

Patrick comes to Le Bar for the first time in 1979, 27 rue de Condé. He takes the place over in 1991. Since then, he has said that he was taken as hostage by the place. Félix Guattari lives a bit further down the street, n° 9. I come there for the first time in 2010. I ask Patrick if I can charge my phone behind the counter, then I draw his portrait – with open shirt as always and his silver chain – as well as those of the other customers. We really get along with each other right away. The portrait is still hanging on the frame of the mirror, which is at the right side at the entrance of the bar. Because I forget my phone when I leave, I have to come back the day after. Since then, I come back here often when I'm in Paris, if I want it to be quiet, to know no one. One evening, the customers at the table next to us – hardly 18 years old – order Patrick's famous cocktail «the crazy hand », a mix of *liqueurs flambé* shaken with a hand that covers the top of the cognac glass. They first breathe the alcohol vapors, then, bottoms up. The alcohol goes straight to the brain and they « fly ». You have to watch them a bit and not serve them too quickly otherwise you lose them too fast. It can be a bit annoying « the hand »; you don't always remain intact. It's no longer exactly the « crazy hand » that we were doing in the 90's. We invented it because we thought it was funny but it was too dangerous. Now it's a bit more of a developed product.

I sometimes call Patrick at Le Bar around midnight from Lausanne to know how he is. He has no mobile phone. Tuesday is usually good because there are not so many clients: one or two tables maximum, and he closes early, around 2 or 3 am. Sunday and Monday you can't reach him, he's in the Val d'Oise checking his accounts. I can hardly imagine him out of Le Bar.

Le Bar is invisible from the street. No sign, just an inscription on the doorstep where you can read: Tes Yeux. Patrick opens the door with a button situated under the counter. He accepts everyone – well it depends if it's the right moment or not. The walls are covered with black velvet curtains. The front window on the street side too. The architecture is an L shape. At the bottom, a tunnel without light. You have to bend down to stand. You don't know when it stops. It looks like it would go on forever. The used sofas made with « skaï » have been here for decades. The Asian decoration was here before Patrick. If you want to change the decoration, you need to have a better idea.

What has changed according to him is not the inside of the bar but the outside: the street and the weather. Well actually, yes, there is no smoking inside anymore. You have to smoke outside. And not to make noise. Not to talk. To be quiet. Several times the police came because of the neighbors' complaints. Patrick already got three warnings. They accumulate over the years and don't disappear over time.

As the taxi driver says: Patrick, he's a good guy, and Patrick's clients are good guys, you can trust

them. Going out of the car, AnnE wants to pay and asks him for a « fracture ».

She asks for a « fracture » instead of a « facture » (a receipt): It's not a slip since she doesn't know the meaning of the word fracture. She's lived in Paris for a year and has just started learning French. For a year she's also practiced French boxing (*savate*) in a club between Place de la République and Gare de l'Est. Ibrahim teaches there; he's a world champion of French boxing and Vovinam. He travels from Sarcelles several times a week, AnnE from the city center at the artist residency where she lives. AnneE brings me to the boxing lesson during the summer. We've worked together for several months. Then, I bring Anne. I write everyday to Anina who is spending a few months in the United States. Everyday, meeting at la Terrasse des Archives, Catherine's « office » with the group, whose constellation varies depending on the availability of each of us.

The first class: I get changed in the dressing room and enter the boxing room where I see AnnE. People stare at me with funny faces. Someone bursts out in laughter because apparently, due to my unfamiliarity with these clothes, I mistook the boxer bra for the final uniform, when in fact you have to add a t-shirt on top of it. I go back into the dressing room and come back with a t-shirt on. First lesson by Ibrahim: you shouldn't be afraid of getting hit. But then you have to hit. The boxing has a strange effect on me: it makes me cry. So in the dressing room after the lesson, teardrops appear. AnnE joins me and confesses that boxing has had the same effect on her. Second lesson, still with Ibrahim: Demonstrations against the bombings in Gaza are happening on la Place de la République. The atmosphere is tight; the first demonstration had been forbidden. Hundreds of CRS are surrounding the place in battle gear; it's been like this for several days. Ibrahim tells me that television teams try to interview the children that he is taking care of in Sarcelles, because they think there are tensions in that neighborhood. He told them to go away. Then he teaches us how to bind our hands. The fingers must be well-separated when you bind the phalanges. Then how to wear the gloves. The strong foot and fight must be « en réserve ». You defend yourself with your weak side to fight better with your stronger side. The body has to get used to doing things in reverse. It's not easy. Apparently I have a crazy leg, as Ibrahim calls it: my leg always wants to step forward instead of staying backward. Nevertheless the body learns quickly, and after two hours of training, the crazy leg remains where it should be. Tears rise. I fight with AnnE. She moves slower and measures her strength. I move myself a bit in any direction, as if I were miming the fight, most probably because of the timidity provoked by this new situation. You don't know how to behave, where to stand in the room, who's looking and how, how to use the material. I continue miming. AnnE is really fighting. It will come for me at the third lesson with Anne: how to learn to really move with your fights and your feet. To protect your face and to dodge. A kick in the pants, the seat: I accidentally give one to Ibrahim. Of course it's forbidden by the rules. You fight an opponent of the

