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In this issue, the Editorial Board is pleased to publish a bouquet of contributions from 33 authors -- in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, German, Latin, Russian, Spanish and Vietnamese.

For the twenty-fifth 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

Inseparable from the history, culture, literature, heraldry and mythology of the human species are those graceful inhabitants of our lakes, the Swans (*Cygnus*). These amazing birds are not just bigger geese or ducks (their close relatives), but emblematic creatures, metaphors, projections of anthropomorphic ideals, images of aesthetics, paragons of light and beauty. Like the Albatross, swans mate for life and have become a popular symbol of love and fidelity, reflected in our folklore, fairytales (the *Ugly Duckling*, *Den grimme ælling* by Hans Christian Andersen) and even in Opera, including Wagner's *Lohengrin* and *Parsifal*.

In Greek mythology the swan was consecrated to Apollo and revered as a symbol of harmony. In art he was a frequent companion of Aphrodite and Artemis. In his fable *The Swan Mistaken for a Goose*, Aesop (620–564 BC) introduces us to the beautiful concept of the “swan song” (κύκνειον ᾄσμα), that final statement of meaning, love of earthly life, completion: "The swan, who had been caught by mistake instead of the goose, began to sing as a prelude to its own demise. His voice was recognized and the song saved his life." Aeschylus (525-455 BC) comes back to the legend in his play *Agamemnon*, where Clytemnestra sarcastically compares the dead Cassandra to a swan who has "sung her last final lament". In *Phaedo*, Plato (428/347 BC) records that Socrates contended that whereas swans sing in early life, they never sing as beautifully as just before they die. This metaphorical phrase makes us dream, because -- although we know that swans really do not sing (they hoot, grunt and hiss) and are hardly musical nightingales – swans anthropomorphically intone that final song of parting from this world, an eschatological though apocryphal allegory, which had already become proverbial in Greece by the 3rd century BC, and captured the imagination of countless poets and sculptors.

The Romans were wont to copy almost everything Greek, and thus Ovidius (43 BC-18 AD) refers to the legend in *The Story of Picus and Canens*, where: "she poured out her words of grief, tearfully, in faint tones, in harmony with sadness, just as the swan sings once, in dying, its own funeral song." We also find allusions to the swan song in Vergilius (70-19 BC). However, Plinius (AD 23 – 79), who died in the eruption of the Vesuvius, challenged the belief: "observation shows that the story that the dying swan sings is false."

Alfred Lord Tennyson's poem *The Dying Swan* evokes the haunting song:

“The wild swan's death-hymn took the soul
of that waste place with joy
hidden in sorrow: at first to the ear
the warble was low, and full and clear;

But anon her awful jubilant voice,
with a music strange and manifold
flow'd forth on a carol free and bold;
as when a mighty people rejoice
with shawms, and with cymbals and harps of gold..."

Tennyson's poem inspired the ballet *The Dying Swan*, created in 1905 for Anna Pavlova to the music of Camille Saint-Saëns *Cygne* from *The Carnival of the Animals*. In the same vein, the Finnish composer Jean Sibelius infused his tone poem *The Swan of Tuonela* (1895) with the same mystery and magic, where in a sublime solo, a *cor anglais* plays the dying song. It is the second part of Opus 22 *Lemminkäinen* (four legends) from the epic *Kalevala*. Undoubtedly, one of the most enduring *Lieder* cycles is Franz Schubert's *Schwanengesang* (D957), fourteen songs published posthumously in 1829, which are considered his musical testament to the world, memorably performed and recorded by generations of baritones including Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau. No painting can be more romantic than Caspar David Friedrich's pair of swans in reed (1820), *Schwäne im Schilf beim ersten Morgenrot* (Эрмитаж museum, St. Petersburg).

