend at a distance, but forever, that climb to Calvary on which the entire people accompanies Christ. Hieratic witnesses of evil, they accomplish their salvation in and by their very exclusion: in a strange reversibility that is the opposite of good works and prayer, they are saved by the hand that is not stretched out. The sinner who abandons the leper at his door opens his way to heaven. "For which have patience in thy malady; for Our Lord hateth thee not because of it, keepeth thee not from his company; but if thou hast patience thou wilt be saved, as was the leper who died before the gate of the rich man and was carried straight to paradise." Abandonment is his salvation; his exclusion offers him another form of communion.

Leprosy disappeared, the leper vanished, or almost, from memory; these structures remained. Often, in these same places, the formulas of exclusion would be repeated, strangely similar two or three centuries later. Poor vagabonds, criminals, and "deranged minds" would take the part played by the leper, and we shall see what salvation was expected from this exclusion, for them and for those who excluded them as well. With an altogether new meaning and in a very different culture, the forms would remain—essentially that major form of a rigorous division which is social exclusion but spiritual reintegration.

Something new appears in the imaginary landscape of the Renaissance; soon it will occupy a privileged place there: the Ship of Fools, a strange "drunken boat" that glides along the calm rivers of the Rhineland and the Flemish canals.

The *Narrenschiff*, of course, is a literary composition, probably borrowed from the old Argonaut cycle, one of the great mythic themes recently revived and rejuvenated, acquiring an institutional aspect in the Burgundy Estates. Fashion favored the composition of these Ships, whose

crew of imaginary heroes, ethical models, or social types embarked on a great symbolic voyage which would bring them, if not fortune, then at least the figure of their destiny or their truth. Thus Symphorien Champier composes a *Ship of Princes and Battles of Nobility* in 1502, then a *Ship of Virtuous Ladies* in 1503; there is also a *Ship of Health*, alongside the *Blauwe Schute* of Jacob van Oestvoren in 1413, Sebastian Brant's *Narrenschiff* (1494), and the work of Josse Bade: *Stultiferae naviculae scaphae fatuarum mulierum* (1498). Bosch's painting, of course, belongs to this dream fleet.

But of all these romantic or satiric vessels, the *Narrenschiff* is the only one that had a real existence—for they did exist, these boats that conveyed their insane cargo from town to town. Madmen then led an easy wandering existence. The towns drove them outside their limits; they were allowed to wander in the open countryside, when not entrusted to a group of merchants and pilgrims. The custom was especially frequent in Germany; in Nuremberg, in the first half of the fifteenth century, the presence of 63 madmen had been registered; 31 were driven away; in the fifty years that followed, there are records of 21 more obligatory departures; and these are only the madmen arrested by the municipal authorities. Frequently they were handed over to boatmen: in Frankfort, in 1399, seamen were instructed to rid the city of a madman who walked about the streets naked; in the first years of the fifteenth century, a criminal madman was expelled in the same manner from Mainz. Sometimes the sailors disembarked these bothersome passengers sooner than they had promised; witness a blacksmith of Frankfort twice expelled and twice returning before being taken to Kreuznach for good. Often the cities of Europe must have seen these "ships of fools" approaching their harbors.

It is not easy to discover the exact meaning of this cus-

tom. One might suppose it was a general means of extradition by which municipalities sent wandering madmen out of their own jurisdiction; a hypothesis which will not in itself account for the facts, since certain madmen, even before special houses were built for them, were admitted to hospitals and cared for as such; at the Hôtel-Dieu in Paris, their cots were set up in the dormitories. Moreover, in the majority of the cities of Europe there existed throughout the Middle Ages and the Renaissance a place of detention reserved for the insane; there was for example the Châtelet of Melun or the famous Tour aux Fous in Caen; there were the numberless *Narrtürmer* of Germany, like the gates of Lübeck or the Jungfer of Hamburg. Madmen were thus not invariably expelled. One might then speculate that among them only foreigners were driven away, each city agreeing to care for those madmen among its own citizens. Do we not in fact find among the account books of certain medieval cities subsidies for madmen or donations made for the care of the insane? However, the problem is not so simple, for there existed gathering places where the madmen, more numerous than elsewhere, were not autochthonous. First come the shrines: Saint-Mathurin de Larchant, Saint-Hildevert de Gournay, Besançon, Gheel; pilgrimages to these places were organized, often supported, by cities or hospitals. It is possible that these ships of fools, which haunted the imagination of the entire early Renaissance, were pilgrimage boats, highly symbolic cargoes of madmen in search of their reason: some went down the Rhineland rivers toward Belgium and Gheel; others sailed up the Rhine toward the Jura and Besançon.

But other cities, like Nuremberg, were certainly not shrines and yet contained great numbers of madmen—many more, in any case, than could have been furnished by the city itself. These madmen were housed and provided for in the city budget, and yet they were not given treat-

ment; they were simply thrown into prison. We may suppose that in certain important cities—centers of travel and markets—madmen had been brought in considerable numbers by merchants and mariners and “lost” there, thus ridding their native cities of their presence. It may have happened that these places of “counterpilgrimage” have become confused with the places where, on the contrary, the insane were taken as pilgrims. Interest in cure and in exclusion coincide: madmen were confined in the holy locus of a miracle. It is possible that the village of Gheel developed in this manner—a shrine that became a ward, a holy land where madness hoped for deliverance, but where man enacted, according to old themes, a sort of ritual division.

What matters is that the vagabond madmen, the act of driving them away, their departure and embarkation do not assume their entire significance on the plane of social utility or security. Other meanings much closer to rite are certainly present; and we can still discern some traces of them. Thus access to churches was denied to madmen, although ecclesiastical law did not deny them the use of the sacraments. The Church takes no action against a priest who goes mad; but in Nuremberg in 1421 a mad priest was expelled with particular solemnity, as if the impurity was multiplied by the sacred nature of his person, and the city put on its budget the money given him as a viaticum. It happened that certain madmen were publicly whipped, and in the course of a kind of a game they were chased in a mock race and driven out of the city with quarterstaff blows. So many signs that the expulsion of madmen had become one of a number of ritual exiles.

