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This is the anniversary twenty-fifth issue of Ex Tempore, which has been published thanks to the continuing financial support of the UNOG Coordinating Council. We are grateful to all whose constancy and collaboration have made this achievement possible and invite all members of the UN family, staff, retirees, members of the diplomatic corps, press corps, NGO-community, consultants, fellows and interns to become our readers and supporters.
In this issue, the Editorial Board is pleased to publish a bouquet of contributions by 46 authors in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian, Spanish and Vietnamese, peppered here and there with Greek, Hebrew and Latin.

For the twenty-sixth issue the editors welcome the submission of crisp, humorous or serious essays, short stories, drama, science fiction, poems, reflections or aphorisms on any topic of your pleasure, as well as photos and illustrations which may be forwarded in electronic form to Alfred de Zayas zayas@bluewin.ch, to Marko Stanovic marko.stanovic@unctad.org, or *to Carla Edelenbos cedelenbos@ohchr.org*

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PREFACE

Tempus fugit! Can it be twenty-five years already since that summer afternoon when we were sitting in the Press Bar near door 6 at the old Palais des Nations, chatting about contemporary literature? There we were, on 14 August 1989 -- a young Brazilian UN staffer, Leonor Sampaio, a well-seasoned UN translator from Argentina, Sergio Chaves, and myself, an eager-beaver American lawyer with the then Centre for Human Rights, sharing impressions on Isabel Allende, Margaret Atwood, Jorge Luis Borges, Paulo Coelho, Friedrich Dürrenmatt, Gabriel García Márquez, Nadine Gordimer, Philippe Jaccottet, Doris Lessing -- while leisurely sipping on espressos and cappuccinos.

Half-way through our animated coffee break, Leonor proposed launching a literary club at the United Nations. Sergio immediately seconded the initiative, and I contributed the thought of having our own literary journal. We were excited about this incipient *Sociedad de Escritores de Naciones Unidas, United Nations Society of Writers, Société des Ecrivains de Nations Unies,* which would tap the hidden literary talent of so many UN colleagues. Who knows? Maybe some kept poems and essays somewhere hidden in their office drawers or nurtured them latent in their busy minds, just waiting to let them out. Would our colleagues not welcome the opportunity of liberating themselves from the constraints of UN jargon, of resolutions with long preambular paragraphs and reports peppered with graphics and heavy with annexes? We were persuaded that many of us could produce respectable poetry, short stories, essays, even plays in all six UN languages– not in bureaucratic legalese, but in the style of our favourite contemporary authors.

Happy with the prospect of cultivating our own garden and plucking the flowers of multicultural imagination, we knew we needed a catchy name – not a hackneyed "UN literary review" or a pretentious *Pléiade* … We wanted to attract spontaneous, uncomplicated, crisp new texts that would address our innermost feelings, aspirations, fantasies – whether humorous, melancholic, nostalgic or lovesick. Quickly a name for the review popped up in my head: *Ex Tempore* – from our times, impromptu, improvised. We were ready to venture into the production of literature and were optimistic about the response by peers and outside critics.

Both Sergio and I were already members of PEN International, Centre Suisse romand and had many non-UN friends who wrote extremely well. We also

knew that the Director General of the United Nations Office in Geneva, Jan Martenson, was member of the Swedish PEN Club, the author of some 30 novels – most of them police thrillers. We felt confirmed in our project. The first problem was, of course, how to finance it? We knew that initially we would have to do it out of our own pockets and were confident that with time we would find sponsors and subsidies. This aspect of the adventure proved particularly arduous, and it was not until 1993 that we managed to obtain a modest subsidy through the Socio-Cultural Commission of the Coordinating Council of the UN staff.

Volume one was typed on A4 paper using regular typewriters (not computers) and assembled quite simply, photocopied and then bound in a *Migros*-folder, just like the ones that students use to submit their term papers. Volume one came out in November and comprised a mere 23 pages. The A4 format (somewhat smaller than the *folio* format of Guttenberg's *Bible*) was kept for four more volumes, until we chose the A5 format for issue 6 (reminiscent of the popular renaissance *quarto* format, although it actually resembles more the *octavo* format) and all subsequent volumes. The number of pages quickly rose from 23 to 60 to 100 to the now more common 160. In the course of the 1990's we started using computers for formatting and scanning of pictures. Claude Citon, Editor-in-Chief of UN Special, helped us with advice on how to produce the magazine, and Pierre Jourdan also of UN Special helped us further with the formatting. Since volume 2 every cover has been designed by Diego Oyarzun Reyes, who also provided original drawings for the body of *Ex Tempore* and the logo with the distinctive pen. Among the authors of the first hour I want to thank Claude Citon, who contributed an essay "Satori" for volume one and has written for *Ex Tempore* ever since, Aline Dedeyan, whose short story "the day of the tenth year" graced the pages of volume one and whose clever plays have appeared in many subsequent volumes of *Ex Tempore*, and Jeanne Salfati, a poet and talented painter. Over the years many *Ex Tempore* members contributed drawings and photos, notably Martin Andrysek, whose artwork was much appreciated by the readership.

Soon we felt the need to give our authors the opportunity to express themselves in public, and started convening *ad hoc* poetry readings, sometimes in the UN theatre room XIV but also in rooms VIII and IX of the old Palais des Nations. Since January 1997 we have held a literary salon at the "Villa des Crêts", attended annually by 30 to 70 literature lovers. On occasion we have held

summer or autumn events in the garden of the villa, e.g. to celebrate the 20th anniversary of *Ex Tempore* or to commemorate the passing away of a dear poet like Mahmoud Darwish. The press initially showed considerable interest in our work, as manifested in numerous articles in the *Tribune de Genève*, *Journal de Genève*, *Le Courrier*, and *Diva International*. More recently the media has been less receptive to our continued existence – I guess we ceased being "exotic" or a "novelty" long ago. Indeed, for over twenty-five years UN staffers have been proving their literary talent and displaying kaleidoscopic interests from humour to satire to tragedy to science fiction. This is one of many reasons why the editorial Board preferred not to devote the yearly journals to any specific "theme" – with one exception, Volume XXI (2010), which was devoted to music. Alas, the theme did not draw enough authors, so that the number of pages of volume XXI dropped to 104.

Synergies are always important for authors. UNSW has gradually built solid cooperation with PEN International Centre Suisse romand, the Société génevoise des écrivains, the Société vaudoise des écrivains, the Société valaisaine des écrivains and the Geneva Writers Group. We have put on exhibit volumes of *Ex Tempore* at the *Salon du livre de Genève* in Palexpo, not only on the UN stand but also on the stand of PEN Suisse romand.

Our literary venture was accompanied by the conviction that UN staffers had a vocation to promote peace through understanding, to build bridges between peoples and cultures. We felt inspired by the Purposes and Principles of the UN Charter, notably the promotion of human rights for all, and the commitment to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war. We shared and continue to share the spirit of the UNESCO Constitution and of civil society initiatives, including the 1921 Charter of PEN International and its emphasis on the responsibility of authors to put literature in the service of peace and to defend the Voltairean principle of freedom of expression and tolerance toward dissenting views.

UNSW/SENU continues to advocate international solidarity in and through our cultural diversity, and would like to be seen as a herald of democracy. Over the centuries many authors and musicians have shared this vision of universal peace, e.g. Hugo von Hofmannsthal and Richard Strauss, who founded the *Salzburger Festspiele* in 1920 to consecrate music and drama to the task of unifying nations and cultures, expressing the ineffable in music – that highest aesthetic form and vital principle of humanity's striving for transcendence.

In 2014 we are particularly aware of the great slaughter of World War I that started one hundred years ago with the assassination of the heir to the Austrian throne Archduke Franz-Ferdinand and his wife Sophie on 28 June 1914. WWI was an eminently avoidable conflict, a war between brothers, a senseless destruction of human lives. We are also aware of the even greater slaughter ushered in by World War II, which started 75 years ago and caused an estimated 50 million deaths. We have seen the peace pledge of the United Nations frustrated in 69 years of uninterrupted local and regional wars – notwithstanding the prohibition of the threat of or the use of force stipulated in articled 2(4) of the UN Charter. We have witnessed constant sabre-rattling and war-mongering by politicians the world over – notwithstanding their lip service to peace. It is here that we writers have a sacred challenge – to anticipate, alert, prevent, expose, reconcile.

It is in this sense that on 14 August 2014 at the Press Bar seventeen of us gathered to celebrate our 25 years. This cozy celebration was followed by a "Library Event" on 14 October 2014 during which around eighty UN staffers and guests came for a lunchtime chat on *Literature for Peace*. The noted Geneva novelist, member of PEN Suisse romand and laureate of numerous literary awards *Daniel de Roulet* was our keynote speaker (see his lecture pp. 10-14 below) and the audience reciprocated in a lively Q & A session.

In October 2014 I was at headquarters in New York and took good advantage of the opportunity to make an announcement about the United Nations Society of Writers over the "iseek" internal news service. The result was a flood of excellent essays, short stories and poetry (some of which are included in this anniversary number, and the rest will be incorporated into volume 26) again proving our point that there is a plethora of talent in the UN Secretariat and that we should reveal it to the world. I was overwhelmed and delighted by the rich response from headquarters, UMOJA, Vienna, field offices, UNMIK, UNEP etc. – this augurs well for the continued publication of Ex Tempore!

We wish to thank all presidents and past presidents of UNSW, particularly Leonor Sampaio, Karin Kaminker, David Winch, and Marko Stanovic, as well as all members of the multinational Editorial Boards. We hope you enjoy reading volume XXV and encourage you to send your essays, short stories and poems to the Editorial Board c/o Marko Stanovic (UNCTAD), Carla Edelenbos (OHCHR) or to Alfred de Zayas (zayas@bluewin.ch).

Essais

Essays

Ensayos

La littérature entre mondialisation et mondialité

Depuis quelques temps le nationalisme fait de nouveau des dégâts. On pensait en avoir assez souffert pour ne plus vouloir s'y exposer. Des débats qu'on pensait clos ressurgissent. On croyait certains principes démocratiques inébranlables. Par exemple la liberté religieuse ou l'interdiction de la peine de mort…

Or prochainement en Suisse, un referendum, lancé par le parti ultranationaliste, proposera de faire passer toute décision prise par le peuple avant les grands principes fondateurs. D'autres partis nationalistes en Europe s'apprêtent à imiter ce genre de campagne populiste. Ils diront : « Nous voulons être maîtres chez nous, ne dépendre ni des juges étrangers ni des organisations internationales. Nous avons des avantages sociaux, des coutumes locales, une industrie autochtone, la mondialisation veut nous en priver. Et s'il nous plait d'interner les tsiganes, s'il nous plait de chasser les musulmans, pour autant que le peuple souverain ait voté la loi, nul principe supérieur ne saurait s'y opposer. Au-dessus de la volonté populaire d'une nation, disent les politiciens ultraconservateurs, « il n'y a rien. »

Ce genre d'affirmation, où les fondements de la coexistence entre habitants de la planète sont bafoués, n'est pas simple à contester. Personne ne se réjouit d'une mondialisation qui met en concurrence tous contre tous, défonce la planète, dynamite le patrimoine culturel. Mais la tentation identitaire et nationaliste, on la connaît, elle mène au recours à la force, à la guerre. Alors quoi ? Comment se comporter ? Comment sortir de ce dilemme entre un ancrage national et une conscience plus large.

Peut-être que ce qui se passe en matière de littérature peut indiquer une manière de faire. La politique, par essence, est nationale. Le citoyen s'occupe de sa cité, de son pays. Au-delà, il y a le monde dont s'occupe la politique étrangère, mais pas le citoyen qui n'élit que rarement quelqu'un à ce niveau-là. On ne consulte pas le peuple pour savoir s'il faut bombarder la Syrie.

Le marché, par essence, est international, il essaie de contourner les obstacles douaniers, il impose l'échange fluide des marchandises et des capitaux.

Et la littérature ? La littérature est par nature régionale, on pourrait même dire régionaliste. Elle ne pousse pas hors-sol, ou alors elle est insipide comme les tomates cultivées dans la ouate synthétique. La majorité des romans font

référence une topographie réaliste et cohérente. On n'imagine pas un roman où la Tour Eiffel ne serait pas à Paris. Il y a quelques exceptions à cette règle quand il s'agit de contes de fée ou de romans qui situent l'intrigue entre un beau chirurgien et une belle infirmière dans un grand hôpital non précisé. Mais dans ce cas-là, à défaut de contexte géographique, le contexte culturel, est bien typé. Même si un auteur prétend écrire contre sa propre culture, sa dissidence se situe encore dans le contexte culturel qu'il conteste. Cendras parle du Transsibérien avec l'accent franco-suisse. Si la littérature a des références géographiques ou culturelles si précises, comment peut-elle prétendre être un modèle pour une pensée qui voudrait s'opposer au nationalisme ?

Il existe pourtant une théorie de la littérature mondiale, mais est-ce suffisant ? Cette théorie est régulièrement révisée. Au début du 19ème siècle, Goethe et ses amis découvrent que la Chine, le Japon et autres pays lointains ont tous une littérature, des écrivains, et qu'un jour, grâce à la traduction, toutes ces littératures pourront être échangées, faire partie d'un art passionnant et planétaire. Goethe parle de *Weltliteratur*, c'est de là que vient l'idée d'un prix Nobel de littérature.

Par la suite la théorie de la littérature mondiale s'élargit encore. Sartre et quelques autres découvrent la littérature américaine (Dos Passos, Faulkner) ou la littérature des pays colonisés (Frantz Fanon). Ils enrichissent la vision d'une littérature mondiale. Elle offre des œuvres qui résonnent directement avec les leurs. Ce dialogue fonde le dépassement du régionalisme inhérent à la littérature.

Plus tard encore, après 1968, quand le colonialisme sera moribond, la théorie s'enrichira encore des *postcolonial studies* et du comparatisme. Désormais l'espace de la lecture est mondial. Grâce à la traduction, toute la production littéraire de la planète est potentiellement accessible et donc comparable.

La dernière étape de ce développement, nous la vivons maintenant grâce aux nouvelles techniques de communication.

Ceux qui ont étudié la théorie d'une littérature mondiale et le dépassement du nationalisme ont essayé d'en comprendre les mécanismes. Ainsi Pascale Casanova avec *La République mondiale des lettres* a mis en évidence la manière dont les capitales littéraires du XIXe siècle ont organisé la hiérarchie des littératures et des écrivains, qu'ils soient consentants, rebelles ou hors-champ. D'autres, comme David Damrosch dans *What is World Litterature*, ont rêvé

d'un corpus unique qu'il serait possible d'appréhender par une science nouvelle. Ce corpus plus ou moins homogène ce serait la littérature mondiale. A quoi d'autres chercheurs encore, comme Franco Moretti dans *Hypothèses sur la littérature mondiale*, ont répondu qu'il vaudrait mieux s'y prendre par genres littéraire : le roman mondial, la poésie mondiale, etc.

Ainsi donc toutes ces théories considèrent que les littératures nationales, confrontées à leurs voisines, transcendent leur ancrage régional. Cependant dans leur cheminement vers une littérature mondiale, elles sont menacées par un ennemi venu du dehors : la littérature standardisée mondialement, la world fiction, production insipide, promue par des groupes éditoriaux qui ne distinguent plus guère entre un livre, une savonnette et des poulets industriels. Là aussi, l'ennemi s'appelle mondialisation.

Mais la mondialisation financière de la fin du siècle dernier qui menace l'existence même de la littérature comme culture du questionnement, produit elle-même un contexte nouveau qui le met en cause et qu'on pourrait appeler la mondialité. Désormais, grâce aux réseaux techniques qui relativisent, compriment puis abolissent à la fois le temps et les distances, le champ dans lequel la littérature de chaque pays est produite a changé de nature. Un raz-de-marée à Fukushima n'attend plus, comme au temps du tremblement de terre de Lisbonne, que Voltaire en discute avec ses contemporains. Le récit du voyage en Patagonie n'attend plus que l'éditeur de Bruce Chatwin lui envoie des copies à corriger. Chatwin aujourd'hui pourrait consigner sur son écran des phrases immédiatement lues sur tous les continents. La marche du monde se précipite à la conscience des écrivains. Les traductions soigneuses sont remplacées par des interprètes approximatifs en ligne. Et cette nouvelle situation en devenir interpelle chaque auteur qui ne peut que s'étonner quand sa phrase est envoyée dans le nuage électronique planétaire avant même qu'il n'y ait ajouté le point final.

Il y a donc la mondialisation qui, en politique, a pour conséquence tragique un repli nationaliste. Mais il y a aussi l'autre face du réel : la mondialité qui met en rapport chacun avec chacun, qui offre des voyages virtuels ou vrais, qui propose sans l'imposer un lien universel entre tous les livres, toutes les productions littéraires. C'est un formidable réseau de textes qu'on devrait pouvoir apprivoiser. Il rend caduque les capitales littéraires et plusieurs repères critiques qu'écrivains et lecteurs appréciaient et qu'il faudra songer à remplacer. D'où la

transformation des métiers du livre qu'il faudra repenser à l'intérieur de ce régime mondial, mais c'est une autre histoire…

Ce qui est nouveau, ce n'est pas le fait que chaque lecteur ait accès à une encyclopédie universelle des textes littéraires, mais bien les conditions dans lesquelles ces textes sont non pas lus, mais écrits. Car l'écrivain lui-même ne peut plus faire abstraction de ce fait : même s'il n'écrit que dans une langue et à partir d'une culture régionale, son travail, dès qu'il le met en ligne, se trouve sur une étagère de la grande encyclopédie de la littérature mondiale.

La littérature est donc par essence régionale et mondiale, locale et globale, relevant de la communauté de tous les hommes. Ça du moins, c'est la théorie. Mais cette théorie n'est pas un argument pour ceux que le populisme condamne au nationalisme. Dire que la littérature a vocation à l'universel, on le savait. C'est comme si l'on disait qu'au-delà de la politique nationale, il y a une planète qu'il ne faut pas négliger. Cette constatation n'en fait pas un argument convaincant. En politique on sait bien que l'horizon ne peut pas être que local, mais le passage vers l'universel ne se fait pas. Le populisme ne se combat pas par l'élitisme de la théorie.

Revenons-en à la littérature. Souvent c'est le particulier qui donne son goût d'universel à un roman. Sans être jamais allé au Japon, un lecteur peut s'attacher à un personnage qui n'est jamais sorti de Tokyo. L'immersion dans un autre monde que le sien suggère au lecteur un ailleurs fréquenté par des personnages charismatiques. Le lecteur est amené à ne plus s'en effrayer.

Ces livres-là, qu'on appelle dépaysant, font sentir qu'au-delà de la nation, du nationalisme, il existe quelques valeurs, quelques principes qui permettent le vivre ensemble. La production romanesque cultive ce sentiment qu'on aurait pu être un autre, être né ailleurs, se trouver maintenant dans la peau d'un musulman alors qu'on est dans une cabane des montagnes suisses en train de lire un roman.

On entrevoit qu'il existe un espace que la fiction littéraire ouvre au-delà du nombril nationaliste. La contradiction entre le local et le global n'en est pas abolie pour autant, mais c'est comme un signe que nous fait la littérature, et la fiction en particulier, pour nous indiquer une voie, en zigzag peut-être, difficile et pas immédiate, pour dépasser l'autisme nationaliste. Le personnage de roman, et non pas la théorie littéraire, voilà sur qui compter pour secouer

l'intolérance. C'est du moins l'espoir auquel celui qui écrit aujourd'hui s'accroche.

Daniel de Roulet, Allocution lors de la célébration de 25 ans UNSW/SENU à la Bibliothèque de l'ONU, introduction par Dr. Sigrun Habermann-Box.

Les Maasais

J'ai passé un temps assez important au Kenya, suite à mon nouveau mariage, et j'y ai travaillé au milieu de collègues relativement plus amicaux, même s'ils n'analysaient guère plus le monde. Le contexte équatorial semblait détendre les esprits. Le milieu international semblait percoler de la pauvreté des pauvres et de la corruption vaniteuse des élites, comme un café du marc de café — en inspirant cependant la crainte que le café devienne mêlé. J'ai éprouvé de l'intérêt pour les Maasais. Eux aussi ont été assez amicaux. Je leur ai rendu plusieurs visites, et parcouru la savane avec eux. Je les ai notamment suivis dans des broussailles infestées de serpents. On en voyait les trous dans des termitières. J'en ai eu une sensation froide, mais sans sueur, et aucun serpent physique (par opposition au fameux serpent symbolique) ne m'a approché. Il est vrai que les Maasais marchaient devant moi, avec un mélange de leur gravité habituelle et de désinvolture, apparemment certains d'estourbir tout cobra ou mamba qui se serait montré avec leurs "rungus" (des gourdins, pas des lances, pour l'occasion).

La marche entre les termitières m'a suggéré une métaphore de ma critique de l'enseignement. Je suivais les pas des Maasais dans la broussaille, en collant littéralement mes pas — mes pieds presque — sur celui qui me précédait. Ainsi j'avais le sentiment, un peu illusoire, que je ne piétinerais pas un serpent, avec la conséquence qu'on peut imaginer. J'étais dans une savane isolée, même si les Maasais déclaraient aller à l'hôpital en cas de morsure. Dans le secondaire et encore plus dans le supérieur je calquais mes mots sur ceux des mandarins, directement ou par des subalternes interposés. Je répétais soigneusement leurs pensées, pourtant pompeuses et de peu de discernement, en les persillant de citations encore plus exactes, et j'évitais tout écart, qui aurait pu me couler à un examen ou m'attirer le mépris d'un enseignant pendant une année scolaire. Le risque était… venimeux, comprendra-t-on le symbolisme ? Autre image, les enseignants étaient grassement sécurisés, eux, dans leur termitière. Je commençais ainsi à mieux comprendre ce qui m'avait consterné dans l'enseignement. Je peux aussi considérer les dignes Maasais comme mes enseignants (si ma métaphore peut être lue ainsi).

En fait j'ai eu une période paisible, dont je me demande encore à ce jour si elle tenait à des circonstances, notamment exotiques, ou à une protection et à une bénédiction divines. Mais je ne devenais pas un mystique : je voulais, comme toujours, comme depuis mon enfance, marquer des points contre le mensonge et la turpitude du monde. A ce que je comprenais un autre dieu (ou Dieu) lui-même voulait cela. Et ma relative tranquillité, dans ses donnes rassurantes, même plutôt discrètes, exprimait peut-être une sorte de trêve de dieu. J'ai

interrogé plusieurs Kényen(ne)s sur la persistance des serpents (zoologiques) dans des termitières trouées. Elle était concevable, et alors leur discrétion exprimait peut-être, métaphoriquement, une retenue divine. Enfin, c'était une hypothèse. Géométriquement je n'avais pas compris le parcours, embroussaillé dans une savane dégagée, des Maasais.

Claude Citon, UNOG retired

Ne plus parler de paix

Mais imaginer une relation, un ensemble de relations qui se touchent, se sentent et s'emboîtent de manière cohérente. Une fusion qui dégagerait l'énergie pour faire tourner la planète autrement. L'homme avec l'homme. Uni non seulement par des liens techno-rationnels mais le désir physique et des envies métaphysiques.

En bravant les tumultes, intérieures et extérieurs, une journée lumineuse d'octobre. Il se réfugie dans la poésie, l'écriture, l'imaginaire. Il ne veut plus badiner avec la notion de paix mais aller chercher les racines des conflits. Les dire. Au milieu du vide personnel/social, la recherche de nouvelle identité et des contradictions sociopolitiques de tous bords.

xxx

Lire « la paix », parlez de la paix.
La voute de l'univers,
surplombant l'ensemble de ses éléments,
donnant un sens à toutes ses formes existantes.
La protégeant, la réchauffant en dehors et en dedans.
La paix et son contraire
Naufrage et résurrection -
instantanée mais constante,
S'accrocher, oui,
Pour nourrir une coquille vide, dévidée,
séparée de son sens, de son amplitude et de son glam
Fracassée en mille fossés
Devenue la poubelle des clivages et des conflits
Peu importe les pourparlers
Face aux abîmes infranchissables
Entre peuples d'ici et de là-bas, libres et enchaînés.
Instrumentalisant à mort la paix.
Jetée en pâture dans des milieux sombres, doubles et opaques,
Par les desperados du monde entier !
Le *chewing gum* des humanistes,
des démocraties avisées
Investit mille fois d'intentions justes et décevantes.

Changeant de sens et de direction à chaque fois.
Au sens pluriel comme au singulier.
Dans des sociétés carburant encore aux références du passé,
Avec ses mythes et ses modes de pensées surannés
Dépourvue de sens, de vérité et de réalité.
Quelle perte pour ceux et celles obligés de l'abandonner.
Et quelle souffrance quand ils en sont privés.
L'homme conscient sans arrière pensés.
L'homme qui a intériorise l'humanité.
Find out and feel good.
Le conflit sera ton moteur pour créer.

Aline Dedeyan, UNOG Retired

A la bibliothèque le 14 octobre 2014

La poésie et la vie

"La poesía es un arma cargada de futuro", "la poésie est une arme porteuse d'avenir" a dit le poète Gabriel Celaya...

Mais, quel est notre avenir, pour quelle vie, pour quelle planète ?

Et c'est ainsi, dans un train matinal, qu'elle se demandait comment elle allait bien pouvoir écrire quelque chose pour l'organisme militant dont elle faisait partie....

Comment, elle, la privilégiée, oserait-elle parler de l'innommable, de la vanité des hommes et des femmes, du futur, du monde déchiré, de la planète dévastée par la cupidité de l'humanité ?
Est-ce que la poésie est vraiment une arme porteuse d'avenir? Elle se le demandait...

Dans nos pays riches, la poésie n'est vécue que par une minorité, comme un trésor en voie d'extinction, précieusement rangée sur les rayons d'une belle bibliothèque ripolinée et agonisante, mais bien vivante ailleurs, où, souffle de vie et de survie, elle coule comme une sève vivifiante dans les veines des nomades de tous horizons, les peuples fiers et libres des espaces infinis...
Le paysage enveloppé d'une fine brume impalpable défilait sous ses yeux, l'éclat du soleil retenu comme un souffle, colorait le ciel d'un rose abricot et elle s'attendait, à tout moment, à voir apparaître quelque angelot baroque, riant, en montrant ses fesses dodues.... Le rythme des essieux sur les rails la berçait, et les souvenirs remontaient en elle comme une source d'eau thermale, bénéfique et stimulante...

L'Apakintza au pays basque, ce paysage rude, les lancés de pierres, les cris rauques de ces hommes arcboutés, tous muscles tendus avant l'effort final, et le soir, la nuit tombée, réunis dans l'hémicycle sacré, liés par la parole et le silence, attendant l'inspiration bénie. Oui, là, la poésie était vivante, l'arme même de la résistance qui a permis à ce peuple de garder son identité, sa force, sa culture, envers et contre tout...

L'image de son père lui apparut tout à coup, à la sortie d'un tunnel, droit comme un if, un petit recueil relié à la main, Omar Khayyâm, "Les Ruba'iyat",
"Hier est passé, n'y pensons plus,
Demain n'est pas là, n'y pensons plus
Pensons aux doux moments de la vie
Ce qui n'est plus, n'y pensons plus."

Puis tout à coup, elle, non, je suis à l'aéroport, le taxi vient de me déposer. De bonne humeur, ce chauffeur saint-gallois à l'accent français m'a mis du baume au coeur, une belle histoire de famille. Ses grands-parents pauvres, poussés par la faim ont émigré en Alsace, puis, la guerre et ses ravages, et lui, après avoir bourlingué dans le monde est là, taxi, dans sa grande voiture luxueuse, pas une Lexus, non une Hyundai, mais quand même, elle a fière allure et je manque de me casser la figure en descendant la marche! Je me sens moins seule, moins désemparée, une âme soeur dans cette Genève si froide, si imbue d'elle-même, si sûre, confinée dans ses certitudes. Dans le hall, telles des fourmis, les passagers s'affairent, s'agitent, regardent compulsivement les tableaux des arrivées et des départs , je trouve mon guichet, mais à ma grande stupéfaction , tout est automatisé , oui, quatre guichets vides et une jeune employée au fort accent tessinois nous fait avancer et nous secoue , "allez, mettez votre valise sur le tapis, scannez votre billet, prenez l'étiquette , collez là,

- mais Madame, ce sont 4 postes de travail en moins!

- Mais non, regardez comme je travaille!

- Que dire?

Je m'exécute, et à nouveau je me sens envahie par un sentiment de solitude, d'incompréhension, mais où suis-je?

Où est la poésie ?

Puis les contrôles, on se dépouille, manteau, écharpe, ceinture, bottes, ordinateur, on passe sous le détecteur, on se rhabille, un numéro anonyme parmi d'autres, pas un sourire, pas un croisement de regard, une coquille de noix dans le torrent des voyageurs sous l'oeil vigilant et scrutateur des représentants de l'ordre mondial de la lutte anti-terrorisme. Tous suspects sauf avis contraire...

Où est la poésie ?

Puis, oui puis, car c'est le labyrinthe, et le fil d'Ariane nous mène à l'aile C, tout au fond à droite, en territoire français, sans qu'on le sache, puisque les gros porteurs empruntent la nouvelle grande piste totalement en France! Curieux, où suis-je? Puis, et oui, je maintiens puis même si le français n'aime pas les répétitions, le grand hall, plein de voyageurs soit en kipa, soit blacks, et la porte C16 ? Fermée, il faut attendre! Le hall se vide petit à petit, les

voyageurs pour Istanbul et Tel-Aviv embarquent, et je vais prendre un café au petit bar où une superbe jeune sénégalaise, au sourire contagieux, rayonnante, me sert. Au comptoir, à ma droite, un intello qui prend deux tabourets, lit Jung, absorbé et autiste derrière ses écouteurs qui finalement me voit et me dit en s'adressant au vague, "take the seat please" et se replonge dans sa lecture; à ma gauche, une belle femme, en chair, parle en anglais puis passe au français « vous allez où ?

- À New York
-moi au secteur français, affaires?

- Non, voir mon petit-fils

- alors dites lui bien que Nicole lui envoie un bisou caramel! »

Caramel? Oui la poésie existe, elle est là, sucrée, fondante et moelleuse, mettant en éveil toutes mes papilles et mes sens....

La conversation s'engage, on parle de tout et de rien, de l'Afrique, Céline la serveuse se joint à nous, c'est comme si on se connaissait depuis toujours, trois exilées, trois soeurs , on m'appelle, on s'embrasse, le serveur me donne la douloureuse, rappel à la réalité , 8.90 pour un café et une eau gazeuse, je râle , il sourit, un peu contrit, j'embarque , personne ne parle français , ma voisine, une belle noire, statue d'ébène, prends un autre fauteuil, "so we have more space", et me voici à nouveau seule, face à mon écran sur le chemin de l'exil qu'a choisi ma belle-fille...

Je me rends compte, alors, que cette solitude c'est celle de l'exilée dont la seule patrie est la chaleur humaine, le partage, l'autre.... Et,... la poésie ....

"Elle passe bien vite cette
Caravane de notre vie
Ne perds rien des doux
Moments de notre vie
Ne pense pas au lendemain
De cette nuit
Prends du vin, il faut saisir
Les doux moments de notre vie"(O.K.)

Un enfant vient de tomber sous une rafale à Gaza...

Alix Parodi, UNSW/SENU

National literature, universal literature

Back in the 1970s, in János Kádár's socialist Hungary – we always called ourselves socialist, never communist; even the sole political party was called Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party; communism as a term was strictly reserved for a distant future until the arrival of that undetermined brave new world – we had very enjoyable literature studies at the secondary school, with the material divided into Hungarian literature and universal (world) literature. That division was the most natural thing to us young students. We were living in a mostly closed society, although with some cracks to it. Travel abroad was subject to an exit visa, delivered or rejected by the Ministry of Interior according to its taste and priorities. Ideas also had to cross the Hungarian border with some difficulty, although it was not totally impossible to smuggle in a small amount of them. We therefore thought it natural that the world was divided into the inside and the outside. Who would have thought at that time that in less than two generations (exactly on 21 December 2007), upon Hungary's entry into the Schengen area of visa-free travel across European internal frontiers, it would be possible to travel to Vienna without border or passport control again – the last time such a thing happened to my late grandmother before the fall of the Habsburg Monarchy (her stories about passport-free travel in Europe before the end of the First World War sounded fascinating and strangely utopian).

In sum, it did not come to our mind that what we studied as universal literature was German, French, English, American or Russian (or perhaps Soviet because we also studied Soviet-Kyrgyz Chingiz Aitmatov's (1928–2008) *Farewell, Gulsary!* (1966)) etc. national literature in its country of origin. Nor did it come to our mind that our Hungarian literature, if it interested anybody abroad, and was read outside our borders, automatically became part of universal literature for that curious reader. We did not know if our literature had any value to be offered to foreigners, except of course the numerous Hungarian minorities in neighbouring countries cut from the majority of Hungarian speakers by a peace treaty signed in 1920 and effective from 1921, that unhappy dictate with the harmless-sounding name "Trianon". (Their proper literature is yet another fascinating cultural epic.)

In the end, there is only one and indivisible universal literature, independently of the language in which it is written. Naturally for the success of a piece of literature, the language also matters. If it is written in a dominant language like English, it has better chances to be distributed and known worldwide, as the difficulties of translation are much smaller. But universal literature can also be created in smaller languages or even dialects. Try, for example, Sofi Oksanen (1977), who writes in Finnish, a language of perhaps 5 million people, and talks about her Estonian roots (Estonian is a culture of 1 million people). Luckily, she is translated into English and French, and you can assure yourself that in terms of values, it is nothing inferior to big language literature. The lesson is that good universal literature carries universal human values but is embedded in a local context, geographically, culturally and time-wise. To give you an example of a big language, if we read in Spanish, we like to immerse ourselves into fictional, but still so realistic, Colombian *Macondo*

(Gabriel García Márquez' (1927–2014) city of fetish), or half-fictional, half real Peruvian *Piurá* (Mario Vargas Llosa's (1936) favourite, to give you the example of another Nobel Prize winner). The time of the plot is also important, despite the timelessness of the values and human sentiments.

All these values also apply to the only winner of Nobel Prize in literature from my Hungarian culture of origin, Imre Kertész (1929). His *Fateless* (1975) has become a universal success because of his good luck, he tackled an issue that everybody in the world understands: the Jewish Holocaust. At the same time, his novel was unique within the vast Holocaust literature because he proved that the main feature of Jews was that they were normal people, and wanted to live a normal life, even in extreme circumstances. Why it was finally Kertész who from the richness of Hungarian literature received the Nobel can be explained by good luck too. He was discovered by some German editors, who assured a good translation and distribution of the book in German speaking territories, which then led to translations into French and English. His Nobel nevertheless came as a surprise in Hungary as he used to be a well respected writer at home, but known to a small number of people. His work did not figure in the school curriculum of Hungarian literature before the Nobel. The prize projected him almost brusquely to the top of the national literary pantheon.