Another wonderful Greek myth is that of the seduction of beautiful Leda, Queen of Sparta, by the god Zeus in the guise of a swan. This story was made tangible in both Greek and Roman marbles, in a famous mosaic in Cyprus, and in paintings, woodcuts and medallions, *inter alia* by Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, Benvenuto Cellini, Rubens, and Cézanne. Numerous writers found inspiration in the myth, notably Rainer Maria Rilke (1875-1926) whose poem *Leda* from the cycle *Neue Gedichte* (1907) I translate below:

*“Als ihn der Gott in seiner Not betrat,
erschrak er fast, den Schwan so schön zu finden;
er ließ sich ganz verwirrt in ihn verschwinden.
Schon aber trug ihn sein Betrug zur Tat,
bevor er noch des unerprobten Seins
Gefühle prüfte. Und die Aufgetane
erkannte schon den Kommenden im Schwane
und wusste schon: er bat um Eins,
das sie, verwirrt in ihrem Widerstand,
nicht mehr verbergen konnte. Er kam nieder
und halsend durch die immer schwächre Hand
ließ sich der Gott in die Geliebte los.
Dann erst empfand er glücklich sein Gefieder
und wurde wirklich Schwan in ihrem Schoß.“*

When driven by his need the god trod near
the noble swan, he marveled at its grace,

and though perplexed, he vanished in its space,
already plotting an imposture dear,
not having tested how his feathered host
would feel. But she who opened as the prize
could recognize who came in swan's disguise,
already sensing what he wanted most,
and while confused in her resistance, never
could she hide her own desire. Alighting
next to her, he wove his neck through ever
weaker hands and conquered her anon.
He reveled thus in plumage white, delighting
in her womb where truly he became the swan.

As Greek mythology would have it, Helen of Troy was conceived of the union of Zeus and Leda. Since the metamorphosis of Zeus into a swan, literature has drawn upon swans as symbols of transformation, and some psychologists suggest that dreaming of a swan may indicate a special sensitivity, or a desire for self-transformation.

In Japanese Ainu folklore, the swan was an angelic bird living in heaven. In Hindu tradition it was the swan that lay the cosmic egg on the waters from which *Brahma* sprang. Swans represent the perfect union, and the Hindu goddess of learning, music and wisdom *Saraswati* has a swan as her companion; the *Raja Hansa* or Royal Swan is her vehicle. The Sanskrit word for swan being *hansa*, the Divine is called *Parmahansa*. Swans are thus revered in Hinduism and compared to saintly persons whose chief characteristic is to be in the world without getting attached to it.

The Irish legend of the *Children of Lir* is about a stepmother transforming her children into swans for 900 years. In the legend *The Wooing of Etain*, the king of the *Sidhe* (subterranean-dwelling) transforms himself and Etain, the most beautiful woman in Ireland, into swans in order to escape from the Irish king and his armies. Swans are also present in Irish literature in the poetry of W. B. Yeats, *The Wild Swans at Coole*, which focuses on the mesmerising characteristics of the swan.

In Nordic mythology, there are two swans that drink from the Well of Urd in the realm of Asgård, home of the gods. According to the *Prose Edda*, the water of this well is so pure that all things that touch it turn white, including swans and all descended from them. Hans Hartvis Seedorff Pedersen's poem *The Nordic Swans* inspired the symbol of official Nordic co-operation, designed by the Finnish artist Kyösti Varis for the Nordic Council in 1985. The swan symbol with its eight quills represents the five Nordic countries Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden, and the three autonomous territories, the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland. In 1989 the swan model became the Nordic Ecolabel.

In Latin-American literature, the Nicaraguan poet Rubén Darío (1867–1916) consecrated the swan as a symbol of artistic inspiration and drew attention to the constancy of swan imagery in Western culture. His most famous poem in this regard is *Blasón* (1896), in which the swan emerges as a symbol of *Modernismo*, the poetic movement that dominated Ibero-American poetry from the 1880s until the First World War, characterized by idealism, sensuality and nobility. In North-American Navajo tradition, the Great White Swan conjures up the Four Winds, while the *Great Spirit* uses swans to carry out its will.

While European, American and Asian swans are mostly white, we are also fascinated by black swans (*Cygnus atratus*), which have other symbolism. Native to Australia and Tasmania, they were introduced in other regions of the world, where they live not only in parks but also in the wild. Australian aborigines saw the black swans as the wives of their All Father. Concerning black swans, the Roman poet *Juvenalis* (60-133 AD) made a sarcastic reference to a good woman as a "rare bird, as rare on earth as a black swan", wherefrom the Latin phrase *rara avis* or rare bird originates. Misogynic, yes, but interesting as a form of literary stereotyping.