Thus we better understand the curious implication assigned to the navigation of madmen and the prestige attending it. On the one hand, we must not minimize its incontestable practical effectiveness: to hand a madman over to sailors was to be permanently sure he would not be prowling

ing beneath the city walls; it made sure that he would go far away; it made him a prisoner of his own departure. But water adds to this the dark mass of its own values; it carries off, but it does more: it purifies. Navigation delivers man to the uncertainty of fate; on water, each of us is in the hands of his own destiny; every embarkation is, potentially, the last. It is for the other world that the madman sets sail in his fools’ boat; it is from the other world that he comes when he disembarks. The madman’s voyage is at once a rigorous division and an absolute Passage. In one sense, it simply develops, across a half-real, half-imaginary geography, the madman’s *liminal* position on the horizon of medieval concern—a position symbolized and made real at the same time by the madman’s privilege of being *confined* within the city *gates*: his exclusion must enclose him; if he cannot and must not have another *prison* than the *threshold* itself, he is kept at the point of passage. He is put in the interior of the exterior, and inversely. A highly symbolic position, which will doubtless remain his until our own day, if we are willing to admit that what was formerly a visible fortress of order has now become the castle of our conscience.

Water and navigation certainly play this role. Confined on the ship, from which there is no escape, the madman is delivered to the river with its thousand arms, the sea with its thousand roads, to that great uncertainty external to everything. He is a prisoner in the midst of what is the freest, the openest of routes: bound fast at the infinite crossroads. He is the Passenger *par excellence*: that is, the prisoner of the passage. And the land he will come to is unknown—as is, once he disembarks, the land from which he comes. He has his truth and his homeland only in that fruitless expanse between two countries that cannot belong to him. Is it this ritual and these values which are at the origin of the long imaginary relationship that can be traced

through the whole of Western culture? Or is it, conversely, this relationship that, from time immemorial, has called into being and established the rite of embarkation? One thing at least is certain: water and madness have long been linked in the dreams of European man.

Already, disguised as a madman, Tristan had ordered boatmen to land him on the coast of Cornwall. And when he arrived at the castle of King Mark, no one recognized him, no one knew whence he had come. But he made too many strange remarks, both familiar and distant; he knew too well the secrets of the commonplace not to have been from another, yet nearby, world. He did not come from the solid land, with its solid cities; but indeed from the ceaseless unrest of the sea, from those unknown highways which conceal so much strange knowledge, from that fantastic plain, the underside of the world. Iseut, first of all, realized that this madman was a son of the sea, and that insolent sailors had cast him here, a sign of misfortune: "Accursed be the sailors that brought this madman! Why did they not throw him into the sea!"² And more than once in the course of time, the same theme reappears: among the mystics of the fifteenth century, it has become the motif of the soul as a skiff, abandoned on the infinite sea of desires, in the sterile field of cares and ignorance, among the mirages of knowledge, amid the unreason of the world—a craft at the mercy of the sea's great madness, unless it throws out a solid anchor, faith, or raises its spiritual sails so that the breath of God may bring it to port. At the end of the sixteenth century, De Lancre sees in the sea the origin of the demoniacal leanings of an entire people: the hazardous labor of ships, dependence on the stars, hereditary secrets, estrangement from women—the very image of the great, turbulent plain itself makes man lose faith in God and all his attachment to his home; he is then in the hands of the Devil, in the sea of Satan's ruses.³ In the classical period,

the melancholy of the English was easily explained by the influence of a maritime climate, cold, humidity, the instability of the weather; all those fine droplets of water that penetrated the channels and fibers of the human body and made it lose its firmness, predisposed it to madness. Finally, neglecting an immense literature that stretches from Ophelia to the Lorelei, let us note only the great half-anthropological, half-cosmological analyses of Heinroth, which interpret madness as the manifestation in man of an obscure and aquatic element, a dark disorder, a moving chaos, the seed and death of all things, which opposes the mind's luminous and adult stability.

But if the navigation of madmen is linked in the Western mind with so many immemorial motifs, why, so abruptly, in the fifteenth century, is the theme suddenly formulated in literature and iconography? Why does the figure of the Ship of Fools and its insane crew all at once invade the most familiar landscapes? Why, from the old union of water and madness, was this ship born one day, and on just that day?

Because it symbolized a great disquiet, suddenly dawning on the horizon of European culture at the end of the Middle Ages. Madness and the madman become major figures, in their ambiguity: menace and mockery, the dizzying unreason of the world, and the feeble ridicule of men.

First a whole literature of tales and moral fables, in origin, doubtless, quite remote. But by the end of the Middle Ages, it bulks large: a long series of "follies" which, stigmatizing vices and faults as in the past, no longer attribute them all to pride, to lack of charity, to neglect of Christian virtues, but to a sort of great unreason for which nothing, in fact, is exactly responsible, but which involves everyone in a kind of secret complicity. The denunciation of madness (*la folie*) becomes the general form of criticism.

In farces and *soties*, the character of the Madman, the Fool, or the Simpleton assumes more and more importance. He is no longer simply a ridiculous and familiar silhouette in the wings: he stands center stage as the guardian of truth—playing here a role which is the complement and converse of that taken by madness in the tales and the satires. If folly leads each man into a blindness where he is lost, the madman, on the contrary, reminds each man of his truth; in a comedy where each man deceives the other and dupes himself, the madman is comedy to the second degree: the deception of deception; he utters, in his simpleton's language which makes no show of reason, the words of reason that release, in the comic, the comedy: he speaks love to lovers, the truth of life to the young, the middling reality of things to the proud, to the insolent, and to liars. Even the old feasts of fools, so popular in Flanders and northern Europe, were theatrical events, and organized into social and moral criticism, whatever they may have contained of spontaneous religious parody.