same weight. You can use the hands and the feet. You need at least one « fouetté » (lateral kick) during a round, which lasts one minute and thirty seconds, then one minute of rest. Three rounds for a match. Kicks in the tibia are forbidden. The attack ensues with hits to the face, frontals and laterals, above the belt, avoiding the breasts for women. We go drink a coffee after the lessons. Ibrahim, who trains us, does not drink because he is observing Ramadan. He's lost weight, around five kilos. The normal regime starts again tomorrow. He's not so sure, it depends on the moon's position. The following lessons with Anne: we use punching bags and jump ropes. We also train by kicking against piles of recovered mattresses. First battle in the ring with strangers: We learn how to control our strength and our gestures. We are sweating. We start to realize our own strength and that of our opponent. The room is generally silent; you hear the kicks and sometimes music. A battle with Anne, I'm afraid of hurting her. I often stop my kicks half way. Battle one on one, the referee controls the rules. The ring is delimited by ropes. I continue to follow Ibrahim's teaching. After several weeks I start to get myself used to it and my body changes, the muscles are more visible. The boxing is hand-to-hand fighting. Violence is physical and direct. You are not used to it. You are alone with yourself and your opponent, who reflects your image. Strengths and weaknesses must be managed immediately; the emotions must also be confronted directly. You win a match in your head. You have to convince your partner that you are stronger. Cunning in relation to your opponent, dissuasion strategies. Not showing anything, even if you suffer or you're hurt. Pretending not to be hurt. So he will doubt. You have to either dissuade the opponent or intensify. Not being transparent, not letting them see through you. For Ibrahim, violence is easier to manage on a ring than on the street: it is where you have to free your violence if you want to fight the other to the KO. Ibrahim started boxing when he was 13. You can continue all your life but you have to be careful with kicks to the head. One of his friends doesn't have clear ideas anymore. He had taken too many kicks. Some people come to boxing only to get hit. The discipline rapidly changes into a habit. The body gets used to it very easily, and soon, if you don't train, things get worse. Actually Anne went to buy a kicking bag this afternoon. She doesn't want to stop training and is worried about not being able to bear the summer break.

Ibrahim knows how to read bodies. He sees everything. He also knows how to keep what he sees for himself. That's why I trust him. The direct physical relation of boxing is managed by a control of distance and by a balance of force. It is about a control that one imposes on oneself and the other in the instant exchange with the opponent. Ibrahim sits in front of me at the table in a coffee place, he is a bit curled up, which is also the defensive position, but he constantly looks at the floor because he is not at ease. We speak the same language but we don't always understand each other. I see myself in his eyes, he probably in mine, which does nothing to put either of us at ease. Our habits are like a third person is seated with us at the table. We are both attentive not to register it too much

in order not to put the other in an awkward position. He has worn his glasses.

That evening, I go back home to République and watch two movies:

*La Maîtresse* (1976), Bulle Ogier: « I love him because he is the only man I don't distrust. » The actress climbs up the stairs of the dungeon with difficulty. She is suffocating. She can't breathe anymore. She thinks it is her dominatrix corset that is too tight but it is an anxiety crisis.

*Holy Motors* (2012), minute 63:55 : « I'm afraid of the cameras. They used to be heavier than us; today they have become smaller than our heads. »

When I trip on a pile in the street, I feel ashamed before I it hurts. I wonder if the people there have seen me. Every day for the last 10 years, Romain walks from rue Vaugirard to the Boulevard Saint-Germain to go to the *tabac*. He knows the way so well that he can go out without his cane. He drinks a coffee a bit further on the Boulevard. Then to rue de Condé to buy bread, passing by rue de l'Ecole Polytechnique. He asks me what I look like. I start to laugh. He starts to laugh too. It's a bit embarrassing. I think a few minutes; I don't know where to start. Long hair, brown eyes, spotted with beauty spots, a bump on the nose, very white skin, an asymmetrical mouth, strange teeth, not very tall, thin and muscled. He says that my description has something monstrous to it. He never thinks about how people look. He asks me if I find myself pretty. I answer that I wouldn't change a thing. One morning, he decides to go all the way to the end of the street after the *tabac* and realizes that the *tabac* is, in fact, next to the bakery, just 50 meters away. He never thought about it. It is at this moment, when he links the two streets to each other, that he decides not to choose between his jobs as a writer and a pianist. He will do both. He hesitated for a long time during his studies at Sciences Po; he needed something that could make him travel while staying in the same place. I ask him if, when he travels, he reads the landscape with the accents. He speaks bad English and this complicates everything a bit. He has a problem making himself understood. He thinks I am 31 years old: 31 for my self-assurance, not more, because of my enthusiasm and my hopefulness. He manages to guess gender thanks to the voice, excluding children before the age of 5.

In the subway in London, I look at the posters glued in fake golden frames on white tiles « Tell us what you think. » The same in Paris two hours later, an advertisement by SNCF : « Switzerland is next door: Paris-Lausanne: 25 euros. » I get on the train and it stops between two stations. I feel once more that a claustrophobia crisis is arising. I adopt one of my most efficient strategies: the ignorance system. To ignore its own environment in order to take the anxiety level down, so that the crisis doesn't blow up. I look at photos on my mobile phone to forget where I am.

Jeanne Graff

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