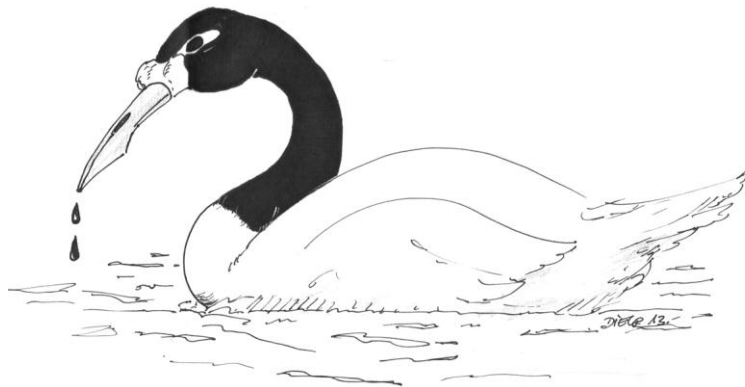
Without a doubt, the most famous ballet on the repertoire is Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake* (Лебединое озеро), produced for the first time in 1877 at the Bolshoi Theater in Moscow. The story begins with Prince Siegfried's celebration of his 21st birthday and the social necessity that he choose a bride. He does not fall in love with any of the pretty maidens at the Court, but escapes to the woods and at a lake he is attracted by the beauty of a white swan, who is none other than Princess Odette, transformed into a swan by an evil magician Rothbart, and whose spell can only be broken through true love. Alas, when Siegfried is about to liberate her, Rothbart produces Odile, a black swan, who so confuses Siegfried, that he ends up choosing Odile instead of Odette. The original story does not have a happy end. But many modern productions have modified the final scene (without touching the glorious music) so that Rothbart engages in a formidable duel with Siegfried and has his wings torn off, whereupon Odette is freed from the curse. Such *licentia poetica* (Seneca) -- poetic licence – enriches both literature and music. Personally, I prefer it, having enjoyed this romantic interpretation danced to perfection by the *Mariinsky* Ballet of St. Petersburg.

A *Gesamtkunstwerk* (total work of art), a fusion of art forms, mythology, literature, music, ballet and staging is worth striving for and can be achieved. We at *Ex Tempore* believe that our world in all its wonderful diversity and splendour is in itself a *Gesamtkunstwerk*. *Ex Tempore* XXIV attempts to capture the magic of the swan as a symbol of beauty, freedom, fidelity, light, air and water -- as an evocation of a multitude of feelings, impressions, nuances and yearnings, which are reflected in the following pages. Enjoy!

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Wagner and Verdi: Bicentenary Year 2013

These two musical giants share the revolutionary zeal as well as the birth year of 1813, when Napoleon's empire was on the wane. German **Richard Wagner** and Italian **Giuseppe Verdi** each took operatic theatre in completely fresh directions. Their rival legacies are being acknowledged in a bonanza of activities including countless concerts, recordings, innovative opera stagings, books, broadcasts and tours in many cities throughout the world. While these two composers never met, and seemed to resent each other, their legacies complement each other to the great joy of melomanes.

For Kasper Holten, Director of the Opera at Covent Garden, "*they brought opera forward from the classical world of Mozart into the future and the 20th century. But while Verdi revolutionized the form in a gradual evolutionary way, taking things on from the bel canto tradition and expressing emotions in a forceful way, Wagner was distinctly more radical.*"

Richard Wilhelm Wagner (1813-83)

Richard was born in Leipzig, Germany, on 22 May 1813, son of Friedrich Wagner, a minor city official who died six months later of typhus, leaving Richard to be brought up by his mother, who subsequently married the very gifted actor and painter Ludwig Geyer. Young Richard entertained ambitions to be a playwright and first became interested in music as a means of enhancing the dramas that he wanted to write and stage. He spent his childhood and youth in Dresden, attending the Kreuzschule church school. He soon turned to the study of music, for which he enrolled at the University of Leipzig in 1831, where he joined *Corps Saxonia*, a fencing fraternity. One of his earliest musical influences was the German composer Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827), whose opera *Fidelio* he had heard when he was 16 years old and immediately decided he wanted to become a composer for the stage.