In learned literature, too, Madness or Folly was at work, at the very heart of reason and truth. It is Folly which embarks all men without distinction on its insane ship and binds them to the vocation of a common odyssey (Van Oestvoren's *Blauwe Schute*, Brant's *Narrenschiff*); it is Folly whose baleful reign Thomas Murner conjures up in his *Narrenbeschwörung*; it is Folly which gets the best of Love in Corroz's satire *Contre fol amour*, or argues with Love as to which of the two comes first, which of the two makes the other possible, and triumphs in Louise Labé's dialogue, *Débat de folie et d'amour*. Folly also has its academic pastimes; it is the object of argument, it contends against itself; it is denounced, and defends itself by claiming that it is closer to happiness and truth than reason, that it is closer to reason than reason itself; Jakob Wimpfeling edits the *Monopolium philosophorum*, and Judocus Gallus the

Monopolium et societas, vulgo des lichtschiiffs. Finally, at the center of all these serious games, the great humanist texts: the *Moria rediviva* of Flayder and Erasmus's *Praise of Folly*. And confronting all these discussions, with their tireless dialectic, confronting these discourses constantly reworded and reworked, a long dynasty of images, from Hieronymus Bosch with *The Cure of Madness* and *The Ship of Fools*, down to Brueghel and his *Dulle Griet*; woodcuts and engravings transcribe what the theater, what literature and art have already taken up: the intermingled themes of the Feast and of the Dance of Fools. Indeed, from the fifteenth century on, the face of madness has haunted the imagination of Western man.

A sequence of dates speaks for itself: the *Dance of Death* in the Cimetière des Innocents doubtless dates from the first years of the fifteenth century, the one in the Chaise-Dieu was probably composed around 1460; and it was in 1485 that Guyot Marchant published his *Danse macabre*. These sixty years, certainly, were dominated by all this grinning imagery of Death. And it was in 1494 that Brant wrote the *Narrenschiff*; in 1497 it was translated into Latin. In the very last years of the century Hieronymus Bosch painted his *Ship of Fools*. The *Praise of Folly* dates from 1509. The order of succession is clear.

Up to the second half of the fifteenth century, or even a little beyond, the theme of death reigns alone. The end of man, the end of time bear the face of pestilence and war. What overhangs human existence is this conclusion and this order from which nothing escapes. The presence that threatens even within this world is a fleshless one. Then in the last years of the century this enormous uneasiness turns on itself; the mockery of madness replaces death and its solemnity. From the discovery of that necessity which inevitably reduces man to nothing, we have shifted to the scornful contemplation of that nothing which is existence

itself. Fear in the face of the absolute limit of death turns inward in a continuous irony; man disarms it in advance, making it an object of derision by giving it an everyday, tamed form, by constantly renewing it in the spectacle of life, by scattering it throughout the vices, the difficulties, and the absurdities of all men. Death's annihilation is no longer anything because it was already everything, because life itself was only futility, vain words, a squabble of cap and bells. The head that will become a skull is already empty. Madness is the *déjà-là* of death.⁴ But it is also its vanquished presence, evaded in those everyday signs which, announcing that death reigns already, indicate that its prey will be a sorry prize indeed. What death unmasks was never more than a mask; to discover the grin of the skeleton, one need only lift off something that was neither beauty nor truth, but only a plaster and tinsel face. From the vain mask to the corpse, the same smile persists. But when the madman laughs, he already laughs with the laugh of death; the lunatic, anticipating the macabre, has disarmed it. The cries of Dulle Griet triumph, in the high Renaissance, over that *Triumph of Death* sung at the end of the Middle Ages on the walls of the Campo Santo.

The substitution of the theme of madness for that of death does not mark a break, but rather a torsion within the same anxiety. What is in question is still the nothingness of existence, but this nothingness is no longer considered an external, final term, both threat and conclusion; it is experienced from within as the continuous and constant form of existence. And where once man's madness had been not to see that death's term was approaching, so that it was necessary to recall him to wisdom with the spectacle of death, now wisdom consisted of denouncing madness everywhere, teaching men that they were no more than dead men already, and that if the end was near, it was to the degree that madness, become universal, would be one

and the same with death itself. This is what Eustache Deschamps prophesies:

We are cowardly and weak,
Covetous, old, evil-tongued.
Fools are all I see, in truth.
The end is near,
All goes ill . . .

The elements are now reversed. It is no longer the end of time and of the world which will show retrospectively that men were mad not to have been prepared for them; it is the tide of madness, its secret invasion, that shows that the world is near its final catastrophe; it is man's insanity that invokes and makes necessary the world's end.

In its various forms—plastic or literary—this experience of madness seems extremely coherent. Painting and text constantly refer to one another—commentary here and illustration there. We find the same theme of the *Narrentanz* over and over in popular festivals, in theatrical performances, in engravings and woodcuts, and the entire last part of the *Praise of Folly* is constructed on the model of a long dance of madmen in which each profession and each estate parades in turn to form the great round of unreason. It is likely that in Bosch's *Temptation of Saint Anthony* in Lisbon, many figures of the fantastic fauna which invade the canvas are borrowed from traditional masks; some perhaps are transferred from the *Malleus maleficarum*. As for the famous *Ship of Fools*, is it not a direct translation of Brant's *Narrenschiff*, whose title it bears, and of which it seems to illustrate quite precisely canto XXVII, also consecrated to stigmatizing "drunkards and gluttons"? It has even been suggested that Bosch's painting was part of a series of pictures illustrating the principal cantos of Brant's poem.

As a matter of fact, we must not be misled by what appears to be a strict continuity in these themes, nor imagine more than is revealed by history itself. It is unlikely that an analysis like the one Émile Mâle worked out for the preceding epochs, especially apropos of the theme of death, could be repeated. Between word and image, between what is depicted by language and what is uttered by plastic form, the unity begins to dissolve; a single and identical meaning is not immediately common to them. And if it is true that the image still has the function of speaking, of transmitting something consubstantial with language, we must recognize that it already no longer says the *same thing*; and that by its own plastic values painting engages in an experiment that will take it farther and farther from language, whatever the superficial identity of the theme. Figure and speech still illustrate the same fable of folly in the same moral world, but already they take two different directions, indicating, in a still barely perceptible scission, what will be the great line of cleavage in the Western experience of madness.

The dawn of madness on the horizon of the Renaissance is first perceptible in the decay of Gothic symbolism; as if that world, whose network of spiritual meanings was so close-knit, had begun to unravel, showing faces whose meaning was no longer clear except in the forms of madness. The Gothic forms persist for a time, but little by little they grow silent, cease to speak, to remind, to teach anything but their own fantastic presence, transcending all possible language (though still familiar to the eye). Freed from wisdom and from the teaching that organized it, the image begins to gravitate about its own madness.