Of course, there are also limits to the comprehensibility of universal literature and hence the transfer of the values they are carrying. The most important one is the language itself. It is evident in the case of small languages, whose authors are waiting for translation. But it can also happen to the ancient part of literature in big languages, too. Take for example, François Rabelais (1494–1553). These days, editors are obliged to translate his old French into modern French, in order to be understood by today's students. Rabelais is also a prisoner of his time. His text is full of references to the culture that was evident at his time but requires lavish footnotes from the editor, making his reading tedious, even in its translation into modern French. It also presents a material world to a young reader in which he does not find herself or himself. As a friend of mine used to say, it is so difficult to read classical or old folk tales to children living in the modern environment, as they are completely lost in the material world of the ancestors. In old Hungarian folk tales, it is the mother who prepares scones baked in ashes for the son embarking on a trip. These days that baking technique is completely lost, and modern sons get at best a scone from the supermarket or a hamburger. You can also be assured to find a very special material world if you read the Polish Nobel Prize winner Władysław Reymont's (1867–1925) *Peasants* (1904–1909) about rural Polish life in the early 20th century. Moreover, all literature, as already mentioned in the case of Rabelais, is full of references to tacit knowledge, and the more faraway the place of origin of the literature, the more you will need the editor's notes.

One can perhaps say that all literature is time- and society-bound, with two exceptions: historical novels, which take place in the past, and science fictions, which take place in the future. But is it true? Are the de-linked completely from the world in which the writer lived? Are Alexandre Dumas père's (1802–1870) historical novels totally embedded in the French past, with

no relationship with 19th century France and its values? Yes, Dumas was very meticulously researching his subjects, but was still influenced by his present in terms of choice of stories and messages to be delivered to his public. And in science fiction, what about George Orwell's (1903–1950) *1984*? Is it really only about year 1984, and not as much about 1948, in which it was written (but published only in 1949…)? Is it not about the values of Europe right after the Second World War? And is it not a book about the future, about the 21st century and Edward Snowden's revelations?

Let us highlight here another difficulty in the transmission of universal literature from one part (and language) of the world to another: the moment you read a piece of literature translated from another language, there is a risk that the same words have a different meaning, or at least a different connotation. I remember for example my complete perplexity vis-à-vis the French expression "il se soucie de quelque chose comme de sa première chemise" (literally "he cares about something like his first shirt"). I understood every single word but I did not grasp why it is understood by the French to mean "he does not worry at all". In our Hungarian experience of the horrible 20th century full of wars, deportations, arbitrary arrests and invasions, that shirt has very probably been bombed, but if not bombed, burned, or confiscated, or stolen, or taken by a foreign soldier at point blank. Therefore, if by miracle, you still have it, you should cherish it greatly. I would say that the difficulty of misunderstanding a word exists even if people formally belong to the same language. An evident question for Spanish speakers: Is *guagua* a bus or a baby?

It is also possible that some words cannot simply be translated from another language. What do you for example do with the beautiful Spanish word of Arabic origin *alguacil* (coming from qadi, i.e. judge)? What kind of other terms can you use? And if you keep the Spanish original, are not you again back to editor's note, which you would like to avoid? And if you translate poetry, and you have more or less the right word, how do you ensure that the atmosphere is the same? Try, for instance, to translate something from Hungarian. It has a special music, due to its richness on vowels (and their lavish use), and a special way of accentuation (accent always on the first vowel. How do you bring back that music in other languages (except perhaps in Finnish and Estonian)? There is also another difficulty: Hungarian has a free order of words (object, subject, adverb, adjective etc.), and the moment you change the order of words, the nuances change. Hungarian left-wing poet Attila József (1905–1937) brought this free order to an extreme in his poem Workers, in which he reverses the order of the possessive and the adjective, something like "gaping capital's yellow mouth" instead of the correct "capital's gaping yellow mouth". This is in fact on the borderline of grammatical error. I have seen it in French translation ("bouche du capital, jaune, ouverte"), which is "pas mal" but still short of the original game of words.

From everything I have said, the main conclusion is that universal literature=good literature in any language. Fine but what is good literature? Are its limits set forever? Is Agatha Christie (1890–1976) part of high literature, or not, or is she in between? Is she different from Arthur Conan Doyle (1859–

1930) who has already been published in Collins Classics and therefore should be considered as high literature? Are Miss Marple's investigations less literary, do they carry fewer values than those of Sherlock Holmes? Very probably, the values are moving all the time. Dumas, mentioned above, was also considered rather a popular and not a classical writer in his time. It is also very sensitive to define which subject matters are still part of literature. Take Peter Nádas' (1942) *Parallel Stories* (2005) praised by some people and criticised very much by others. His descriptions of sexuality go beyond all limits of decency we have known so far; D.H. Lawrence's (1885–1930) *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928), a scandal book of its times seems to be a pale story of *eau de rose* compared with Nádas. It is true that almost 80 years passed between the two books but is there any absolute limit to what can still be published in high literature?

So the definition of good literature is that is carries positive, good human values. Even Nádas can be part of it, if his long novel delivers those positive values. Of course, negative values are neither so easy to define. It is, however, true that all anti-human and racist ideas are and will always remain outside the scope of literature. Good literature can treat even the "enemy" decently, as a human being. It is an arduous task because sometimes one nation's hero is another nation's scoundrel. Take for example Bohdan Khmelnytsky, who was a Cossack leader of a 1648–1657 uprising against Polish rule, which resulted in massacres of Poles, Ukrainians and Jews. In Ukrainian tradition, he is a hero of national liberation, and he is also seen positively by Russians due to his movement's union with Moscow's Tsar Alexei Mikhailovich, while for the Poles he was a violent man who killed many Poles and precipitated the demise of Poland (leading to the partition of Poland a century and a half later), and for the Jews, he was a politician who had made the eradication of Jews one of his goals and had many of them killed often under atrocious conditions. This man is almost impossible to be described in an objective manner that is universally accepted. Polish Nobel winner Henryk Sienkiewicz (1846–1916) has found a more or less acceptable solution in his *Fire and Sword* (1884), in which, although he takes side with the Poles, enemies are also shown real human beings, with real feelings and certain human values.

Fine, we have decided to exclude from literature those who have denied human values. But what do we do people who have acted on both sides of that invisible division line? Should we read and accept Knut Hamsun's (1859–1952) *Hunger* (1890), which by the way earned him a well-deserved Nobel Prize, although his Nazi sympathies became more and more evident over the passing of time, leading to open cooperation with Nazi Germany? There is no straightforward answer to that. It is equally difficult to judge Ezra Pound (1885–1972) without feeling lots of ambiguity about him: nobody denies that he was a great poet, but he sympathized more with fascist Italy than the Anglo-American coalition. And to cite an example from the other extreme of the political spectrum, during the Second World War, the great Soviet writer Ilya Ehrenburg (1891–1967) was not only the author of the funny and wise *Extraordinary Adventures of Julio Jurenito and His Students* (1922), but a virulent anti-German pamphletist and propagandist during the Second World War. In a piece originally published in the Red Army newspaper Krasnaya Zvezda, distributed

to the fighting troops in flyer form, too (a facsimile is reproduced in de Zayas *Nemesis at Potsdam (*Routledge p. 68)), and finally reprinted in his book *The War* (1942–1944), he wrote that "Germans are not humans … for us there is nothing more joyful than a heap of German corpses". Or let us refer to Ernest Hemingway (1899–1961), whose prose was usually wonderful and humanistic (think of *The Old Man and the Sea* (1951)). Nevertheless in a letter to his editor Charles Scribner, dated 27 August 1949, he described without remorse how he had murdered a German prisoner of war because the latter would not cooperate in his interrogation.[1]

One can say that we should not be excessively harsh on authors because of their own frailties and prejudices. It is usually wiser to judge the product and not the producer – on a case by case basis, and on condition that the dark side of the person does not affect the quality of the main part of the work. We should not forget either that sometimes the context made it very difficult to realise that one has just drifted to the inhuman side. To pick up the case of Ehrenburg, whatever we think about Stalinist Soviet Union, it is a matter of fact that in 1941 it was Nazi Germany that attacked the U.S.S.R. and the Red Army was waging – at a staggering human cost – a desperate and just war of defence to repel the aggression. In those critical times, even such extreme attitudes as the diabolisation of the enemy seemed to be justified. And once the spirit hatred was out of the bottle, it was close to impossible to put it back even when the winds were turning and the Soviet counter-attack reached Germany. Now we know of course that Soviet attitude towards Germans was not just inhuman but also made the end of the war longer and bloodier than necessary. References to fierce German resistance to Soviet advance on the back of news of atrocities against German civilians can be found these days even in bestselling books like Ken Follett's (1949) *Winter of the World* (2012).[2] Ehrenburg did not see his *dérapage*, and to his defence again, let us add that, for somebody who had to confront directly the effects of the genocide of Soviet Jews by the Nazis, it was particularly difficult to develop a differentiated vision of Germans.

But let us now turn back to literature and take an example of an author from my native Hungary who is already on the other side of the division line of acceptable. Cécile Tormay (1876–1937) wrote some quite readable, although not necessarily top, novels, such as *The Old House* (1914), before the outbreak of First World War. With the fall of the conservative world order (to which she was attached all her life) provoked by the loss of the war, leading to a short-lived republic and then an equally short-lived communist government, she saw her world crumble. Luckily for her (although not necessarily for everybody in her country), foreign intervention ended these political experiments and brought back conservatives to power. Tormay described her experience during the republic and the communist government in *An Outlaw's Diary* (1923), which is clearly a racist, and probably a fascist, book. She maintains that the two revolutions (republican and communist) were led by degenerate people, which for her is a synonym of Jews. These people were degenerate by their physical

[1] See his *Selected Letters 1917–1961*, edited by Carlos Baker, Scribner and Sons, New York, 1981, p. 672.

[2] Never feel ashamed of reading bestsellers, on condition that you are aware of their difference from high literature.

appearance and by their mental inferiority (especially compared with the conservative "victims" of the revolution, who have noble appearance and mental superiority). This way, she became the precursor or racist literature.

Let us note here for the historical facts that people of Jewish origin were indeed overrepresented in the leadership of the communist movement but this fact has nothing to do with any kind of racial predisposition and reflects a sociological logic. During the period leading to the revolutions, many people of Jewish origin joined progressist movements (from which many communist leaders came) because of the difficulties of social advancement that they felt particularly. And when the communist experiment started, they were attracted by the same beautiful face values of the movement which attracted many Hungarian intellectuals of all kinds (at least for some time), of which perhaps you may best know Béla Bartók (1881–1945). (By the way, leftist poet Attila József mentioned above was only 14 during communist rule but he loved it because it was the first and last time that the Hungarian State paid a holiday to him, the proletarian boy.) Let us also note here that people of Jewish descent became communist by rejecting all forms of religion, including their own traditions. No wonder that the majority of the practising Jewish community was clearly against the atheists communists. Tormay failed to see this reality.

Tormay is rightly contested in Hungary because she viewed her infamous *Outlaw's Diary* as a central part of her oeuvre, therefore disqualifying herself from the group of people whose weaknesses are forgiven. Nor should we forget that, to make things worse, the current conservative political leadership of the country attempted to instrumentalise her by including her in the school curriculum, and even name a street after her. (Luckily the latter has not materialised yet).

In the Hungary of the 1970s, Tormay's works were not available, not so because of her anti-Semitism as for her anticommunism. In this respect, she shares the same fate with her antithesis, the very humanist Sándor Márai (1900–1989), who despised communism and fascism equally. But all in all, we had a good access to universal literature. From the Soviet side, for instance, Boris Pasternak's (1890–1960) *Doctor Zhivago* was put on the index – allegedly it was too anti-communist – but we could read Mikhail Bulgakov's (1891–1940) *Master and Margarita* and even Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's (1918–2008) *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* in good Hungarian translation. (Please do not try to understand the logic of Kádár's ideology chief György Aczél who decided which author should be accepted, tolerated on banned, and on what grounds. We anyhow benefitted from his inconsistencies.) Although very few of us wanted to enter the Faculty of Letters, we had a good immersion in literary analysis, which otherwise was surprisingly non-ideological. However, it was not so easy to accept that the rules of literary analysis are not as immovable as the roles of physics and chemistry. Whether a piece of literature is good or bad depends also on the context, the intentions of the writer, on the perceptions and reactions of the audience, and most importantly, whether the writer's style is original or not. For instance, the imitation of simple peasant language was a literary feast in the Hungary of the mid-19th century but became the turf of the

small talentless poets (*willow-tree poets* in Hungarian) in the 20th century. And there is no piece of literature that would please 100% of the people; therefore the list of favourite writers varies from person to person. Ultimately, the individuality makes universal literature great fun. And do not be ashamed to judge it always yourself. Do not let be influenced by "wise" people. Good reading.

Kalman Kalotay, UNCTAD

Ngozi, Marko, Kalman and Amos at the *Ex Tempore* celebration on 14 August 2014 at the Press Bar of the Palais des Nations

On Spinoza, Einstein and God

"The devil can quote the Bible to achieve his purpose", William Shakespeare

They asked Einstein whether he believed in God. He replied: "I believe in Spinoza's God." I was curious and went searching. What the hell, who would that God be? I do not know much about philosophy, but I know that every philosopher reflects his own time and history. Hegel said that every great philosophy represents its own time apprehended in thought. Nietzsche said that every great philosophy is a personal confession of its creator.

The philosophy of Baruch Spinoza reflects its history: the son of Portuguese Jews who migrated to Holland fleeing the Inquisition, he was born in Amsterdam in 1632. He was expelled from the local synagogue in 1656, aged 34. The Protestants also banished him as a blasphemer against the Holy Scriptures. If he lived today, would have been expelled from various churches, temples and human institutions, maybe even certain TV programmes, political parties and sports fan clubs. A great guy. I would have liked to have had a beer with him.

Spinoza lived at the time of transition between the medieval and the modern. He noted that the advances of science were making the almighty medieval God obsolete. He was perhaps the first to realize that happiness is not a matter of luck, but of conscience. Till today, many people still play the lottery without realizing it. Spinoza described a secular society, liberal, democratic at least 100 years before the world produced a concrete example of this. Living 200 years before Darwin, he understood that the design of nature evolves through processes that do not depend on a designer. Spinoza finally proposed a God who is not "above nature, but part of it". I understood, then, the admiration of Einstein.

Einstein, the great scientist, believed in Spinoza's God. He said he believed in a God who is manifested in the orderly harmony of what exists in nature and not a God who cares about the fate and actions of human beings. But this only answers part of the question. After all, what governs the fate and actions of human beings? That part that did not interest Einstein interests me a lot. Einstein wrote his famous paper on relativity theory in 1905 when he was 26.

He lived at the time of transition between the modern and the contemporary. He proposed the most current physical model for the universe, long before they invented TV, cell phones, computers, Internet and fast foods. Do we live better because of these?

Quantum physics, for example, has evolved over the past thirty years. More recently, physicists and mystics try to align the physical theories of Einstein on space, time and motion with the theories of quantum physics to study the chaotic behaviour of matter on a microscopic level. The basic idea is that everything is connected. What happens or does not happen in our lives has more to do with how we relate to others than on a divine being that would live in the skies. However, living in doubt, we keep praying for the macro and giving medicine to the micro.

In short: there are people who do not care about others but know the Bible by heart and think that God loves them for it. Some people have everything they have because they lied, cheated, conned others but fervently pray and believe that God loves them for it. There are people who do shady deals with the spiritual and the material to get the feeling that God loves them for it. History is full of examples of groups of people who used the name of God – under the banners of various religions - to kill others. What bothers me more is that this is considered normal.

On the other hand, some people are better persons because they believe in God, whatever its name. I respect everyone. Personally, I am Buddhist, Muslim, Jewish, Atheist, Christian, Spiritualist, Confucian, Confused, Balanced, Agnostic, Diagnostic, Prognostic, not necessarily in this order.

I think God understands everything, even differences between religions. I hope he would like me because of that.

We can disagree about Spinoza, Einstein or God and so on, but as human beings working for peace and understanding we should understand the world as an extension of our home and vice-versa. If Spinoza appeared here today he would certainly be welcomed to have a beer with us.

Jonas Rabinovich, UN New York

The great slaughter 1914-1918

Wars invariably impact literature, art, music – culture in all its manifestations. World War I gave birth to the League of Nations and to the International Labour Office, whose motto "*si vis pacem, cole justitiam*" (if you want peace, cultivate justice) could also be our motto. The inter-war period saw the publication of much anti-war literature, including Einstein's *Why War?* (a book commissioned by the League of Nations – Sigmund Freud delivering a very literary answer to Einstein's *question of questions*) and Erich Maria Remarque's *All quiet on the Western Front.* Alas, the traumata and the absurdity of the war also silenced many authors, notably Rainer Maria Rilke, who suffered a cultural shock lasting for years that made it impossible for him to write a line of verse — until that felicitous explosion of inspiration in 1922 at the Château de Muzot in the Swiss Valais, where he produced the *Elegies* and the *Sonnets to Orpheus* in a mere two weeks.

As a reaction to the horror or the slaughter of Europe's youth, PEN International was launched in London in 1921 as a private peace-through-literature initiative, in a way anticipating UNESCO's universal vocation. A British novelist, Mrs. C.A. Dawson Scott, founded the first P.E.N Club in London.

At the end of the First World War, intellectuals and writers were convinced that the "war to end all wars" had been a colossal calamity, and a thoroughly avoidable conflagration. Henceforth it should be a high priority of writers to endeavour to build bridges among nations and peoples, in order to help prevent future wars through better understanding of our common values and interests, through open dialogue over our differences and through sincere efforts to settle potential sources of conflict. Indeed, if we know each other's literature, we would be less afraid of our neighbours, because we would recognize our very own yearnings and feelings in their novels and poetry. Thus, we should make words, words of all colours and nuances — instead of making war.

We remember the lament of the British soldier Wilfred Owen in his emblematic *Anthem for Doomed Youth* (1917), a Petracan sonnet with English rhyme-scheme, edited by his friend Siegfried Sassoon, also a young pacifist poet, when they were both patients at the Craiglockhart Hospital in Edinburgh:

What passing-bells for these who die as cattle?
Only the monstrous anger of the guns.
Only the stuttering rifles' rapid rattle
Can patter out their hasty orisons.
No mockeries now for them; no prayers nor bells;
Nor any voice of mourning save the choirs, –

The shrill, demented choirs of wailing shells;
And bugles calling for them from sad shires.
What candles may be held to speed them all?
Not in the hands of boys but in their eyes
Shall shine the holy glimmers of goodbyes.
The pallor of girls' brows shall be their pall;
Their flowers the tenderness of patient minds,
And each slow dusk a drawing-down of blinds.

These sad, immortal verses were put to music by Benjamin Britten in his stupendous *War Requiem*, composed after World War II, and premiered at the reopening of Coventry Cathedral.

The First World War, in which some ten million Europeans lost their lives, would yet be followed by the Second World War, which claimed five times as many victims and left many millions maimed and traumatized for life. How many artists would perish in those unnecessary conflicts, how many were silenced by the insanity of it all? The Bled Manifesto on Peace, adopted 2013 by PEN International's Writers for Peace Committee is an important document that is being taken into account by the inter-governmental working group of the UN Human Rights Council, which is tasked with the adoption of a United Nations Declaration on the Right to Peace.

Views on the First World War have evolved over the past century and will continue to evolve. We cannot expect spectacular discoveries through further archival discoveries or the release of classified documents. Early on the Soviets did release many embarrassing documents from the Tsar's archives. And gradually Austrian, German, British and French documents have completed the picture. A serious problem has been to weed out propaganda and discard teleological history-writing with its penchant for anachronisms. There is much rubbish-history and trash-trivia that still plague many pseudo-scientific interpretations of the origins, conduct and consequences of the war.

Everyone knows who won and who lost. But there is no consensus (and probably will never be) on who was responsible or "guilty". Already in 1928 Harvard Historian Sydney Fay published his 2-volume classic on the Origins of the War, which challenged the guilt paragraphs of the Treaty of Versailles and apportioned the responsibility more generally. Article 231 stipulated:

"The Allied and Associated Governments affirm and Germany accepts the responsibility of Germany and her allies for causing all the loss and damage to which the Allied and Associated Governments and their nationals have been subjected as a consequence of the war imposed upon them by the aggression of Germany and her allies."

This was the clause upon which the reparation claims against Germany were based. Not only was this clause historically untenable, it also (predictably) resulted in a festering sense of injustice that fed radical and nationalistic movements in Germany and directly contributed to the outbreak of WW II.

The Australian Professor Christopher Clark, currently teaching at Cambridge University, has recently made a remarkable impact with his new book *Sleepwalkers*, which contradicts much of the self-serving and politicized narrative of the victors, even if it does not reveal much that was not already available for anyone who wanted to do indpendent research. In any event the simplistic and one-dimensional perspective of Fritz Fischer (*Griff nach der Weltmacht, 1961*) is now mercifully discredited.

What seems important and relevant today is the development of a strategy to anticipate conflicts and facilitate dialogue and negotiation so as to prevent the threat or the use of force -- both of which are prohibited in article 2, paragraph 4, of the UN Charter. Whereas the League of Nations was incapable to prevent the outbreak of World War II, the United Nations has mediated many potentially dangerous disputes and spared the world from the scourge of yet another world war -- notwithstanding the tensions and indignities of the cold war and seven decades of continuous civil wars and regional armed conflicts. In light of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction, a world war today would probably mean the end of the human species on the planet.

We need a change of mind-set and a shift of priorities away from the military-industrial complex and toward the promotion of all human rights – civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights. Instead of producing more weapons, we must ensure the right to food and clean water, the right to shelter, the right to one's homeland and identity, the right to privacy.

Patriotism is not war-mongering but actively waging peace. It is not expansionism, or looking for what land to invade next. It does not strive to subjugate others or take advantage of them. Only chauvinism takes pleasure in exploiting others and doing injustice to them. Patriotism is consciousness of the noblest potential of one's homeland and the will proactively to advance this potential. It means working for social justice and against privilege and corruption. Let us remember the motto of the Peace of Westphalia (1648) which ended the horrendous Thirty Years War: *Pax optima rerum*. Peace is the highest good.

Alfred de Zayas, OHCHR retired

Books, books and books: Where to start and where to finish

They can be the variety and spice of life and great companions at home or abroad. They come in hard form, soft form, pocket form and any other form with an infinite variety of content for leisure and pleasure that can sadden, madden or inflame. They can teach us, reach us but never leave us alone. They can take us down memory lane or to places we've never been through vast horizons of past, present and future. There are books for babies, books for young, books for adults, books for parents, books for erudite, books for literate, books for ignorant, books for everything and everyone, through A to Z, to literally nourish, or corrupt, body, mind and soul. What we do, or don't, read says a lot about who we are, from where we've come, and maybe where we are going. **Books, books and books:** Where to start and where to finish?

Since ancient times books have fascinated and the world's libraries contain some of the greatest treasures of the genres now more to be admired than read. The wisdom of Ancient Egypt is embodied in a papyrus in the British Museum XXth dynasty, c.ll50 BC, *The heart of him who is engaged in writing rejoices; every day he is young.* It is said that libraries are wonderful things. Many can be austere and overpowering places with dark wood, leather seats, rows and rows of uniform and opulent leather-bound volumes conveying a message that they are to be looked at, not read. There is a hushed silence where people, in fellow feeling with others, sit silently at their desks and sometimes give a furtive glance at the intruder who would dare disturb the peace. There are libraries in institutions of learning, at places of work, at leisure and home places, all with one thing in common. **Books, books and books:** Where to start and where to finish?

The word "book" with its derivatives opens up a reading in itself. Bible, the collected books of the Old and the New Testament, comes from the Greek biblia, books. In all there are 46 books in the OT and 27 in the NT. From "book" we have an extended vocabulary of words, in singular or plural. Here are some in alphabetical order –able, -binder, -case, -club, -end, -ing, -ish, -keeper -learning -let, -lice, -maker, -mark, -mobile, -plate, -seller, -shop -stall, -store, -token, and -worm. The latter is also the insect that damages books by gnawing the bindings and boring holes in the paper that includes silverfish, booklice, moth and beetle larvae, etc. "Book" is described as a collection of sheets of paper bound together; a written or printed literary work. It must embrace the learned encyclopaedias, dictionaries, the mosaic of other reference

works, directories and so much more. **Books, books and books:** Where to start and where to finish?

Given the great choice and infinite variety, in original or translation, the above might suggest one thing that a book is not. To those who say a book is just a book, it would spell the death knell for a great companion to those who love to read or write. **Books, books and books:** Where to start and where to finish?

ITA MARGUET – ILO retired
(read at the 25th anniversary of the founding of the UNSW at the UN Library on 14 October 2014)

Dylan (Marlais) Thomas: Year of Celebration

In 2012 the Welsh government announced a Year of Celebration across Wales, the United Kingdom and around the world for the centenary in 2014 of the birth of poet and writer Dylan Thomas. Born on 27 October 1914 in the industrial seaport city of Swansea in Carmarthenshire he has been hailed as one of the most important poets of the century whose lyrics rank among the most powerful and captivating of modern poetry. He wrote poetry while still at school and later worked as a journalist before moving to London. In 1934 his first volume was published; *Collected Poems* was published in 1952 and among his many works the voice play *Under Milk Wood* is one of his best known. In 1937 he married Caitlin Macnamara and they had two sons and a daughter.

He died in New York on 9 November 1953 during an extensive literary and lecturing tour and his body was returned to Wales for burial. A lengthy obituary by his fellow Welsh poet and long-time friend, Vernon Watkins, appeared in *The Times* of London on 10 November 1953. His final resting place is marked with a simple wooden cross in the churchyard of St. Martin's Laugharne, the Welsh fishing village where he lived and worked for many years. His wife is buried in the same grave and her name appears on the reverse side of the cross. On l March 1982 a sculpted green Penryhn memorial stone with inscription from his poem *Fern Hill* was unveiled in Poet's Corner in Westminster Abbey, London. A replica of the Westminster Abbey plaque is placed in St. Martin's Church.

Year of Celebration

Dylan Thomas' work and stature as a poet are extensively documented and chronicled by scholars, literary critics and commentators including his biographers. He disliked being regarded as a provincial poet and decried any notion of "welshness" in his poetry, noted for its lyricism, and said to be influenced by other writers including William Butler Yeats and the verbosity of James Joyce.

To honour his work, life and legacy an eclectic mix of events are taking place at major venues across the home town of Swansea's famous son. They include talks, workshops, exhibitions and performances of his work with special invited guests. A BBC Dylan Thomas season of poetry, prose and music events was broadcast to coincide with National Poetry Day 2014 to honour

probably the most famous and celebrated writer that Wales ever produced. He is being remembered in the United States with numerous literary events.

In Swansea a focal point for celebration is the Dylan Thomas Museum, the house where he was born and lived for twenty-three years. A separate project is a new statue cast in bronze to be placed in the area near the house where he lived. In 2004 the Dylan Thomas Prize was created in his honour and awarded to the best published writer in English under the age of thirty. In 2005 the Dylan Thomas Screenplay Award was established. Administered by the Dylan Thomas Centre, the Prize is awarded at the annual Swansea Bay Film Festival. The Dylan Thomas Theatre is also a reputed cultural landmark.

To mark the centenary of his birth the Dylan Thomas Centre launched an upgraded exhibition which officially opened on 27 October 2014. It will display unique items and memorabilia associated with his writings and will include a collection of black and white photographs, some dating from the late 1930s when he was newly married and another set taken in New York in the early 1950s. The seventeenth annual Dylan Thomas Festival took place from 27 October to 9 November to coincide with the dates of his birth and death.

"Doomed Poet"

He suffered from bronchitis and asthma from childhood and struggled with them all his life. In later years he acquired a reputation which he fostered as a "roistering drunken and doomed poet". He died intestate with assets of around £100.

His troubled and Bohemian style marriage was fuelled by alcohol and infidelity but the relationship survived. In a memoir published in 1982 Caitlin described her relationship with Dylan as "*predominantly a drink story because without the first-aid of drink it could never have got onto its rocking feet".* Prophetic words attributed to the poet … "*The day will come when the name Dylan Thomas will be echoed from shore to shore. Only I won't be around to hear it."*

Ita Marguet, ILO retired

"Mentoring the next generation"

Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.

—Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 25, para.1)

It was a serendipitous unfolding of events after the 41st UN Inter-Agency-Games that took place this year in Long Island, New York, on the campus of Hoftra University, where I met a like-minded soul in the wife of my high school friend, Dr. Albert Granger, whom I haven't seen for over 30 years. It was the second time I met his wife in person, Mrs. Gina Granger, Coordinator of Special Programs at Hoftra School of Medicine. She and I bonded instantly based on this stage of parenting we arrived on, the emergence out of the dependent years of our children, on the cusp of spreading each their own wings in preparation for their journey into independence. Weaning ourselves away from our maternal roles is one that we may never come to see, but what to do when the nest slowly empties.

As life would have it at every turn of its course, our maternal instincts are served up with a new role of parenting, the kind where we don't have to do the nitty-gritty, but to simply be part of a support system that is much needed by all young adults navigating their way through their career planning and development. My new-found friend brought me on to her project of nurturing such young adults, in her case, young medical students who, in spite of their study load, welcome the breadth of support that keeps them from submerging into the scientific world of medicine. She saw in my work experience the immense potential of transferring my institutional knowledge so that I was one added to a number of medical professionals, long-standing colleagues and friends, who were invited for an informal gathering at their home to share with these medical students perspectives from the reality of work. In my case, I was asked to speak about my work experience in the UN. And, I must honestly say, I felt truly at home sharing about my daily work with my HIV/AIDS Section and Global Team colleagues, illustrating to these young medics what I have witnessed over the years providing administrative support for the work of my colleagues in this area of global health issues, the very real issues that they would one day face, with the hope that they may be inspired and creative in bringing the UN mandates and philosophy into their professions.

Two months later, that session spawned into a Skype video conference held for a group of high school students, gathered together from various locations of New York for a summer programme provided by Hofstra North Shore LIJ, School of Medicine, the "Medical Scholars Pipeline Program". This took place on the 23rd of July 2014, evening on our side of the Atlantic, Vienna, Austria, afternoon on theirs, Long Island, New York. It was a half hour of covering the requested list of topics:

· What is the purpose of the United Nations?
· How does the UN impact global health?
· What is your U.N. role in Vienna?
· Global places you travel for work.
· Does the UN affiliation make people treat you like royalty?
· How can one get involved in UN Activities?

I elaborated on each point, the best I could, taking it to the perspective of young adult minds slowly opening up like butterflies emerging out of their cocoons, feeding them with information that I hoped would take root and remain with them after this half-hour session. I directed them to our UNODC to learn about the breadth and depth of our work as an organization, where, at the tip of their fingers on their keyboard, they can access directly on their devices, today's extension of their hands, developments happening in real time, including access to archives for information they can easily refer to. We have, after all, young academics on the brink of information overload, and our website is just the perfect source to obtain digestible information. Since I didn't want to wait until the end of this half-hour session to do the question and answer part, I asked them after each point if they had anything to ask or comment on. They did indeed have some very interesting questions and concerns, which brought out more content, tailored to their interest, which I hope has raised their curiosity, the peak of which I hope will move them.

One of the most touching concerns raised was what will now happen to the fight against HIV/AIDS after the attack on MH17, taking all the lives in it, and at this most significant time when some were on their way to attend the AIDS Conference in Melbourne, six participants confirmed who were leading experts and activists. The concern was on the immense loss of expertise gone forever, and whether this loss would significantly impact on the ongoing battle against HIV/AIDS. I explained that these six people are part of a huge international community that is very close and cohesive in their fight against this disease. The expertise they have left behind is an incredibly valuable legacy. There is no loss in terms of knowledge, and in honor to these six people, a rich body of their research is in the hands of this community to keep this fight moving forward. I

encouraged these high school students to pursue their studies and become medical professionals because it is in situations like these, and many other global health issues covered by UN mandates where they are most needed and will serve well.

Though this is a small group of high school students commuting from various locations into the Hofstra University campus, the hope of this programme is to continue and grow annually in order to serve the development of these young minds who will carry the torch of our generation, and continue where we have left many matters yet to be solved and dealt with. For now, the Pinkerton Foundation is a major support having just awarded 50,000 USD into this programme.

I invite you, my dear colleagues, to take part in such a mentoring exercise, as we move on into our years of graceful maturity. It is truly a service to mankind to be able to hand over our work experience, our institutional knowledge to young, bright minds, who will form the foundation of the next generation. Let us join in their development, and cultivate their talent, their gift, their intelligence, and most especially the spirit and soul to serve. Life is hard enough as it is. Wherever we can, let's continue to make it do-able for this next generation. The burdens of this world today cannot be carried only by our generation. It harks for the engagement of our next generation. By sharing your professional strength, you are passing on a legacy of each of yourselves to find a rightful place in the future of these young professionals.

Where we came from on each of our individual and distinct life journey is important, and what matters most is where we are going with it onwards into the future.

Mae Cayir, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

AN ELEGY FOR MY MOTHER

"S*halom aleichem*."

For a brief moment, extended perhaps in my own mind by a certain heightened awareness, I stared mutely. Taking me in more fully, seeing the torn shirt, vest, and suit, recognizing the recent *kriah* indicative of mourning, his smile vanished within a concerned question.

"What's going on?"

"In an hour, I am going to bury my mother."

My wife and I had arrived with our children more than an hour early for the funeral, concerned about the arrangements made the previous day, intent on ensuring that the peace of those decisions be secure. Standing now in line at a gas station across the street from the King David Memorial Park, in line with several other Jews waiting to use the station's facilities (what could be more mundane?), I was struck by the calm sincerity in his face.

He looked out at the cemetery, noticing without comment the lack of other mourners, the few chairs, and the untented site, and returned his gaze to me.

"Do you need a *minyan*? I have a small *shul* in an office nearby and could make a few calls for you."

What kind of world plays such tricks on a man? Thursday had been spent in careful negotiation over my mother's body and imminent funeral, an extraordinary shift from lost son to principal mourner. Estranged from her for more than fifteen years, I had arrived at the hospice to find my mother completely unconscious and unresponsive; for all I could tell, she was already dead. Holding her warm hand and asking the unanswerable 'why did our lives need to be so hard', I felt a brief twitch of her index finger, tears gathering heavily in my eyes.