In 1833 at the age of twenty, Wagner had finished composing his first complete opera *Die Feen* that remained unproduced until half a century later. He had brief appointments as musical director at the opera house of Magdeburg and Königsberg during which he wrote *Das Liebesverbot* based on William Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*. This second attempt was staged at Magdeburg in 1836, but met with little acclaim.

He developed an operative genre which he called music drama, synthesizing music, drama, verse, legend and spectacle. Notable works are the operas *Der Ring des Nibelungen* (Cycle of four operas 1847-74), *Tristan und Isolde* (music drama 1859) and *Parsifal* (1882). His popular sheet music

includes *Wedding March*, *Themes from Parsifal*, *the Ride of Valkyries* and *the Siegfried Idyll* (1870), that are still widely performed.

His early operas *Rienzi* (1842) and *The Flying Dutchman* (1843) led to his appointment as conductor at the Dresden opera house, where *Tannhauser* was successfully performed (1845). During the composition of *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, an operatic treatment of German mythology, he fell in love with Mathilde Wesendonck (1828-1902), who inspired the opera *Tristan und Isolde*. In 1870 Wagner married Liszt's daughter, Cosima von Bulow (1837-1930), twenty-four years his junior. In 1868 he produced *Die Meistersinger von Nurnberg* and began building a theatre in Bayreuth for the first performance of *The Ring* (1876). His last opera, *Parsifal*, was produced in Bayreuth in 1882.

Wagner was a controversial figure, both because of his modernist musical and dramatic innovations, and as a public exponent of revolutionary and anti-monarchist ideas. A prolific writer, he authored hundreds of essays, poems, an autobiography *Mein Leben* (1880), as well as a massive amount of correspondence. His writings covered a wide range of topics including politics and philosophy, and detailed analysis, often quite contradictory, of his own operas.

He was responsible for several theatre innovations developed at the Bayreuth *Festspielhaus*, an opera house specially constructed for the performance of his operas. These innovations included darkening of the auditorium during performances and placing the orchestra pit out of view of the audience. The Bayreuth Festspielhaus is the venue of the annual Richard Wagner festival which draws thousands of opera fans to this remote town in Franconia, just north of Nuremberg.

In 1877 a Wagner Festival was held at Royal Albert Hall in London consisting of eight concerts conducted by Wagner himself. In Ireland the example of Wagner's exploration of German mythology, and the excitement generated by the rediscovery of Irish mythology as part of a wider project of cultural nationalism, led to a flowering of mythological plays in the early twentieth century as part of the Irish Literary Revival.

Also in 1877 Wagner began work on his final opera, *Parsifal*. The composition took four years during which he also wrote a series of increasingly reactionary essays on religion and art. In 1882 a second Bayreuth Festival was held for the new opera. By this time he was suffering from angina. During the sixteenth and final performance of the opera on 29 August, he secretly entered the pit during Act III, took the baton from Hermann Levi, and led the performance to its conclusion.

After the festival the Wagner family travelled to Venice for the winter, where Richard died from a heart attack on 13 February 1883, in the Palazzo Vendramin on the Grand Canal. His last words were recorded as ... *'I am fond of them, of the inferior beings of the abyss, of those who are full of longing'*. His body was returned to Bayreuth and buried in the garden of his residence Villa Wahnfried, where 47 years later his imperious widow, Cosima Wagner, was also buried, next to him, in 1930.

Giuseppe Fortunino Francesco Verdi (1813-1901)

Giuseppe Verdi was born on 10 October 1813 in Le Roncole, a village near Busseto, in turbulent times with Parma staggering under the thumb of Napoleon's armies. His baptismal register on 11 October lists him as "born yesterday" which could be either 9 or 10 October. It was in Busseto he received his first lessons in composition.

