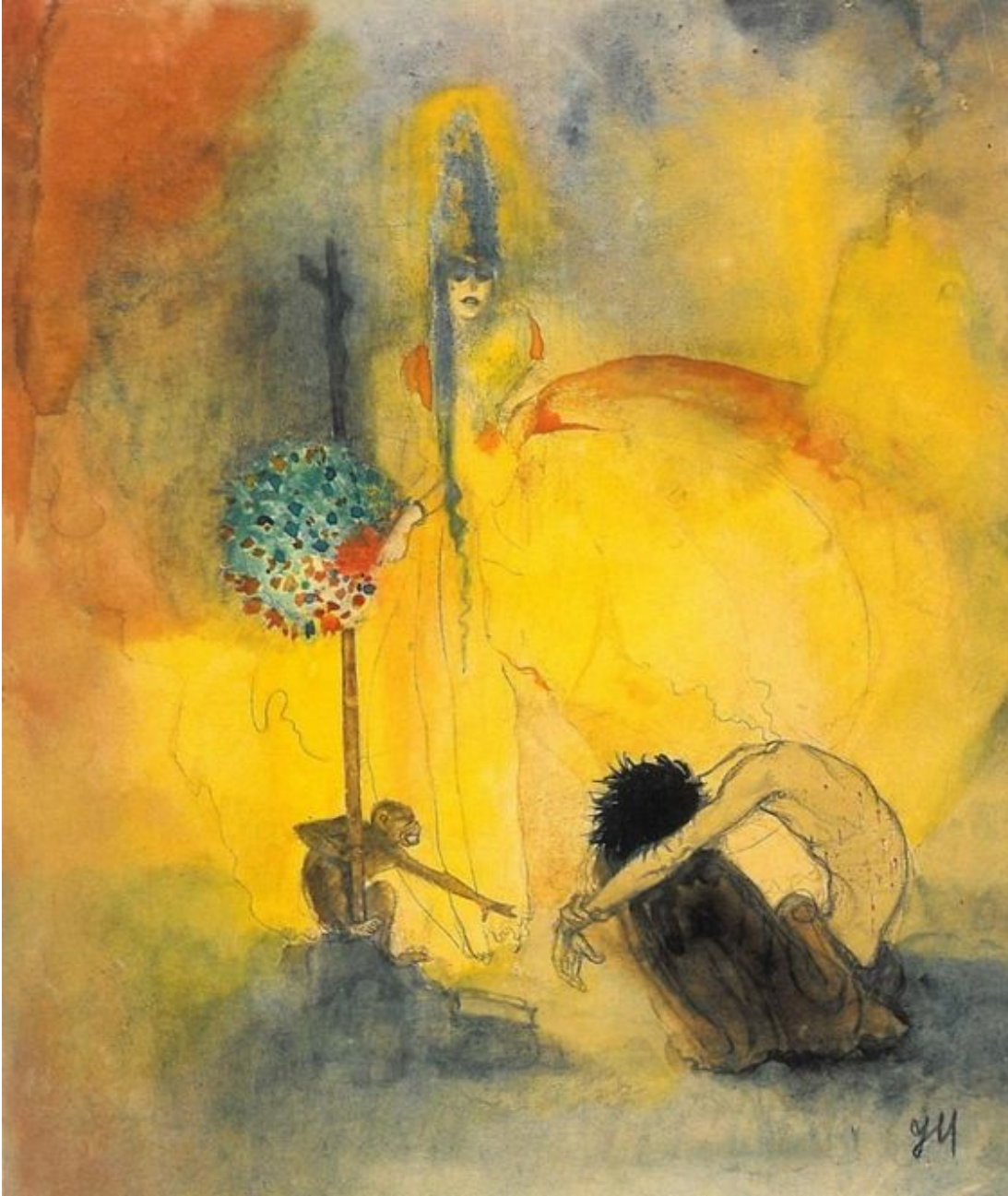


Before and Beyond the Void

by [Romain P. A. Delpeuch](#) (May 2021)



Antonius and the Queen of Saba, Jeanne Mammen, 1910

“Mistold, misheard, despised and scorned,
in fine apparel unadorned,

lowly and whispered are my prayers,
languished and wishful, born of cares
innumerable, and of love
expected neither from above—
beyond the ceiling of my cell
over my head where memories dwell,
buoyant with hopes unreal—nor from
beneath that crust of flesh whence come
yelling desires I don't indulge.
Befall what may, I won't divulge
rebellious secrets, those I use
or let fair Grace on me infuse."

Wherever does she turn her gaze, she sees but shades,
numb, unaware and blind. Yet, inwards, shines a light.

"However dry and sad my outward days,
confined within constraints I chose (mitsvot
unyielding, freeing men from worldly lot),
egressive, dreamy nights set me ablaze.
Philosophy has failed to show the ways
leading to happiness and from the rot,
essential stench of life. Though I will not
describe nor understand the marvels rays
athwart my path reveal of light forlorn
pertaining to the source of all despair,
nefarious hope and awe, I'll wait for dawn
illuminate to cast an earthly glare
and on my brow becalm the fevers' yawn,
mark of forbidden sights and holy scare."

On waking, he remembered but a pair of eyes
refracting godly light in hues his sight could bear.

"Now let me come to you. I saw
what's on your mind. You'll only yaw
on currents cross of seas ideal
rolling with thoughts we'd sail and reel

but for a while. And soon, you'll reach
your aim and what it has to teach.
Bequeathed to us, this gift unearned
besets your peace. Your overturned
oblivion, chosen silence, bound
between two worlds, between them wound,
exhaled you from the realm of life.
Ignore your qualms. They feed on strife.
Let me impart to you my might,
let's save mankind from its sore plight."

In his domain she makes her way, as if to share
materials darker than his own in unsound sighs.

"Repellent thorns of barren briers were spread
over the dismal wasteland, intricate
marsh of my dolent fate. Though desolate,
a simple look of yours has turned that dead,
interior, mirrored landscape to a red
never beheld: the one of isolate
pilgrims of hate and love, of duplicate
allegiance solved in blood aplenty shed.
Delights in common nature found and claimed
embosom us in one another's nights.
Lavatic depths of passion have us maimed
perhaps before we met, before the flights
even of fanciful delusions aimed
untimely at our hidden inner heights."

Caresses, even mental, can in truth alight
helobious hearts, and kindle souls that love evades.

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Romain P. A. Delpuech was born and bred in south-west France

where he still lives.

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