Paradoxically, this liberation derives from a proliferation of meaning, from a self-multiplication of significance, weaving relationships so numerous, so intertwined, so rich, that they can no longer be deciphered except in the esoterism of knowledge. Things themselves become so burdened

with attributes, signs, allusions that they finally lose their own form. Meaning is no longer read in an immediate perception, the figure no longer speaks for itself; between the knowledge which animates it and the form into which it is transposed, a gap widens. It is free for the dream. One book bears witness to meaning's proliferation at the end of the Gothic world, the *Speculum humanae salvationis*, which, beyond all the correspondences established by the patristic tradition, elaborates, between the Old and the New Testament, a symbolism not on the order of Prophecy, but deriving from an equivalence of imagery. The Passion of Christ is not prefigured only by the sacrifice of Abraham; it is surrounded by all the glories of torture and its innumerable dreams; Tubal the blacksmith and Isaiah's wheel take their places around the Cross, forming beyond all the lessons of the sacrifice the fantastic tableau of savagery, of tormented bodies, and of suffering. Thus the image is burdened with supplementary meanings, and forced to express them. And dreams, madness, the unreasonable can also slip into this excess of meaning. The symbolic figures easily become nightmare silhouettes. Witness that old image of wisdom so often translated, in German engravings, by a long-necked bird whose thoughts, rising slowly from heart to head, have time to be weighed and reflected on; a symbol whose values are blunted by being overemphasized: the long path of reflection becomes in the image the alembic of a subtle learning, an instrument which distills quintessences. The neck of the *Gutemensch* is endlessly elongated, the better to illustrate, beyond wisdom, all the real mediations of knowledge; and the symbolic man becomes a fantastic bird whose disproportionate neck folds a thousand times upon itself—an insane being, halfway between animal and thing, closer to the charms of an image than to the rigor of a meaning. This symbolic wisdom is a prisoner of the madness of dreams.

A fundamental conversion of the world of images: the constraint of a multiplied meaning liberates that world from the control of form. So many diverse meanings are established beneath the surface of the image that it presents only an enigmatic face. And its power is no longer to teach but to fascinate. Characteristic is the evolution of the famous gryllos already familiar to the Middle Ages in the English psalters, and at Chartres and Bourges. It taught, then, how the soul of desiring man had become a prisoner of the beast; these grotesque faces set in the bellies of monsters belonged to the world of the great Platonic metaphor and denounced the spirit's corruption in the folly of sin. But in the fifteenth century the gryllos, image of human madness, becomes one of the preferred figures in the countless *Temptations*. What assails the hermit's tranquillity is not objects of desire, but these hermetic, demented forms which have risen from a dream, and remain silent and furtive on the surface of a world. In the Lisbon *Temptation*, facing Saint Anthony sits one of these figures born of madness, of its solitude, of its penitence, of its privations; a wan smile lights this bodiless face, the pure presence of anxiety in the form of an agile grimace. Now it is exactly this nightmare silhouette that is at once the subject and object of the temptation; it is this figure which fascinates the gaze of the ascetic—both are prisoners of a kind of mirror interrogation, which remains unanswered in a silence inhabited only by the monstrous swarm that surrounds them. The gryllos no longer recalls man, by its satiric form, to his spiritual vocation forgotten in the folly of desire. It is madness become Temptation; all it embodies of the impossible, the fantastic, the inhuman, all that suggests the unnatural, the writhing of an insane presence on the earth's surface—all this is precisely what gives the gryllos its strange power. The freedom, however frightening, of his dreams, the hallucinations of his madness, have more power of attraction

for fifteenth-century man than the desirable reality of the flesh.

What then is this fascination which now operates through the images of madness?

First, man finds in these fantastic figures one of the secrets and one of the vocations of his nature. In the thought of the Middle Ages, the legions of animals, named once and for all by Adam, symbolically bear the values of humanity. But at the beginning of the Renaissance, the relations with animality are reversed; the beast is set free; it escapes the world of legend and moral illustration to acquire a fantastic nature of its own. And by an astonishing reversal, it is now the animal that will stalk man, capture him, and reveal him to his own truth. Impossible animals, issuing from a demented imagination, become the secret nature of man; and when on the Last Day sinful man appears in his hideous nakedness, we see that he has the monstrous shape of a delirious animal; these are the screech owls whose toad bodies combine, in Thierry Bouts's *Hell*, with the nakedness of the damned; these are Stephan Lochner's winged insects with cats' heads, sphinxes with beetles' wing cases, birds whose wings are as disturbing and as avid as hands; this is the great beast of prey with knotty fingers that figures in Matthias Grünewald's *Temptation*. Animality has escaped domestication by human symbols and values; and it is animality that reveals the dark rage, the sterile madness that lie in men's hearts.

At the opposite pole to this nature of shadows, madness fascinates because it is knowledge. It is knowledge, first, because all these absurd figures are in reality elements of a difficult, hermetic, esoteric learning. These strange forms are situated, from the first, in the space of the Great Secret, and the Saint Anthony who is tempted by them is not a victim of the violence of desire but of the much more insidious lure of curiosity; he is tempted by that distant and

intimate knowledge which is offered, and at the same time evaded, by the smile of the gryllos; his backward movement is nothing but that step by which he keeps from crossing the forbidden limits of knowledge; he knows already—and that is his temptation—what Jérôme Cardan will say later: “Wisdom, like other precious substances, must be torn from the bowels of the earth.” This knowledge, so inaccessible, so formidable, the Fool, in his innocent idiocy, already possesses. While the man of reason and wisdom perceives only fragmentary and all the more unnerving images of it, the Fool bears it intact as an unbroken sphere: that crystal ball which for all others is empty is in *his* eyes filled with the density of an invisible knowledge. Brueghel mocks the sick man who tries to penetrate this crystal sphere, but it is this iridescent bubble of knowledge—an absurd but infinitely precious lantern—that sways at the end of the stick Dulle Griet bears on her shoulder. And it is this sphere which figures on the reverse of the Garden of Delights. Another symbol of knowledge, the tree (the forbidden tree, the tree of promised immortality and of sin), once planted in the heart of the earthly paradise, has been uprooted and now forms the mast of the Ship of Fools, as seen in the engraving that illustrates Josse Bade’s *Stultiferae naviculae*; it is this tree, without a doubt, that sways over Bosch’s *Ship of Fools*.