He went to Milan at the age of twenty to continue his studies, and there he attended operatic performances as well as concerts of specifically German music. Milan's beaumont association convinced him to pursue a career as a theatre composer. During the mid-1830s he attended the Salotto Maffei Salons in Milan, hosted by Clara Maffei. Returning to Busseto he became the town music master and with the support of Antonio Barezzi, a local merchant and music lover, who had long supported Verdi's musical ambitions in Milan, Verdi gave his first public performance at Barezzi's home in 1830.

Because he loved Verdi's music, Barezzi invited Verdi to be music instructor to his daughter Margherita, and soon the two soon fell deeply in love. They were married on 4 May 1836 and Margherita gave birth to two children in 1837 and 1839. Both died in infancy while Verdi was working on his first opera and, shortly afterwards, Margherita died of encephalitis on 18 June 1840 aged 26. Verdi adored his wife and children and he was devastated by their deaths.

Unlike most of the visual arts, opera was commercially profitable, accessible to most classes of society, thus an effective means of reaching the nineteenth century public. Verdi used musical theatre to contrast noble ideals with the corrosive effects of power, love of country with the inevitable call for sacrifice and death, and the lure of passion with the need for social order.

His first mature work was *Rigoletto* (1851). His many operas, such as *La Traviata* (1853), *Aida* (1871) and *Otello* (1887), emphasize the dramatic element, treating personal stories on a heroic scale and often against

backgrounds that reflect his political interests. Verdi is also famous for his *Requiem* (1874). He wrote *Falstaff* in 1893, based on Shakespeare's *Merry Wives of Windsor*.

After 1843 for a decade that Verdi described as his "galley years", he wrote a large number of operas. For some, the most important opera that Verdi wrote is *Macbeth* (1847). For the first time he attempted an opera without a love story breaking a basic convention of nineteenth century Italian opera. In 1847 *I Lombardi* (1843) revised and renamed *Jérusalem* was produced by the Paris Opera. Due to a number of Parisian Conventions that had to be honoured (including extensive ballets) it became Verdi's first work in the Grand Opera style.

Following the death of Margherita Barezzi, Verdi began an affair with Giuseppina Steponi, a soprano in the twilight of her career. They married on 27 August 1859 at Collonges-sous-Salève, in the kingdom of Piemonte, just outside Geneva. After his mother's death Verdi made his home at the family place of Villa Verdi at Sant'Agata in Villanova sull'Arda until his death.

Verdi's opera *Rigoletto*, which premiered in 1851, was a great success. It sets up Verdi's original idea of musical drama as a cocktail of heterogeneous elements embodying social and cultural complexity, and beginning from a destructive mixture of comedy and tragedy. In Verdi's "middle period" in 1853 *Il Trovatore* was produced in Rome and *La Traviata* in Venice. The latter was based on Alexandre Dumas play 'The Lady of the Camelias' and became the most popular of all Verdi's operas, listed as most performed opera worldwide. Between 1855 and 1867 an outpouring of great Verdi operas followed.

In 1869 Verdi was asked to contribute a section for the requiem mass in memory of Gioachino Rossini, which was compiled and completed but never performed in Verdi's life time. His own, complete *Requiem Mass*, almost a dramatic oratorio, was first performed at the Cathedral of Milan on 22 May 1874, honouring the famous novelist and poet Alessandro Manzoni who died in 1873.

During his later years Verdi worked on revising some of his earlier scores. His last opera *Falstaff* was an international success. In 1894 he composed a short ballet for a French production of *Otello* his last purely orchestral composition. In 1897 he completed his last work, a setting of the traditional Latin text *Stabat Mater*, the last of four sacred works that Verdi composed.

In October 1894 the French Government awarded Giuseppe Verdi the

Grand-Croix de la Legion d'honneur, the first non-French to receive the Grand-Croix. His music is hailed as some of the greatest operatic work of all time.

While staying at the Grand Hotel in Milan, Verdi suffered a stroke on 21 January 1901 and died a week later on 27 January. His funeral service is documented as the largest public event in Italy with numerous choirs conducted by Arturo Toscanini. His burial was initially in Milan's Cimitero Monumentale. A month later Verdi's body was removed to the "crypt" of the Casa di Riposo per Musicisti, a rest home for retired musicians that Verdi had recently established.