I prayed quietly with her for a bit, reciting *viduy* (confession) for her and asking *meḥilah* (forgiveness) for myself, crying silently over a lifetime of pain and misery, of abuse and humiliation and insanity that shattered our relationship over and over for decades until I finally severed ties. I chanted Psalm 130 just above a whisper, the song of the penitent, as I had when a dear friend died of a suicidal overdose, as I have for years when blowing shofar, the Psalmist's words echoing within as I extend the final blast, the *tekiah gedolah*, into breathlessness. Moments later, the hospice declared her gone.

Shifting my focus back to the gas station, the tall, bearded stranger extended his offer.

"I can ask others to join us, if you like."

I ventured a question I always resist myself when others ask me what type of religious Jew I am. And I felt a faint tingle in my spine when he returned gently my own stock response.

"Are you with some organization?"

"We're just *frum Yidden*, just religious Jews. Would you like me to arrange a *minyan*?"

Wednesday, I learned of my mother's imminent death from my sister, who heard it from an aunt, who had it from her sister, one of my mother's two executors, along with her one remaining friend in this world. I called him that night to locate my mother, as neither my sister nor the non-executor aunt, both of whom for reasons of their own had also severed ties with my mother, knew where she was. A saintly man who had for years supported my mother when everyone else had abandoned her, he could hardly contain his anger and contempt; yet in his essential decency and kindness, he talked with me.

"I'll tell you, but after this call, I never want to hear from you again. No one could be so cold as to abandon a sick mother, no amount of hate could justify such cruelty."

His anger and resentment washed over me; there was no point in telling him I did not hate my mother, that I simply could not endure any kind of relationship with her. In the end, he provided me with the name and number of the hospice.

"Everything is taken care of. I have paid for her cremation, and arranged with your aunt to bring her ashes to Florida to be scattered as she requested. I have arranged for a rabbi. You don't need to do anything. Please don't call again."

Cremation. Ashes. Rabbis.

From the moment I had received word of my mother's condition, the despair of a lost lifetime together cleared in the growing light of my own unexpected filial task, that I convey in her death a sincere love, natural and good, a love I could express truly and simply, having denied her for decades a love she herself craved but to which she had no right.

Whatever my aunt and her friend and others may think of the artistic or romantic value of my mother's last request of them, or of the sacred importance of honoring an isolated, dying woman's final wishes, the mere possibility of cremation was anathema to me. I felt not only the desecration of the body and soul that Jewish tradition teaches us attends cremation, but also the profound emptiness of scattered ashes, as though my mother's life had come entirely to naught, to nothingness. I felt the historical pain of our people, the crematoria of Nazi Germany, the presence of millions desecrated in the ashes of nihilistic hatred. And I felt once again my mother's delusional world moving us all, asserting itself in her death as it had divided us in life.

The social worker tending my mother brought me no comfort: my mother had left instructions to inform only her executors of her death. Neither my sister, then visiting colleges in upstate New York with my twin niece and nephew, nor I were to be called. Yet there I was, alone in the room with my now deceased mother.

"Your aunts were here earlier in the night. One of them, the executor, will be making arrangements for cremation, as your mother requested."

What to say to this earnest, soft-spoken and compassionate woman who had cared for my mother in her final days? My mother was two people, I explained, an everyday, very ordinary Jewish woman who took her son to the Boy Scouts, attended PTA meetings, and baked cupcakes when she was the school class mom, drove us to the local Conservative temple for after-school Hebrew classes. The other woman within suffered from manic-depression and occasional bouts of psychosis. Often her fantasies seemed so real that others would for years follow her in them, until one after another, they abandoned her in frustration and often misery.

“The plan for scattering her ashes in Florida is another of my mother’s fantasies, a death wish that she should vanish into oblivion, at one with the orange grove. But there was another plan, which my sister shared with me last night: my mother bought a burial plot next to her own mother. I want my mother’s funeral to honor that in her which was sane and good, to honor her strong Jewish identity and her underlying decency and love of life. Please, don’t let them turn her funeral into yet another sick fantasy of death and nothingness.”

My aunts, my mother’s Christian half-sisters from her father’s second marriage, are good people, but they were immovable. How could a son who had abandoned his mother for fifteen years show up at the moment of her death and even ask that her final wishes be denied?

“We don’t need to fight about this. Your mother will be cremated according to her wishes. I have power-of-attorney and am co-executor. There is nothing you can do.”

“Oh, we are not fighting at all; at least, I am not. I am asking you, though, to honor my mother’s Jewish soul, to recognize that she had made in fact two plans: one to be cremated by you, another to be buried by me and my sister alongside her mother, in the plot she purchased for herself when Nana died. I recognize that your intention is in line with wishes expressed by my mother, even if I feel that they stem from the unhealthy part of her soul, and that as Christians, you perhaps cannot understand how abhorrent cremation is to us as Jews. I ask that you understand how my sister and I feel, however much anger or resentment you may also understandably feel at our long estrangement from our mother.”

The social worker and I talked again, and she introduced me to the chaplain, a Reconstructionist rabbi with a huge heart. Sometimes, I sense tension in these encounters, as my beard and deep voice, not to mention six foot frame, can seem intimidating. Eight inches of height, a different set of chromosomes, and very real religious values divided us, but I sensed none of the usual tension.

Asking the usual question perhaps in an effort to orient the conversation and issues, she smiled patiently.

“What kind of synagogue do you attend?”

“A Modern Orthodox place in Highland Park, New Jersey. Nothing terribly exotic. I’m just a *frum Yid*.”

As the social worker sat in the room with my mother, I cried in the hallway with this kind, sensitive rabbi, explaining again about my mother’s divided life of everyday, middle-class motherhood and Judaism, and the twilight world of her delusions, of Mah Jongg and severe manic-depression.

“Please, I beg you, please try to persuade them to stop this desecration of my mother. She suffered so much in life. We must give her a decent, respectful burial, the same as all Jews have had since Sarah.”

Early afternoon, the social worker returned with the news that the executors were intent on honoring what they felt were my mother’s last wishes. With a faint, reassuring smile, she explained the situation.

“So, here’s where we are, Craig. Your aunts are clear about their intention to cremate your mother, according to her wishes. However, since power of attorney terminated with your mother’s death, and you, your mother’s next of kin, are here, I have told them that I will release

the body to them for cremation only after I can certify that the will names them as executors and that they have control not only of her estate but also of her remains — basically, that your mother specifically charged them with her cremation."

Later, after I had already called a local Jewish funeral home to collect my mother's body, we talked, all of us, my aunts and a cousin (also estranged from my mother), under the kind eye of the social worker who had authorized me to take possession of my mother. While they still felt I was violating my mother's trust, they conceded the legality of my decision and embraced me with as much peace and love as we could locate within ourselves after such a trial.

Reflecting on that extraordinary moment Thursday when my focus shifted from saving my mother from cremation to actually arranging for a proper funeral, I responded to my friend at the gas station.

"A *minyan*? I count five, possibly six Jewish men for this funeral, and that's including the funeral director. I cannot ask you to call for a *minyan* for us. I am happy to be able to bury my mother with love and respect, according to our laws for thousands of years. (If only you knew, I thought.) I myself am conducting the service, which I have worked out with my rabbi. If there is a *minyan*, we will recite *Kaddish*; if not, then we will not recite *Kaddish*. The main thing is that my mother will be laid to rest properly; I am entirely focused on that and at peace with whatever happens."

I appreciated his concern as well as his confusion, keenly aware of the almost mystical interplay between a *minyan* and *Kaddish*, community and closure, a kind of inner music uniting Jews for almost two thousand years. A *minyan* establishes the basic quorum for a congregation, transforming a group of individuals into a community of faith — not merely those ten men who happen to arrive first, but a community of all present before G-d. *Kaddish*, recited at the end of our daily services and funerals (and at the conclusion of Talmudic study), gives word and voice to that music, testifying that our service together has been in G-d's name.

He looked at me quizzically and with care, unaware of the road I had taken to reach that juncture. How could I not care about having a *minyan* to say *Kaddish* as we buried my mother? Still held fast by yesterday's miraculous redemption, I could neither explain nor expect him to understand where I had been, and retreated with him into the everyday.
"I am content to be able to bury my mother properly and recite *Ayl Maleh Raḥamim* for her, as agreed with my rabbi when we discussed the service. Besides, it's midday Friday already, and you should all be home preparing for Shabbos. But I am very grateful for your kindness, and thank you for both my mother's soul and my sister."

"I understand."

How did we even come to be in this strange, sad place of arranged grassy plots and tilting monuments carefully etched with the names of loved ones from prior generations? Neither my sister nor I remembered where our grandmother had been buried. A horrible, violent woman who had shattered my mother early in life, we buried her in the '90s and walked away, a cold, empty day left behind without further thought, much less any love.

"Where is the burial plot located?"

The social worker had cancelled all appointments for the day, seeing early on that this case would require her complete attention. She offered to call the funeral home to make the necessary arrangements for the removal of my mother's body from the hospice, and to inform them where

the burial would take place. We weren't entirely certain: our grandmother died in 1992 or 1993, and a cousin thought she might be in a place called Roosevelt Memorial Park in Northeast Philly.

"Well, the funeral home reports that Roosevelt has a plot registered in your mother's name, purchased in '93, and the year of birth is '36 (one year off from my mother's known date, but fine). Looks like a match, which is great."

Later, though, the funeral director called back. The names around the plot were all provided to me: none matched my grandmother's name. Even more seriously, the cemetery had called other names listed with the deed for identification purposes, and the prospective tenant of that poor house was still alive and well, thank God. Yet how could there be two people with the same name and birth year who had purchased a plot the same year?

"Do you have any more information we can use to find the burial place of your grandmother?"

I called my sister, then on the road back from upstate New York, hoping she might dredge up some lost fact from her amazing, seemingly exhaustive memory. While she could not recall the name of the cemetery, she somehow retrieved from her inner GPS the roads we traveled twenty years ago on the way to our grandmother's funeral.

"Tell them we took 95 to Knights Rd."

Now after hours, the funeral director sounded skeptical, but reviewing a local map he found a small, privately owned cemetery in Bensalem, less than two miles from Roosevelt and just off Knights Rd. In disbelief, but intent on exploring any lead, the director called the small cemetery's owner-operator at home. Only partially successful again, the funeral director shared the disappointing news with the social worker.

"Craig, I'm sorry, but they have a match again on the name and the 1993 purchase date. The birth year is correct, 1935, so all that looks good. But the name of the plot next to hers is different, so the names don't match again."

Near tears, I identified the woman named in the neighboring plot as my grandmother.

"I can't thank you enough for what you have done. Not only have you found the plot my mother wanted, but in doing so I hope we have reassured my aunts that this really was my mother's intention, that it was real and solid and true, not merely another fantasy of hers or an invention of our own."

And so we rescued my mother from the fires of cremation and the destruction of her soul over an orange grove in Florida and found the long-forgotten burial plot my mother had indeed purchased two decades ago.

When my mother's coffin arrived in the hearse Friday afternoon for the simple, grave-side ceremony, after a night of care by the local Ḥevra Kadisha, after *taharah* (purification rites prior to burial) and *shemirah* (*guarding*, the recitation of psalms while the deceased awaits burial), we were but a small group of family and friends. One aunt (a half-sister of my mother by her father's second marriage), two cousins, two old friends of my mother's, my sister and her partner, their children and two friends, my wife and our four children and a few of our friends. Many of us had not even seen each other for ten, twenty, or as in the case of my aunt, more than thirty years. All of us had been estranged from my mother by the time of her death.

The previous night I had spoken with my sister's partner about the service.

"I've worked it out with my rabbi. There will be some changes to the usual service, but it's all fine. We can recite a few psalms and *Ayl Maleh Raḥamim*, a deeply moving elegiac prayer for Divine compassion which usually isn't said *Erev Shabbos*, but it means a lot to me and my rabbi supports it. We almost certainly won't have a *minyan*, so we'll skip the *Kaddish*. Because of *Shabbos*, there won't be any eulogies, but I'll say a few words and my sister can, too, if she wants. I think it should be fine."

"Craig, I'm worried about your sister. I don't think she can take a fight. Some of the people there are really upset."

"Don't worry, I'll take care of my sister. We're there to bury our mother, and the main thing in a Jewish funeral is the burial itself. You've probably never been to an Orthodox funeral, but in our community, we bury the departed ourselves, shoveling by hand — and we don't leave the grave until we finish. Others will dig the grave, but after lowering the coffin, we will fill the grave ourselves. That will be our focus, burying her with care and love and respect. So, if anyone is making trouble, just pick up a shovel and shift your focus back where it belongs, on the burial. I think everything will be ok; they're all good people, even if a bit volatile sometimes. Whatever you're feeling or my sister, just keep shoveling."

Thursday night, filled with the music and poetry of psalms and *Kaddish* and *Ayl Maleh Raḥamim*, memories and visions of my mother mingling with the voices of my aunts and cousin and sister, filled with gratitude for them all and for my rabbi and the hospice rabbi and for the social worker and funeral director, I slept a brief, unfamiliar, dreamless night at peace.

Our lives turned on a still, very quiet day of earth and clay and prayer.

The small band of mourners stood quietly, moving uneasily in the cemetery ahead of the service. I invited my aunt and a cousin to read some of the prayers in English, which under the circumstances (that I was to their mind not honoring my mother's last wishes), they politely declined. I reviewed the service with my sister, who agreed to read Psalm 16, *Mikhtam l'David,* traditionally recited at funerals on the eve of *Shabbos* and during the month of *Nisan*. We were all there, disunited in our own private grief, struggling among ourselves for a peace I had attained from the moment I received the call Wednesday, a peace that had gathered strength and further resolve Thursday when I held my mother's hand and prayed with her, an inner quiet and clarity that had trembled at times in tears until in calm relief I transported my mother's body to the funeral home. For the others, today's ceremony would need to help them traverse that same difficult terrain.

Making his own peace with the decision to bury rather than cremate my mother, my cousin approached me.

"You know, Craig, your mother couldn't have chosen a better spot for herself. Those trees are exactly the kind she used to draw, with those bare pointy branches all tangled up and spreading out."

My aunt, at first taken aback by my invitation to recite a psalm at the service, stood alongside me, her tired eyes shining and wet.

"Thank you for asking me to read, Craig. I don't feel comfortable, but I really do appreciate it."

At 1:00, I asked the five men present, including friends and family and the funeral director, to serve as pall-bearers. As the funeral director explained the task to us, another man arrived, a complete stranger, one of the gas station rabbi's friends, walking down the road ahead of two others, astonishing us all. With one of the strangers acting as pall bearer, the funeral began.

"*Yosheiv b'seiser elyon*," I chanted, my voice lost it seemed to me at first in the still, spring air, "Whoever sits in the refuge of the Most High, lodges in the shadow of the Almighty."

We lowered my mother into her grave, a water-logged hole reinforced with the contemporary concrete liner.

"The first shovelfuls by me and my sister will be done back-handed, to show our regret. When you finish shoveling, please place the shovel back in the earth, rather than handing it to another, to show our reluctance to continue with this sad task."

Hard, wet Pennsylvania clay lay piled neatly next to the grave, high and imposing. Shoveling proceeded slowly, as the grim earth fell heavily into the grave, covering the coffin. Clay into the grave, into the water surrounding the liner. Clay into the earth, clay on our shoes, sticking wet to shovels and clothes. Shovel, rest, push the dirt hill forward a bit, and shovel again. At the rear, a home-town friend with her own small red gardening spade lifted clods forward. My daughters joined us, burying a grandmother they knew only by my sad estrangement from her, pushing forward the sad little pile. Niece and nephew, my sister's children, shoveled alongside my Catholic aunt with friends and more distant cousins they had never met, denizens of a former generation.

The clay resisted us in ancient, unforgiving rebuke. Clods broke apart slowly under the pressure of our spades, exacting mortality's toll on aching arms. Dirt caked on the soles of our feet as we moved with the slippery mound. Soaked with the foot-high groundwater of the grave, the clay compelled care for every load carried across the small patch of the neighboring grave. Water and clay and my mother's soul took their full measure of the love required to return home the heavy soil extracted from her deep, narrow tomb.

Gritty, dark red earth and sticking masses of gray — the very modeling clay from which we as children had shaped and fired ashtrays for the cigarettes that decades later killed my mother or vases for dried flowers sold in her abortive crafts shop — our task claimed us for its own. Quietly shoveling against the implacable clay, we worked in pairs, rotating in cycles, relieving those in front who, tiring, pushed their spades into the dense mound for others to assume. Jackets came off in the brisk air as we felt the bite of an occasional April breeze. I wondered what I had gotten them all into, old friends and family and three kind strangers, eschewing the back-hoe standing ready across the way to shift mechanically the disturbed ground we had undertaken to move with now soiled and blistered hands.

I would have buried her alone, but was infinitely grateful for our little community struggling against the slowly reduced pile. Dissonant whispers floated in the air as clods splashed into the grave, displacing the rising groundwater, surrounding my mother with the freshly-worked earth.

"Why don't they just push it in with the tractor and leave her be?"
"Are they really going to shovel all that?"

"Do you think those men will stay the whole time? We only have nine men for a *minyan* anyway."

Friends who played Mah Jongg with my mother more than fifty years ago, women who continue to play weekly and who met first in our home slamming tiles and laughing with delight, shoveled the rich, dank earth into the grave over an old, unforgotten friend. My aunt and our cousins (from my mother's brother's first marriage) shoveled and I shoveled and my sister and her partner and their friends and all of us working, side by side with strangers who came at first to make a *minyan* but stayed to bury my mother — stayed even though we were short one man despite their miraculous presence.

Soil grew again in the earth, slowly filling the grave, covering my mother's coffin with thick red clods and gray sticky masses and bits of grass from the broken ground shoveled under into the pit. Glancing across the way, I caught sight of a car approaching, a late-comer: my oldest friend, the son of my mother's oldest friend, had arrived unexpected from Maryland, three and a half hours after unknown to me he had cancelled his day's plans. I cried on his shoulder, years washed away in the embrace of a man who though somewhat younger had really been there when we were but little boys struggling to be children in a strange, unchancy, too-adult world.

"I had to be here with you, Craig, I had to."

Our tenth man had truly arrived, our little congregation of once disparate souls whole and complete, overcoming time and distance in soil and clay. We shoveled silently together, burying my mother.

Shovel and spade, pushed hard by soiled shoes into the dense clay, we returned the earth to my mother's grave, a quiet expression of love uniting us in care for a troubled, lonely soul. An hour and a half after chanting Psalm 91, *Yosheiv b'seiser elyon,* my mother's family and friends and three strangers from the larger community of the Children of Israel packed the last of the moist clay and earth back into its home, embracing my mother.

My sister came to my side at the foot of our mother's grave. Quietly, she reminded me of our childhood antagonism, a twenty-year war reflecting the unconscious strains of our parents' failing marriage and the deep fissures in our mother's soul.

"If only she could see us today."

At peace with each other now for years, my sister and I turned to pray for our mother.

"*Mizmor l'David, Adonay ro-ee lo eḥ-sar*. A Song of David – The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want."

My sister read Psalm 16, *Mikhtam l'David,* "Keep me, G-d, for I have taken refuge in You." I chanted Psalm 130, 'a cry unto G-d from the depths', as a penance for myself and a prayer for my mother.

"Because today is *Erev Shabbos* and *Nisan*, we cannot indulge our grief in eulogies. It is not out of a lack of love or care or respect that we refrain from eulogizing my mother, but out of love for the Sabbath, and appreciation for the miracles God performed for us in the month of *Nisan* when we left Egypt. My mother lived a life of great sorrow. There were joys, to be sure, but we all know that she knew too much pain and suffering. We pray that the love and care we have put into this *mitzvah shel emet*, this truly selfless act of loving-kindness, and our recitation of these psalms, will bring her soul comfort and peace in the compassionate love and mercy of our Parent and Sovereign in Heaven."

My sister and I recited the *Mourner's Kaddish*, sanctifying the closure of our mother's life and burial before G-d, our voices merging in concert with our friends and family, with the strangers from the gas station and my old friend from Maryland, our tenth man.

"*Y'hay sh'may rabbah mivorach, l'olam ul-may ul-mayah*. May His great name be blessed forever and ever."

Approaching the end of the funeral service, when according to the teachings of our tradition my mother's soul would depart from us, I addressed our little congregation.

"When I discussed the service with my rabbi, I told him I knew that on *Erev Shabbos* and during the month of *Nisan*, we are not supposed to recite *Ayl Maleh Raḥamim*, the prayer for divine compassion that traditionally concludes Jewish funerals. If anyone needed this ancient prayer, though, if anyone needed compassion, I told him, it was my mother. Knowing something of her suffering and my own, he replied that we should do it in Hebrew and also in English, to make sure everyone understands and gets behind the prayer."

Eyes closed upon the text before me, feeling the presence of my mother strongly among us, aware too of generations of Jews reaching back to that first burial of Sarah in Machpelah, ancestors to whom my mother's soul would in this moment be gathered, I chanted the ancient elegy on behalf of the departed.

"*Ayl Maleh Raḥamim, sho-khayn ba-m'romim* …. God, full of compassion, present in the heights, grant repose upon the wings of the Divine Presence in the exalted holy and pure places, resplendent in the shining firmament, to the soul of *Zelda bas Avraham Yosef v'Masha* …"

Off a bit away from us, above a distant pile of the cemetery's now too-familiar clay, a momentary breeze caught the dry earth as I chanted my mother's Jewish name, *Zelda bas Avraham Yosef v'Masha*, swirling upward a gray and red plume before scattering its dust gently again upon the earth.

The funeral director explained to the small group how to offer the traditional words of consolation to the mourners as we left the burial site. Surrounded by our friends, family, and those same miraculous strangers, we walked quietly away from my mother, may she rest in peace.

"*Ha-Makom y'na-khaym es-khem b'tokh sh'ar a-vei-lay Tzion v'Yirushalayim*. May you be comforted among the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem."

My mother's soul at rest, we lived a lifetime that day, embracing old friends and distant family, blessed by three kind and good men who vanished down the road as quietly as they came.

"I can't properly thank you as a mourner who just buried my mother, but you know what you did for me today."

He looked at me with kind eyes and a gentle smile.

"*Ha-Makom y'na-khaym es-khem b'tokh sh'ar a-vei-lay Tzion v'Yirushalayim*. *Shabbat Shalom*."

Craig Hanoch, FPD Umoja Focal Point, Field Personnel Division

Nomadland

*"Know the right measure!" (*μηδέν άγαν) The oracle of Delphi

It's easy to be an atheist
when faced with babyish notions of God;
not so easy when we open up
to the miracle and mystery of living.

Our Nomads live in Nomadland.
Where that is and what it's like,
these pages will vaguely make clear.
The Palefaces live in Madland.
Who they are and what they do
will also dimly come to light.

Nomadland.
The land of balance between here and there,
fact and fable,
despair and aspiration;
the land in the middle of the see-saw,
watching the bumps, watching the highs,
watching you and me.

Where things are not so mad as they may seem.

Geography lesson

Kandosh was sitting with Darwish, his tutor, on a camel-hair carpet woven by relatives. Maps were spread out before them:

– A person from England is English. And one from Scotland is Scottish. Is someone from Holland, Hollish?

– No, Dutch.

– Oh! And a man from Germany, Germish?

- No, German.

– And his wife, a Germwoman?

– Look, their languages are difficult, just as ours are for them. So to simplify, we call them all Palefaces. Just as they refer to the lot of us as Nomads.

– What is the difference between us, and where are we both on this globe of the world?

– It's not a matter of geography, but of attitude. We are not a State. but a state of mind. We are footloose; they look for footholds. Places for us are for passing through; for them, where they want to stay. They can be very obstinate. For us, when lands no longer provide, we move on without regret. Their ways differ. If, for instance, they are born into a Faith, or acquire one later on, they'll stick to it even if the sustenance has passed – if ever it was there in the first place. They defend their theories, even kill or die for them, or attempt to force them on others. Opinions for them are stable; for us they are passing clouds, which may or may not give rain. Our concern is for crops and cattle; they invest in investments. They live in their heads; we in our feet, our heart, all over.

– Oh, Darwish, that's all so complicated! I don't think I really understand.

– Nor, in truth, do I. So let us play chess – a game I believe they borrowed from us.
But they have learned to play it with machines, whereas we backward people still need human beings.

The curse

Yongdzin the Shaman, sitting in the circle, spoke of the curse upon the Paleface:

– They are so involved in trying to prove
they are who they are not, that they're closed to being open to who they are,
beyond the bondage of their self-inflicted fictions.

Paleface City

Mother Nomad took her son to Paleface City:

– Mamma, why is everybody moving around so fast?

– They think they know where they are going.

– Why are they all so busy with things?

– They think they know what they are doing.

– And why to their eyes shift around like that, or gaze around at nothing?

– They think they know what they're thinking.

– Oh mother, let us go back to our floating home!

Death

– Is granddad really going to die?

– Yes, my son. My father will soon be leaving his body. Everyone who once lived is now dead. And those still alive, like you or me, are also going to die. We can't stop ourselves or others from dying, but we can stop ourselves from truly living.

This you must always remember.

A question of terminology

The official turned up without prior warning:

– Are you Mr. Dongding the Showman?

– You could put it that way.

– My Department has been instructed by the Ministry of Labour to ascertain if you're in possession of a valid licence to practise.

– I practise nothing. I practised for countless incarnations, and this time round I was born in early retirement.

The civil servant eyed him with baffled suspicion:

– Hmm. Perhaps this matter falls rather within the purview of the Ministry of Health.

Nice girl

– Honoured teacher, I entered into marriage pure of body. Faithful I remained, despite my husband's wayward ways. I practised my devotions with unfailing regularity. I was always ready to lend a helping hand, and did all I could for my children. All this, and yet, and yet... I'm so unhappy!

Am I being punished for something I might have done?

– Rather for things you left undone.

Sweetheart, you sweetness has been your undoing. Your obliging smile – even while saying you are so unhappy – belies the bitterness brewing underneath. By denying your wildness, you opted for mediocrity.

CCC

The clans folk encountered on the site of their gathering a team of Palefaces poring over maps and adjusting bits of equipment.

The Nomad spokesman approached the person who seemed to be in charge.

– Are you the Elder of this group?

– They actually call me the foreman.

– Like one of our forebears, but still alive? And what, if I may ask, is your business on this ground?

– We've come to dig, or drill as we put it, to find the treasures beneath the soil – treasures to be shared between us and yourselves.

– But *we* know full well what treasure lies beneath this holy earth.
– Aah?

– The bones of our ancestors, to honour whom we gather twice a year.

– These bones will be removed with utmost care, not to mention generous compensation.

– This land belongs to these bones, and these bones belong to this land.

– We can surely come to an understanding. Your English is remarkable, and I myself, though an engineer, have a Master's in CCC.

– CCC?

– Cross-cultural communication.

– I would never have guessed. Now take your leave! Our dancers are unpacking their lances and shields, while the drummers tighten their hides.

– Our rights have been granted by your country's biggest chiefs, and these documents have force of law.

– Our weapons here are normally used for ceremonial purposes. But should they be turned to other use, our blood and yours will nourish this earth.

Tell your people to be so good as not to make a fuss. We'll stay to admire your dancing and your chants, then your Elder will sign, as best he can, just here on the dotted line. All of us will benefit, you'll see!

Good and evil (for kiddies)

Nomad daddy is explaining to his child:

– Never imagine that we are the goodies, and they out there are the baddies. There are goodies and baddies everywhere. In fact in each person there's a goody and

a baddy. It's a question of proportion, more or less of this or that.

– So what must we do?

– If we encourage the nice part inside us, there's less room left for the nasty part. In the same way in society, the stronger the voice of well-meaning people, the less the others will have their say.

– Do good people do good things, and bad ones bad?

– Sometimes deeds we think are good lead to bad results, while sometimes bad ones bring unexpected benefits.

– So how do we know if what we are doing should or shouldn't be done?
– We can never be sure, for life is complex and full of surprises. But what we can be sure about is what we intend deep down.

– How can we tell if intentions are good or bad?

– Good intentions bring together; while a bad intention brings discord. Good intentions are founded on respect: respect for ourselves, respect for others, for Nature and, above all, for the Mystery.

– What do you mean by the Mystery?

– If I could tell you, it would no longer be the Mystery. That you will have to explore for yourself. The one thing all of us have in common, we're all in search of happiness. Where and how we go for it is what makes us good or bad.

Enjoy the trip

She looked to be in her early fifties, conservatively dressed, apart from a yellow scarf with red letters in Sanskrit.

– I'll try to summarize what it's all about.

– I'm listening.

– My father belonged to one religion, my mother to another. They did not look like they belonged to each other, let alone to themselves....

Yongdzin waited for the lady to continue.

– So I dipped into different denominations, and was targeted by zealots of various sects, none of which could convince me for long. I came to see them all as collective ego-trips. I finally embarked on the guru trail, but witnessing all those

gullible devotees... In the end I sent the whole lot packing – all those preachings and teachings! From now on I'd rely on my own intuitions, my own inner promptings, however much these might fluctuate. Better my own mistakes I reckoned, than other people's persuasions!

– So what has brought you to me?

– Well, I heard that... In fact, I would like to ask you a question. May it be that I'm now replacing a collective ego-trip by an individual one?

– Wherever there is ego present, all our trips are ego-trips. But there are trips and trips:
Some take us to even fatter egos; others to slimmer ones, making space for the mind to gain deeper insight, and the heart more compassion.

– Sounds good! What's the catch?

--- Feeling proud for having got it right.

Peace in our time

Znanich was hiking down to the village when he met a group of men and women winding their way up the rocky hill. A young man stepped out to shake his hand:

– I take it you're from the hermitage. We have come to visit Mr. Yongdzin. Is this the right path?

– The right path, yes, but not the right time. He is spending this week in silence.

– But we've come from afar. We're from the International Union of Fighters for Peace. We come with a proposal for a working alliance which he may find fit to pass on to your Elders. We seem to share a lot of common ground...

– We have read a few of your reports. You come from afar, but not far enough. You people put the cart before the horse. Fighting for peace is a crying contradiction. There can be no peace in your Paleface paradigm.
You will need your armies, lest your countries be overrun; you will need the force of your laws, for fear of chaos and mayhem.

Acting just on events just leads to other events to act on. What interests us is to know what happens to cause what is happening. And that cause is always in us. So that is where we have to act.

Our deeds are the outcome of who we are. Being is the horse, and the cart

will follow. Only with an Outlook based on the Sacred can coercion, oppression and jostling for the top-jobs become part of a primitive past.

– But we'd still like to meet with Mr. Yongdzin. Could we try to make an appointment?

– I advise you not to waste either your time or his. He would say very much what I have just said – albeit with more authority.

Tadzig draws some distinctions

Tadzig was telling a Paleface reporter how attitudes diverged in their respective Lands:

– You people say they believe in God. Or don't. Or don't know. Or don't care. We wanderers are less wordy: we simply experience godliness in the ways available to each.

You have religious authorities. We have Elders who, by example, inspire us to seek for ourselves.

Many in Madland like to get high on lust or drink or drugs. We reach our heights on wings from within.

Roads for you are destinations. Destinations for Nomads are the latest points of departure.

Your watchword is CONQUEST – of markets, mentalities, land, resources... Ours is RESPECT – a pact, not a fight, with existence.

Your dealings hinge on buying and selling. We prefer giving and receiving. You measure success in wealth and prestige. We in inner contentment.

Yours is a world of dismal "isms" – racism, sexism, sectarianism – hotbeds of hate and exclusiveness. When we grow familiar with what was unfamiliar we enrich our vision and widen the mind.

Adventure for you is relayed by the media. We like it live.

Dissimilar too are our views around sex. You use it for excitement, profit, conquest. For Nomads it's an opening, an epitome of sharing, together whatever the level.

Creatures of ego cry constantly "More!". We want Enough as the benchmark for all.

Madland is a no-man's-land. A no-woman's land even more. Ours is one of men and women intent on maturing until their parting breath. Your denizens, so busy, find little incentive to sanctify their lives. We Nomads have been trained to see the Sacred wheresover we may roam.

Your heads are stuffed with clichés and taboos, which you than convert into actions. We scrutinize our actions, see where they lead, and have no need for clichés and taboos.

Big business has cankered your sport and your art Sport with us is a challenge to the body, and art a call to the spirit

The deluge of data flung at your subjects deafens any silent introspection. We seek to know what we need to know, and feel no shame in admitting to our ignorance.

Your arms manufacturers never go bust. They thrive on the destruction of the products they produce. Weapons for us are sinister throwbacks to Mankind's unregenerate past.

In Madland thugs can be readily mustered to act as the fist of despotic arms. Our land breeds no thuggery, and bereft of a fist the arm of oppression is impotent.

Your ways with Mother Nature are anything but natural. You manhandle the breast that offers Her milk. We for our part are filial and grateful, mindful of our place in Her manifold family.

We know of ways that would rid the world of hunger, but the megaphones of Madland drown out our voice.

You lay stress on fighting disease; we on enhancing health.

Madland palates are jaded and rapacious. Fins ripped off from living sharks, legs from writhing frogs... Our people refuse to stomach food produced through dehumanized deeds.

You try to frighten death away. You shy away from ageing as though it shouldn't happen. No effort or expense is spared to push back the clock. We see old age as the season of synthesis, sifting through the learnings of a lifetime. Dying for us is the leaf on a tree, accepting that the time is ripe to relinquish its hold and return to the earth.

I, Tadzig, a standard Nomad, have hereby given voice to those who say NO to insanity.

Problematics

– I don't know how to react, Mr. Yongdzin. My son has fallen for another woman.

– Perhaps she has come to raise him up?

– But I'm so fond of Laura, my daughter-in-law, and hate to see her hurt. What should I advise my son to do?

– Whatever he does will be fraught with problems: Pursue this new relationship? Go back to Laura? Carry on with them both? Pull away from the two of them? And his problems, since you love him, will be your problems too.

– So where to find the solutions?

– Not by trying to get rid of the problems. By refining awareness,our vision grows clearer, and we better know how to respond.

– But don't you Nomads believe in monogamy?

– We believe in what we experience. Monogamy, monotheism, all those monopolies... what problems! Only your game 'Monopoly' makes sense, since it isn't taken seriously. Life is too serious not to be taken as a game.

– Sir, you're getting me confused.

– Problems are basically *situations* which the ego is unwilling to accept.

– Doesn't that amount to resignation?

– Accepting reality by no means precludes our taking appropriate action. Response comes from consciousness, reaction from reflex.

– Ought I to tell him to come and consult you?

– Tell him first to consult himself. And to wonder who belongs to whom.

We do not belong to those we love; and nor do they belong to us.
But we all belong to the imperatives of Love.

