

*If my memory does not deceive me, I have read in Virgil of the Palladium of Troy, a wooden horse the Greeks offered to the goddess Pallas, which was big with armed knights, who were afterwards the destruction of Troy; so it would be as well to see, first of all, what Clavileno has in his stomach.*

Miguel de Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, vol. 2, ch. 41

Do you remember the Bidone Aspiratutto? I asked RM about it too, out of curiosity. While DIYing in our family house at the lakes, I would play with it while my grandfather, father and mother handled cement, electrical cables, shelves and tiles. Designed by Milanese Francesco Trabucco for Alfatec in 1974, it aspired to be the ultimate vacuum cleaner, and cool too, like certain contemporary Dysons. It was a tautology on wheels: a bin made of sheet metal painted military green, with the label (capacity, voltage, Made in Italy) turned into a stencilled logo, as if it was an army jeep, although in M\*A\*S\*H version. A tank ready to annihilate the planet's dust with its flexible cannon, a macho-ironic object that bypassed gender divisions yet not class divisions (worker/housewife). Certain patterns we introject, even without meaning to.

I am allergic to dust. Domestic dust is made up of half human organic matter (hair and especially skin, on which *dermatophagoides* mites feed, thousands per gram, especially in beds), and then of animals, plants and minerals, and even fragments of meteorites. We breathe and ingest past eras and bodies throughout our lives. Our own bodies constantly crumble, recompose and evaporate, although we prefer to ignore the porosity (from *poros*: passage, orifice) of all boundaries. RM tells me that bedbugs (*cimex lectularius*) use vacuum cleaners to travel, propagating from one office or apartment to another as they are cleaned up by domestic pieceworkers. Industrial vacuum cleaners, which promise the aseptic gift of cleanliness, are their Trojan horses: they become carriers of invisible Others, whose hosts we become. In the dark, we dread their arrival, like nightmares (from the Latin *incubare*: to lie on, to brood over). Even the bugs and viruses that infest our computers use Trojans to enter, grow and multiply, invading the fictitious and sacred space of privacy. Many compartmentalisations between inside and outside are illusions, and it is salubrious for them to flake, like our skin, inhabited by the dermal microbiota (mites, mycetes, bacteria and viruses), the commensal that helps us get rid of dead cells: the higher the biodiversity, the fewer the potential pathogens. The microbiota in our digestive tract (bacteria, viruses, fungi, protozoa), which make up about one kilogramme of our bodyweight, regulates the production of neurotransmitters such as dopamine and serotonin, which in turn preside over memory, attention, pleasure, sleep, mood, empathy and creativity. The exchange of microbes between mother and new-born during birth and breastfeeding boosts their immune defences. We are plural ecosystems and symbionts. Cleaning and cleansing, obsessively, does not protect us from complexity.

[Barbara Casavecchia]