What does it presage, this wisdom of fools? Doubtless, since it is a forbidden wisdom, it presages both the reign of Satan and the end of the world; ultimate bliss and supreme punishment; omnipotence on earth and the infernal fall. The Ship of Fools sails through a landscape of delights, where all is offered to desire, a sort of renewed paradise, since here man no longer knows either suffering or need; and yet he has not recovered his innocence. This false happiness is the diabolical triumph of the Antichrist; it is the

End, already at hand. Apocalyptic dreams are not new, it is true, in the fifteenth century; they are, however, very different in nature from what they had been earlier. The delicately fantastic iconography of the fourteenth century, where castles are toppled like dice, where the Beast is always the traditional dragon held at bay by the Virgin, in short where the order of God and its imminent victory are always apparent, gives way to a vision of the world where all wisdom is annihilated. This is the great witches’ Sabbath of nature: mountains melt and become plains, the earth vomits up the dead and bones tumble out of tombs; the stars fall, the earth catches fire, all life withers and comes to death. The end has no value as passage and promise; it is the advent of a night in which the world’s old reason is engulfed. It is enough to look at Dürer’s Horsemen of the Apocalypse, sent by God Himself: these are no angels of triumph and reconciliation; these are no heralds of serene justice, but the disheveled warriors of a mad vengeance. The world sinks into universal Fury. Victory is neither God’s nor the Devil’s: it belongs to Madness.

On all sides, madness fascinates man. The fantastic images it generates are not fleeting appearances that quickly disappear from the surface of things. By a strange paradox, what is born from the strangest delirium was already hidden, like a secret, like an inaccessible truth, in the bowels of the earth. When man deploys the arbitrary nature of his madness, he confronts the dark necessity of the world; the animal that haunts his nightmares and his nights of privation is his own nature, which will lay bare hell’s pitiless truth; the vain images of blind idiocy—such are the world’s *Magna Scientia*; and already, in this disorder, in this mad universe, is prefigured what will be the cruelty of the finale. In such images—and this is doubtless what gives them their weight, what imposes such great coherence on their

fantasy—the Renaissance has expressed what it apprehended of the threats and secrets of the world.

During the same period, the literary, philosophical, and moral themes of madness are in an altogether different vein.

The Middle Ages had given madness, or folly, a place in the hierarchy of vices. Beginning with the thirteenth century, it is customarily ranked among the wicked soldiers of the psychomachy. It figures, at Paris as at Amiens, among the evil soldiery, and is among the twelve dualities that dispute the sovereignty of the human soul: Faith and Idolatry, Hope and Despair, Charity and Avarice, Chastity and Lust, Prudence and Folly, Patience and Anger, Gentleness and Harshness, Concord and Discord, Obedience and Rebellion, Perseverance and Inconstancy, Fortitude and Cowardice, Humility and Pride. In the Renaissance, Folly leaves this modest place and comes to the fore. Whereas according to Hugues de Saint-Victor the genealogical tree of the Vices, that of the Old Adam, had pride as its root, Folly now leads the joyous throng of all human weaknesses. Uncontested coryphaeus, she guides them, sweeps them on, and names them: "Recognize them here, in the group of my companions. . . . She whose brows are drawn is Philautia (Self-Love). She whom you see laugh with her eyes and applaud with her hands is Colacia (Flattery). She who seems half asleep is Lethe (Forgetfulness). She who leans upon her elbows and folds her hands is Misoponia (Sloth). She who is crowned with roses and anointed with perfume is Hedonia (Sensuality). She whose eyes wander without seeing is Anopia (Stupidity). She whose abundant flesh has the hue of flowers is Tryphé (Indolence). And here among these young women are two gods: the god of Good Cheer and the god of Deep Sleep."⁵ The absolute privilege of Folly is to reign over whatever is bad in man. But does she not also reign indirectly over all the good he can do: over ambition, that makes wise politicians; over avarice, that

makes wealth grow; over indiscreet curiosity, that inspires philosophers and men of learning? Louise Labé merely follows Erasmus when she has Mercury implore the gods: "Do not let that beautiful Lady perish who has given you so much pleasure."

But this new royalty has little in common with the dark reign of which we were just speaking and which communicated with the great tragic powers of this world.

True, madness attracts, but it does not fascinate. It rules all that is easy, joyous, frivolous in the world. It is madness, folly, which makes men "sport and rejoice," as it has given the gods "Genius, Beauty, Bacchus, Silenus, and the gentle guardian of gardens."⁶ All within it is brilliant surface: no enigma is concealed.

No doubt, madness has something to do with the strange paths of knowledge. The first canto of Brant's poem is devoted to books and scholars; and in the engraving which illustrates this passage in the Latin edition of 1497, we see enthroned upon his bristling cathedra of books the Magister who wears behind his doctoral cap a fool's cap sewn with bells. Erasmus, in his dance of fools, reserves a large place for scholars: after the Grammarians, the Poets, Rhetoricians, and Writers, come the Jurists; after them, the "Philosophers respectable in beard and mantle"; finally the numberless troop of the Theologians. But if knowledge is so important in madness, it is not because the latter can control the secrets of knowledge; on the contrary, madness is the punishment of a disorderly and useless science. If madness is the truth of knowledge, it is because knowledge is absurd, and instead of addressing itself to the great book of experience, loses its way in the dust of books and in idle debate; learning becomes madness through the very excess of false learning.

*O vos doctores, qui grandia nomina fertis
Respicite antiquos patris, jurisque peritos.*

MADNESS & CIVILIZATION

*Non in candidulis pensebant dogmata libris,
Arte sed ingenua sitibundum pectus alebant.*⁷

(O ye learned men, who bear great names,
Look back at the ancient fathers, learned in the law.
They did not weigh dogmas in shining white books,
But fed their thirsty hearts with natural skill.)

According to the theme long familiar to popular satire, madness appears here as the comic punishment of knowledge and its ignorant presumption.