And Love dictates the solutions.

David Walters, UNOG retired

Palabras

Te sientas en frente de una hoja blanca e intentas traducir las sensaciones, los olores, los amores, las pausas y los alientos en palabras. Y las palabras, luego, crean una nueva vida, diferente de la que se quería traducir. El escribir es la caja china del vivir. Mundos generados por mundos. Palabras por la vida. Vida y mundos nuevos por las palabras.

Lees palabras escritas por otros y la máquina del tiempo y del espacio se enciende. Oigo, de lejos, gritos de niños; siento bajo de mis pies descalzos el calor suave y seco de la arena del desierto; me lleno los ojos de la luz refleja de una puesta del sol invernal somnolienta y cristalina; y envidio la heroína papelera de turno, tan femenina, tan fuerte, tan hermosa, ¡tan verdadera!

Yo había ya nacido. En aquel tiempo las palabras estaban quién-sabe-dónde. Quién sabe dónde estaban "mis" palabras antes que fueran mías. De cualquier manera, yo había nacido y ellas estaban en otro lugar. Pues, un día — era pequeña — se me asomaron en la cabeza, me brotaron y me florecieron en la cabeza no-sé-de-dónde y empecé a cuidarlas, a valorarlas, a buscarlas, en los libros, en mi cabeza, en las hojas blancas y empecé a traducir la vida en palabras. Fue entonces (¿pero ha sido de verdad entonces? ¿Quién puede decirlo en qué preciso instante el puro placer de algo, de alguien se vuelve en amor?) Fue entonces, decía, que se me quedó claro (la verdad verdadera - diferente de la memorable y cautivante que se vive en las palabras - es que todo se quedó claro mucho tiempo después) se me quedó claro que no tenía escape. Era ineluctable. Inevitable. Como una enfermedad en su estadio terminal, como las fases de la luna y como los resfriados al cambio de estación. Mi amor por las palabras.

Raffaella De Lia, UN New York

Русский дадаист Серж Шаршун

Сергей Шаршун "Морской крест", 1950, 97х130, масло, холст

Пять лет назад работы первого (и последнего) русского дадаиста показывались в женевской галерее «Artvera’s». Это была восьмая выставка русского художника на родине дадаизма, каковой является Швейцария.

Первая персональная выставка Сержа Шаршуна в Швейцарии проходила в Женеве (Galerie Benador) в 1967 г. Затем были выставки в Базеле (1968, 1970, 1979), снова в Женеве (1971 - Galerie Saint-Leger (гуаши) и 1976 – Galerie Cour Saint-Pierre (работы маслом и гуаши), и, наконец, в Берне (1979).

В экспозиции, насчитывающей около 80 работ, были представлены работы, созданные на протяжении почти 50-летнего периода творчества художника (1920-е - начало 1970-х годов). Это самая крупная посмертная выставка художника (его не стало в 1975 г.) и вторая по значимости после ретроспективы 1971 года в Национальном музее современного искусства в Париже (правда, там были представлены и гуаши).

Ю.Анненков. Портрет Сергея Шаршуна. 1952г. Картон, тушь.
Собрание Ренэ Герра, Франция.

Родившись в купеческой семье, жившей в глухой провинции, Сергей Шаршун, будучи старшим сыном, по традиции должен был продолжить дело отца. С этой целью в возрасте 11 лет родители отправили его в коммерческое училище города Симбирска. Со временем коммерция и занятия в училище все меньше интересовали юного Шаршуна. К 16 годам он предпочитал рисовать и читать книги. И захотел стать художником. Профессиональным. И даже держал вступительные экзамены в Художественную школу – уже в Казани. Но провалился.

Однако юноша был с характером. В 1910 г. он отправляется в Москву, где записывается в частную художественную школу-студию, в которой преподавали И.Машков и К. Юон (художник, кстати, швейцарских корней). И с головой окунается в московскую художественную жизнь, о которой так мечталось в далекой русской провинции.

Но мечта разбивается о российскую действительность. Ученика художественного училища из купеческого сословия призывают на военную службу, что совсем не входило в планы начинающего художника. Он дезертирует из армии и решает скрыться от службы за границей. И вот

едва освоивший азы художественной грамоты Сергей Шаршун уезжает – через Берлин – в Париж. Учиться. И, если получится, завоевав Париж, вернуться «со щитом» в Россию. Было это в 1912 г.

Что же касается службы в армии, то свой «гражданский долг» Российской империи художник вернёт во Франции, записавшись добровольцем в Русский экспедиционный корпус в конце Первой мировой войны, где и прослужит два года. В 1922 году Сергей Шаршун из Парижа отправляется в Берлин, чтобы оформить документы на возвращение в Россию. Но разговоры с теми, кто после революции Россию покинул, заставляют его отказаться от своего намерения. Как скажет С.Шаршун в письме немецкому искусствоведу Эберхарду Штенебергу в 1967г., «Раньше я думал вернуться в Россию, но после пребывания в Берлине в 1922-23 году подобное желание исчезло». Вместо Москвы, после 14-месячного пребывания в Берлине, где им были проданы первые две картины (!), С.Шаршун возвращается в Париж, где он станет Художником, одним из тех, кого впоследствии объединят под названием «Парижская школа». Художники из России – волею судьбы – представляли в этой «школе» целый «класс». И какой это был «класс»!

Ларионов, Гончарова, Шагал, Сутин, Кандинский... Страницы бы не хватило, чтобы всех перечислить. Первая волна русской эмиграции, а к ней принадлежал и С. Шаршун, выбросила на французский берег такое созвездие талантов, ставших впоследствии светилами на мировом художественном небосклоне, каким может похвастаться не всякая национальная школа. Шаршуна традиционно относят к французским абстракционистам, среди которых были и такие художники русских корней, его младшие современники, как Серж Поляков (1900-1969), Андре Ланской (1902-1976) и Никола де Сталь (1914-1955).

Трудно поставить С.Шаршуна в один ряд с художниками, названными в начале предыдущего абзаца. Одна из причин – двоякость художественного таланта. Ведь на протяжении всей своей жизни Серж Шаршун был и поэтом, и писателем и художником. Причем, вплоть до начала 40-х годов, больше литератором, чем живописцем. И его встречи с дадаистами имели в своей основе его литературную деятельность.

С. Шаршун, Внутренний пейзаж, 1943, масло, бумага, 54х73 см

Живопись в эти годы (1917-1923) служила лишь фоном, иллюстрацией к дадаистическим демаршам (вплоть до написания и публикации целой брошюры о дадаизме) С. Шаршуна. И его роль в этом движении была не из последних. Именно поэтому весь его литературный архив был приобретен за 16.000 франков в 1986-1990гг. публичной университетской библиотекой города Базеля. Ведь Швейцария официально считается родиной дадаизма (1915-1922), явившегося своеобразной реакцией молодого поколения писателей и художников на ужасы Первой мировой войны и социальные революции первых десятилетий XX-го века.

Другая причина заключается в том, на наш взгляд, что склад художественного дарования С.Шаршуна был таков, что он искал свой путь к прекрасному в направлениях, которые были открыты другими. Поэтому практически ко всем наиболее значительным периодам его творчества (а названия им, будучи поэтической натурой, художник придумывал сам – орнаментальный кубизм, орнаментальный импрессионизм, абстрактный неосимволизм и т.д.) вполне можно добавлять определение «пост-». С.

Шаршун был вначале пост-кубистом (по приезде в Париж он стал учеником Метценже и Ле Фоконье), затем пост-пуристом (в начале 1920-х годов художник познакомился в Париже с Амеде Озанфаном (1886-1966), основателем пуризма в живописи, – его картина «Кувшин» будет также представлена на выставке - и создал цикл работ, преимущественно натюрмортов, в которых влияние последнего более, чем очевидно) и пост-

импрессионистом (выставка, показанная Бенуа Сапиро весной 2005г. в галерее «Le Minotaure», так и называлась «La leçon de Monet»), с начала 1940-х – пост-абстракционистом, пост-символистом...

С.Шаршун, Отражение скрипки, 1945, масло, холст, 50х65 см

Обращение художника в начале 1950-х годов к «музыкальным» и «водным» темам, которые являются наиболее значимыми и интересными в его творчестве, и те имеют своих предшественников. Причем, в данном случае, в русском искусстве. Достаточно будет назвать в этой связи два имени: Микалоюс Чюрленис (1875-1911) и Василий Кандинский (1870-1944). Именно они одними из первых стали разрабатывать идею «синтеза искусств». Но в отличие от первого, являвшегося реалистом, С.Шаршун ищет «синтеза» языком абстракции. Впрочем, как и В.Кандинский. В отличие от которого С. Шаршун в ряде работ на «водно-музыкальные темы» не так ярок, красочен. Он тяготеет к монохромности и более ярко выраженной фактуре самого красочного слоя. А вот по поэтичности, лиричности своих произведений на музыкальные темы, С.Шаршун В.Кандинского с его рационализмом, оставляет, как мне кажется, позади. Но в этом можно будет убедиться (или разубедиться), побывав на выставке, где именно этому периоду отдано предпочтение.

… Мечте художника вернуться на Родину, лелеянной еще в 1910-е годы, суждено было сбыться только после его смерти. Сначала вернулись картины – тридцать одна! – которые в 1974 году художник завещал

Третьяковской галерее и которые были получены ею в 1982 и 1991 гг. И если вначале они были отправлены в запасники, то в настоящее время в постоянной экспозиции галереи С.Шаршун занимает целую стену!

Затем состоялась первая персональная выставкой (60 работ), показанная в 2006 году в Музее личных коллекций Музея изобразительных искусств им. А.С.Пушкина Бенуа Сапиро, известным французским галеристом, экспертом по С.Шаршуну в Союзе антикваров Франции и владельцем парижской галереи «Le Minotaure», и его соотечественником Эриком Фитусси. Выставку сопровождал прекрасный каталог.

Затем выставка была показана в Русском музее в Санкт-Петербурге. А за 10 лет до этого известный французский исследователь русского зарубежья Рене Герра показал в ГТГ работы из своего собрания на выставке «Они унесли с собой Россию... Русские художники-эмигранты во Франции 1920-е - 1970-е». И среди них 16(!) работ Сержа Шаршуна.

Интересно заметить, что работы С.Шаршуна конца 1920-х – начала 1940-х годов, как правило, небольшого формата. Дело в том, что это был один из самых трудных периодов его жизни. Художник в прямом смысле бедствовал. Как позже скажет его современник, Шаршун два раза в неделю выходил из дома, покупал овощи на базаре и варил из них свои «бесконечные супы», которыми и питался. Сначала он теряет своего галериста. Кризис 1929г. обрушил рынок и не таких художников как Шаршун, работы которого практически не продавались. Сам художник выжил лишь благодаря пособию по «интеллектуальной безработице».

Денег на холсты не было. Поэтому С.Шаршун где мог - как правило, это бывало в мастерских более обеспеченных художников, - подбирал обрезки холстов, на которых и писал картины. Сейчас работы С.Шаршуна находятся во многих частных собраниях нового поколения русских коллекционеров. Именно благодаря им картины С. Шаршуна (87% сделок с которых приходится на художественный рынок Франции), продававшиеся по французским ценам, теперь предлагаются на мировом открытом, то есть аукционном, рынке по ценам русским. За последние 10 лет цены на его работы выросли на более чем 350%!

ALEXANDRE TIKHONOV, OHCHR retired

NOUVELLES

SHORT STORIES

CUENTOS

Histoire de Flora

(*Ce récit est dédié à Carmen Weinstein qui aimait tant ses chiens*)

Du haut de ses balcons ajourés, l'hôtel Beau Rivage contemple les eaux gris-bleu du lac Léman. Vis-à-vis de la porte d'entrée flanquée de ses colonnades, se dresse le monument Brunswick, mausolée unique en son style flamboyant, tout en contraste avec l'austérité habituelle des édifices genevois. A l'intérieur de l'hôtel jaillit un bouquet d'ampoules lumineuses, comme pour faire oublier le fantôme de l'impératrice Sissi errant tristement dans les couloirs.

Et voilà Flora, la jeune serveuse du restaurant qui pénètre dans l'hôtel ! Elle ne se lasse jamais de s'émerveiller devant le cadre luxueux de son lieu de travail. L'atelier de cuisine du traiteur baigne dans une propreté étincelante. Tout au fond du restaurant, une bibliothèque emplie de livres rares lui confère un cachet particulier. La jeune femme qui vit dans un studio étroit proche de l'hôtel mesure chaque jour sa chance de faire partie de l'équipe prestigieuse du restaurant. Elle admire le savoir-faire de son supérieur hiérarchique, le chef de rang qui la complimente souvent pour la qualité de son travail. La serveuse a enfilé son uniforme et commence à dresser les tables avant l'arrivée des clients.

Mais soudain c'est l'affolement général. Profitant de l'arrivée d'un livreur, un adorable petit chien griffon s'engouffre dans le hall du restaurant. Tous serveurs, cuisiniers, accourent pour chasser l'intrus. Le chien s'est arrêté dans sa course ; soudain son regard se fixe sur Flora. Et c'est un véritable coup de foudre ! Avec ses grands yeux implorants, il admire la jeune serveuse. Elle le trouve attendrissant, petite boule de fourrure blanche avec des pattes noires, des oreilles allongées et touffues comme s'il cherchait à cacher la tristesse de son regard. Nul doute que ses maîtres partis aux sports d'hiver l'ont abandonné. Le rejeter dans les rues glacées de Genève semble impossible à Flora. Elle éprouve le besoin de le protéger et demande l'autorisation de s'absenter pour le ramener chez elle. Indulgent, le chef de rang l'y autorise.

Désormais quand Flora rentre de son travail, le griffon l'accueille par des aboiements joyeux. Tous deux, accoudés à la fenêtre du petit studio, contemplent l'hôtel Beau Rivage illuminé dans la nuit.

Glorice Weinstein, UNSW/SENU

PHOTOSHOP

It is April. I love spring. All related to it is beautiful. Bright. Colorful. Aromatic. I wake up early in order to feel stronger the sun, the tulips and the hyacinths. The irises. The coffee. I peruse languidly several dailies with the latest news. Nothing new. Or rather nothing promising. There will be elections again. But in May. And again the lull will be short. I close my eyes and try to wave away the sadness. An almost impossible task. After twenty years of absence a lot of things had happened. Inevitable. As oblivion. Death. The dreams of what it could be. But it had not.

I put on my sneakers, no laces, and run down the stairs for a morning stroll. A tested way to chase the questions about existence. My existence. And mostly to escape from the answers. A white envelope in the post box. Usually a bill or an annoying administrative letter. I reach mechanically. An unrecognizable handwriting and a polite invitation. NIKO & CO invite you…There it is – an opportunity to get out of my asocial shell.

- Galski, … - am phoning one of the few remaining friends - …tonight at 7…can you?

- Of course…

Galia was someone who appreciated fashion. She had an amazing talent to dress elegantly without threatening catastrophically the family budget.

- Pick me up at 6…We will walk on Vitosha and have a drink before…

Galia has one more talent, necessary for survival. A sense of humour.

- OK, my friend. How shall we dress?... Worthy of the haute couture standards or a little bit less…

- You – yes, you are able to do it, me – a little bit less…because as usual I have brought only casual…

Six o'clock. Galia is punctual. In purple and black.

You are very beautiful…I can't find the matching shoes… may be I did not bring them…No time for make up…Look at this sweater…shall I be too hot in it…

- Yes, I think so…

- Never mind…

I had remained loyal to my habit to be dressed and have shoes inappropriate for the weather or the occasion, despite the consequent promise to change, made at each experienced inconvenience or created awkward situation. I compensated the complexity and the lack of space of my life in a suitcase with an elevated budget for clothes, shoes and make up. However fashion has its own laws. Apparently "the look" is achieved not solely with money, but also with time, patience and persistence. We paced slowly along "Vitosha". The wind had blown far away the clouds of dust and petrol fumes. The mountain crests were clearly delineated. Their proximity created the sentiment that the street ended in the mountain of the same name. That one could reach it quickly, just outstretch a hand and touch the green leaves. Nevertheless, everything seemed changed. So did the entrance of NIKO and CO. Unrecognizable. An endless row of black limousines and jeeps. A second endless row of bodyguards in black with microphones, mobile phones, bulged jackets. White shades, high round white tables around a white bar, pink sparkling wine from Euxinograd, a Black Sea vineyared. Boys in white vests and black bow ties danced in the shiny and joyful crowd with trays heavy with glasses and appetizers.

Rozali and Jessica, splendid in silky red and orange showed us skillfully through the noisy hive to the second floor.

- The view from here is the best, Mrs. Georgieva. The defile is starting…

I knew both young women from the opening of NIKO & CO, where during the rare visits to Sofia I filled in the missing items in my suitcase. I had done the same during the current visit. Radiant they melodically informed…"Ah, you are here, we have a pleasant surprise for you!"

Galia was talking to a colleague lawyer. I was sipping the sparkling wine. Watching the beauties around. One of them courteously nodded to me. May be not to me. The woman smiled. I smiled back. May be she took me for somebody else? Or at last home has become a place as anywhere else? Smiles swapped somber and distrustful masques. The music got louder. A last microphone test. The hive of silk and lace hushed. My eyes stopped involuntarily at the smiling woman. A renewed nod. A renewed response. She approached:

- You did not recognize me…

A moment of waiting. Embarassing.

- I am Maggi. Maggi – Ivan's wife…

- Oh, Maggi…, - I exclaimed hastily. – I am so glad to see you! I am since a week here and thought of you…looked for your cell phone number, but…

I added the lie, because I truly got worried that I did not recognize Maggi, whom I liked very much. Several years before I left we might have spent our summer vacations together at the Golden Sands, a Black Sea resort. Our connection was husbands and their financial world.

- How are you? Where are you now? – Maggi's voice is very pleasant. Singing. Calm.

- I just retired…and returned to…

- Quieter, please! – Maggi smiled. – I retired too but am working…with Ivan…in our company…

- Wonderful…As for me… I plan to rest only…to live…

I added the last sentence as if my life would start as of that moment. I was aware that I may not sound very convincing. To start your life at Sixty Two. Strange. But this was my case. After a failed marriage and incompatible relationships, after a long career in a publishing house abroad, with 2 grown up children…I was alone. The audacity to think that this was possible was due to my character. To an extent to my looks too. I radiated the mixture I was - a stubborn freedom freak, a down to earth dreamer, an extreme admirer of beauty and a string of other impractical qualities. Well, a bit tired from the numerous life battles.

- I am indeed happy that I retired…- I added again, busy with the recurrent question: Why didn't I recognize Maggi?

- Please, quiet! - she repeated mockingly… - Look! The woman opening the defile is the owner of NIKO & CO…

- Oh, she is very pretty…this young woman… the yellow lace suits her…

- Oh, no… she is not that young…

- I don’t see very well from here… Three diopters shortsighted… but it is so annoying to put on and take off these glasses…

- Stop with that! ... – Maggi did not finish the phrase. She was referring though to the flow of my hints about our age. – Listen, I will show you the new people… In bright blue and beads you see the niece of the Chairman of INVEST TRANSPORT… Do you remember him? In the eighties he was Director General of BULCOMMERCE…

I did not remember him, as I never knew them even when I was young. Business dinners and celebrations I avoided both in Bulgaria and abroad. “People think I am a widower”, used to say my ex husband with a slight reproach and a slight hope to challenge a change. But I remain this way to date. Only qualities that can be proven impress me.

-What does she work?

- She is the niece of…

I thought that Maggi knew but did not wish to tell me. May be the work of the niece did not merit yet the admiration of this society. Or may be she did not work. I keep forgetting that some people do not have to work.

- How are your sons?

- You mean my daughters?

I made an attempt to mumble a kind of an apology for the continuous confusion.

- They are in London…we have a branch…

- Wonderful! And you and Ivan?

The end of the defile fall and winter 2013/2014 was finishing, still I could not overcome the distressing worry, mixed with an increasing anxiety that it was not Maggi who was sitting next to me. It is she. Yet it is not she. Luckily there was her voice. If I recalled it properly. The only thing that the filling hyaluronic and Botox injections and the stretching scalpel of the plastic surgeon would not be able change. The high forehead was rather swollen. But no wrinkles. The beautiful almond eyes were frighteningly diminished. But no wrinkles. The skin around the cheekbones was drawn as the skin over a drum. Nonetheless, no

wrinkles. The filled in chin – an impeccable oval. Again no wrinkles. The lips had doubled in size.

- Me and Ivan we play golf…

I like golf. Green space. Fresh air. Moderate pace. Correct – for the third age. If you do not take too seriously the vanity surrounding this particular sport you could easily spare your knees and your back without injuries and you would not have a heart attack. Don't forget a hat against the sun though. That's it. I did not share with Maggi the spontaneously struck decision to start playing myself. I had to stop saying anything reminding our age.

The woman in the fashionable yellow filled in the moment of emptiness.

- You can buy the pieces presented in the defile even now…

I looked carefully at the humming face. Understood the unfinished remark Maggi made. The owner of NIKO & CO had been transformed and maintained with the same persistence that this exercise imposed. Probably in the same plastic surgery clinic. However, she had not spared anything. She had added the nose. Pinched up. Yes, I thought one more out of million times, they all look alike. I tried to chase the reflections obstructing the conversation. Galia helped me. She frantically tried to attract my attention gesturing: "Aren't we leaving finally?"

I stood abruptly.

- Maggi, I have to go. Please, give me your number, am returning to…for a short time and once back in Sofia I will give you a call immediately.

At home I went through the box with visiting cards and compared carefully the visiting card of Maggi with that of Maggi from the defile. The little cartons looked identically glossy and elegant. As if printed in the same print shop. Similar were the names of the women: Meglena and Magdalena. The family names though sounded completely different.

Petia Vangelova, UNHCR

From Deception to Grace

It was the beginning of fall in New York. It was a fall like any other, with the melancholy that can evoke the falling of the leaves, the early sunsets, snuggling up at home, as we leave our summer clothes behind along with the open, loud, sizzling summer with its infernal heat. But this autumn would be different for me, very different; my body, mind and spirit would take on a summer-like heat.

My name is Mariana Casanova. I am a forty-three year old Dominican woman. I married at the age of eighteen. Many people thought I was pregnant and that I would not finish college. A year later, my first daughter was born and four years later I finished my degree in Communications. I've been married for twenty-five years. I've lived in the Bronx for fifteen years now and I work as an Editor, Monday to Friday, nine to five, for a publishing company in Manhattan.

One day out of nowhere my life completely changed; it took an unexpected three hundred and sixty degrees turn.

I couldn't believe what was happening to me. Perhaps it was all a dream or part of a nightmare. Maybe someone had told me this absurd, ridiculous, senseless, illogical, incoherent story and, therefore, I had not been able to accept or digest it right away. I confused it with the lives of others, somewhere between fantasy and reality, fictitious and real characters merged on one stage. You refuse to even consider the possibility that this was actually happening to you. These are things that you hear occur to other people. And you feel for them; how awful that so-and-so is experiencing that. Thank God it's not me. And in some way you are comforted by someone else's misfortune.

I thought I was above these mundane situations. My life seemed, if not perfect, stable, at the very least.

We had a beautiful family; our daughters had been brought up with good manners and were excellent students. The eldest had graduated from law school; the middle one was in her last year of college and the youngest had just entered medical school. Everyone we knew complimented us on what a wonderful job we had done as parents.

My husband I would talk about how we were going to enjoy our free time traveling and sightseeing since we would no longer have anyone to look after. We could dedicate our time to ourselves and rediscover that romantic spark. Although we were a couple that got along really well, shared many things and could converse for hours, we lacked a bit of romance. Despite the fact that

flowers were never missing on Valentine's Day, Mother's Day, birthdays and anniversaries.

In light of those things, my nieces would say they wanted to have a marriage like ours; such compatibility. The opposite of the main cause of divorce in many countries: incompatibility. Therefore, we couldn't divorce for that reason; no, not because of that.

I didn't have the slightest idea how to handle this situation that had presented itself now. I've always known what to do and say at the right moment; always so decisive, firm, confident when making choices. Now, I did not know what to do or say, and even worse, who to say it to. There was not one family member, friend, or colleague with whom I could share this tasteless and disgusting melodrama with. Someone who could perhaps help me see things clearer. At the same time, I didn't really want to share the news with anyone.

I realized later on that this first reaction to something unknown, the want to deny what was going on and the want to pretend as if nothing was wrong and the believe that I could solve everything on my own, or even better, that it would all clear itself up on its own, without anyone's intervention, except divine, was foolish.

Meanwhile, I decided to go on with my daily routine. During the week, I would go to work. On Saturdays, I would go to the supermarket, then I'd wait for our housekeeper to arrive and then I'd go to the beauty salon.

Everything is normal and this situation will work itself out one way or another; that was what my confused mind was thinking at that dark and cloudy moment. All reason and objectivity had been lost.

From that moment on, I was not in control of my emotions. My intelligence was not functioning, my brain no longer discerning properly. I desired deeply for my life to go back to its normal rhythm.

As a consequence of this turbulence, not caused by any plane, I once arrived at work at nine thirty and began working when at around ten thirty, I remembered I had left the toaster oven on at home. I placed the bread in it at around eight in the morning, but did not eat a thing. I left the house and had forgotten to turn it off. I told my boss what had occurred and that I had to leave before something happened. One of my co-workers found out and said, "You must be overloaded".

When I reached my building, the smell of burnt bread had travelled to the hallway. Once I was in the apartment, I could see the smoke coming from the oven; I turned it off and had to open the windows and leave from the apartment for a few hours; it felt suffocating.

On another occasion, I got home at night and not until the next morning, when I was leaving to work, did I become aware that I had left the keys on the door. I sighed thinking how lucky I was that nothing bad had happened.

My mind was overwhelmed, just as my co-worker had said. Nevertheless, I denied this mental state. I wanted to keep having stability and continue being who I had been. I was determined to hold on, tooth and nail, to what my life had been; to what I felt I was entitled to as an inalienable right and what I thought no one could rip away from me. This is why I was going to fight the fight and wage war if necessary to defend what I considered to be mine.

I had been married for a quarter of a century to a man whom I considered to be my best friend, a faithful partner, dedicated husband and the most loving father. I recognized in the midst of the chaos that I had married too young and too hastily. Even for my country's standards, I was too tender and immature to take on such a serious commitment. The facts were the facts and I couldn't change them. I had to confront the present.

In retrospect, my husband and I had been supporters of one another. We had a very balanced relationship. When he needed me, I was there and vice versa. Neither one had done more than the other in any way. We both contributed to the bills. On one occasion, he more than; and reciprocally depending on the circumstances. We had a pretty decent income; we had room to breathe**,** although we couldn't be worse at administrating it. This had often been the cause for many arguments throughout our relationship.

Naturally, this is my opinion; this is what I thought our relationship was. What did this other person think? How did the other half, my other half, feel was almost impossible to know. Nevertheless, I wished I could read minds; his mind. I agonized wanting to know the How, When, Where, Why, Whom. More importantly, I wanted to know when he had stopped loving me, if he had ever loved me at all. I didn't have the answer to any of these unknowns.

On the other hand, I wanted to maintain the status quo. I continued the daily routine of getting up and getting ready to face work. It was daunting, exhausting, with

the of a boss with serious mental problems, a co-worker who was a vicious, negative, manipulative, simply a traitor who, for example, waited for the

moment that I was on a vacation to suggest editorial procedural changes. One day I was surprised with the news that we were no longer going to use the term electronic mail, but rather e-mail in all that we published.

At noon, I'd go to my French classes with the hope of one day being able to say *Bonjour, ça va.* This would open doors for me, I thought so. I didn't know whether they would be to hell or to paradise. I hoped for somewhere in between, perhaps closer to paradise than to hell.

It was not difficult, at least for the time being, to pretend everything was fine, even when my job requires a lot of concentration, but then again the over ten years of experience supersede what I was feeling. Either way, much energy was being spent there. There is always a deadline; some difficulty to face, solve; some friction with someone. I always have to be on the defensive. At the end of the day, I was mentally exhausted. My emotional intelligence was tested each and every day I'd go to work. There is much blood, sweat and tears before each pay day.

I felt as if "my role" was done with the end of each work day that I could take off the mask. What a relief to be myself. It's very draining to have to smile when your soul is breaking to pieces, to hide your worries, put them away in a locked drawer, hide the key where no one will find it and to open it when no one is looking. I remember one Friday evening on my way home on the train, a stranger said to me: Why that face? Smile, it's Friday!

Ana-Maria Gonzalez, UN New York

Peace Day 2009

Pavel, the head of the Regional Office in Mazar-e-Sharif, had assigned all staff in the Northern Region to plan activities to mark Peace Day 2009.[3] There was no funding available for these activities – just a few ballpoint pens, caps, and T-shirts. I was simply brimming with ideas, and I suggested to my colleague Reiko that we visit an orphanage in Maimana city, the provincial capital of Faryab province, and work with the orphans to paint the building, both to beautify the children's drab environment and to live up to UNAMA's outreach function. After all, outreach involves more than just working with high-ranking Afghan politicians or influential clerics; in my view, it is much more important to win over the hearts and minds of the local populace. The plan turned out to be quite expensive, since we would have to buy expensive paint, brushes, smocks for the children, buckets, and so on. I was willing to pay for it, and managed to convince Reiko that it was a good idea as well; she ended up providing half of the financing for the project.

[3] The UN International Day of Peace, instituted in 1981, is celebrated every year on September 21. The annual meetings of the UN General Assembly traditionally start on the third Tuesday in September. September 21 is supposed to be a day on which all parties to any conflict observe a ceasefire and violence is suspended.

As soon as Pavel gave his approval, I met with the head of the Ministry of Social and Labour Affairs and the head of the Ministry for Women's Affairs for the province of Faryab, both women. They are the only female government employees to hold key positions in Faryab. Both women were enthusiastic about my idea. They suggested that I visit again the next day to get to know the children who would be participating in the project. I insisted that girls make up half of the group.

Habib, Aid Coherence Assistant at that time, calculated how much paint was needed for the project and drew up a cost budget for me. Alexandre, the Head of UNAMA Public Relations Mazar-e-Sharif, agreed to cover the event. Various TV and radio channels were invited to attend, and a press conference was planned for during the project itself. I was thrilled to be allowed to paint the compound together with the Afghan children and my Afghan colleagues. Before the event, I had a tailor make 12 painter's smocks, one for each of the children.

On the day of the event, some of the employees at the school associated with the orphanage turned out to be rather conservative; they were bewildered to see me, a woman, working with 12 orphaned children right in the middle of the street, first cleaning the exterior walls of the facility and then sprucing them up with a new coat of paint, all in the late summer heat. The children had never held a paintbrush or roller before, and they were proud and happy to be allowed to participate in a project that was so important to them. The walls of the courtyard were painted with colorful images: peace symbols, flowers, suns, children, hearts… everything a child's heart desires.

Afghan TV crews and radio stations arrived on scene in the afternoon. When they did, I took a break from the busy scene at the wall for quite some time in order to take questions from Afghan journalists with Alexandre. One of the journalists quickly changed topics, steering the discussion away from the actual topic, Peace Day 2009 and UNAMA's contribution, and toward UNAMA's intervention in the presidential elections instead. Alexandre quickly and adroitly talked his way out of the matter, since UNAMA's senior management was split at that time about UNAMA's intervention in the election process, so it would not have been a very good idea for Alexandre to engage on the topic. Then, while I was being interviewed, my headscarf slid down. Since I was on camera, and video footage is not edited before being shown publicly, I had no choice but to keep my cool and continue speaking without stumbling. It would have been much more embarrassing to try to rearrange my scarf while the camera was rolling, so I pretended nothing was the matter and saw my speech through to the end.

After the press conference, I threw myself back into painting. I was exhausted in the end. It was Ramadan, and drinking or eating in public was unthinkable. I sneaked to one of the UNAMA cars parked in the compound and tried to snatch a gulp of water unobserved. One of the UNAMA drivers saw me drinking, but pretended he had seen nothing. I felt vaguely guilty, although I am not a Muslim. To this day, I'm not entirely sure why I found the incident embarrassing, since my Afghan colleagues were aware that I was not a Muslim, so no one should have been expecting me to be fasting while I was in Afghanistan. I was, however, adapting more and more to local customs, even when every fiber of my being seemed to resist. Although I was of two minds about it, I did earn a lot of respect among the Afghans by doing so, and it quickly became clear to me that this approach also brought me greater safety

and security. As long as the local community and local counterparts accept and respect you, your personal safety is largely secure.

These are not just idle, abstract thoughts; a lot of things could have happened on that long day spent outdoors. I could have been kidnapped in the blink of an eye, for example, considering that I was working right in the middle of the street, without any protection at all. The Uzbeks who make up the majority of the population of Faryab Province – themselves fairly liberal, for Afghans – had never seen the like. But in fact, nothing happened, and I think the experience was positive and informative in one way or another for everyone who had a chance to see what we were doing. It may have even broadened some horizons. At the end of the day, I even taught the UNAMA drivers how to use a paintbrush and roller – after all, we all wanted to get the work done as soon as possible. During Ramadan, everyone wants to be home at sunset to break the fast.

