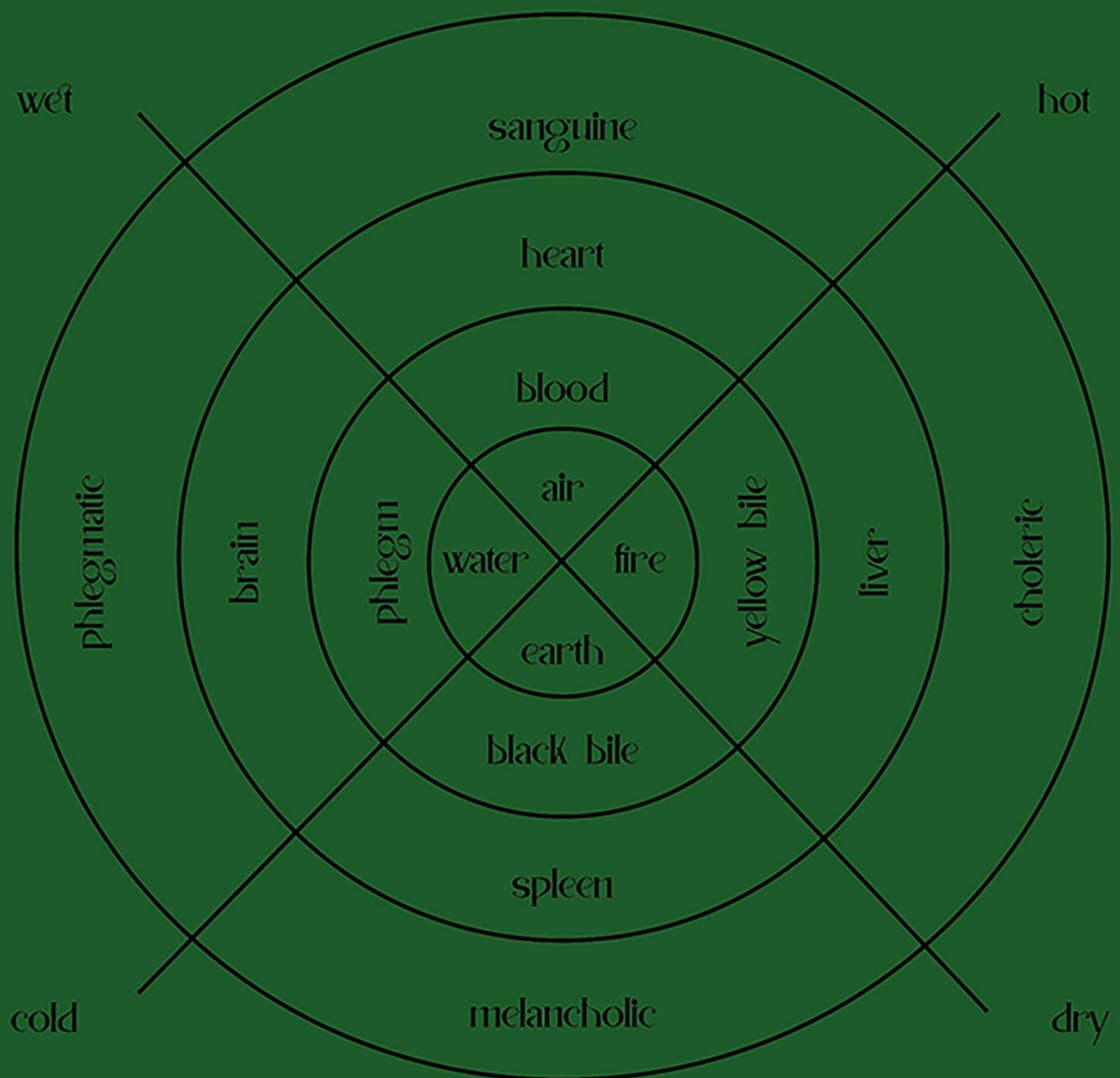


FrameWork 10/22

Mathilde Varanese on Patrick Howlett



fruit out of season



spleen / sprain

**Tennis makes my spleen swell and
clay courts sprained my optimism.**

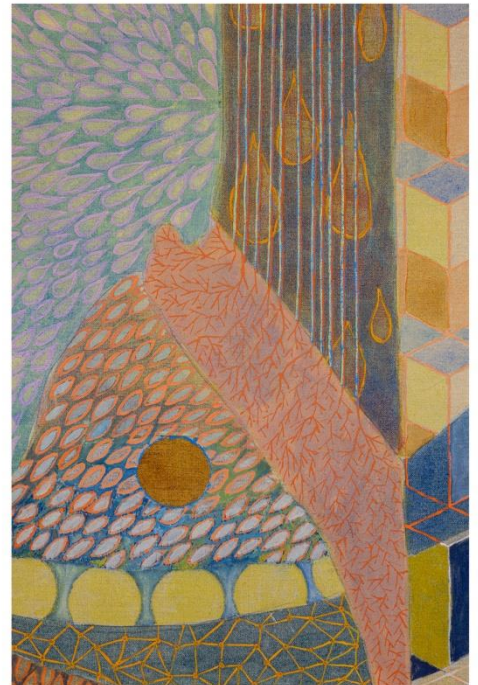
I strain my legs collecting his rebounds. He scrolls through the serves with the fervor of a faulty automatic ball launcher. Behind the baseline, I carry the relics of his strikes.

I run to the rhythm of the balls stubbornly hitting their oblique target. All his movements tinkle with the inevitable meeting of blue carpet and green felt. His immaculate white shoes squeak on the rubber lawn. The orchestration of his musculature resounds with strident flutes and gasping breaths. The diagonal of his strikes strives to exhaust me, but I embrace his musicality.

I imagine him a childhood of opulence, without the troubles as well as the joys, which cross adolescence. I list the countless games where the family's fragile balance rests on the final score. I know his summers without any other beach than the one delimited by lime corridors. I know that the imperative of performance shapes his resilience as an athlete and his sensitivity as a lover.

His pink polo shirt only gives me a glimpse of what lies on the other side of the wrought iron. My only trophies will remain his lost tennis balls.







nervous juices



phlegm / fame

Fame and phlegm defy themselves.

His slackened ligaments contest the weight of the glass door. After two attempts of opening compromised by a wet handle, he forces his hand to clasp the metal with a redoubled conviction. The vapors of eucalyptus reach instantly his nostrils and assail his nervous system.

He grants a few seconds to his vision to acclimatize himself to the dense surrounding air. The opaque blue that envelops him becomes a tile, then turns into a ceramic bench towards which he lets his feet lead him. His pores obey the heat of the stones and exude the tensions they contain.

Through the milky cloud, he guesses a formless silhouette whose contours are drawn according to the pulsations of the drizzle. He silently scans the emptiness wishing to meet there his own reflection. A regular breath betrays the presence of an immobile old man and dissipates his fantasies of anonymity. Even here, he is never alone.

In a vain attempt at invisibility, he covers his head with the towel offered by the reception staff. If he no longer sees the crowd, perhaps they will also eventually forget his face. The terrycloth remains a thin shield against the besieging gaze of his daily audience. This undeniable truth permeates his body, lining the oozing walls and substituting the pungent scent of anxiety for the sustained vegetal fragrance.

He hastens to flee the place when the old man breaks his spell of inertia to address him a superstitious greeting. The obviousness strikes his placid envelope: it does not matter the outcome of this evening, he will not play anymore.