In a general way, then, madness is not linked to the world and its subterranean forms, but rather to man, to his weaknesses, dreams, and illusions. Whatever obscure cosmic manifestation there was in madness as seen by Bosch is wiped out in Erasmus; madness no longer lies in wait for mankind at the four corners of the earth; it insinuates itself within man, or rather it is a subtle rapport that man maintains with himself. The mythological personification of madness in Erasmus is only a literary device. In fact, only "follies" exist—human forms of madness: "I count as many images as there are men"; one need only glance at states, even the wisest and best governed: "So many forms of madness abound there, and each day sees so many new ones born, that a thousand Democrituses would not suffice to mock them." There is no madness but that which is in every man, since it is man who constitutes madness in the attachment he bears for himself and by the illusions he entertains. Philautia is the first figure Folly leads out in her dance, but that is because they are linked by a privileged relation: self-attachment is the first sign of madness, but it is because man is attached to himself that he accepts error as truth, lies as reality, violence and ugliness as beauty and justice. "This man, uglier than a monkey, imagines himself handsome as Nereus; that one thinks he is Euclid because he has traced three lines with a compass; that other

"*Stultifera Navis*"

one thinks he can sing like Hermogenes, whereas he is the ass before the lyre, and his voice sounds as false as that of the rooster pecking his hen." In this delusive attachment to himself, man generates his madness like a mirage. The symbol of madness will henceforth be that mirror which, without reflecting anything real, will secretly offer the man who observes himself in it the dream of his own presumption. Madness deals not so much with truth and the world, as with man and whatever truth about himself he is able to perceive.

It thus gives access to a completely moral universe. Evil is not punishment or the end of time, but only fault and flaw. A hundred and sixteen cantos of Brant's poem are devoted to portraits of the insane passengers on the Ship: there are misers, slanderers, drunkards; there are those who indulge in disorder and debauchery; those who interpret the Scriptures falsely; those who practice adultery. Locher, Brant's translator, notes in his Latin preface the purpose and meaning of the work; it is concerned to teach "what evil there may be, what good; what vices; whither virtue, whither error may lead"; and this while castigating, according to the wickedness each man is guilty of, "the unholy, the proud, the greedy, the extravagant, the debauched, the voluptuous, the quick-tempered, the gluttonous, the voracious, the envious, the poisoners, the faith-breakers" . . . in short, all that man has been able to invent in the way of irregularities in his conduct.

In the domain of literary and philosophic expression, the experience of madness in the fifteenth century generally takes the form of moral satire. Nothing suggests those great threats of invasion that haunted the imagination of the painters. On the contrary, great pains are taken to ward it off; one does not speak of such things. Erasmus turns our gaze from that insanity "which the Furies let slip from hell, each time they release their serpents"; it is not these insane

forms that he has chosen to praise, but the "sweet illusion" that frees the soul from "its painful cares and returns it to the various forms of sensuality." This calm world is easily mastered; it readily yields its naïve mysteries to the eyes of the wise man, and the latter, by laughter, always keeps his distance. Whereas Bosch, Brueghel, and Dürer were terribly earth-bound spectators, implicated in that madness they saw surging around them, Erasmus observes it from far enough away to be out of danger; he observes it from the heights of his Olympus, and if he sings its praises, it is because he can laugh at it with the inextinguishable laughter of the Gods. For the madness of men is a divine spectacle: "In fact, could one make observations from the Moon, as did Menippus, considering the numberless agitations of the Earth, one would think one saw a swarm of flies or gnats fighting among themselves, struggling and laying traps, stealing from one another, playing, gamboling, falling, and dying, and one would not believe the troubles, the tragedies that were produced by such a minute animalcule destined to perish so shortly." Madness is no longer the familiar foreignness of the world; it is merely a commonplace spectacle for the foreign spectator; no longer a figure of the *cosmos*, but a characteristic of the *aevum*.

But a new enterprise was being undertaken that would abolish the tragic experience of madness in a critical consciousness. Let us ignore this phenomenon for the moment and consider indiscriminately those figures to be found in *Don Quixote* as well as in Scudéry's novels, in *King Lear* as well as in the theater of Jean de Rotrou or Tristan l'Hermite.

Let us begin with the most important, and the most durable—since the eighteenth century will still recognize its only just erased forms: *madness by romantic identification*. Its features have been fixed once and for all by Cervantes. But the theme is tirelessly repeated: direct adaptations (the

Don Quichotte of Guérin de Bouscal was performed in 1639; two years later, he staged *Le Gouvernement de Sancho Pança*), reinterpretations of a particular episode (Pichou's *Les Folies de Cardenio* is a variation on the theme of the "Ragged Knight" of the Sierra Morena), or, in a more indirect fashion, satire on novels of fantasy (as in Subligny's *La Fausse Clélie*, and within the story itself, as in the episode of *Julie d'Arviante*). The chimeras are transmitted from author to reader, but what was fantasy on one side becomes hallucination on the other; the writer's stratagem is quite naïvely accepted as an image of reality. In appearance, this is nothing but the simple-minded critique of novels of fantasy, but just under the surface lies an enormous anxiety concerning the relationships, in a work of art, between the real and the imaginary, and perhaps also concerning the confused communication between fantastic invention and the fascinations of delirium. "We owe the invention of the arts to deranged imaginations; the *Caprice* of Painters, Poets, and Musicians is only a name moderated in civility to express their *Madness*."⁸ Madness, in which the values of another age, another art, another morality are called into question, but which also reflects—blurred and disturbed, strangely compromised by one another in a common chimera—all the forms, even the most remote, of the human imagination.

Immediately following this first form: *the madness of vain presumption*. But it is not with a literary model that the madman identifies; it is with himself, and by means of a delusive attachment that enables him to grant himself all the qualities, all the virtues or powers he lacks. He inherits the old *Philautia* of Erasmus. Poor, he is rich; ugly, he admires himself; with chains still on his feet, he takes himself for God. Such a one was Osuma's master of arts who believed he was Neptune.⁹ Such is the ridiculous fate of the seven characters of Desmarets de Saint-Sorlin's *Les Vision-*

naires, of Chateaufort in Cyrano de Bergerac's *Le Pédant joué*, of M. de Richesource in *Sir Politik*. Measureless madness, which has as many faces as the world has characters, ambitions, and necessary illusions. Even in its extremities, this is the least extreme of madnesses; it is, in the heart of every man, the imaginary relation he maintains with himself. It engenders the commonest of his faults. To denounce it is the first and last element of all moral criticism.