Stefanie Appenzeller, UN New York

邻居的遗孀

黄砥石

邻居B先生，年纪很大了。我和他住在两隔壁，相处却不熟，属于那种点头之交的典型瑞士好邻居关系。在瑞士，除非邻居有急难，一般情况下互相很少造访，平时电梯里见面打打哈哈谈谈天气都已经是老邻居之间比较热络的行为了。二十年来，在这栋近百户的大楼里，与我保有这种“热络”关系的邻居不超过十家，登堂入室一起吃过饭聊过天的邻居只有两家。

这天出门，在过道里正好迎面撞上B先生从电梯里出来，他阴暗带乌的面色使我心中一惊，这是一张死神降临的面孔，我年轻时在一位临危亲长的脸上看见过，于是不自禁地惊问：“你怎么了？”

不料B先生勃然大怒，厉声回答说：“我很好！”说完头也不回扶杖而去。

过了几天，住区的物业管理员告诉我，我的邻居B先生去世了。还说，B先生多年卧病，全靠老太太一个人照顾。如今去世了，老太太准备搬去和女儿同住。没多久，老太太果然搬走了。公寓是老人留给老太太的遗产，她不来住，房子就一直空着。

这样过了几年，一天忽然警察来敲我的门，说是要借我的阳台观察一下隔壁的公寓。我起初不以为意，估计是瑞士警方对空房例行采取的保安措施。不料几个月后，警察又来了，还是要借我的阳台观察隔壁的公寓。这下我忍不住好奇了，问警察，警察却讳莫如深。

过不久，隔壁的公寓终于有了响动，门上有人用红纸贴了一个小圆点，正对着隔壁公寓的那座小电梯也人来人往显得比较忙碌。我心想：看来老太太决定卖房子了。

一天，我看见一位男士从隔壁公寓出来，还仔细地锁上门，便迎上去问："您是我的新邻居吗？"

"不，我是社会服务处派遣的护理员，负责照顾B太太。"说完也不加解释点点头走了。

我捉摸，看起来不知为什么原因，B老太太已经从女儿家搬回来住了，而且健康状况似乎并不太好。但令我不解的是，居然至今还没见到过B老太太，感觉上她似乎有意识地在回避我们这些邻居。

从那以后，好几次，我下班回家从靠近自己公寓的电梯出来，隐隐约约总感觉有人匆匆闪进隔壁公寓，有时还听见隔壁公寓的房门被悄悄掩上然后轻轻上锁的声音。

有一天回家，我开门回自己公寓的时候故意放慢脚步，猛回头果然发现B老太太躲在自己门洞里侧眼悄悄朝我这边窥视。我当然知道她绝不是出于任何恶意，但心里还是觉得很不舒服。此外更奇怪的是，我发现B老太太经常去按正对着她家公寓的那座电梯的呼叫钮，电梯来了她却不上去，兀自站在自己的门洞里，好像期待有人从电梯里走出来。她等谁呢？不会是她去世的丈夫吧！

直到最近有一天，我忽然听见外面过道里人声噪杂，开门出去发现是B老太太在歇斯底里地在哭喊：“我打不开门！我进不去！我要回我自己的家！！喔喔喔……”物业管理员和一位邻居在一旁手足无措地干着急。

我上前问清原委，原来社会服务处不知什么时候在B老太太的门上多加了一把锁，B老太太拿自己的钥匙只能开启自己原来的锁，门却依然不开。她急得又哭又跳，拼命拉门，用力之大，把门把都拉脱了。我提醒物业管理员赶紧通知社会服务处来开门，一场风波才算平息。

这桩事件过后，整栋公寓好像忽然平静下来。B老太太公寓门上那把新锁仍在，但B老太太却不在了。不但公寓的门不再打开，所有遮光的百叶窗和通往阳台的落地窗也都关上了。

不知道B老太太去了哪里。当时她为什么从女儿家搬出来，这就已经是一个问题；后来又为什么依赖社会服务处来照顾她，而她的女儿却从来没有出现过。尤其难解的是，社工竟然有权力在她的门上加锁，使她回不了自己的家，这就难免使人质疑这儿的养老制度是怎么运行的。

正在思考B老太太的问题，却在地下车库遇到物业管理员，他沉着声告诉我，我们大楼9层的那位九秩老人被发现死在自己的公寓里，是他工作时发现的。警察局的验尸报告说，老人去世已经一个星期了。

[translation]

My Neighbor’s Widow

Mr. B was my neighbor. He was quite old, but I did not know exactly how old he was. We lived side by side but were not really close. We were typical Swiss neighbors. In Switzerland, unless devastatingly urgent, the neighbors rarely visit each other. Those who chat about the weather in the elevator are already considered on friendly terms. For all the 20 years that I lived in this apartment building of about 100 units, I can count less than 10 with whom I have been on such terms and only 2 with whom I have had meals together.

One day, I ran into Mr. B in the corridor while he was stepping out of the elevator. His ghostly aspect gave me a fright. I had seen it many years ago on the face of a dying relative. Without thinking, I cried out: “Are you alright?”

But Mr. B became very angry and snapped: “I AM alright!” Then he stomped back to his apartment on his walking stick.

A few days later, the concierge of our building told me, my neighbor Mr. B had passed away. He added that since Mr. B had been ill for long years, now that he was dead, Mrs. B who had been taking care of him would have to go live with their daughter, and Mrs. B did move away soon after. The apartment next door was Mr. B’s legacy to Mrs. B. It was thus left unoccupied.

Quite a few years later, a policeman came knocking on my door, asking for my permission to observe my neighbor’s empty apartment from my balcony. I took it to be a normal security measure of the Swiss police, so did not give it a second thought. But the second time, a few months later, that the Swiss police came knocking on my door asking for the same permission, I became curious. But the police refused to divulge.

Then there began to have signs of movements and noises from the empty apartment next door. Someone stuck a red dot on its door. The small elevator facing the apartment became quite busy. I thought to myself: it seems the old lady has finally decided to sell her husband’s legacy.

One day I saw a man leaving the next door apartment. The careful way that he locked the door struck me. So I went to meet him and asked if he was my new neighbor.

“Oh no, I am a male nurse from the Social Services. I take care of Mrs. B.” Then he left as if afraid lest I became too inquisitive.

One thing was clear: for whatever reason, Mrs. B had moved out of her daughter’s home and back into her own apartment. In addition, she was not well. What puzzled me was that it seemed no one had ever seen her. One would almost speculate that she was avoiding contacts with the neighbors.

In the following months, many times, when I stepped out of the larger elevator facing my apartment and about to enter my own apartment, I sensed a sudden movement in the doorway of the apartment next door. Sometimes I thought I heard a hushed-up clicking of a key.

One day, on coming home I purposely slowed down my movement while entering my apartment and suddenly turned my head. Lo and behold, Mrs. B was hiding in her doorway and peeking towards me. I knew she could not possibly harbor any evil design towards me, but it felt weird just the same. Another thing Mrs. B did that taxed my imagination was that she constantly pressed the call-button of the elevator facing her apartment. But when the elevator arrived, she never got into it, but remained in her doorway, as if waiting for someone to step out of it. Who was she expecting? Her husband?

Until recently one day, I heard loud noises and a woman crying in the corridor. It was Mrs. B wailing hysterically: "I can't open my door! I can't get in! I want to enter my own home!....." The concierge and another neighbor helplessly stood by, not knowing what to do.

What had happened was that for reasons known to no one and since when the Social Services had decided to add another lock on to Mrs. B's door. Mrs. B could only open her old lock, but the door remained locked. She cried and wailed. She pulled at the door with such vehemence that the doorknob came off. I reminded the concierge to hurry up and call the Social Services. They should be able to help.

After the incident, the entire building seemed suddenly to become quiet. The new lock on Mrs. B was still there, but Mrs. B disappeared. Not only the door of the apartment remained constantly shut, all the window shades were drawn and the French windows closed.

I didn't know what had happened to Mrs. B. I was very puzzled by the behavior of Mrs. B's daughter. She had never appeared but had left her mother to the care of the Social Services. The most inexplicable part of the episode was why had the Social Services assumed so much power of discretion in the matter of adding a new lock on the door, preventing the poor woman from getting into her own apartment. Was this the typical *modus operandi* of the system that the old people here were reduced to face?

With these thoughts in my mind, I happened to run into the concierge in the underground garage. He told me the ninety-year old neighbor on the ninth floor had died in his own apartment. When he found the body, the old man was already dead a whole week earlier.

David Huang, UNOG retired

КАЗИНО

- Ты закажешь гостиницу? - Светлана спросила это больше для порядка.

Они ездили в Париж летом уже не первый раз, и у них с Флоранс было четкое распределение обязанностей. Она заказывала билеты в театр, а подруга покупала билеты на поезд Женева-Париж и бронировала номер в гостинице. Флоранс перезвонила на следующий день и радостно сообщила, что на сей раз они будут жить не в гостинице, а на квартире у ее приятеля, Оливье Шабанэ, который куда-то уезжает. Ключи он оставит у консьержа. Так что все складывается удачно.

- Нам здорово повезло, - радовалась Флоранс. – У него роскошная квартира в Оттуда легко добираться в любую точку Парижа. Метро рядом. И на гостинице сэкономим. Можно будет в магазинах гульнуть!

Приехали они в Париж поздно вечером. О том, что в районе Марэ когда-то находилось болото, напоминало лишь название. В свое время рыцари-тамплиеры неплохо потрудились, осушив болото, а Генрих Наваррский довел дело до конца и обустроил эти места. Бывшая окраина уже давно стала центром и славилась своими фешенебельными и живописными кварталами. Дом знакомого Флоранс находился недалеко от площади Вогезов – одной из самых красивых площадей Парижа. Такси свернуло на застроенную невысокими домами улицу и остановилось перед красивым, строгой архитектуры, домом. Вошли в огромные ворота, которые с улицы открывались ключом, и оказались в очень симпатичном внутреннем дворике, уставленном кадками с растениями. Сам трехэтажный дом, где жил Шабанэ, походил скорее на особняк, чем на многоквартирный дом. Возможно, когда-то он и принадлежал одному семейству. Широкая мраморная лестница, скульптуры на лестничных пролетах, по две квартиры на этаж – все говорило о том, что живут здесь люди не бедные. Да и взгляд консьержа, встретившего их внизу, говорил о том, что их внешний вид – поношенные джинсы, спортивная обувь, не принадлежавшая ни к одной из популярных марок, легкие ветровки - не очень соответствует дресс-коду данного дома.

Квартира на верхнем этаже была под стать дому. Просторный холл, высокие потолки, огромная гостиная, три спальни и кухня по размерам не уступавшая гостиной. Но главная прелесть квартиры состояла в том, что обставлена она была очень неординарно. В таком доме вы ожидали увидеть хрустальные люстры, мебель в стиле одного из Людовиков, заставивших миллионы людей и два, и три века спустя после своей смерти, стремиться приобрести хотя бы стул, на котором сохранились микрочастицы пыли их эпох. В этой квартире пыли хватало. Но покрывала она предметы чрезвычайно оригинальные и, главное, непонятно каким образом уживавшиеся друг с другом. На огромном, сделанном из цельных досок столе, явно вывезенном из какой-то французской деревенской глуши, прекрасно смотрелась пара больших позолоченных канделябров в стиле ампир. Изысканный шелковый, скорее всего, персидский ковер Кашан чудесно соседствовал с абстрактной картиной на стене. Тончайшей работы кашмирская шаль покрывала минималистское кресло пятидесятых годов. Эти предметы жили каждый своей жизнью, но все вместе создавали какой-то удивительно веселый и теплый ансамбль, в котором вам сразу же становилось легко и по-домашнему уютно.

В кабинете, куда Флоранс завела ее в конце визита по квартире, Светлана увидела на маленьком столике несколько фотографий.

- А где здесь хозяин дома? – Светлане захотелось посмотреть на человека, сумевшего создать такой оригинальный и в тоже время теплый интерьер.

- Оливье? Вот он! – Флоранс подошла ближе.

С фотографии на них смотрел очень пожилой человек. Но его глаза сияли таким неподдельным энтузиазмом, что назвать этого мужчину стариком не поворачивался язык.

- А кто он по профессии?

- Архитектор.

- Тогда все понятно. Квартира у него замечательная.

- Да, вкус у Оливье отличный, но у него и жена была художницей.

В Париже они смогли выполнить лишь программу-минимум. В первый вечер отправились на главное мероприятие, ради которого они и приезжали уже третий раз в Париж именно в это время года.

Двенадцатый сезон Дягилевских балетов. Как и во времена единственного антрепренера, чье имя вошло в историю наравне с именами артистов, художников и писателей, они проходили в театре Шанз-Элизе. Декор этого театра в стиле Арт-Нуво, как нельзя лучше соответствовал великолепным декорациям и костюмам, выполненных гениальными художниками начала века – Бакстом, Бенуа, Гончаровой. И убранство театра, и декорации – все переносило вас в Париж начала прошлого столетия.

На второй день они выбрались в пару музеев, где проходили интересные выставки, а суббота была отдана шоппингу. Какая женщина, приехав в Париж, лишит себя этого удовольствия. Правда, с мучением пополам. Все то, что действительно нравилось, продавалось по заоблачным ценам. И денег хватало лишь на то, чтобы купить шарфик, очень подходивший к приглянувшемуся платью, но не само платье. Или кошелек, прилагавшийся к понравившейся сумке. Сама сумка оставалась в магазине. После двух-трех часов хождения по магазинам, Светлана так уставала, что хотелось лишь одного – отправиться домой. Но Флоранс был неутомима и непреклонна: уехать без нового платья из Парижа? Такого позора она на свою уже седую голову не перенесет. И они отправлялись по очередному адресу, известному лишь Флоранс, где продавались вещи известных модельеров по сниженным ценам. Или спускались в какой-то подвальчик, именно там сегодня устраивали грандиозную распродажу ни много ни мало как моделей Шанель прошлого года.

- Ну и что из того, что прошлого? – пожимала плечами Флоранс, рассматривая выхваченное из рук соперницы платье, явно на пару размеров больше, чем ей требовалось. – Здесь можно убрать, тут подшить и будет отлично смотреться! Ведь правда, замечательная вещь? – спрашивала она не потому что сомневалась, а так, для порядка, у Светланы.

Светлана кивала головой. Возражать, даже если вещь явно не подходила, смысла не имело. Флоранс была упряма, как истинный бык, которым она и являлась по гороскопу.

Зато как замечательно было просто бродить с Флоранс по Парижу. Она хорошо знала этот город, здесь прошло ее весьма благополучное, спокойное детство и довольно бурная юность. Она водила Светлану по

каким-то малоизвестным улочкам, в которых начисто отсутствовали туристы, но зато было полно чисто парижского обаяния. А потом они садились на метро и ехали бог знает куда, чтобы оказаться на блошином рынке, о котором не было написано ни в одном из путеводителей, и где попадались столь же занятные, сколь и ненужные вещи. Флоранс их, тем не менее, покупала и, что более удивительно, всегда находила им применение. Она заводила Светлану поесть в крошечный ресторанчик, с улицы выглядевший весьма неказисто, но который, как выяснялось, видел в своих стенах парижан периода первой французской революции. А в другом, недешевом, куда они отправлялись промотать сэкономленные на гостинице деньги, за соседним столиком оказывался известный телеведущий, чьи передачи о французской литературе они обе очень ценили.

Три дня в Париже пролетели, как всегда, очень быстро. Утром на четвертый в дверь позвонили. Это вернулся хозяин квартиры – Оливье. Засидевшиеся накануне за рюмкой вина и разговорами Флоранс и Светлана проснулись совсем недавно. После краткой церемонии представлений, Оливье быстро оценил обстановку.

- Так, вижу, вы еще не завтракали. Пошли в ресторан по соседству. Там отлично кормят, - предложил он.

- Но у нас же поезд в три часа…, - робко возразила Светлана. – Мы должны в час выехать.

- Ну и что? У нас полно времени, - поддержала идею Флоранс, которая всегда и везде опаздывала.

- Сейчас десять. Даю вам на сборы час. А после бранча я вас отвезу на вокзал.

Когда-то английские студенты взяли два слова, «breakfast» и «lunch», соединили их, и получился тот самый бранч, который столь популярен теперь во всем мире. Встал поздно – для тебя это завтрак. А если ты, наоборот проснулся ни свет, ни заря и к одиннадцати уже проголодался, то сойдет за обед.

В этот ранний час в ресторане, куда пригласил их Оливье, было довольно пустынно. По тому как молодой парень за стойкой бара и официанты приветствовали Оливье, было ясно, что он здесь завсегдатай. Оливье признал, что ему, холостяку, готовить для себя лень, и он обедает

и ужинает почти всегда в одном из ресторанов неподалеку от дома. Предпочитает этот, поскольку здесь хорошо готовят рыбу. Но в обращении персонала к Оливье сквозило нечто большее, чем вежливость к постоянному посетителю. Было видно, что здесь к нему относятся по-настоящему дружески, и он был в курсе жизни всех, работавших в ресторане. У бармена спросил, родила ли жена и, услышав, что да, бросился радостно обнимать парня. У обслуживавшего их столик официанта, поинтересовался, сумели ли поставить на ноги жену, заболевшую накануне его отъезда тяжелой формой гриппа.

Справившись у Флоранс и Светланы о том, что они любят, Оливье сам выбрал блюда, которые, на его взгляд, должны были им понравиться. После того как было заказано все, чего хватило бы, по мнению Светланы, не только на сытный бранч, но и на плотный ужин, Оливье и Флоранс занялись любимым и почти неизбежным занятием французов: они принялись критиковать власть предержащих. Светлана прекрасно помнила, как расходилась Флоранс еще совсем недавно, когда разговор заходил о тогдашнем президенте Саркози. Она, как и большинство знакомых французов, проголосовала за партию социалистов, чтобы не допустить Саркози к президентскому креслу на очередной срок. Не прошло еще и года с прихода к власти Холланда, как он стал врагом не меньшим, если не большим, чем Саркози. Оба, Флоранс и Оливье, вышли из поколения молодежи шестьдесят восьмого года. Как с гордостью говорила Флоранс – «...мы тоже были на баррикадах». И хотя с тех пор утекло много воды и силы у бывших студентов уже были не те, страстности в отстаивании своих политических убеждений у них не убавилось. Вот и сейчас, Флоранс и Оливье так бурно обсуждали последние новости, будто вчера не Холланд сказал нечто не слишком удачное, выступая в парламенте, а близкий знакомый сделал оскорбительное замечание в их адрес. После политики перешли к более светским беседам. Обсудили нашумевший спектакль, прошлись по адресу сверхпопулярной, но совершенно безголосой певицы, разобрали последней роман какого-то молодого, но очень многообещающего писателя. Светлана в основном слушала, но отнюдь не скучала. Она любовалась Оливье и своей подругой. Их задора и энергии было не

занимать и молодым. «Они удивительно подходят друг к другу!» – эта мысль не единожды посетила Светлану в ресторане.

- А вы из Женевы? - Оливье, заметивший, что Светлана мало участвовала в разговоре, обратился, наконец, к ней.

- Работаю в Женеве, а живу во Франции.

- Вот как, во Фрнации?

- В Дивоне. Это же совсем рядом с Женевой. Пятнадцать минут, если нет пробок. А вы там бывали?

- Был один раз..., - Оливье на минуту задумался, как будто решая, стоит ли продолжать. – Со мной там произошла удивительная история. В казино. У вас же там казино есть. Вы знаете?

- Есть, - подтвердила Светлана. – Туда даже Достоевский ездил из Женевы играть. В Женеве казино были запрещены очень долго. Я, правда, в казино не хожу, но ресторан при нем неплохой.

- Да, дивонское казино хоть и небольшое, но пользовалось популярностью. И ресторан всегда был приличный, - согласился Оливье. – Там все это и случилось. И было это… - Оливье замолчал, прикидывая, когда же произошли события, о которых он явно собирался рассказать, - было это летом 1977 года.

Мне тогда как раз исполнилось тридцать пять лет. Я приехал в Женеву по делам нашего архитектурного бюро. У нас был совместный проект со швейцарской фирмой. Требовалось уточнить кое-какие детали. Приехал я на неделю, но работа затянулась, и я скучал ужасно. После Парижа Женева – это ведь деревня. К тому же друзей у меня тогда там не было. И вот как-то вечером, от нечего делать, отправился я в Дивон. Играть я не играю, но решил там поужинать. Из любопытства заглянул все-таки в казино. Впечатления особого оно на меня не произвело, и я уже собирался уходить, когда мое внимание привлекла девушка, стоявшая около стола, где играли в рулетку. Из толпы, окружавшей стол, ее выделял не только и не столько красивая внешность и элегантный вечерний наряд, но и то, с какой уверенностью, несмотря на свою молодость, она держалась. Было очевидно, что она восточных кровей: очень темные густые длинные волосы, огромные с поволокой глаза, полуприкрытые длинными ресницами, довольно темная кожа. Но при этом совершенно арийские черты лица и правильной формы тонкий нос –

такое я видел впервые. Во Франции я встречал немало интересных женщин с примесью арабской крови. Чаще всего это яркая, но, на мой взгляд, несколько вульгарная красота. В этой молодой женщине не было ни грамма вульгарности, ее отличали не только утонченность черт, но и грация движений. Я подошел поближе и встал напротив нее. Как зачарованный я следил за ней. Она, как будто почувствовав мой взгляд, оторвалась от игры, взглянула на меня и улыбнулась. Потом не спеша собрала фишки, лежавшие на столе, встала и пошла к кассе. Я не решился идти за ней и, выйдя из игорного зала, перешел по крытому коридору из казино в отель. Сначала я зашел в бар, чтобы выпить бокал вина и решить, что мне делать дальше: идти ужинать или вернуться в казино в надежде еще раз увидеть женщину, так заинтересовавшую меня. И тут она тоже вошла в бар. Увидев меня, она улыбнулась всей той же уже очаровавшей меня улыбкой и подошла ко мне.

- Там душно, не правда ли? – ее французский был очень плох, она с трудом подбирала слова.

- Не хотите ли выпить бокал вина? – я встал и жестом предложил ей сесть в кресло за мой столик.

- Спасибо, - она села напротив.

- Давайте познакомимся, - предложил я. – Меня зовут Оливье, а вас?

- Анита, очень приятно.

- Вам, наверное, легче говорить по-английски? Вы из Индии?

Я перешел на английский.

- О, конечно! Да, я недавно приехала из Дели. А откуда вы?

- Из Парижа.

- Я там еще не была, но обязательно поеду.

- Как красиво! - Анита смотрела куда-то мимо меня.

- Да, Париж красивый город.

- Нет, вот это очень красиво, - Анита подняла руку и изящным движением указала на стену позади меня.

Я обернулся и только сейчас увидел, что на стене бара, где мы сидели, висят чудесные гравюры букетов цветов, расписанные акварелью.

- Английские гравюры, - Анита встала и начала обходить гравюры одну за другой, внимательно рассматривая букеты. – Здесь столько всего красивого! И эта гостиница!

- Внутренний декор гостиницы выполнен в стиле Арт Нуво, - произнес я с ученым видом.

- Да? А что это такое?

Я принялся с видом знатока объяснять, как возник и чем примечателен этот стиль, надеясь произвести впечатление на девушку. Анита слушала меня, кивала, но я видел, что на самом деле ей это не очень интересно.

- Так хочется есть! – вдруг заявила она. – Здесь прилично готовят?

- Говорят при казино хороший ресторан, – я колебался, не зная, удобно ли мне сделать следующий шаг.

- Давайте поужинаем! – опередила меня Анита

- Позвольте мне пригласить вас, - я вскочил с кресла.

- Но я первая предложила, - возразила Анита. – К тому же сегодня я в выигрыше.

- Нет, это невозможно, у нас не принято, чтобы женщины приглашали мужчин на ужин. Я думаю, и в Индии такое вряд ли возможно.

- Везде эти условности. А потом еще говорят о каком-то равноправии, - Анита тоже встала. – Хорошо, я согласна, раз уж вы настаиваете.

В ресторане при казино мест не оказалось и нам пришлось вернуться в отель и пойти в ресторан при отеле. Вы, наверняка, знаете его. Он и сейчас существует. Дорогущий, но я этого не знал. Хотя догадался, когда увидел, что он практически пуст. Нам принесли меню, и мы принялись изучать его.

- Извините, пожалуйста, я не понимаю, как это? Здесь что волков едят? – спросила вдруг Анита.

Я поперхнулся хлебом, который перед этим откусил.

- Каких волков? – переспросил, откашлявшись.

- Ну как же? Вот здесь так и написано: «loup ». Да еще под каким-то соусом, - она протянула мне меню.

- Так это же «loup de mer », - улыбнулся я. - Вы по-английски говорите? Так это «seabass»[4]. Очень вкусная рыба.

[4] Морской окунь (перевод с англ.)

Анита расхохоталась так заразительно, что я не выдержал и тоже засмеялся.

Во время ужина говорил в основном я. Анита лишь коротко и довольно уклончиво отвечала на мои вопросы, когда я осмеливался расспрашивать ее. Я узнал лишь, что ее мать была индианкой, а отец англичанином, что она жила в Дели и иногда выезжала в Англию к родственникам отца.

В конце ужина Анита начала поглядывать на часы. Когда подали десерт, она извинилась и сказала, что вынуждена покинуть меня, ей пора возвращаться. Я встал, собираясь проводить ее и, если нужно, довести до дома. Приехав в Женеву, я взял на прокат машину, зная, что проведу здесь не один день. Но Анита объяснила, что за ней приедут и, скорее всего, уже ждут у казино. Она подошла ко мне и неожиданно поцеловала в щеку, обдав запахом духов, в котором явно присутствовала нотка сандала. Несмотря на этот восточный акцент, аромат был не приторным, как это часто бывает с восточными духами, а теплым и влекущим. Сейчас бы, наверняка, сказали, сексуальным.

- Не хочу, чтобы у вас были неприятные объяснения с женой, - Анита опять рассмеялась, провела рукой по моей щеке, вытирая след помады.

- Я не женат, - поспешил сообщить я.

Анита на секунду задумалась, затем открыла сумочку, достала оттуда книжечку, обтянутую золотистой кожей, написала в ней что-то.

- Приходите завтра ко мне на ужин. Должна же я отблагодарить вас. Вот адрес. Жду вас в семь, - она вырвала листок и протянула мне.

Не дожидаясь ответа, повернулась и пошла к выходу. На пороге обернулась, помахала мне рукой и еще раз повторила: «В семь, не опаздывайте!»

Когда я вернулся в гостиницу, то не мог заснуть, все вспоминал прошедший вечер. Поведение Аниты было очень странным. Нечасто приходилось мне встречать женщин, которые вели бы себя столь свободно, расковано. А ведь Парижу эмансипированных женщин не занимать.

Что это открытость, непосредственность или отсутствие воспитания, понятия о том, что принято и не принято в западном обществе? Или же во всем этом какая-то непонятная мне игра. Случайно оказалась она вслед за

мной в баре или специально последовала за мной? Почему? Я понравился ей?

Одно я знал твердо: эта женщина поразила мое воображение, и я ни за что не собирался упустить шанса увидеть ее еще раз.

На следующий день в назначенное время я отправился в старый город. Ехал и гадал: одна Анита дома? Замужем она или, может, вдова? Листок бумаги, который она мне дала, ничего не прояснял. Там просто стояло: мадам Грейг Херст, а ниже - женевский адрес. В этом районе Женевы могли себе позволить жить люди лишь очень и очень состоятельные. Судя по дому, в котором находилась квартира, в деньгах мадам Херст действительно не нуждалась. Квартира лишь подтвердила это: большая прихожая, обставленная солидно и со вкусом. Горничная провела меня в гостиную и вскоре туда вышла Анита под руку с немолодым мужчиной, опиравшимся на трость.

- Мой муж, Грейг, - представила Анита мужчину. – А это тот самый человек, который спас меня вчера от голодной смерти.

- Ну, вы преувеличиваете, - смутился я.

- Ничего подобного, - улыбнулась Анита. – То, что женщина одна играет в казино, еще терпят, а вот если вы одна отправитесь в ресторан и усядетесь за столик, все будут пялиться на вас, будто вы совершаете что-то совершенно неприличное. У вас в Европе весьма странные нравы.

За ужином нам прислуживала горничная. Готовила его отнюдь не Анита. Когда я похвалил вкусное первое блюдо, она со смехом призналась, что хозяйка из нее никакая. Поначалу я чувствовал себя напряженно и неловко, но Грейг и Анита держались непринужденно, и вскоре я тоже расслабился. Выяснилось, что Херст англичанин, много лет провел в Индии. О том, чем занимался, он не распространялся. Сказал лишь, что отошел от дел и решил попутешествовать. В Женеве они оказались недавно и решили задержаться, поскольку Женева – идеальный город для путешествий по Европе. Куда ни захочешь поехать, несколько часов лета.

Потом Грейг рассказывал об Индии. Анита больше молчала, но ее небольшие ремарки всегда были точны и остроумны. Единственное, что

смущало меня – это ее взгляд. В нем чувствовалось не просто внимание радушной хозяйки к гостю, а нечто большее. Любопытство? Интерес?

- А поехали сейчас в Дивон, в казино? Мне там понравилось! - предложила вдруг Анита, когда мы перешли из столовой в гостиную.

Грейг сразу же отверг эту идею. Тогда Анита умоляюще посмотрела на меня. Я смутился, не зная, как вести себя в этой ситуации. И тут ее муж удивил меня.

- А почему бы вам не поехать с Анитой? Я уже не в том возрасте, чтобы развлекаться по ночам, а вы поезжайте, проветритесь.

Я сделал вид, что колеблюсь больше для приличия. На самом деле идея отправиться в Дивон одному с Анитой, меня, конечно, обрадовала. Анита поцеловала мужа в щеку, он позволил ей это сделать, не скрывая некоторой снисходительности, и поглядел на меня с выражением, говорившим: ну что не сделаешь для этих чудесных, но избалованных особ!

Пока мы ехали до Дивона, Анита вела себя так, что я лишь утвердился в своих ощущениях о ее симпатии ко мне. В казино сначала мы были вместе, переходили от одного стола с рулеткой к другому. Анита дурачилась, смеясь, ставила то на четные, то на нечетные, потом, проиграв, поставила все фишки на ноль и опять проиграла. На сей раз довольно значительную сумму. Я никогда не любил играть, а тем более, в казино. А сейчас мне тем более было не до игры. Мне хотелось остаться с Анитой наедине, а в залах было полно народа. Я попытался уговорить ее пойти в бар отеля, выпить бокал вина. Но Анита как раз уселась у столика, где играли в «блэк-джек». Она заявила, что я явно не игрок, а поэтому не должен мешать ей. Мы договорились, что я покурю и выпью чего-нибудь в баре, а потом вернусь за ней. Но не раньше, чем через час. Я согласился. А что мне оставалось делать?

Через час я вернулся за Анитой, и мы отправились в Женеву. В машине по дороге домой, она опять была более чем любезна, уже откровенно кокетничала и, прощаясь, взяла с меня слово, что завтра я непременно приду к ним опять на ужин.

Я согласился, меня уже по-настоящему влекла эта женщина, и на следующий день вновь звонил в дверь знакомой квартиры. Сценарий вечера с точностью повторил вчерашний: Грейг за ужином был оживлен и

любезен, Анита разговаривала мало, что не мешало ей бросать на меня исподтишка довольно откровенные взгляды. После ужина Грейг заявил, что устал, а Анита попросила меня отвезти ее в Дивон. Начав играть, она опять заявила, что я ее отвлекаю, и отправила меня в бар. По дороге назад, в машине, Анита несколько раз, будто невзначай, дотронулась до моей руки. Но когда, провожая, я попытался ее обнять, то она со смехом вырвалась и, убегая, крикнула: «До завтра! Ждем вас на ужин!» На следующий день, когда мы вернулись в Женеву, Анита, зайдя в подъезд, на минуту прильнула ко мне и поцеловала. Так продолжалось несколько дней. Мне было уже ясно, что Анита страстный игрок. Я говорил себе, что с самого начала мне была отведена роль лишь ее личного водителя, с которым она каждый день отправлялась в Дивон. И тогда я давал себе слово вечером не идти на ужин. Но наступал условленный час, и я вновь звонил в дверь квартиры Херстов, убеждая себя в том, что Анита искренне увлечена не только игрой, но и мною.

Через неделю, когда мы, подъехав к их дому, уже страстно целовались в машине, я предложил завтра не идти в казино, а отправиться ко мне в отель, в Женеве.

- Ну что же, может быть... Посмотрим, - Анита посмотрела на меня так, что у меня сначала замерло, потом учащенно забилось сердце. – Посмотрим...

Она еще раз нежно поцеловала меня и вышла из машины. Дверь подъезда уже закрылась за Анитой, а я все сидел, пытаясь справиться с волнением. «Неужели?! Наконец-то!!»

Когда я вернулся к себе в отель, меня ждала телеграмма от моего начальника. «Срочно прибыть Париж. Завтра важная встреча. Обсуждается ваш проект». Всю ночь я не спал, сочиняя ответную телеграмму в архитектурное бюро. Я пытался придумать хоть какое-то оправдание для того, чтобы задержаться еще на несколько дней в Женеве. Но утром, мне позвонил мой приятель по бюро, с которым мы вместе готовили проект. Оказалось, что он свалился с воспалением легких и не может быть на встрече. Кроме меня некому было встречаться с заказчиком.

Оливье замолчал...

- Ты вернулся? - Флоранс не выдержала первой.

- Нет, не получилось. Заказчику что-то не понравилось в проекте, пришлось переделывать. На работу и согласование ушло почти два месяца. Я все-таки поехал в Женеву. Табличка с именем по-прежнему красовалась на двери, но никто не отвечал на звонки. Я приходил несколько вечеров подряд...

- И вы так никогда больше не встретились? – на этот раз вопрос задала Светлана.

- Как ни странно встретились и совсем недавно, - усмехнулся Оливье. – Но это уже неинтересно.

- Интересно, расскажите! - чуть не хором воскликнули Флоранс и Светлана.

- Женщины могут быть очень разными, но всех их объединяет одно качество: любопытство, - с улыбкой заметил Оливье. - Мужчине было бы все равно: встретил или не встретил. Главное, что ничего не произошло между нами. А остальное, разве имеет значение? Ну да ладно, слушайте

Несколько лет назад я оказался в Баден-Бадене. Просто так, не по службе. Приехал на концерт. Вы, наверное, знаете, там находится один из крупнейших концертных залов Европы. И после концерта решил сходить в казино. Оно у них там действительно замечательной красоты, старинное. Анфилада залов, украшенных с роскошью, достойной тех денег, которые там оставляют. Я прошелся по комнатам, взял бокал вина и присел в небольшом салоне для отдыха. Там банкетка вдоль стены под балдахином, уютное местечко. К тому оттуда хорошо было слышно музыку, в соседнем зале стоял рояль, и неплохая певица исполняла итальянские романсы. Рядом со мной мирно посапывал какой-то старичок. Когда пение закончилось, и народ в зале зааплодировал, он дернулся и проснулся. Старичок был совсем древний и к тому же, видимо, у него была проблема с ногой. Он попытался встать, опираясь на палку, но сделал это как-то неудачно и снова бессильно опустился на диван. Его трость упала и откатилась в сторону. Я поднялся и подал трость Грейгу Херсту. Он не узнал меня. Да и я бы не узнал его, если бы не трость. Она была особенная, с резной ручкой из сандала. Я подождал, пока он поднимется, а потом пошел вслед за ним в соседний зал. Грейг остановился около одного из столов, за которыми играли в «блэк-джек», и позвал «Анита!». За столом сидело несколько игроков. Не знаю, узнал бы

я Аниту, если бы он не назвал ее по имени. Она сильно изменилась, очень постарела. Сколько ей было? Прошло почти тридцать лет с того времени, когда я ее встретил. Тогда, в Дивоне, я думаю, ей было около тридцати. Значит, теперь под шестьдесят. Мне даже не верилось, что эта седая женщина с пергаментного цвета лицом, испещренным морщинами, поразила когда-то меня своей красотой. Анита была полностью сосредоточена на игре. Грейгу пришлось несколько раз позвать ее, пока она услышала. Когда она взглянула, наконец, на него, оторвавшись от карт, я узнал ее глаза. Они были по-прежнему удивительно хороши. Анита скользнула взглядом по моему лицу, но, конечно, не узнала. А, скорее всего, она и не видела ничего. По тем нескольким дням в казино Дивона мне была хорошо знакома та углубленность в себя, а вернее, в игру, которую я вновь увидел сегодня. В такие минуты ее лицо было отрешенным и в то же время до предела напряженным.