To the moral world, also, belongs the *madness of just punishment*, which chastises, along with the disorders of the mind, those of the heart. But it has still other powers: the punishment it inflicts multiplies by nature insofar as, by punishing itself, it unveils the truth. The justification of this madness is that it is truthful. Truthful since the sufferer already experiences, in the vain whirlwind of his hallucinations, what will for all eternity be the pain of his punishment: Éraсте, in Corneille's *Méliste*, sees himself already pursued by the Eumenides and condemned by Minos. Truthful, too, because the crime hidden from all eyes dawns like day in the night of this strange punishment; madness, in its wild, untamable words, proclaims its own meaning; in its chimeras, it utters its secret truth; its cries speak for its conscience. Thus Lady Macbeth's delirium reveals to those who "have known what they should not" words long uttered only to "dead pillows."

Then the last type of madness: that of *desperate passion*. Love disappointed in its excess, and especially love deceived by the fatality of death, has no other recourse but madness. As long as there was an object, mad love was more love than madness; left to itself, it pursues itself in the void of delirium. Punishment of a passion too abjectly abandoned to its violence? No doubt; but this punishment is also a relief; it spreads, over the irreparable absence, the mercy of imaginary presences; it recovers, in the paradox of innocent joy or in the heroism of senseless pursuits, the vanished

form. If it leads to death, it is a death in which the lovers will never be separated again. This is Ophelia's last song, this is the delirium of Ariste in *La Folie du sage*. But above all, this is the bitter and sweet madness of *King Lear*.

In Shakespeare, madness is allied to death and murder; in Cervantes, images are controlled by the presumption and the complacencies of the imaginary. These are supreme models whose imitators deflect and disarm them. Doubtless, both testify more to a tragic experience of madness appearing in the fifteenth century, than to a critical and moral experience of Unreason developing in their own epoch. Outside of time, they establish a link with a meaning about to be lost, and whose continuity will no longer survive except in darkness. But it is by comparing their work, and what it maintains, with the meanings that develop among their contemporaries or imitators, that we may decipher what is happening, at the beginning of the seventeenth century, in the literary experience of madness.

In Shakespeare or Cervantes, madness still occupies an extreme place, in that it is beyond appeal. Nothing ever restores it either to truth or to reason. It leads only to laceration and thence to death. Madness, in its vain words, is not vanity; the void that fills it is a "disease beyond my practice," as the doctor says about Lady Macbeth; it is already the plenitude of death; a madness that has no need of a physician, but only of divine mercy. The sweet joy Ophelia finally regains reconciles her with no happiness; her mad song is as close to the essential as the "cry of women" that announces through the corridors of Macbeth's castle that "the Queen is dead." Certainly Don Quixote's death occurs in a peaceful landscape, which at the last moment has rejoined reason and truth. Suddenly the Knight's madness has grown conscious of itself, and in his own eyes trickles out in nonsense. But is this sudden wisdom of his folly anything but "a new madness that had

just come into his head"? The equivocation is endlessly reversible and cannot be resolved, ultimately, except by death itself. Madness dissipated can be only the same thing as the imminence of the end; "and even one of the signs by which they realized that the sick man was dying, was that he had returned so easily from madness to reason." But death itself does not bring peace; madness will still triumph—a truth mockingly eternal, beyond the end of a life which yet had been delivered from madness by this very end. Ironically, Don Quixote's insane life pursues and immortalizes him only by his insanity; madness is still the imperishable life of death: "Here lies the famous hidalgo who carried valor to such lengths that it was said death could not triumph over life by his demise."

But very soon, madness leaves these ultimate regions where Cervantes and Shakespeare had situated it; and in the literature of the early seventeenth century it occupies, by preference, a median place; it thus constitutes the knot more than the denouement, the peripety rather than the final release. Displaced in the economy of narrative and dramatic structures, it authorizes the manifestation of truth and the return of reason.

Thus madness is no longer considered in its tragic reality, in the absolute laceration that gives it access to the other world; but only in the irony of its illusions. It is not a real punishment, but only the image of punishment, thus a pretense; it can be linked only to the appearance of a crime or to the illusion of a death. Though Ariste, in Tristan l'Hermite's *La Folie du sage*, goes mad at the news of his daughter's death, the fact is that she is not really dead; when Éraste, in *Mélite*, sees himself pursued by the Eumenides and dragged before Minos, it is for a double crime which he *might* have committed, which he might have *wanted* to commit, but which in fact has not occasioned any real death. Madness is deprived of its dramatic seriousness; it is

punishment or despair only in the dimension of error. Its dramatic function exists only insofar as we are concerned with a false drama; a chimerical form in which only supposed faults, illusory murders, ephemeral disappearances are involved.

Yet this absence of seriousness does not keep madness from being essential—even more essential than it had been, for if it brings illusion to its climax, it is from this point that illusion is undone. In the madness in which his error has enveloped him, the character involuntarily begins to unravel the web. Accusing himself, he speaks the truth in spite of himself. In *Mélite*, for example, all the stratagems the hero has accumulated to deceive others are turned against himself, and he becomes their first victim, believing that he is guilty of the deaths of his rival and his mistress. But in his delirium, he blames himself for having invented a whole series of love letters; the truth comes to light, in and through madness, which, provoked by the illusion of a denouement, actually resolves the real imbroglio of which it is both cause and effect. To put it another way, madness is the false punishment of a false solution, but by its own virtue it brings to light the real problem, which can then be truly resolved. It conceals beneath error the secret enterprise of truth. It is this function of madness, both ambiguous and central, that the author of *L'Hospital des fous* employs when he portrays a pair of lovers who, to escape their pursuers, pretend to be mad and hide among madmen; in a fit of simulated dementia, the girl, who is dressed as a boy, pretends to believe she is a girl—which she really is—thus uttering, by the reciprocal neutralization of these two pretenses, the truth which in the end will triumph.