Оливье задумался.

- Ну и что дальше? Вы подошли к ней? – на сей раз не выдержала Светлана.

- Нет, они с Грейгом сразу ушли из казино, - Оливье взглянул на часы. – Послушайте, а на поезд вы собираетесь или нет?

- А сколько Оливье лет? – поинтересовалась Светлана, когда они, все-таки успев на поезд, разместились на своих местах.

- Думаю, семьдесят стукнуло.

- Он женат? – продолжала допрос Светлана.

- Был женат, даже дважды, а сейчас вдовец.

Светлане пришла в голову совершенно гениальная идея.

- Ты все время ноешь: надоело одной жить, вот бы найти старичка какого, не развалину, бодренького! Вот он, старичок-боровичок. А ты теряешься... К тому же очень даже премилый.

- Вечно ты преувеличиваешь! Может и сказала я что-то в этом духе пару раз, а ты уж сразу - ноешь все время...

Слова Светланы явно задели Флоранс.

- Ладно, не обижайся. Но все-таки, чем вы не пара? Я за вами наблюдала в ресторане – вы удивительно подходите друг другу. И столько

лет знакомы. Даже странно, неужели он никогда не ухаживал за тобой? А ты? Не была в него влюблена?

- Как-то так выходило. Действительно, в студенческие годы он был в меня влюблен, но у меня был другой парень. Потом, когда я вроде бы была не прочь, он уже женился. Правда, первая жена была настоящей стервой. Слава богу, она быстро сбежала от него с каким-то музыкантом. Но я уже была замужем за Пабло, ты его помнишь. А когда я разошлась с Пабло, Оливье встретил свою вторую жену, художницу. Ему под стать. Они и встретились на каких-то любительских курсах живописи. Оливье ведь неплохо рисует. Они оба были уже не очень молоды. Ему как раз сорок стукнуло. Я запомнила, потому что мы их свадьбу в его день рождения отмечали. Тогда они квартиру эту купили и обставили. Это был счастливый брак. Но прожили они вместе с художницей недолго. Ей и пятидесяти не было, заболела. Какое-то психическое расстройство. Она впала в депрессию, а потом покончила жизнь самоубийством. И с тех пор Оливье один.

- Вот видишь. Надо тебе за него взяться по-настоящему.

- Ну конечно. В семьдесят лет! Самое время этим заниматься.

- Во-первых, тебе не семьдесят, а только шестьдесят пять. А во-вторых, ты в прекрасной форме. Вон, какая фигура, девчонка, да и только.

- Знаю, знаю как у вас про таких говорят. Сзади, мол, манекенщица, а спереди –
пенсионерка. Или что-то вроде того… Ты мне уже говорила! – Флоранс обиженно поджала губы.

- Ничего такого я про тебя не говорила! Это я про ту мадам, что перед нами по бульвару в шортах шествовала!

- Да ладно, не оправдывайся! – Флоранс махнула рукой. – Посмотрим, что ты через десять лет запоешь.

Прошло несколько месяцев. Приближался Новый год.

- Как ты насчет Парижа? – поинтересовалась Светлана во время очередной встречи с подругой. – Поедем?

Они традиционно отправлялись в Париж на рождественскую распродажу.

- Не знаю, посмотрим, - ответила Флоранс без особого энтузиазма.

-Ты бы позвонила Оливье, может быть, опять у него остановимся? – не отставала Светлана.

- Если и поедем, то остановимся в гостинице, а не у Оливье.

- Почему же? Он же приглашал, - удивилась Светлана.

- Я отнюдь не уверена, что на сей раз нам найдется там место, - Флоранс продолжала говорить загадками.

- Ты думаешь? Но там же огромная квартира. Нет, тут что-то не так. Признавайся, в чем дело!

- Я тебе не говорила, но несколько месяцев назад я ездила в Париж, - с явной неохотой начала Флоранс. – Ты знаешь, твои слова тогда в поезде... Ну, мол, что мы подходим друг другу. С Оливье. Я все время об этом думала. Действительно, он всегда был мне симпатичен. Вот и решила: а почему бы и нет? И отправилась в Париж. Приезжаю, звоню Оливье. Не поверишь, когда он подошел к телефону, разволновалась, как девчонка… Он очень обрадовался. Сразу пригласил меня зайти. Немного удивилась, что он не спросил, где я остановилась и почему не у него. Но ничего такого не подумала. Принарядилась, напомадилась и отправилась. Прихожу, а Оливье мне вдруг заявляет, что меня ждет сюрприз.

- Вот как? И что же за сюрприз? – Светлана уже по выражению лица Флоранс понимала, что ничего хорошего ждать не приходится.

- В том-то и дело, что не совсем тот, какой он планировал. Мы сидим, пьем кофе, и тут хлопает дверь. Заходит женщина. Ты знаешь, я сразу ее узнала. Оливье так красочно описывал ее... «Флоранс, позволь познакомить тебя с Анитой. Прошу любить и жаловать». Ты знаешь, он произнес все это так, будто на ее месте, по крайней мере, принцесса крови. А уж как смотрел на нее! Прямо таял весь. Даже противно. Потом он представил меня. Сказал, что, мол, вот, старинная приятельница заехала навестить. Так что ты думаешь? Эта самая Анита вдруг хмыкнула нечто невразумительное, скорчила пренеприятную физиономию, развернулась и вышла из комнаты. Представляешь пассаж? Бедный Оливье не знал, куда ему деваться. Побежал за ней, но мадам все равно не пожелала выйти. Вот так-то! А ты говоришь, поехали...

- Надо же! Где он ее отыскал? В Баден-Бадене? А что с ее мужем? Он умер?

- Понятия не имею, не стану же я его спрашивать. А потом и неинтересно мне это! – категорически отрезала Флоранс.

- Жалко Оливье.

- Не говори..., - согласилась Флоранс. - Одна жена сбежала, другая повесилась, а теперь эта мадам объявилась…

- Не везет ему что-то с женщинами,– подвела итог Светлана.

- А мне что ли везет с мужиками? Хотя, еще не все потеряно. Может, найду-таки старичка-бодрячка, - рассмеялась Флоранс. – А пока вот гостиницу в Париже надо поискать поближе к центру, - закончила она уже деловым тоном.

Natalia Beglova, UNOG retired

First from left during the celebration at the Press Bar of the Palais des Nations on 14.8. 2014

RÉFLEXIONS

REFLECTIONS

REFLEXIONES

Purple cows

Life at its infancy is sprightly, funny, cuddly, cute, spontaneous, surprising, delightful – whether puppy, kitten or child. Eventually all this magic mutates into us.

Art happens in the head of the art lover, the colour enthusiast, the form aficionado, the passionate melomane. Art is not only the canvas or the score, but the feeling, the emotion, the melancholy it evokes.

What distinguishes human beings from animals is not just that humans know how to make tools (sea otters and crows also use tools!) or that they engage in sports activities (just watch a dog play with a ball on the beach!), but that humans know how to create art and how to transform ideas, emotions, feelings into canvas, sculpture, music, how to distill reality into symbols, how to evoke the transcendental.

As youth needs to believe in role models, elderly people also need to believe in the coming generations. The cycle of life is fuelled by faith – sometimes even faith in an illusion – that inner voice that needs to keep alive an optimistic light of hope in the future.

Although we all live in the real world with all its beauty, complexity, nuances, physical laws and objective facts, we operate in artificially limited worlds, in contexts governed by teleological rules, red lines, stop signs, taboos – and enforced certainties. These separate epistemological systems are subject to man-made rules with their own internal logic and mathematics, where 2 plus 2 does not necessarily result in 4, because the building blocks are weighted according to extraneous factors of perceived political or social necessity, where essential elements and crucial facts that do not fit the equation can be negated if their logical consequences and implications counter the socially imposed "truths" which determine not only the outcome but also the process of deliberation.

We all have a pluralistic identity which is always in flux like a river (Heraclitus) and manifests not only a collective dimension in its dynamics of flow, in liturgies and rituals, but also an individualistic dimension defined by our personal choices.

Knowledge is of little use without courage and determination.

It is easier to admire a good book than its author. Human beings have many more pages.

Learning requires observation, distance, comparison and the capacity to laugh at it all.

Individualism is a mixed blessing. Identity means knowing who one is and having one's own ideas; but trying to be a centre of attention is exhausting for ourselves – and others!

Too much achievement, too much public fame has a price: life itself.

Poetry resides in us all, but only the passionate few can reveal its magic.

The key to personal happiness is a sense of belonging, of harmony and familiarity with one's environment, a combination of enthusiasm and melancholy, of love and equanimity, of being snug in one's skin. Love of oneself and respect for one's heritage must not to be confused with narcissism or xenophobia. On the contrary: it is a prerequisite for creativity and a dependable foundation for loving and inter-relating.

Loving others as ourselves is daunting – seeing others like ourselves is rather more manageable.

Music is neither a liturgy of sounds nor a litany of notes -- not empty ritual, but epiphany, a sacrament capable to redeem the soul. On angel wings waft melodies of melancholy, merriment, of yearning, jubilation -- while the human heart beats to the rhythm of ethereal hymns.

Assigning labels to complex frameworks – and people – tends to misdirect attention and is often done deliberately to obstruct objective assessment by red herring distractions.

Age teaches us the courage of humility.

To be in tune with ourselves depends on our capacity to be here and now, seize the beauty of the moment, the miracle of light and shades, of birdsong and profound silence, eye contact with a spouse, a friend, a cat, the touch of a loving hand.

Cultural development raises intellect over instinct, reason over emotion. Hence cultural development tends toward pacifism.

History

Countries should cease celebrating old battles and old victories. Instead, they could celebrate the end of hostilities and the signing of peace agreements.

World War I was not fought to make the world safe for democracy, but rather safe for big business and financial bankers.

The 14th July 1789 was hardly a day of glory or even a manifestation of retributive justice. There were only seven prisoners detained at the prison of Bastille St. Antoine (built 1357 at the time of the 100 Years' War): four convicted forgers, one sexual offender (the Count de Solages; the Marquis de Sade had been imprisoned there until 4 July, when he was transferred to the Charenton insane asylum) and two mentally ill detainees. A mob stormed the prison, liberated the prisoners, murdered the thoroughly benign commander Bernard-René de Launay, who had patiently attempted to negotiate with the leaders of the mob. Most of the guards were massacred. A great disinformation campaign followed: The botched "liberation" and other repulsive events soon mutated into heroic mythology. The Bastille was not a "place of slavery and horror", nor did it contain "machines of death", at least not in 1789!

The historical truth of many events largely believed to have happened is frequently much less interesting than the actions and reactions that undoubtedly followed and which are solidly documented. For instance, no one can prove that St. James ever went to Spain or that his bones lie in Santiago de Compostela. But who can deny the truth of 12 centuries of pilgrimage to Santiago, the fervour of millions of Christians who ventured the Way of St. James in the hope of spiritual renewal, indulgence, salvation? Who can deny the considerable cultural and economic impacts of these pilgrimages? Other examples – some good, some bad: whether of not the Virgin Mary was visited by Archangel Gabriel, the paintings of the Visitation by Jan van Eick, Rogier van der Weyden, Filippo Lippi, Fra Angelico, Lorenzo Costa, Pietro Perugino, Leonardo da Vinci, Rubens, Murillo, etc. are a miraculous added value. Whether or not one believes in the Bible, Bach's *Passion according to Matthew*, Händel's *Messiah*, Haydn's *Missa in tempore belli*, Mozart's *Requiem*, Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis*, Bruckner's *Te deum*, more than justify the belief.

On the negative side – no one can prove that the USS Maine was blown up by the Spaniards in 1898 or that the Spaniards had anything to do with it – but it was used to justify the US intervention in the Cuban war of independence, leading directly to the occupation of Cuba (and of Guantánamo), Puerto Rico, Guam and the Philippines. The consequences by far exceeded the pretext. Yet another: we all know that there were no weapons of mass destruction in Iraq in 2003, and yet the "coalition of the willing" ushered in the total destabilization of the area, the death of a million Iraqis, the emergence of ISIS. Again, the effects are evident, even if the presumed origin was a deliberate fake.

Law and Politics

The rule of law is meant to progressively achieve justice, which requires flexibility and fine-tuning. If law were mathematics – one would use computers and could dispense of judges! The rule of positivism or *dura lex sed lex* is just blind bureaucracy.

Positivism should not be confused with the rule of law – for it is only the rule of the elites.

Positivism in law is intended to promote predictability and stability. But when positivism is divorced from common sense, it becomes Shylock-like intransigence and ultimately undermines the credibility of law as a means to attain justice, not blind mathematical results.

The lust of destruction is often camouflaged as the legitimate instinct of self-preservation.

It is not always the party that pulls the trigger first who bears primary responsibility for an armed conflict, but the party who deliberately drives the other to despair, provokes him, corners him and gives him no alternative but to fight or surrender.

Patriotism can be and often is a manifestation of intellectual laziness.

Patriotism is not war-mongering but seeking the welfare of the country by waging peace and working for social justice.

Elites do not want greater participation by the *hoi polloi* and prefer to entertain them with *panem et circensis* to keep them quiet.

There are two factors of communal cohesion – coercive violence and a sense of right and wrong, ties of sentiment and solidarity between members of the group.

The reign of violence can be replaced by the reign of norms that define equity and establish machinery to achieve it. But the powerful prefer violence.

Capitalism, if unregulated, undermines democratic governance and is incompatible with that value it claims for itself: meritocracy.

Politicians are seldom credible advocates of logic, consistency or vision. They tend to perform as improvisation artists, architects of make-believe and jugglers of incompatibles.

Manufactured consent corrupts democracies into populist entities that easily mutate into predator democracies domestically and internationally.

Some countries praise the blessings of competition. But when a viable competitor emerges, they rush to destroy it by military force instead of by the normal processes of competition. The rules of the game apply only as long as we are going to win.

If we undertake to make a list of non-rogue States, it will be a short list.

The post-Orwellian world is characterized by the prevalence of logical breaks and cognitive dissonances. A Ministry of Truth is no longer needed to suppress facts, because facts have ceased to have logical or predictable consequences. The stream of life and random events continue notwithstanding facts that cry out for attention and action. The post-Orwellian world hosts a new category of facts that have inherent significance and implications – yet, quite amazingly, no consequences. Impervious to facts, it is and remains "business as usual."

Politically incorrect facts are like the cold light of a beacon aimed blindly at the sky.

Speaking out has a price. Keeping silent often has its price too. Ultimately, the long-term consequences of not speaking out tend to be worse.

Human Rights

Modern *Realpolitik* has learned how to instrumentalize human rights rhetoric to pursue traditional geopolitics. Frequent buzz words include tolerance, peace, partnership, democracy, freedom – all transformable into their opposites.

Life is not law but heart. We speak of *human* rights, not of positivistic entitlements. In other words, we speak of rights that necessarily attach to the human person, that are inherent or immanent.

Human rights are not just the right to hold property, to compete or to have free markets – these are actually ancillary rights that follow the more essential primary rights – or enabling rights – to food, water, shelter. Society must satisfy both, but should address the former only after it has ensured the latter.

Euphemisms facilitate blatant injustice.

A culture of punishment gives a false hope of ensuring social peace. Indeed, reliance on deterrence as a viable preventive policy will always fail unless and until the penal code addresses the deeper causes of crime, which more often than not reveal social dysfunctions that can only be healed by education, rehabilitation and an expectation of justice. Force and sanctions are meaningful only when they are understood, when both society and the criminal perceive punitive measures as necessary, fair and proportional -- and not rejected out of hand as mere exercise of power by established elites.

The "human rights industry" thrives on arbitrary fashions, on the "flavour of the month", nourished by empty rhetoric that avoids challenging the *status quo*. It caters to a particular audience, distracting attention away from the underlying causes of injustice and serving as a convenient fig leaf that facilitates the pursuit of business as usual – in all good conscience. AdeZ

AdeZ and Marko Stanovic listening to Daniel de Roulet at the UN Library

THEÂTRE

DRAMA

TEATRO

As if this were the end of life

The sound of waves breaking gently on a stony beach. Two voices walking near the shore.

But why did you choose me?

> You caught my eye. You weren't like the others. And then it felt good to hold you, to feel the weight of you, your shape. There was a feeling of comfort, of peace.

And so you brought me all this way.

> I made one step and then another. I became attached. Keeping someone close—it takes an effort, concentration, it's a responsibility. This becomes love.

Love?

> Strange to say?

It should mean something to me.

> But what? That's what you are asking yourself?

Above all I feel far from home. First one step and then another, and then—after so many thousands—where are we? Far.

> You miss your old home?

A bit of shore covered with others like me. An embankment. The sun and rain.

Garlands of yellow lights outlining a row of restaurants, sandal shops.

> You know, I almost left you once.

It was more like you forgot me.

> All of a sudden we had gotten so used to one another.

I think you needed to look around a little.

> I suppose you're right. And I came running back.

You were afraid.

I think so.

Afraid of what though?

Of having left—abandoned you.

As if I couldn't fend for myself.

As if I should be wondering who I was to be able to leave you like that.

Words.

Are you still angry with me?

I've never been angry with you.

Then . . . Did you feel something else?

This is something I've been thinking about lately.

Along with other things?

Too many things.

You'd rather not think at all.

Probably not.

A long, gray metal warehouse, a semi up on blocks.

What do you really want from me?

Your company, some conversation perhaps, staying together.

And if it had been me who had looked around?

It's hard to imagine.

You know, even with my eyes shut I can look around.

A dog running ahead, nose to the ground, darting from one side of the road to the other.

I have learned so many things since we have been together.

I'm glad to hear it.

I look at other people—they seem to have so many needs. Things they need to buy, to drink, to see, to eat. Places they want to go.

I freed you from all that. I'm all you need.

Off to the left a small harbor framed in concrete, a brown mast, a blue light.

What have you learned?

Can I say nothing? I don't mean that in a mean way. Sometimes I wonder if life with you isn't too easy for me. Always your hand holding me, stroking me, protecting me. What could someone learn from such a life?

Something about love?

The sounds of a boat rubbing against its hawser.

Do you ever get tired?

I thought I would. In the beginning I told myself, if I can't, so be it, it's not to be. There'll be a sadness, but freedom too.

You could find someone who knows how to dance!

That's what you would do if you were me?

The warmth of the water.

You shouldn't feel so responsible.

You don't understand. Responsibility is not a burden. Your weight, your presence, the fact and the form of you. As if this were the end of life, so simple and essential.

William Warner, UN New York

Would Like To Meet

The rather un-lived-in living room of a characterless modern flat. Two cheap armchairs from IKEA. Table. Two dining chairs. Unopened packet of crisps. Two glasses. A bottle of white wine.

Bill, unfit- and unkempt-looking, overweight, t-shirt and jeans, wrong side of 35, sitting in one armchair looking at a page of small ads in the Standard with a biro in hand.

Ring at the door. Bill admits Ben, a little older, but sprucer and slimmer. Jacket and trousers.

Scene 1.

Ben: *(looking around rather bewildered, taking in the rather dismal surroundings and the absence of other people):* So I'm the first, then? When are the others coming?

Bill: Well actually, it's only going to be the two of us.

Ben: You said you were inviting a few people round for a flat-warming. With drinks and nibbles!

Bill: I did.

Ben: And …? Where are the people? Where are the drinks and nibbles?

Bill: This morning Jeannette rang and said she had talked with Christine and Mary. They had agreed it would be disloyal to Alison for them to come. As if it was me who dumped Alison rather than the other way round.

Ben: And what did Peter and Jonathan and Alan think about that?

Bill: Do you really think they consulted them?

Ben: Well, not every man is a wuss like you. … (*Pause.)* So it will be just you and me, then?

Bill: Yup.

Ben: Well, it'll be a great party! …. A packet of crisps, a miseryguts and a bottle of warm white wine from Tesco's. I didn't bring a bottle, by the way. As you advertised the event as a flat-warming, I've brought you some tea-towels. … But perhaps I should have brought a blow-up doll.

Bill: Thanks. How thoughtful.

Ben: Well, you could at least have warned me. I could have been giving a lovely lady a lovely evening.

Bill: Don't let me keep you. Ring her up and say you've had a cancellation. …. (*Pause)*... Look, I didn't tell you because I thought it might actually be good, just the two of us. You're my oldest friend …

Ben: Not your *only* friend?

Bill: *(ignoring that remark)*: … As I was saying, you're my oldest friend, and I thought you might give me a bit of advice about how to meet someone else. A "lovely lady", as you put it. Tell me how you got back into seeing people after Sheila threw you out.

Ben: Sheila didn't throw me out!

Bill: You said she told you that if you didn't leave, she would walk out herself …

Ben: That's not quite the same. … Anyway, I think it was time for a change. *(Pompously.)* Our relationship had run its course. She was pestering to get married.

Bill: And what would have been so wrong with that?

Ben: Well, I don't think I am quite ready.

Bill: After 12 years?!

Ben: Well, if you get married, then the woman will expect kids.

Bill: And you don't want kids?

Ben: I've seen my sister's. Horrible little brats, always crying and wailing and needing wiping at both ends.

Bill: I know what you mean. I remember Alison's nieces.

Ben: And if you get married, you're almost bound to get divorced one day, and that's a terrible hassle. Easier not to get married in the first place. Especially as there are so many other "lovely ladies" for me to meet. (*Sighs, though with not with sadness.*) So many women, so little time!

Bill: Exactly. That's what I felt. About the marriage bit, I mean.

Ben: So Alison was pushing you to *get married*?

Bill: Not in so many words. But I sensed the pressure.

Ben: Because a little bird told me she'd gone off you and was interested in her trainer at the gym. …

Bill: Who told you that?!

Ben: That's my little secret. Of course it may not be true. …. *(Pause.)* But the same little bird told me everything was not well between you and Alison in the, er, bedroom department.

Bill: That's rubbish! Who told you that?

Pause.

Ben: How often were you doing it, then?

Bill: It's none of your business. … (*Pause; thinks: decides to come clean).* Well, we had been together for 10 years or so, and it does get a bit boring after a while ….. Perhaps every two weeks …

Ben: Once a *fortnight*!!! I wash my car more often than that! No wonder Alison's leching after the handsome David at the gym.

Bill: That's not true!!

Ben: Perhaps it is, chum. … So tell me: was the big fortnightly event on a Saturday evening or on Sunday morning over the Observer magazine?

Bill: Mind your own business!

Ben: And when does Alison go to the gym?

Bill: Sunday morning.

Ben: Ah! …

Bill: Don't you dare go there!

Pause

Ben: I rest my case. Anyway, who cares? You went your separate ways months ago. Why shouldn't you and Alison be looking to get your pleasures elsewhere? … Well, I *say* pleasures. I hope you both *did* get a bit of pleasure, even it was rather boring and only once a fortnight when she wasn't at the gym. …

Bill: Piss off!

Ben: Calm down, sunshine! Didn't you just say something about getting my advice on how to get yourself a lovely lady? Someone to keep you warm between the sheets now that you've moved from that seedy bedsit to this, er *(looks around sceptically),* cozy new home?

Bill: Well, I just thought you have rather more experience in that area, and …

Ben: I do, of course, and I think that's a great idea. I'm more than happy to point you in the right direction. … Meanwhile I do hope you're practising on your own. … I mean otherwise your, er, John Thomas" might fall off. … If it hasn't already … You know the saying: use it or lose it.

Bill: Oh shut up! You're disgusting.

Ben: No, look. I'm a nice guy. To tell the truth, it'll be a bit of a relief not to be showing Sharon a nice time tonight. I could do with a bit of a rest. *(Scratches his crotch.)* So now I'm here I'll play the Good Samaritan and give you some counselling. Sex advice from Dr Ben. But first I need a drink. And not just some cheap plonk you haven't even bothered to put in the fridge. Have you got any beer, spirits, ice-cubes? *(Bill shakes his head.)* Any delicious nibbles apart from that one packet of crisps?

Bill: Sorry, no. I was going to get it all in today, but then Jeannette phoned up and I didn't bother.

Ben: So it wasn't worth doing just for your sex counsellor, then? Thanks a lot. Then give me a tenner and I'll go along the road.

Scene 2

The same, some time later. Ring at the door. Bill opens to Ben, who walks in with a small cardboard box which he unpacks on the table: a bottle of vodka, a carton of orange juice, a plastic bag of ice cubes, several packets of crisps and nuts.

Ben: Why I'm such a saint, I don't know! I'm invited for drinks and nibbles, forego an evening with hot totty, and arrive to find I won't have even Jeannette or Mary or Christine to flirt with. *I'm the only guest*. And I end up doing the catering myself!

Bill: As I said, Ben, you don't have to stay.

Ben: It's OK. Just get some glasses. But be aware that Doctor Ben charges £100 an hour.

Bill: Fuck off! (*He goes to the kitchen. In his absence, Ben picks up the Standard and sees that Bill has been ringing adverts in a Lonely Hearts column.)*

Bill returns with two tall beer glasses.

Ben: (*taking on the air of a psychotherapist and adopting a poor German accent)* Very gut! As you know, I vould not normally take alcohol vile advising a patient. Zat vould be ferry unprofessional. But zis is obviously a ferry difficult case, so I vill make an exception.

(*Puts ice cubes in the glasses, half fills them with vodka and tops up with juice.)*

Now just lie down, empty what's left of your mind, and ve vill address your sexual problem.

Bill: You stupid sod! I don't have a sexual problem! And I don't have a couch.

Ben: Anyone of your age who has sex less frequently than I clean my car certainly has a sex problem. Scientists have proofed zat a man in ze prime of life – I know it is hard to believe, looking at you, but you *are* in ze prime of life - needs to haff sexual intercourse at least tvice

a veek. Ze emptying of ze testicles floods ze brain with serotonin, which makes you feel good. Uzzervize, ze build-up of unspent semen will poison your brain.

(Reverts to normal accent.) As you are an ignorant pillock, Bill – despite your expensive education - I should explain that serotonin is a kind of natural happiness drug.

Bill *(sarcastically)*: Thank you, Doctor. I knew that.

Ben: So you must empty zose testicles, those "love jewels", as the French call them - in ze *vay* I suggest, as *often* as I suggest. Otherwise ze result is *unhappiness*, depression. Vich is just what you appear to have.

Bill: For God's sake, stop messing about. I get the message. Get on with it. I just want to meet someone again. How do I do that?

Ben: *(snapping back into his normal accent)* Well, it's not so difficult. All the normal ways should work. It depends on how desperate you are.

Bill: What do you mean – all the normal ways?

Ben: You know, hanging around in bars. Inviting someone for a meal. Taking a colleague to the cinema. Going go a gym … [*Bill reacts* ...] Oh, sorry! … Note to self: *don't mention the gym!* Think of how you started up with Alison. How did you two meet? How did you *get it on*, as they say?

Bill: I don't think we need to get into that.

Ben: Come on. *It vill help our diagnosis. Let's put everysing on ze table.* Tell Doctor Ben.

Bill: Well if you must know, we were seeing each other as sort of friends for 18 months, and then we got drunk at the office party and things moved on from there …

Ben: Not ze most romantic of courtships, of course, but not unusual, it must be said. All your inhibitions disinhibited by 17 vodka-and-cokes. … Photocopying your privates on the Xerox machine, etc. --- And how vould you describe your sexual relationship after that alcohol-fueled debut?

Bill: I'm not getting into that.

Ben *(coaxing)*: Go on. Tell Doctor Ben …

Bill: No.

Ben: Tell me zen instead about your sexual experience *before* zis, er, rather lengthy "courtship" of Alison. Courtship is of course a very old-fashioned vord. But zen, perhaps you are an old-fashioned man. Do you seenk ze vord "courtship" is accurate in this case?

Bill: No. Yes. Maybe. I suppose we were both interested in each other but didn't pick up the courage to … hold hands or anything.

Ben: *Mein Gott!* I'm beginning to seenk you are a hopeless case. I may heff to pass you on to Doctor Ruth! But we've still have some time left before our hour is up. Tell me about your experience vis the opposite sex *before* Alison.

Bill: I was very keen on girls from very early on.

Ben: At last some good news! Zees is ferry promeessing!

Bill: In fact, I was engaged twice before the age of 8!

Ben: Eenteresting, ferry eentereesting! Tell me more!

Bill: The first was Janet. Her dad owned the pet shop near school. I adored the parrot and the hamsters. My aunt asked Janet if she was going to marry me, and she replied that she would – "if he engages me". So I did. I hoped to inherit the shop.

Ben: But I presume that, at this young age, there was no, how you say, "hanky panky". I mean between you and Janet, of course, not between you and the parrot or the hamsters.

Bill: You silly bugger!

Ben: You did not show each other what my colleague Dr Monty Python refers to – in his technical term - as your respective "naughty bits".

Bill: Certainly not!

Ben: Although such behaviour is in fact quite common among very young people. ..

Bill: Well, we didn't!

Ben: And why did this beautiful engagement come to nothing?

Bill: We moved away for a year, and by the time we came back Janet had found someone else.

Ben: Very sad. My sympathies. So someone else inherited the hamsters and the parrot.

Bill: Yes. Paul Godwin. My dentist's son. I was pretty sad about that. But it didn't matter very much, because I got engaged to Bridget, who lived four doors down.

Ben: How was this engagement formalized?

Bill: I gave her a ruby ring that came with a lollipop.

Ben: Of course, how romantic! … And how was life with your second fiancée?

Bill: We were very close. We walked to school together. I fought Andrew Woolston for her, and we rigged up a kind of tin can phone line between our bedrooms.

Ben: More good news! You fought a rival knight to keep your lady love. And you found a way of staying in contact even though you lived apart. … But again, I suppose, no "hanky-panky"?

Bill: Of course not. … Or rather, not really. We *did* do something rather strange, now I come to think of it. We collected the empty ink cartridges from our fountain pens, prised out their bottoms with our compasses …

Ben: Eentereesting! Please proceed.

Bill: … and inserted one into the other to make a kind of swishy plastic cane. We took turns to beat each other.

Ben: Curiouser and curiouser.

Bill: My sister once asked my mother if she knew what we were up to. My mother went white, obviously fearing the worst … She was relieved that we were only inflicting pain on each other. Taking it in turns to play the headmaster in the *Beano*.

Ben: I presume you were not yet mature enough to conduct full sexual intercourse …

Bill: No, no, no. Puberty came later. Very much later in my case. Well into my teens, I found the showers after rugby very embarrassing. There was Roger, with pubic hair and an enormous todger, and there was me – all pink and white and hairless with the genitals of an infant.

Ben: "Todger"! An interesting vord. You do realize you have a rather archaic focabulary, Mr Wainwright? I vunder why zees is. … But let me get this right: you had two fiancées by the time you were eight, and indulged in sado-masochistic behaviour before the age of 11 before you could even masturbate. And then …?

Bill: And then I went to a single-sex school where I never caught sight of a girl.

Ben: Where you envied Roger and his todger.

Bill: It was seven years in a sexual desert.

Ben: How poetically put! … But your fiancée Bridget was still down the road …?

Bill: Yes, but she went to a mixed school where there were no doubt hairy young teenagers who had more to thrill her than a plastic cane …

Ben: I see. But I suppose you went to parties and discos where there were girls?

Bill: No.

Ben: Tennis clubs?

Bill: No.

Ben: Car boot sales? Whist drives? Harvest festivals?

Bill: No, no, no.

Ben: My dear chap, you are aware that, according to Larkin, sexual intercourse began in 1963. …

Bill: Yes, I know. Just before the Beatles' first LP. It was bit too late for him. Etc. But a bit too early for me. Because sexual intercourse had obviously stopped again before I became capable of the act.

Ben: So when did it start for you?

Bill: When I was 19. Between school and university I got on a scheme which sent me to Germany for six months with 35 other school-leavers. Most of them girls. And I was determined to lose my virginity before I came home.

Ben: My goodness! I'm glad to learn that the boy was not totally bereft of spunk – if you'll pardon the expression. And you fulfilled your ambition?

Bill: Yes.

Ben: With a lady of the night in the Hamburg red light district, perhaps?

Bill: No!

Ben: Why not? That would have been a totally normal transaction with a great deal of historical precedent. The oldest profession. Fathers used to pay for their sons to be initiated in this way.

Bill: Well mine certainly didn't. And I would never think of that kind of thing. I guess I was a bit of a romantic.

Ben: Even though the major incentive was to lose your virginity rather than find the love of your life?

Bill: I suppose I had a hazy idea that the two might be combined.

Ben: So how did it go?

Bill: It was pretty horrible, actually. In a cheap hotel in Munich. With one of the girls on the programme. Virginia.

Ben: A very appropriate name, you might say.

Bill: Well yes. Or rather no. … Of course I was nervous and clumsy and came too fast. That was bad enough, but then she revealed that I was not her first. Or even second, for that matter. … Which was a bit of a shock. I thought we would be like Adam and Eve – discovering sex together.

Ben: So you didn't actually communicate much about sex before then …?

Bill: No.

Ben: And after that …?

Bill: Well, it did gradually get a little better. Virginia and I carried on for about a year, even after we went to separate universities. But I was at the last single-sex college in Cambridge and she was at a uni in the north … and the inevitable happened. She found someone else, and I was dumped.

Ben: This seems to be developing into rather a pattern.

Bill: Hmmm.

Ben: And then?

Bill: And then nothing. That was it. … Until Alison.

Ben: So that is the sum total of your sexual experience. A bit of flagellation at nine or 10. Premature ejaculation in Munich, improving slightly over time. And once a fortnight with Alison for 10 years after a courtship of 18 months … This is hardly the record of a Don Juan or a Casanova.

Bill: No. I didn't say it was.

Ben: And now you want my advice on how to rekindle your sex life at the age of – how old are you?

Bill: Thirty-five. No. -six. Yes, thirty-six. Thirty-seven next month.

Ben: Oh dear. *Late* 30s already. Let's have another drink. *(He pours.) (Pause.)* … I see you have been looking at some Lonely Hearts ads. In a newspaper. Very old-fashioned, newspapers. But very sweet. *(Picks up paper and reads.)* WOMEN SEEKING MEN: "Fun-loving professional, mid-30s, WLTM similar man, GSOH, for friendship and more. London area." I see you've marked that one.

Bill: What's WLTM?

Ben: My God. You are ignorant! "Would Like To Meet".

Bill: Oh I see! Thanks! And GSOH … Let me guess …. "Good Salary Own Home"? Bloody hell! Is that all women are interested in?!

Ben: No my dear boy. They also like tall men with good bodies and all their hair. Which may be a problem for you. But for your information GSOH means "Good Sense of Humour" … Do you qualify?

Bill: Well, I don't feel terribly hilarious at the moment. Perhaps I'll buy a joke book.

Ben: And by the way, "mid 30s" probably means "early 40s". And "fun-loving" means "will want a lot of sex". i.e. far more than once a fortnight. Are you up to it?

Bill: Ha bloody ha! Listen, the once a fortnight business only kicked in after a few years. Alison and I did do it more often that that at the start.

Ben: And perhaps a bit *less* than once a fortnight towards the end?

Bill: *(a little sheepishly)* Maybe.

Ben: How often?

Bill: At the start or at the end?

Ben: Both.

Bill: I'm not telling.

Ben: Suit yourself. Though full disclosure might be more helpful. Perhaps a lack of experience or libido on your part is a factor in you being dumped so often.

Bill: What do you mean, "so often"? Twice at the most.

Ben: I mean your pet-shop owner's daughter, your pre-pubertal flagellation partner, your Munich initiator … and Alison. That makes four.

Bill: Ah.

Ben: Anyvay, it is goot zat you are now trying to remedy ze situation through ze Lonely Hearts ads. Zat is a sign of progress. May I just ask why you are not following the more conventional routes?

Bill: By which you mean …?

Ben: Chatting up a secretary, taking her for a meal or a film, holding hands, going back for coffee. Letting things take their course. Or meeting people at a gym. Oh sorry! *Don't mention the gym!*

Bill *(curtly)*: No!

Ben: Or you could join an evening class … Art history, English Lit. There are always more women, providing you don't sign up for car mechanics. Or how about an amateur dramatics club? I'm told *they* are hotbeds of wife-swapping etc.

Bill: I *did* try the amateur dramatics club a couple of years ago, in fact.

Ben: Good! Well done! And …?

Bill: Well, for a start I didn't have a wife to swap. And anyway, practically everyone in amateur dramatics is a pensioner. When any younger women *do* come along, they get married immediately, fall pregnant, and disappear off the face of the earth.

Ben: Well, what about the amateur *operatic* society, then? I hear there are a lot of women in that.

Bill: There are. But most of them are in their 60s or 70s, at least, and I can't bear Gilbert & Sullivan. In any case I can't sing and can't dance.

Ben: That's no problem. They're so short of men they're gagging for anyone with a – what was the strange word you used – "todger". Whatever their talents.

Bill: I think that's unnecessarily crude of you.

Ben: And don't they do a pantomime every year with loads of kids and a couple of girls in tights pretending to be blokes?

Bill: Yes, but I'm not Jimmy Savile or Rolf Harris, and the girls in tights have boyfriends who practically lock them in chastity belts and pick them up in sports cars after the rehearsals.

Ben: But Pete was telling me his wife dragged him to *Chicago* only last month. And he says there were loads of hot chicks. Perhaps you should give the operatic club another try. The young talent can't all have boyfriends with sports cars and padlocks.

Bill *(humouring Ben)*: I'll think about it.

Ben: Of course, you could also put an ad in MEN SEEKING WOMEN. How would it go?

Bill: Do we go for honesty or realism?

Ben: Well, you *could* try "Overweight balding depressive, late 30s, seeks Marilyn Monroe lookalike to revive moribund sex life". But that might not find too many takers. … Of course you can't write GSOH because you don't have a sense of humour. Any while you might still have a reasonable salary, you don't really have your own home. … Any more.

Bill: For a counsellor, you're really very comforting. Good for the morale.

Ben: Let's have a top-up. *(He sloshes generous helpings of vodka into the glasses.)* … Of course you could try internet dating. …

Bill: I absolutely *loathe* the internet.

Ben: But that's where all the action is these days. At least, it's worked well for Doctor Ben here. I've met many lovely ladies that way.

Bill: How many?

Ben: Lots. But who's counting? All you need to know is that my John Thomas, my todger, or whatever you want to call it, is getting far more attention and exercise than when I was at uni 20 years ago. And that's saying something.

Bill (*sourly*): Congratulations!

Ben: The great thing is that internet dating saves you so much time. Apart from the lies about their age and their figures, you find out a lot about them very fast and can skip a lot of the chat. Of course, you have to be careful if they say they want to go on walks, or to concerts, because they may *actually want* to go on walks or to concerts. But you know you're on a winner if they say they like cooking and cuddly nights at home in front of the telly. No expensive dinners or theatre tickets. No 18-month courtship nonsense. I tell you, with anyone half-beddable, you can be in on the first or second date. The third at the very outside. If I'm not, it's curtains. Honest! My latest is a nurse called Sharon. We met yesterday. I could have been getting to third base with her this very minute … if I hadn't decided come to this, er, wonderful party of yours instead.

Bill *(increasingly irritated)*: I told you, you needn't stay. Piss off and get your end away if you want.

Ben: Look, I'm here. Sharon's fine, but nothing special. I can see to her tomorrow. I've got a soft spot for you, and I'm trying to do you a favour. I'll stay.

Bill: Thanks!

Ben: Anyway, why do you *loathe* the internet? *Everyone* loves the internet these days. You'll be telling me next that you don't have an iPhone or a tablet. Or that you aren't on Facebook.

Bill: I don't have an iPhone or a tablet. And I'm not on Facebook.

Ben: Bloody hell! What century are we in? You must be the only person under 40 who doesn't, and who isn't. What can we do with you?! *Anyway*, I was just telling you why internet dating sites are far better at finding you bedmates than Lonely Hearts in the papers. You can swiftly screen out vegans, Christians, Sun-readers or other people you would like to avoid.

Bill: Listen, I'm gazing at a screen all day at work, and don't want to be on the internet when I'm at home. In any case, whenever I go googling for stuff it just pushes porn and viagra at me.

Ben: Ah, you see how clever the internet is? It knows what you really want! Google reads your mind. It knows you *are* interested in porn and penis pills.

Bill: No I'm NOT! Why would I want to gaze at brain-dead men with big todgers and slags with pumped-up breasts and no morals?

Ben: Why indeed? … But I think you protest so much. … You must have been looking around – otherwise Google wouldn't bombard you with all those ads.

Bill: And why would Google think I need penis pills?

Ben: Perhaps it's been spying for the Americans and picked up on your low libido and pathetic sex life. Anyway, maybe the pills wouldn't be so bad an idea if you are considering

entering the ring again. I'll freely admit to popping a pill or two myself, to cope with all the women who are throwing themselves at me. I'm nearly 40, after all, though I say I'm 33.

Bill: I don't believe this! … (*Ben tops up his glass.)* ..So what dating site do you use?

Ben: *Sites*. *Plural*. It depends what I'm feeling like. If I want to take it a bit slowly – still no more than three dates before sex, mind - then I go for Guardian Soulmates. It filters out some of the riff-raff. Riff-raff don't read the Guardian. The problem is, the women on that site are quite likely to be vegetarian, sandal-wearing, and serious. They often want to talk about politics. They want a Relationship with a capital R.

Bill: Perhaps the word "soulmate" is the clue.

Ben: Exactly. So if you simply want a quick shag with no strings or expectations, then I recommend hornylondon.com.

Bill: I knew you were superficial, Ben, but I didn't think you were *that* superficial.

Ben: Actually I rather surprised my*self* at the depth of my shallowness. I got so many replies to the first profile I put on hornylondon that I didn't know how to handle them. I mean, what are you supposed to do if you start with Stephanie the receptionist but still have half a dozen more you want to at least pass in review? Maybe the red-haired accountant from Barnett will be better in bed. Or Julia the sales assistant from Wapping. Or Mandy the randy civil servant. What is the etiquette? What do you tell Stephanie? After all, you don't buy the first flat you look at. You make sure you visit a good number before you take your decision and move in. So do you tell Julie that she was terrific but that you'll get back to her after trying out Mandy, Liz, Bella, Chrissy, Dawn, Emma …

Bill: *(interrupting)* : I get the picture.

Ben: *(continuing):* … Helen, Philippa, Anna, Nathalie, Charlotte …

Bill: It must be a hard dilemma.

Ben: … Sasha, Sheila, Belinda, Liz …

Bill: Shut up!

Ben: Anyway, for the moment I'm just wallowing, like a pig in shit. Perhaps it's just a phase, even though I'm much older than most of them. Perhaps I'll move on in due course to a soulmate who worries about her carbon footprint and cooks lentils. But as Captain Oates said when he walked out on Captain Scott, I may be some time. …

Bill: What self-sacrifice! I suppose I should be pleased you won't freeze to death.

Ben: Oh, did I discern a little touch of humour? Even it was a little bitter. Very good! Anyway, my dear chap, I sense I've caught your interest. So what shall it be: Soulmate or fuckbuddy?

Bill: *What* was that word?!

Ben: *Fuckbuddy*. F U C K B U D D Y. As in "fuck" and "buddy". You don't know the word? But I guess it's pretty self-explanatory, no?

Bill: It certainly is!

Ben: Anyway, I get the message. You are far too sensitive and inexperienced for hornylondon dotcom. Your, er, "todger", as you call it, would shrink away in fright. We'll go with Guardian Soulmates, which will be less intimidating. I'll get my laptop from the car, and we'll sign you up. You'll see. The responses will come flying in!

Bill: Umm …

Ben: And you can pop down to the offy for another bottle.

Scene III (on the table: *two bottles of vodka, one empty, the other two thirds full; three empty packets of crisps; a laptop.)*

Ben *(sounding a tad inebriated as he shows Bill the Guardian Soulmates site)*: Look, you see. It's brilliant. You can sign up for free and then the magic of computers will propose literally hundreds of women who are practically gagging for you.

Bill: You mean, I don't have to pay anything?

Ben: Not at the start. Only if you want to *contact* the lovely ladies in question. It's like browsing in a supermarket. You can have a look at all the food, and see what you might like. But you've got to pay before you can eat. You can't even exchange email addresses or phone numbers. They've got you by the short and curlies.

Bill: Very clever. And what if I just fill in the profile and some wonderful woman is so impressed that she wants to contact me?

Ben: Well, the same applies to them. They can indicate their interest, which the system tells you about. But both sides have to have paid subscriptions before any contact is possible.

You know, one bloody woman had the nerve to ask me to pay HER subscription so that we could get in touch, even though the system had decided that I was a 100% match for her. I told her that the only way she was going to meet her ideal man was to pay her own subscription. I didn't want to get hooked by a gold-digger. And in the end she did. But the moment I saw her in the caf I wanted to turn round and go home. Her face was drooping as if she'd been left out in the rain. I told her I was terribly sorry, but had to go visit my dying mother. And that was that. I blocked her after that.

Bill *(after another swig)*: OK. Right then. Thanks for all the glorious detail. I suppose I'll give it a go. How do we start?

Ben: We click on the registration form … here … and fill in your details: who you are and what you are looking for. I'll read the questions, and you tell me what to tap in. Ready?

Bill *(another swig)*: Ready. Fire away.

Ben: Number one. You are a man looking for a woman? Right? … *(Pause.)* ... Hello! Is there anyone there?

Bill *(with irritation)*: Yes, I am a man looking for a woman.

Ben: Just checking. I was just wondering if there might be a hidden reason why it hasn't worked out between you and women. … Perhaps you would really be more interested in a Roger with a todger?

Bill: You cheeky sod.

Ben: OK. You are a man looking for a woman. How old is she allowed to be, or pretend to be? I suggest you put 25-35. Even if she takes seven or eight years off her real age, it won't be too bad.

Bill: You're the expert.

Ben: And when were you born? Remember, you can lie too – though I suggest you go for a makeover before you take put a picture put up.

Bill: Oh shit. I've got to put up a photo? Hell! Perhaps we'll forget the whole thing.

Ben: Come on, my boy! As they say on Mastermind, I've started so I'll finish.

Bill: Well, put in 11 November 1981.

Ben: You think they'll buy that? You look 42, not 32?!

Bill: Thanks very much. Well, I'll come clean when I meet them.

Ben: In any case, you can put a photo up later. And what about your handle?

Bill: My what?!

Ben: Your internet alias, you twit! You know, pussygalore21 or sexpot54 or tiger55. Think of something that makes you sound interesting.

Bill: I can't think of anything. You invent one for me.

Ben: … Weekendwanker?

Bill: Piss off.

Ben: I've got it. By God I'm brilliant! "Dormantvolcano"… . And now your subtitle?

Bill: My what?!

Ben: Your advertising slogan. You know, you have to imagine yourself as a brand: "Just do it". "I'm loving it". "Connecting people." "The real thing. "

Bill *(catching on)*: "Cindy, the doll you love to dress!". "Tressy: her hair grows." "One thousand and one cleans a big big carpet …" That kind of thing?

Ben: You're getting the idea. But perhaps something a little more masculine?

Bill: "A glass and a half in every half pound".

Ben: Not bad. Women like chocolate. ….

Bill: It's what your right arm's for?

Ben: That would have gone well with "weekendwanker", but we decided against that.

Bill: It takes two hands to hold a whopper!

Ben: We don't want to build up anyone's hopes here …

Bill: Fuck off!

Ben: Try building on the volcano theme.

Bill: How about: "Erupting with you"?

Ben: Bingo! Very good! That'll do nicely. We'll go with that. …. *(taps this in).* Right, now some quick questions: 1. Are you looking for: marriage, a long-term relationship, a fling, or "let's see how it develops"? That one's nicely non-committal. I recommend you tick that one.

Bill: OK, boss.

Ben: Eye colour?

Bill: Blue. Well, grey which looks blue in the right light. Put blue.

Ben: Height?

Bill: Six foot.

Ben: Bollocks! OK, I'll put six foot, but you'll have to borrow some shoes from Nicolas Sarkozy. Build? Slim, average, a few spare pounds?

Bill: Errr …

Ben: Perhaps it's time for a bit of honesty here.

Bill: Put "average". I'll start a diet tomorrow.

Ben: Do you cook?

Bill: Yes. Italian.

Ben: I'm not sure that the occasional spag bol counts. Or popping a frozen pizza in the oven. But it's your call. … Are you sporty?

Bill: Yes. Tennis. Table tennis … Cycling.

Ben: You haven't played for years. And you haven't got a bike.

Bill: Well, I was thinking of taking them up again.

Ben: OK. …. Arts?

Bill: Theatre, cinema, exhibitions, literature …

Ben: Tick, tick, tick, tick. … You do realize this is all lies, don't you?

Bill: Well, it won't be soon. I'm going to be a reformed man. Turn over a new leaf.

Ben: Religion. Christian? Agnostic? Atheist?

Bill: Atheist. No, you'd better put Agnostic. They might find it less offensive.

Ben: Very good! You're getting the hang of this. Have you got children?

Bill: No.

Ben: Do you *want* children?

Bill: No. Er. (*Pause.)* No, make that "Yes".

Ben: Really? I'm surprised. But if you insist. …. OK, that'll do for the moment. You can fill in the long sections later, when you are less drunk. We've got enough for now. Just tap in your email address – you do *have* an email address, don't you? – and ENTER.

Bill: *(getting more and more excited, taps into the computer, presses Enter and picks up his glass)*: Cheers! …*(Takes a large swig.)* Right, how long does it take now?

Ben: My dear chap, it's instantaneous! Look, your list of potential soulmates is already here! And with photos! All these wonderful women the computer thinks match your totally honest set of answers. Sit down and get yourself a drink.

Bill: I am sat down. And I already have a drink.

Ben: So you have. Right. Are you sitting comfortably? *(Bill nods.)* Then I'll begin. At the top of the list we have: Foxtrot Oscar, with the slogan "Gunning for you". You are supposed to be a 97.8% match for her, and she is a 91.5% for you. …

Bill: Sounds good. And she looks quite nice.

Ben: But Foxtrot Oscar stands for F.O. You see what I mean. And "Gunning for you" sounds a bit dangerous. It might be a pisstake.

Bill *(definitely cheering up by now, and adopting the tone of a cheery TV host):* So let us have the next candidate please!

Ben: And in second place, with an average compatibility rating of an impressive 94.8%, is the lovely "Pea1982" with the slogan "artist activist".

Bill: "Pea1982"? As in Birdseye peas?

Ben: Well, maybe as in home-grown vegetables. Look at the photo! I can't see that one buying frozen peas. And "artist activist" sounds a bit weird. Probably a communist vegetarian with no money or sense of humour. I'd pass on that one too.

Bill: OK. Moving swiftly on …

Ben: Coming up in third place is "Champagne Supernova" with the slogan "When's she's good, she's very very good, but when she's bad she's incredible".

Bill: She sounds a little … intimidating.

Ben: So now we get to number 4: you're deemed to be 89.5% of what she wants, and she's supposed to be she's supposed to be 91.2% of what you want. That's Felicity78, with the slogan "Don't give up". And the photo's not bad either. Look here.

Bill *(peering):* Oh my god! That's Alison!

Ben: Are you *sure?*

Bill: Well, the hair's different. But I'm pretty sure it's her. What else does she say?

Ben: Ah! Well that's where you have to stump up some money, I'm afraid. To read more, and see more photos – and to contact her – you have to subscribe. Clever, isn't it?

Bill: OK. OK. OK. How do I subscribe?

Ben: Just click here. Thirty-two quid a month. By credit card. But I don't understand: you know where Alison lives – if it *is* her. You don't need to pay up to get in touch with her.

Bill: Shut up! I want to make sure it's her and see what she says. I'll subscribe. How long does it take? *(He gets his card from his wallet and starts filling the form in with lightning speed.)*

Ben: In a minute or two you will be able to look at all the details and all the photos of *all* the lovely ladies, including Felicity. You will be able to contact them, and – if they have recorded a message – you will be able to dial an expensive phone line to hear their voices.

Bill: Right. OK. Look! They're congratulating me on subscribing. I'm in! OK. OK. Now if I click on Felicity78 …. More photos. YES. It is Alison! She's a teacher, she's 35 … So

not everyone lies, Ben. Alison is *really* 35! *(Reads on.)* She's looking for marriage. *I told you so, Ben.* And she wants kids …

Ben: But you said earlier you didn't want to get married. You're out of this relationship, and there are loads of possibilities out there. In any case, Alison dumped you.

Bill: *(suddenly downcast)*: You're right. … But that was the *old* me. Now I've changed! You've seen my profile. …

Ben: Yes. Dormantvolcano is younger, sexier, more interesting … He even wants kids … But what about marriage? Felicity78 says she's looking for a sensible, supportive and sensuous *husband*.

Bill: Maybe I could be talked into it marriage. … It can't be so bad. Lots of people do it. …

Ben: But aren't you jumping the gun a bit? There's David the gym instructor on the scene …

Bill: You don't *know* that …

Ben: And maybe a dozen other chaps who have contacted her through *Guardian Soulmates.* As I told you, relationships can develop very fast. … And she is looking for someone ***sensuous*.**

Bill *(becoming very agitated)*: I'm sure I can become more sensuous if I try … Perhaps you could give me some tips?

Ben: I'm sure I could. That's another of my sidelines for 100 quid an hour. …

Bill: They mustn't. She mustn't. … Oh God, no! What can I do now?

Ben: I suggest you dial the premium phone line – I see she *has* recorded a message – and listen to what she says. *(Bill grabs the phone and starts dialling.)*

Then inform Felicity28 of your interest and see if she responds. If she does, you can reveal who you are. She obviously won't recognize you from what we have just put into the computer. If she's not interested and doesn't, tough luck. You'll have to move on. Remember you have just forked out 32 quid, and there are endless numbers of other wonderful women to meet.

[Bill is listening to Alison's recorded message, paying no attention to Ben. He is increasingly agitated, but also showing signs of happiness. Ben burbles on.]

Of course, you should have a shave – frankly, tonight's unshaven look looks more like laziness than designer stubble. As your professional counselor, I advise you to lose some weight, have a haircut and get some decent clothes before you put any photos online or meet anybody.

Bill: That'll take too long! First thing tomorrow I'll have a shave, smarten myself up and go round to throw myself on Alison's mercy! Do you think she'll take me back?

Ben: I'll be crossing my fingers, mate! But before I go, what was the handle of the one who's very good when's she's good but incredible when she's bad?

DAVID LEWIS, EBU, FORMERLY WHO

At the Ex tempore Salon on 24 January 2014

POÈMES

POEMS

POEMAS

BROUILLARD OU ÉCLAIRCIE

Quand on voit le brouillard, on sait que derrière, il y a une éclaircie.

Dans une brume, je me suis envolé,

Et quand je suis tombé sur l'arc en ciel passant,

Je me suis laissé glisser éternellement, jusqu'au pays des lettres,

Où l'on entend la voix… de la poésie.

De retour sur la terre,

J'ai senti à l'oreille

La voix du poème

Et celle des mots.

Et quand vient le soir noir, on y entend des bruits…

On pense que ceux sont des fantômes, mais ceux sont les voix… de la poésie.

Camilo PALLASCO (9 ans), fils d'Albane Prophette, OHCHR

Douleur ou Douceur

Douleurs ou douceurs de la vie
Une seule lettre les différencie mais
Cependant quelle dissemblance !
De la douleur nait la douceur
Puis la douceur engendre la douleur
Que faire devant ce va-et-vient ?
Sinon, faire appel à la sérénité
Pour que dans la douleur
On s'attende à la douceur
Et que dans la douceur on sache
Que la douleur peut venir à tout moment.
L'essentiel est de rester dans la sérénité
Qui est aussi sécurité
L'important est de savourer intensément chaque douceur
Et de sourire à la Vie même dans la douleur

Le jour et la nuit

Le jour et la nuit existent
Je ne me bats pas pour changer cela
Pourquoi devrai-je me révolter
Durant la nuit de mes expériences ?
Le jour quand tout est lumineux
Tout est joyeux, je me réjouis
La nuit quand tout est sombre
Que le chagrin et la peur m'envahissent
Je réalise toutefois que c'est seulement la nuit
Que je peux admirer les étoiles qui brillent au firmament
Racontant des vies humaines passées et
Rassurant que Dieu et Ses anges
Me tiennent la main
Peu importe les circonstances.

Françoise Mianda, OHCHR

PAIX, OÙ ES-TU, OÙ TE CACHES-TU ?

Depuis la nuit des temps
Nous te cherchons vainement
Certes tu sembles être bien installée
Au sein de certaines contrées
Les hommes t'ont construit un Palais
Chaudement protégé par des gardiens …
S'appellent-ils les Gardiens de la Paix ???

Dans ce palais on discute, on se dispute
Autour de toi et de ton corollaire, la guerre
C'est une éternelle, perpétuelle lutte
On parle de Pourparlers de paix, de Traité de paix, de *Justice* de paix
On *cherche* la paix, on *demande* la paix
On décrète la paix, on *consolide* la paix
On essaie de *conclure* la paix,
De construire la paix,
Le mieux ne serait-il pas finalement
De demeurer en paix, pour un temps
De dormir en paix.

PAIX, OÙ ES-TU, OÙ TE CACHES-TU ?

On parle de la paix des ménages
Sujet vieux comme le monde, sans âge
On parle de la paix des cités
où il y a des gardiens de sécurité
Autour de toi s'associent mille idées:
Être en paix… avoir la paix… Vivre en paix...
Partisans de la paix…artisans de paix...
Paix *sur la terre aux hommes de bonne volonté…*

PAIX, OÙ ES-TU, OÙ TE CACHES-TU ?

Tu fais le tour de notre Planète Terre
Que de travail, de répit tu n'en as guère
Comment se fait-il que tu coures ainsi ?
Et si dans ce monde en guerre, en feu
On prenait le temps de s'asseoir autour du feu
Fumer le calumet de la paix, l'esprit en harmonie ?

Ne pas laisser hurler les fauves en nous
Les laisser s'échapper comme des fous
Saisir ce chaos intérieur qui nous habite
Sait-on vraiment quand notre être s'agite
Au point de vociférer, colérer, accuser,
D'intriguer, revendiquer, dominer
De se venger, d'écraser, de tuer…
Comment transformer le meurtrier
En nous tapi si subtilement
Ce Gengis Khan, implacable guerrier
Qui met le monde à feu et à sang ?

PAIX, OÙ ES-TU, OÙ TE CACHES-TU ?

Alors, Paix, tu t'échappes, t'enfuis
Vers d'autres lieux plus harmonieux
Tentant de trouver cette harmonie
Ta sœur d'âme, sous de nouveaux cieux
Afin d'essaimer les graines de paix

Puisse s'éveiller la conscience de paix!
Que la paix *soit avec vous* !

Le Bonheur

Le Bonheur
C'est tout simplement
Déguster une glace en contemplant le lac
Frémissant, sous la brise, de mille vagues
Un cygne glissant voluptueusement,
Toutes ailes ouvertes, dans sa majesté.
Ô pure merveille hors du temps
Que cette rive éclaboussée
De lumière par le jet d'eau irisé.
Mon cœur pleure de bonheur
Mon âme en extase sourit ravie
De tant de beauté et d'harmonie
C'est cela, le bonheur
Un instant d'éternité
Empreint de sérénité

Beatrice Ory, UNOG LIBRARY

Inconnus

Je te chante, toi
Mon amour d'ailleurs.
Dans mon chant
Ton regard.
Soûl de visages, paysages
De l'autre côté de la mer.

Dans mon chant
L'océan
Qui nous unit, qui nous sépare.
Sa douce mélopée
Qui nous raconte
Des douleurs insoupçonnées
Des douceurs dévinées.

De mon rivage
Sans te voir je te reconnais
Me reconnais.
Et puis, tu es là
Et dans ta voix
Nous nous sommes retrouvés.

Maria Manuela Bailao, Languages Service, UNOG

LA JOURNEE DU BONHEUR

Oh, soleil astre de puissance et de clarté
pour cette journée du bonheur
illumine nous jusqu'a la nuit étoilée
laisse rayonner sur les êtres ta splendeur

fais battre nos coeurs sachant t'apprécier
fais réchauffer nos corps par ta chaleur
fais fondre nos âmes pour ce jour apprécié
couvre nos esprits aspirant au bonheur.

Choisis un jour de pluie toi la belle pour me quitter
laisse encore ta beauté vibrer en mon coeur
pour ne pas voir les larmes sur mes joues coulées
par l'incompréhension ne gâche pas cette journée du bonheur

Que mes mains soient tes mains
Que mes yeux soient tes yeux
Que mes pensées soient tes pensées
Caresse avec moi cette journée.

L'amour n'a pas de prix, il est cadeau
Cette journée n'est pas sans valeur
Elle nous libère de nos fardeaux
Partagez-la, éternelle elle deviendra cette journée du bonheur.

C'est dans notre regard qu'elle brillera
C'est dans nos gestes qu'elle persistera
C'est dans nos paroles qu'elle se prolongera
C'est par le sourire sur nos lèvres que sur la terre elle s'étendra.

Maxime de Cham's (lu à la Bibliothèque des Nations Unies à l'occasion de la célebration de la journée international du Bonheur, le 20 mars 2014)

LE TEMPS

Toi le temps, miroir de mes grands faits, reflet fidèle de mes exploits, amortisseur de mes chagrins, amplificateur de mes amours et bannisseur de mes remords.

Tu éclaires mes faiblesses, aiguises mon courage et me pousses à la résistance dans un élan rempli d'espoir.

Tu protèges mes nuits paisibles et accompagnes mes jours agités, tu es l'ennemi de mes cauchemars, le calmant de ma lassitude et l'ami de ma solitude.

Toujours fidèle à tes promesses, même les plus aléatoires, tu m'amènes le printemps avec des champs pleins de bourgeons verdoyants et des tiges couronnées de fleurs flamboyantes.

Tu poursuis ta route, impassible aux vacarmes de la vie, aux turbulences de l'existence, aux cris de nouveaux nés et au silence des morts.

Rien ne t'intéresse à part ton égoïste autonomie et ton indépendance solitaire.

Tu vieillis tout en restant jeune et me rappelles sans détours que tu es éternel.

Mais moi, je te connais le temps, au printemps, en été, en automne et en hiver, et si des fois tu me fais peur, souviens-toi que je suis le plus lucide et le plus puissant.

Je passe d'allée en chemin, je traverse les océans, je voyage parmi les astres et le néant, tout en restant indifférent au temps.

Je t'apporterai la preuve que tu es ma créature, moi et mes semblables nous t'avons fait et le monde avant toi à nos mesures, pour nous servir.

Je te dompterai le temps, le soleil, la lune et les étoiles sont mes témoins volontaires.

Je t'asservirai à mes besoins, et mes désirs, à mes passions, mes amours et mes fins les plus lointaines.

Je t'arracherai l'éternité et je te consacrerai l'éphémère, telle est ma volonté la plus claire.

Osman **EL HAJJE (membre du groupe de travail des Nations Unies sur les disparaissons)**

Le chemin vers l’autre

Le chemin vers l’autre
Se poursuit
Les pas porteurs
D’amitié fraternelle
Avancent sincères

Le sourire aux lèvres
Et l’esprit confiant
Lieu d’une hospitalité
Séculaire

De la rose du temps
Qui nous est imparti
Exhale
Un instant à l’abri
De l’indifférence
Comme une lumière
À l’ombre du destin

Peu importent les paysages
Ici on ne voyage qu’entre
Un visage et un autre visage
Un visage vêtu de son sourire
L’autre ruisselant de larmes

Peu importe la destination
Seule compte
L’inaccessible quête
Qu’on accepte
Dans son inachèvement

Ici on fait le chemin
Vers l’autre
En complice volontaire
Ou on ferme à jamais
Les yeux et le cœur

الطريق الى الآخر

الطريق الى الآخر
يتواصل
خطوات الصداقة الأخوية
تتقدم بكل وفاء

البسمة على الشفاه
والنفس موضع
حسن الظن والضيافة
دائما تتفتح

من وردة الزمن المعين لنا
نتنسم لحظة نور
بعيدا عن الأنانية
تحث ظلال المصير

أيا كانت المناظر
هنا لا نسافر
الا من وجه لآخر
وجه تعلوه الابتسامة
والآخر يتدفق بالدموع

مهما كان الهدف

يتعذر نيله

نرضى به

من باب السعي

هنا نسير نحو الآخر

لنساعده طوعيا

او نغلق عيوننا وقلوبنا

الى الأبد

Être de ce chemin

L’affection enracinée
Dans le coeur
Envahit le corps
Cellule par cellule

Nul ne peut l’empêcher
De prendre possession
De sa demeure

Être de ce chemin
C’est tendre les mains
Vers l’infini

C’est accepter l’autre
Le semblable
Et l’opposé

الكون على هذا السبيل

المودة المتجذرة في القلب
تغزو الجسم
خلية بعد خلية

لا أحد يمكن ان يمنعها
من امتلاك
مكان اقامتها

الكون على هذا السبيل
هو ان نمد يد العطاء
الى ما لا نهاية

هو قبول الآخر
مماثلا أو معارضا
على حد السواء

MARIA ZAKI, UNSW/SENU

Silken Sands

Breathe in the land of silken sands,
warm spices, copper leaves.
Where brightness feeds eternal
for one whose heart believes.

A place proclaimed unreachable
by way of paths carved straight.
Only the key of coloured thought
unlocks the knowing gate.

Grand messages, it beckons,
pulsating, sea-smooth tones.
Its one request, that what you ask
be your request alone.

Think nothing manufactured,
those wishes scarcely last.
It's in the pure, selfless pleas,
iron-strong dreams are cast.

Hold firmly to compassion,
release all templates planned.
Open the deep, unprocessed eyes
in the land of silken sands.

Fire

Swift flames, I do remember.
Close heat burned each December.
I'd watch the forest colours dance
and count each burning ember.

They've turned to ash, those young days,
the comfort of the warm haze.
My father's farm, a place of rest,
of light and bonfire blaze.

This new place has its own smoke,
a hazy, lingering cloak.
It covers grey my old-town thoughts
of orange sparks and soft oak.

This path, it does require,
new thoughts to form, inspire.
The old leaf turns and blackens where
I find a new-born fire.

Earth and Wheat

You tell me of the symphony
that brings you down on bended knee.
I'd never heard it, 'til that day.
At once, it swept all words away.

Delivered to a foreign time,
a language lost in stirring rhyme.
Strings beheld a mighty story,
notes transposed of earth and glory.

All my days, I'll think of you,
I'll close my eyes and fall into
a mystic world, on bended knee,
when I hear your symphony.

Natalie Alexander, UN New York

The Eclipsed Tower

A dragon breaks through
The mirror pool
Sinuous black curves of obsidian rainbow
Scattering shards of light
Bringing knowledge
From intertwining roots in dark caverns, and underground streams.
A world is remembered in water,
Past reversing into future verse now.

He recounts how the people said:
“The trees aren't high enough
Let’s cut them down and build something bigger
Let’s lay hold of heaven by force!”
And how we raised a gleaming tower
At the desert's edge -
A stepped pyramid challenging the sky.

But the tower was struck and split,
Our babbling voices crescendoed and
were still.
Its right side is collapsing,
Smoking pylons exhale
vapour rising against a disappearing sun.
Its left side’s crumbling pockets ooze corruption.
The core is broken.
Our cracked and pillaged tower
Has been eclipsed by night.

Webbed wings open wide
Sprinkling crystalline droplets.
Dragon song fills the twilight
Telling of days past and nights to come.
Stars prick winking into the velvet night
That covers the ruined tower
Like a soft blanket
Quieting the fervent voices.
Let them meld into the darkness
And be heard no more.
Instead birds cry desolation
Across the waste.

We see the shadows of ziggurats, corporate towers like the tower of Babel and high hopes
All marching towards their downfall.

The Dragon oracled: “For as once my kind shook the earth with every step,
And the world feared our fire,
Now we but appear in troubled dreams
Or on your winding banners;
So too the worlds of men will pass away,
Only to appear in darkened dragon dreams
Or on the banners of angels unfurling.”

Alison Joanne Greig, UNMIK

The Defenders of the Day

They command here in a language of fear
Watchful, waiting, listening,
Finding pointed fingers
In words flicked carelessly off a foreign tongue
Decoded by influences too nuanced to comprehend
And now impossible to rescue from
Centuries of concocted perceptions
We to be on guard every moment
Lest a word should escape into the inferno of hate
To be smelted and deformed
Into something polluted and alien
Every guileless speech a battle for acceptance
Launched out to be struck down
By the defenders of the day

Marcel Bent, UNMIK

WORDS

first i drip
honey from my lips
words lap around you tenderly
every flick of my tongue
spurts lines of pleasure
takes you exactly as you want to be taken

then i assault you with my mouth
words wield
rapid-fire
twist and probe
into the pit of your gut
each breath explodes your fiction
spills naked truths
reveal you for what you are

still
you do not tremble for release
your closeted walls
are not penetrated by
oral stabs
that yearn to shatter smoky images
layered for the world to see

in time
I will deconstruct you with my pen
strip down your coated exterior
expose your hidden wirings
etch reality into a foundation
erected by the stroke of my hand

MARCEL BENT, UNMIK

Sorrow

(Dedicated to my husband.)