Madness is the purest, most total form of *qui pro quo*; it takes the false for the true, death for life, man for woman, the beloved for the Erinnys and the victim for Minos. But it is also the most rigorously necessary form of the *qui pro*

quo in the dramatic economy, for it needs no external element to reach a true resolution. It has merely to carry its illusion to the point of truth. Thus it is, at the very heart of the structure, in its mechanical center, both a feigned conclusion, pregnant with a secret "starting over," and the first step toward what will turn out to be the reconciliation with reason and truth. It marks the point toward which converge, apparently, the tragic destinies of the characters, and from which, in reality, emerge the lines leading to happiness regained. In madness equilibrium is established, but it masks that equilibrium beneath the cloud of illusion, beneath feigned disorder; the rigor of the architecture is concealed beneath the cunning arrangement of these disordered violences. The sudden bursts of life, the random gestures and words, the *wind of madness* that suddenly breaks lines, shatters attitudes, rumples draperies—while the strings are merely being pulled tighter—this is the very type of baroque *trompe-l'oeil*. Madness is the great *trompe-l'oeil* in the tragicomic structures of preclassical literature.

This was understood by Georges de Scudéry, who made his *Comédie des comédiens* a theater of theater, situating his play, from the start, in the interacting illusions of madness. One group of actors takes the part of spectators, another that of actors. The former must pretend to take the decor for reality, the play for life, while in reality these actors are performing in a real decor; on the other hand, the latter must pretend to play the part of actors, while in fact, quite simply, they are actors acting. A double impersonation in which each element is doubled, thus forming that renewed exchange of the real and the illusory which is itself the dramatic meaning of madness. "I do not know," Mondory says in the prologue to Scudéry's play, "what extravagance has today come over my companions, but it is so great that I am forced to believe that some spell has robbed them of their reason, and the worst of it is that they

are trying to make me lose mine, and you yours as well. They wish to persuade me that I am not on a stage, that this is the city of Lyons, that over there is an inn, and there an innyard where actors who are not ourselves, yet who are, are performing a Pastoral." In this extravaganza, the theater develops its truth, which is illusion. Which is, in the strict sense, madness.

The classical experience of madness is born. The great threat that dawned on the horizon of the fifteenth century subsides, the disturbing powers that inhabit Bosch's painting have lost their violence. Forms remain, now transparent and docile, forming a cortège, the inevitable procession of reason. Madness has ceased to be—at the limits of the world, of man and death—an eschatological figure; the darkness has dispersed on which the eyes of madness were fixed and out of which the forms of the impossible were born. Oblivion falls upon the world navigated by the free slaves of the Ship of Fools. Madness will no longer proceed from a point within the world to a point beyond, on its strange voyage; it will never again be that fugitive and absolute limit. Behold it moored now, made fast among things and men. Retained and maintained. No longer a ship but a hospital.

Scarcely a century after the career of the mad ships, we note the appearance of the theme of the "Hospital of Madmen," the "Madhouse." Here every empty head, fixed and classified according to the true reason of men, utters contradiction and irony, the double language of Wisdom: ". . . the Hospital of incurable Madmen, where are recited from end to end all the follies and fevers of the mind, by men as well as women, a task no less useful than enjoyable, and necessary for the acquisition of true wisdom."¹⁰ Here each form of madness finds its proper place, its distinguishing mark, and its tutelary divinity: frenzied and ranting

madness, symbolized by a fool astride a chair, struggles beneath Minerva's gaze; the somber melancholics that roam the countryside, solitary and avid wolves, have as their god Jupiter, patron of animal metamorphoses; then come the "mad drunkards," the "madmen deprived of memory and understanding," the "madmen benumbed and half-dead," the "madmen of giddy and empty heads" . . . All this world of disorder, in perfect order, pronounces, each in his turn, the Praise of Reason. Already, in this "Hospital," *confinement* has succeeded *embarkation*.

Tamed, madness preserves all the appearances of its reign. It now takes part in the measures of reason and in the labor of truth. It plays on the surface of things and in the glitter of daylight, over all the workings of appearances, over the ambiguity of reality and illusion, over all that indeterminate web, ever rewoven and broken, which both unites and separates truth and appearance. It hides and manifests, it utters truth and falsehood, it is light and shadow. It shimmers, a central and indulgent figure, already precarious in this baroque age.

Let us not be surprised to come upon it so often in the fictions of the novel and the theater. Let us not be surprised to find it actually prowling through the streets. Thousands of times, François Colletet has met it there:

I see, in this thoroughfare,
A natural, followed by children.
. . . Consider this unhappy wretch;
Poor mad fool, what will he do
With so many rags and tatters? . . .
I have seen such wild lunatics
Shouting insults in the streets . . .

Madness traces a very familiar silhouette in the social landscape. A new and lively pleasure is taken in the old confraternities of madmen, in their festivals, their gather-

ings, their speeches. Men argue passionately for or against Nicolas Joubert, better known by the name of Angoulevant, who declares himself Prince of Fools, a title disputed by Valenti le Comte and Jacques Resneau: there follow pamphlets, a trial, arguments; his lawyer declares and certifies him to be "an empty head, a gutted gourd, lacking in common sense; a cane, a broken brain, that has neither spring nor whole wheel in his head." Bluet d' Arbères, who calls himself Comte de Permission, is a protégé of the Créquis, the Lesdiguières, the Bouillons, the Nemours; in 1602 he publishes—or someone publishes for him—his works, in which he warns the reader that "he does not know how to read or write, and has never learned," but that he is animated "by the inspiration of God and the Angels." Pierre Dupuis, whom Régnier mentions in his sixth satire, is, according to Brascambille, "an archfool in a long robe"; he himself in his "Remontrance sur le réveil de Maître Guillaume" states that he has "a mind elevated as far as the antechamber of the third degree of the moon." And many other characters present in Régnier's fourteenth satire.

This world of the early seventeenth century is strangely hospitable, in all senses, to madness. Madness is here, at the heart of things and of men, an ironic sign that misplaces the guideposts between the real and the chimerical, barely retaining the memory of the great tragic threats—a life more disturbed than disturbing, an absurd agitation in society, the mobility of reason.

But new requirements are being generated:

A hundred and a hundred times have I taken up my lantern,
Seeking, at high noon . . .¹¹