I can play the piano but I don’t know the notes,
I can sing any song but forgot all the words,
I can play any game but I don’t keep the rules,
I can scream for your love but I don’t have the voice.

I can’t wait for the sun but I know it will rise,
I can’t wait for the moon but I know it will shine,
I can’t show you my pain but I know you will feel,
I can’t take out my heart but I know it will heal.

When I look in your eyes you will know what I think,
When I tell that I love you your heart will sink deep,
When you touch and caress me I shall open my soul,
And the sorrow around us forever shall stall.

BLEEDING DARKNESS

(Dedicated to the Westgate attack)

When a face of a demon
Reflects in your eyes,
Your soul’s being stolen
And replaced with evil’s bud.

When your blood is being frozen
In your veins, in your heart,
It’s a sign that this demon
Is laughing out loud.

When your body convulses
In attempt to break free,
Your mind understands
That survival is a key.

By the time your heart’s bleeding
It’s already too late,

And the demon is winning
Leaving you no escape.

If you still have some power
To stand and to fight,
You are being finished
With a cold dreadful smile.

Desperation, frustration,
What is left there to see?
Where's hope and salvation?
Where's love that you need?

And you kneel to the demon
Begging him to let go,
Forgetting that evil
Isn't feeling remorse.

And the bud that's been growing
Instead of your soul,
Gets bigger and bigger,
Consuming it all.

You forget that odd person
That you were before,
Embracing the darkness
And craving for more.

Liana Archaia-Atanasova, UNEP, Nairobi

PEERLESS PRESCIENCE

In the face of conflict
unfolds wings of patience
across a desert of doubt
evokes the lushness of rain
besieged by swamps of suspicion
lays brick after brick of trust
encircled by uncertainty
celebrates life —
pours bubbly pearls of joy
plants trees of generosity
sows flowers of respect
and for the erring and lost
builds bridges of belonging.

STRETCHING IT

A vertical wingspan
furtively touches
realms far apart.

Victims, torturers
suffering,
trapped in darkness.

Transparent beings
luminous, afloat
on glass-like planets.

A breath of love,
wing tips aquiver,
spans both.

SEQUELS

Remembrances,
opalescent beads,
strung out,

scintillating across space,
interlaced,
one leading to another—

tales from the past:
a thousand and one
nights

fending off death;
a thousand and three
Don Juanesque loves—

journeys across time,
leading sooner or later
to the same place,
another chance,
burgeoning awareness,
budding compassion—

struggles,
retrieving the lost,
sowing the chosen,
harvesting
the scattered
and ripened—
bounties,

helping to grasp
the rules of the game
and slowly abide
by their wisdom,
rich from suffering.

Christine Ledakis, ILO retired, freelance translator

TOO LATE

The paths of life unveil changing road turns
Some long, some short, some surprisingly curved
Seconds, minutes, days, months or even years
Can make the difference in fate's defiance

Attraction, curiosity and lust blend
When true souls connect with spark-filled magic
As lovers seek to fill the emptiness
of their lonesome, passionate, yearning hearts

You smiled at me and my shield fell away
Doubts gave way to longing, fear to resolve
You found the way deep into my essence
And touched the marrow that holds my substance

To the flow of love we let our hearts dance
Unaware that the bend was sharply curved
A moment too late, a little too soon
Our stars seemed not under skies auspicious

What began with hope now entwines with gloom
Love is a leap of faith, a twist of fate
The heart alone must endure the burden
Of love suppressed, masked with indifference.

Rita AGHADIUNO, OLA, UN/NY.

An axiom of

An axiom of the astronaut: you shall measure in breaths the distance from the earth to the moon
An axiom of the cook: do not come between the blade and the beet
An axiom of the chicken: the skinny bird escapes the broth
An axiom of the used-car salesman: toil, make trouble, open locks for whoever knocks
An axiom of the plumber: no drain, no gain
An axiom of the poet: if the word bleeds, write it
An axiom of the shoemaker: you shall hold your tongue while I stitch your sole
An axiom of the lion tamer: where there is mane there is pain
An axiom of the scholar: my axiom is better than your axiom

Meditation on Market Day

Ripe apples rise in bins beneath green awnings,
hands search purses and pockets, bills curl
in metal boxes with stubborn locks.
Books show the weave of their spines.
And rows and rows of polished eggs: imagine
the labor of so many hens. Their sense of loss.

Think of beets, strong as grenades, root red
scent of damp taproot, long stalk topped with
bright green leaves, beets stacked on tables, locks
laid out behind them, tied in knots. Do beets
bleed? Imagine their sap sluicing through our veins –
what would the beet say to such sacrifice?

See the white rabbit, bred to be pet
(you want to add color to a creature
so pale). Who doesn't love its beating heart,
its confusing fur, the itch of its nose
taking in the scent of cabbage?
And what of the rabbit's foot, that bearer
of keys – is that such a lucky gift?

Elizabeth Lara, UN New York

Because

How long will the bed
stay warm after we have left it?
How long before the sun
breaks through the cloud bank
like an angry fist?

When was your grandmother's
birthday
and did you capture
her recipe for brown bread
before she died?

When was the last time you cried
a good long time
without reason, without thinking,

because a warm bed feels good,
brown bread baking in the oven
smells good,
sun breaking in the front window
warms butter waiting in a dish.

Sitting, silent

From behind the window
I shut my eyes,
absorb the street sounds
as a darkening sky
claims the neighbourhood:

a man rattling tools in a box,
a woman's high heels as they hit pavement,
a host of birds that negotiate amongst the leaves.

Heat settles on the room–
stillness tries to enter

yet a dove on the ledge
offers its litany
as feet shuffle faster and faster
to salsa music.

When silence does come,
I imagine your voice telling me
ours is not a caravan of despair,
we are free to come
and come again.

My mind wanders around the words
to the woman seated next to me,
how she suddenly lost sight
in her right eye since we last met;

to the other woman
who let us hold the tribal rain stick
that could make different sounds,
generate its own music.

I leave the room, enter still summer air–
a young man steps out of darkness
needs money for the night.
I reach to give him what I have,
his outstretched arm
lined with tiny triangles
pointing in all directions
encounters mine.

Beth Peoc'h, UNCTAD

WE WANT PEACE NOW!

A paracrostic poem = the first line is repeated by the first letter of each line reading downward.

We want peace now!
Enough of barbaric murder and destruction.
Wars and violence are primitive solutions,
Any conflict can and must be resolved
Not with blood and despair, but negotiation.
Think peace, not guns and missiles, be brave and
Put an end to war. What we need is food, wells,
Education, work, homes, security for all, music
And clear blue skies with birdsong and butterflies.
Come out of the dark ages, step into a new future,
End this hell of hate, the suffering and fear,
Not tomorrow, not next week, but today,
Or be cursed for all eternity!
We want peace now!

Putsches

In theory, putsches can be useful,
but most of the time they're not
A manifestation of rot
with results often quite rueful.

On top there is a new elite
who tends to be much worse
wanting to fill their purse
by getting in the commanding seat.

They rise to the surface like dross
much to the population's loss.
One could say, for simplicity's sake:
A putsch is like an apple-upside-down cake.

Livia Varju. UNHCR retired

AT THE SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE

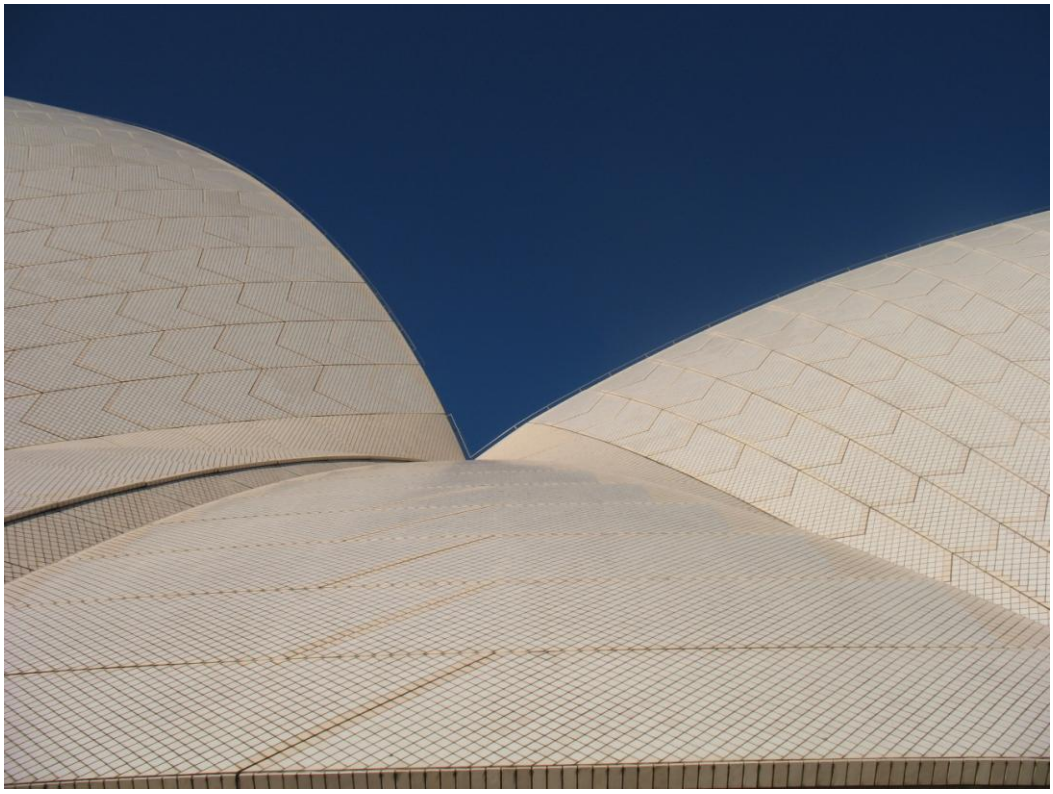
Call it instantly the pinnacle of modern art,
a happy paroxysm, Jacobin revolt of heart:
Jørn Utzon's architecture wakes our appetite
for sculpture in design, our love of height and light.

From azure shores rise shells in pristine white.
Or are they swollen sails in stormy flight?
Archangel wings that waft in winds and skim
the surf to rise in high harmonious hymn?

Jørn Utzon's shells are sails and wings and snowy mountains:
Forms composing function, flowing fountains
of imagination rushing from this water place
into the universe of time and space.

Adjacent Royal gardens germinate and sing
archaic melodies of life renewing.
See! A sacred Lotus greets the day,
a water lily floats into the bay.

Where rolling surf breaks on the verdant shore
and foaming waves surge with a mighty roar,
rise fine ceramic roofs, criss-crossing, sloping off,
competing with the sea and sky in bold aesthetic bluff.



This emblematic, genial site is home
to ancient Muses. Here the soul can roam,
tanscend itself in sound and ecstasy,
for here is vision, faith, integrity.

Exterior silhouettes evolve with light and shade--
the sunrise, sunset, starry skies are made
for lovers, young and old. Within we feel, we dream,
we hear sopranos sing how things are seldom what they seem.

Beneath the broken eggshell tent
breathe varied forms of man's enlightenment,
symbolic dreamings dressing concrete walls
in magic colours, native didgeridoo calls.

God blessed his architects and engineers:
Sir Avo Arup shares Jørn's honours and the cheers.
Together they composed this symphony in stone;
they orchestrated waves and naves that Psalms intone.

Cathedrals and Basilicas boast marble stairs.
In Sydney *mélomanes* scale concrete steps to airs
of Verdi, Wagner, Strauß, Puccini, Debussy,
whose sacred tunes proclaim man's yearning and esprit.

Cathedrals are indeed like poetry in stone;
here too, stone prayers make this music temple zone
of spiritual transcendence, terpsichorean shrine
of ballet, thespian arts, of opera and choirs divine.

Not just Australian, Danish or Pacific:
This eclectic house is hieroglyphic,
primal, mystical, a common heritage
of humankind, a promise and a pledge.

On magic nights a myriad coloured lights explode
above these hallowed domes as in a pantheistic Ode
to Joy embracing in D-major all creation:
This is Sydney's kiss of cosmic affirmation. **AdeZ**

Q & A

Who is calling,
Who is asking for me?
Who claims my soul,
Heaven, hell or purgatory?

What have I done,
What have I seen
Where did I fail,
How should I have been?

What more is there to know?
What more is there to see?
How much is enough?
What does it take to be?

In my short time I've tried
To find some answers, and strived
To live in dignity with head held high:
To make my existence come alive.

If I've failed or fallen short,
Don't judge me in a way that's harsh,
A mere mortal can only strain at his chains
Before sinking into death's marsh.

Will my soul live on beyond my body
In some different space beyond this world?
Or will the final curtain mean the total end
To all meaning - perpetual darkness unfurled?

If I've done some good,
And lived in a worthy way,
Then at least I'll leave some mark,
Befitting a human who had his day.

Bohdan Nahajlo, UNHCR

Primer insomnio

Llegan la madrugada y sus sonidos:
El vuelo de las seis, el primer tren
Que gime y se aleja crujiendo,
El mismo río discreto que transcurre
Bajo el puente cercano, las anónimas
Voces de ruiseñores y viajeros,
La irrepetible luz en la ventana
De la mañana única que empieza.
Inclinado sobre el perfil reciente
Se acoda y canta y mira en la penumbra
El amoroso rostro que no cesa
Y su reposo sin precedentes.
Ella duerme y sonríe sin sobresaltos,
Blanquísima en la sombra y fulgurante.
El la mira y piensa que sólo esto faltaba.

Fragmento

Ya no vimos la luz cruel del día, el fuego que se enciende,
en el mar las nubes, en las aguas serenas la distancia,
no sé dónde fuiste como un barco iluminado
que cruzaba la noche cercenada de mí, donde estabas
mientras
aparecia el día de mañana, bajo esa luz que todo
lo despierta,
y vuelve leche los jugos de las hierbas en las vacas,
y conduce los perros en largas caminatas sin destino,
y elimina espejismos, y ata y desata los sentidos al mundo
y lame los colores de brillante saliva, bajo esa luz,
mi sombra
general estaba sola, creciendo entre la arena...

Creta

Únicamente la mano de un dios pudo crear estas piedras.
Más allá el mar las mide inquieto que las moja
Y cruje el sol en la arena y en las barcas.
Yo estoy aquí. Todo es ninguna parte.
Desde la altura un aire árido
Me dice que este es el laberinto.

Miguel Molina, UNSW/SENU

At the Library Event of 14 October 2014

TU LAMENTO

Hoy me falta inspiración para cantarte.
Por qué mi alma llora?
Hace tanto tiempo que no se incorpora.
Por qué no te animas?... Ya es hora.

Recuerdas, ése, tu lamento de niño?
Sorprendida me dejaste con tu canto…
Cómo te inspiraste, cómo sollozaste…
Sólo sé que eras un niño y tan mío
Hoy sólo sé que eres tan mío como antes
Con tu inocencia angelical aunque seas un señor
Y sigas componiendo y cantando cosas bellas
A otro ángel como fuiste tú, tan tuyo como mío
Porque él es tu prolongación, es mi prolongación:
Es tu hijo y es mi nieto.

DESVARIO

Como una encrucijada en mi camino
Un loco desvarío mi corazón sufrió:
Estiré mis brazos y fuiste una ilusión
Pronuncié tu nombre y fue una canción.

Llanto desesperado invadió mi alma
Lágrimas de sangre quemaron mis pupilas
Pero más ardiente aún fue el desvarío
De mi pobre corazón.

Amargo trago, trago amargo de tus labios bebí
Pero ya era tarde… la copa vacía al suelo tiré
Y como una loca, en mi sublime desvarío
Cada pedazo quise reconstruir,
igual que un niño Inocente y resentido,
en mi delirio dormida quedé.

LOCURA

Locura infinita, deseo marchito
Pensamiento sublime que jamás germinó
Llanto quejumbroso de horas amargas
Locura infinita nubló mi corazón.

Como una procesión los recuerdos pasan lentamente
Elevando tu imagen a la cúspide sagrada
Del alma adormecida por tu desamor
Cómo te quise, cómo me odiaste
Desde el mismo momento en que mi amor nació.

TU PARTIDA

Una lira… necesito una lira…
Una lira para inspirarme
Y en mis momentos de ocio templarla
Como se templa mi corazón enardecido
Con el recuerdo de tus ojos adormecidos
Que en otros tiempos lágrimas vertieron
Contándome historias de niños.

Recuerdas? No, no puedes recordar…
Dormida para siempre te has quedado
Sin un adiós, sin el postrer adiós…
Con ese timbre quedo, supongo tenías
Cuando quisiste irte, irte para siempre
De éste, que tú, o madre, llamabas
"mundanal ruido" suspirando
Suspirando con un suspiro hondo.

Hoy sólo tengo como recuerdo
Tu linda cara angelical, carita sana,
Carita buena que sabía alegrarse
Aun cuando por dentro tu corazón llorase.
Te doy mi adiós, madrecita santa.
Reposa en tu loza fría…. Allí te visitaré algún día.

Rosa Montoya de Cabrera UNOG retired

De eso a nada

Imagino que copiar al pasado es la parte infinita del presente
que más satisfecha escribe su historia
porque no se ha sabido de ningún sentimiento que se haga viejo
porque recordar sin memoria es la mejor oración
pero que no tenga sentido
que no sea nada
se asome a tu mente
y pregone que volverá el Mesías.

En unos días se completará la luna

Puede llegar de importar el ayer pero ahora somos su sueño
han pasado todas las posibilidades
te queda el infinito y puedes hacer trampa
sospecho que tú y yo somos una
lo difícil fue inventar los sentimientos
simple lo demás
la equivocación
hacerlos después
porque terminaron quedando espacios vacíos
tantos que el rencor no se dio abasto
y la indiferencia nunca ha tenido razones para habitarlos
hay momentos para callar
este fue uno que pasó.

Finales alternativos

Fui un error
he aprendido a pasar indiferente ante cada una de las situaciones
que me lo recuerdan o hacen ver
pero me dejas seguir y acercarme a ti desde la igualdad imposible
pero es a veces
y entre el olvido y no comprender
como que la verdad sale perdiendo
fui un error

participo en las temibles reglas de tus sentimientos
y lees las palabras que anoto
fuera del silencio y la ausencia
de alguna manera ser imperfecto no es derrota
fui un error y es terrible
saberlo
sentirlo
vivirlo
pero el problema va a ser de la muerte y del cielo
porque hacerme un lugar inesperado en la eternidad
pesa
con el infierno no es problema
nunca se equivoca.

Algo llama

Supongo que si puedes inventar la belleza en mi anochecer en otros sitios es igual
aunque esos lugares estén ubicados antes o después y en ninguna parte
tus ojos son lo que miras
pero hay algo en las innumerables variedades de sentir
que solo es fiel a un momento
no tengo la certeza de que eso sea lo que necesites
porque ni tu soledad ni la mía es completa
pero puede ser otro encuentro innecesario
sin razón
sin motivo
una casualidad
pero ligada de manera indestructible a lo que sea la memoria y signifique.

Luis Aguilar Contreras UNSW/SENU

La inspiración de un niño, el amor hecho millones

¿Qué de mí?
De lo que fuiste
Lo que dejaste.

Cinco de marzo
Apágose el fulgor de tu vida.

Corazones rotos,
Sacudón de vidas.

¡Consternación! ¡Angustia!
Eran, son millones las Ilusiones enlazadas.
Revolución de Esperanzas

Bolívar había vuelto a desenfundar su espada.
También yo, ayer niño, cifré esperanzas
Cómo no hacerlo.

Venezuela toda se trepó en el cabalgo de tu canto.
Día aquél
Tras tu caravana
Corrí con la sola pasión que abraza a un niño.

Era la carta de mi vida
Puño y letra, lágrimas caídas.
Solo pedí, Comandante amigo
Hacer lo que ya señalaba tu destino

Nación y Patria
Te has ido, pero has cumplido.
No hay pueblo huérfano.

Padre responsable,
Duro Trabajaste
Mucho sembraste,
¡Hoy segamos!

Estruendo de voces sollozan tu partida
La Patagonia,
El Cabo de Hornos,
El viejo continente
Inhóspitos confines de esta tierra

Donde quiera hubo lugar
Donde quiera palpitar,
Donde quiera existió un hambriento,

Tu mensaje fue aliento.

Comandante amigo admiro tu grandeza,
Sorprendiste al mundo
Por tu bravura.

Con tu sinergia reuniste pueblos
Hermanasteis amistades allanadas por la insolencia del tío

Vestiste siempre de Arrojo y coraje
Para el rescate de oprimidos y olvidados.

Desolados pueblos les preñaste de esperanzas
Han parido la confianza
Hoy te dan gracias.

Neruda dijo de Bolívar que volvía cada un siglo
Diremos de ti que nunca te fuiste.

No hubo destierro
No hubo tormento
Se te pagó con amor
No araste en el mar.

No le llores sultana del Ávila
No lamentes su partida
Su innata capacidad
Poseído de virtudes
Presagió su inevitable marcha

No pensó en agonías
Desterró el sufrir
Dedicóse a vivir.

Pueblo el te amó
Recordarán generaciones de este tiempo,
De otros siglos

Gobernante digno,
No por sus excesos
No por sus mazmorras

No dio cuartel
Contra la pobreza
Hecha hambre,
Hecha desdichados,
Hecha desterrados.

¡Qué desconsuelo!
La Venezuela que encontraste
Vivir como menesteroso,
Extraño en tu propia tierra.

Tu mi Venezuela
Pobres en una tierra preñada de riquezas
Yugo tiránico
Sometimiento

Amor fingido
Democracia mancillada
Condenados,
Mi pobre país rico
Riquezas: ¿De quién para quién?

El derecho de saber

¡Qué glorias!
La Venezuela que dejaste
Acaso trescientos años no bastan, dijo aquel recordado majadero,

¿Acaso 40 años de ignominia no son suficientes?
Se preguntó este majadero de nuestro tiempo.

Hubo respuesta,
¿Quién espera?
Cuando el rezar ya no basta.

Te hizo libre,
Quebrantó tu yugo,
Te devolvió lo que nunca debiste perder.

Libertad, soberanía, dignidad y hambre
Hambre no de pan
Hambre de vivir,
Hambre construir

¡Vamos carajo!
A transitar con generosidad,

Estando emancipados,
Vivamos en justicia su legado.

Tu majadero de nuestro tiempo,
Sosegando tu espíritu te hiciste terco,
Te hiciste incrédulo
La patria te premie y el cielo no te olvide

La poesía y el Canto
De Neruda, de Benedetti, de Alí
Penetraron en la piel de tu pueblo

Tus palabras llanto
Tu llanto romance
Tu proeza se hizo poema,

El Samán de Güere fue testigo,
Tu poesía fueron obras
Tus obras la dignificación de un pueblo que dice:
Hugo gracias por tanto.

Jackson Galindo, Mision de Venezuela

Ex Tempore salon 24 January 2014

Russian Haikus

Дождливые дни

На глазах
Пожелтели все листья
Дождливые дни

Вышел на поляну
И тебя тоже видно
Маленький боровик

Глухой стук
Бока яблок бледнеют
В жухлой траве

собираются на работу
Соседи сверху
стучит дождь

на паутине
высохла роса
последние нити тумана

как замурчал
на бабушкином диване
мягкие подушечки кота

беззвучно
пролетели два ворона
поляна полная грибов

еле вытянул ногу
в след на лесной дороге
стекает струйка воды

выглянул мизинцем
через дырку в кармане
осенний дождь

Tatiana Nagovsky, UNOG retired

Холодная весна

Луна на восходе
Из далёкого леса
Ночь пропоёт соловей

Ведь не вспомню
Потоком люди
Входят в метро

Позвякивают стаканы
При движении поезда
Затихающий разговор

Разговор
Возле свежей могилы
У него хорошая смерть

Парует
Удушающе пахнет
Алея обрезанных клёнов

По траве обходим
Огромную лужу
На острове лягушонок сидит

На поворотах
Теряется в травах
Тропинка к широкой реке

Высохли листья
на упавшем дереве
дятла настойчивый стук

листва медленно
закрывает небо
холодная весна

Несбывшийся сон

Недопитую чашку чая
Ночной дождь
налил до краёв

занял место
согласно купленному билету
за окном дождь

летом
здесь рыбное место
осока легла по реке

прохладные волны
на сук ивы
повесил пиджак

в руках сына
завертелся пропеллер из жести
под ветерком

одинокий вечер
вспоминаю
несбывшийся сон

спилили старый сад
под штукатуркой проступает
заложенное окно

долгожданная встреча
купил печения к чаю
белый зефир

предзимье
бросаем камешки
вскользь по реке

Mikhail Lyablin, CERN

Trên Chòi Canh

Anh thấy gì lưng trời hay vòng tay ôm
Anh thấy gì mây rừng hay mái tóc đen
Anh thấy gì mù sương hay màn nước mắt
Anh thấy gì lòng sông hay mạch máu tim
Anh thấy gì gió chiều hay chân lá bước
Anh thấy gì lửa hồng hay nóc lều tranh
Anh thấy gì rào gai hay viền mi khép
Anh thấy gì ngõ lầy hay nếp trán nhăn
Anh thấy gì bóng chim hay người sắp chết
Anh thấy gì quân thù hay đứa em anh ?

From the mirador

The skyline or the hug of loving arms?
What do you see
The clouds above the forests or the ebony hair?
What do you see
The mist or a veil of tears?
What do you see
The stream of water or the heartbeat?
What do you see
The evening breeze or the leaves quivering ?
What do you see
A glowing fire or the thatched roof of a home?
What do you see
Barbed wire or downcast eyelashes?
What do you see
Muddy furrows or wrinkles on the forehead ?
What do you see
The silhouette of a fleeing bird or a dying man?
What do you see
Your enemy or your brother?

Nguyên Hoàng Bao Viêt, UNSW/SENU

TRADUCTIONS

TRANSLATIONS

TRADUCCIONES

Geza Beri was born in 1933 in Budapest. In l953 he became a political prisoner, condemned to a life sentence. In October 1956, at the time of the Hungarian Revolution, he fought against the Soviet troops, and afterwards worked as a manual labourer at a chemical plant. Some of his poems appeared in the West, but without his name. He was rarely allowed to publish in Hungary, and committed suicide on Christmas Eve, 1979.

Ode to Freedom

Not the centuries nor all the powers
by triumph and defeat torn apart
have created your eternal flowers
you were born out of our loving heart

arms may since then injure or protect you
doctrines may dispute your truth and worth
humiliating millions who are true
for loving one to whom they gave birth

barbed wire and current may try to confine
inquisitors summon and accuse
though nailed to a cross, your truth still does shine
on a crest, you rise above abuse

you alone are chosen stigmas to bear
blood of our blood, you our own first born
to be human? you hold that secret fair
we conceived you on an ancient morn

since the beginning of revolutions
your name is called when dark storm clouds loom
you come to life, your seed spans the oceans
it is our heartbeats that make you bloom *

Invaders came to pillage and to sack
huge wings black shadows o'er field and hill
of a convulsed Europe and in their track
nations were defeated, but the will

for you in victorious barbarians grew
your touch their receptive hearts inspired
and they became human through love for you
how much blood-soaked change you have survived!

spears, lances split the air and armour crashed
then swords were followed by rifle shots
victors and defeated no longer clashed
but gently lay beneath the same clods

forever you are destined here to stay
transmuted eternally by genes
ever reborn in a glorious new way
your being is never what it seems

*

But you come true, if only for a time
and can be seen with your human face
your steps in the pavement stones cut a sign
when storms blow hindrance in every place

cholera, contagion, penury, plague
fire, earthquake - whatever ill passed by
with destructive new weapons in their wake
how many men were ready to die

with your name on their lips because they knew
that your brave love would make them complete
from their white forehead bathed in fiery dew
down to their mud-trodden weary feet

Whenever you were called you always came
into this sad world of change and woe
your banner flashed across the storm and rain
when passionate hearts did will it so!

and when we leave our galaxy behind
our only banner will be your name
to constellations, beings we may find
your great love we will ever proclaim

and all the cosmos will forever know
the human dwellers of planet Earth
as your creators who to friend and foe
carry your flame in the universe

Original in Hungarian by Geza Beri
English version by **Livia Varju, UNHCR retired**

Yannick Gagneret : In memoriam

Un personnage multi-facettes se cachait sous l'uniforme de Yannick. Ce légionnaire universitaire a rejoint l'ONU à Genève en 2005. Ce formateur, secouriste, a aussi en place des procédures en collaboration avec des intervenants du pays hôte.

En 2009, lors d'une mission en Afghanistan, il fut confronté à une attaque au cours de laquelle 5 fonctionnaires des Nations Unies ont péri. Il est intervenu avec brio en prenant en charge la sauvegarde de 20 collègues restés sur les lieux.

Au-delà de ces compétences, se cachaient des passions. Le sport tout avait forgé cet athlète lui conférant une endurance et un mental à toute épreuve. La montagne ensuite avait, par sa dimension et l'exigence d'une implication totale physique, technique et mentale, a constitué une continuité dans son accomplissement personnel.

Ces dernières années, les expéditions se sont succédé sur les plus hauts sommets du monde. Comme tout ce qu'il entreprenait, ses préparations étaient rigoureuses. Beaucoup ont réalisé qu'il était une personne hors du commun.

Ses amis savaient qu'il préparait une nouvelle ascension, il connaissait le danger mais l'appel de la montagne fut plus fort que tout. En redescendant du Makalu qui est le cinquième sommet du monde et considéré comme l'un des plus techniques, Yannick, a été pris dans une tempête et n'a pas survécu.

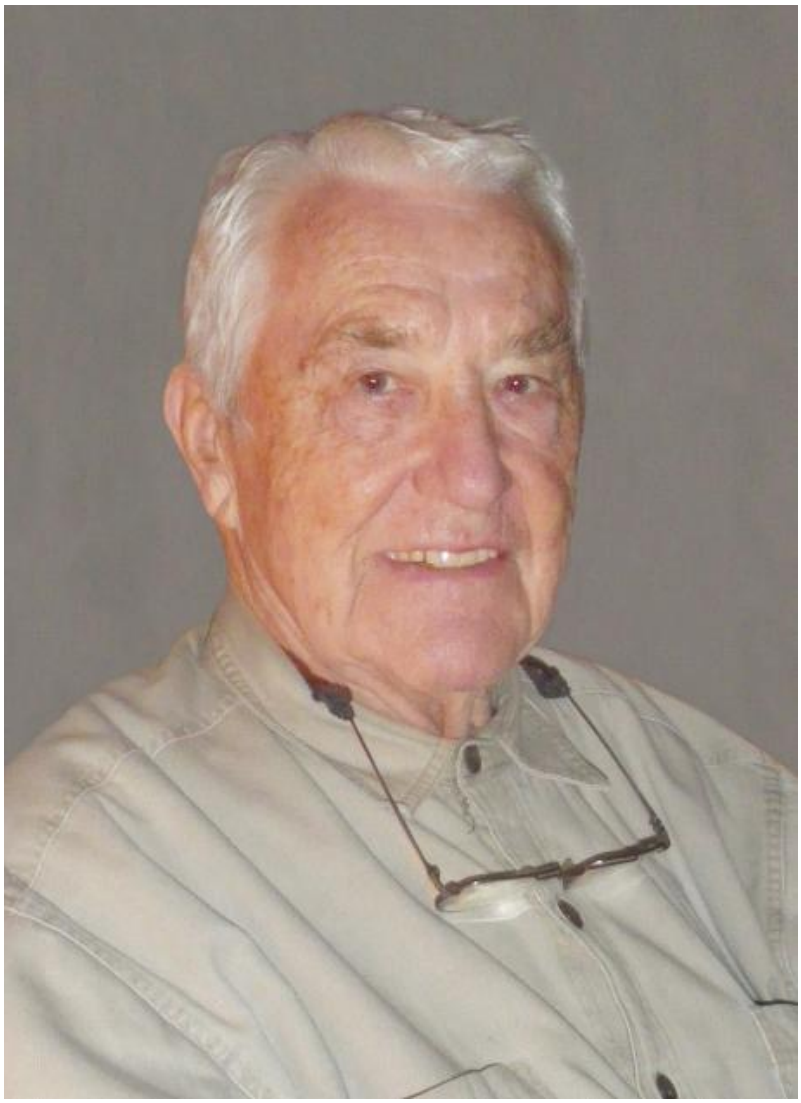
Salut Yéti, tu avais les yeux sur des sommets que peu d'hommes ont atteints. C'est un privilège d'avoir croisé ta route, c'est un privilège pour les Nations Unies d'avoir eu dans ses rangs, un homme de cette qualité.

Christian David, UNOG

RAYMOND KLEE 1917- 2014

Ray worked for UNIDO for many years and was a freelancer at UNOG when I met him back in 1985, long before *Ex Tempore* was born. Over the years he contributed to no less than 12 volumes of our journal, beginning with number two, where he had two lovely poems "Winter landscape" and "l'aube de tes lèvres". He was perfectly tri-lingual – English, French and German and a cosmopolitan optimist. Often he wrote under the pseudonym Ray Barry, but I persuaded him to use his real name. He was born on 17 May 1917 in New York and passed away on 23 November 2013 in Rietz, Austria, at the family home surrounded by his children and grandchildren. If you open youtube and enter connections like "Barry Klee sings" or "Raymond Klee 91 sings", you will find quite a number of songs he uploaded at very old age, including some of his favouriges such as "Danny Boy", "Kathleen Mavourney", "The Rose of Tralee", "Caro mio ben" and some Schubert songs. His son Terry, a distinguished Austrian barrister, is also a fine tenor.

Many readers will remember Ray's humor and *joie de vivre.* He was blessed with a long life, a lovely family -- and many, many friends. I am sure he is smiling at us from up there.



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For the Journal's 2015 issue the Editorial Board invites literary efforts of general interest, short stories, science fiction, humour, poems or aphorisms in any of the UN official languages (or in other languages accompanied by a translation into a UN language). Please send these as well as pictures and illustrations to the Editorial Board electronically in format Times New Roman, 14 p to: zayas@bluewin.ch, to marko.stanovic@unctad.org, or to cedelenbos@ohchr.org .
Visit also our new website: www.extempore.ch

See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Nations_Society_of_Writers and http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ex_Tempore_(journal)