Amalfi and Ravello: Costiera Amalfitana

Amalfi was one of Italy's four ancient Maritime Republics, the others being Genoa, Pisa and Venice. Powerful in the middle ages (839-1135), it traded extensively with the Orient, long holding the monopoly for commerce in the Tyrrhenian Sea exporting Italian goods to Eastern markets in exchange for spices, perfume, pearls, jewels, textiles and rugs. North African influence is visible in Amalfi's old traditional dwellings with narrow streets and houses clinging together connected by labyrinth-style covered alleyways and staircases.

The Amalfi coast was granted UNESCO world heritage status in 1997 to be preserved for its natural and unique beauty. It has an immense diversity of landscapes ranging from coastal settlements through the intensively cultivated low slopes and large areas of pastoral land to the dramatic high mountains. It is described as one grand balcony suspended between a sea of cobalt blue and the feet of the Lattari Mountains in a stretch of hollows and promontories with cultivated terraces, vineyards, lemon and olive groves.

The towns of Amalfi, Positano and Ravello have captivated and inspired artists for centuries from the fourteenth century author and poet Giovanni Boccaccio to nineteenth century Richard Wagner and twentieth century playwright Tennessee Williams. American poet, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807-82) achieved enormous popularity with long poems such as *Amalfi* (1875), waxing lyric to the idyllic resort on the west coast of Italy on the Gulf of Salerno. Amalfi was much visited by royalty and was a favourite place for the British upper class to spend winter on the Grand Tour in Europe.

In medieval times Amalfi had its own coin called the Tari and flourished with schools of law and mathematics. It founded an imposing hospital in Jerusalem leading to the Order of St. John, then Knights of Cyprus, of Rhodes

and in 1530 the Knights of Malta that still exist. Mediterranean seafaring was once governed by *Tabula Amalfatine*, one of the oldest maritime codes from the twelfth century. Amalfi's ancient shipyard, now *The Museum of the Compass and of the Maritime Duchy of Amalfi*, tells the story of its nautical history with exhibits of ancient maps and documents, and the compass that revolutionised navigation techniques associated with Flavio Gioca. This son of Amalfi is honoured with a statue at the original place of the port where ships docked and unloaded.

A jewel in the crown is the byzantine Duomo or Cathedral of Amalfi one of the most visited monuments on the coast. Testimony to its history and ancient past includes the Cloister of Paradise, the Basilica of the Crucifix which houses the Museum, the crypt of St. Andrew and the Cathedral. A long flight of steps leads to the impressive main portals and its treasures are inestimable. In the atrium are the first bronze doors brought to Italy from Constantinople with four fine figures in Byzantine style representing Christ and the Virgin, with initials in Greek, as well as St. Peter and St. Andrew, with legends in Latin.

The Cathedral of Amalfi is where the "head and other bones" of Saint Andrew are preserved. The Apostle who had evangelised Greece was crucified in Patras. From there Cardinal Pietro Capuano, Papal Envoy to the Fourth Crusade, took his body first to Constantinople and later to Amalfi where he is venerated as the patron saint. His statue is a focus of pilgrimage for Amalfitans and visitors.

On a smaller scale the medieval town of Ravello is perched on a promontory at 1,198 feet or 365 metres. Considered one of the most romantic and beautiful small towns in southern Italy, it was described by French novelist André Gidé as a place closer to the sky than the sea. Protected by its walls, it is a peaceful place blessed with lush gardens, quiet lanes, sun drenched corners with lofty and spectacular panoramic views of the sea.

At the heart of Ravello rise an eleventh century cathedral and the Villa Rufolo, which is one of two villas for which the town is famous. Considered the masterwork in the town's extensive repertoire of historical and architectural show pieces, the villa was built in the thirteenth century by one of the wealthiest families in Ravello. At the height of its glory, it boasted "more rooms than there are days in the year". Popes and kings are included amongst its renowned guests. Falling into decline and almost state of ruin, in 1851 Villa Rufolo was bought by a wealthy Scottish botanist, Nevile Reid,* who restored it to its antique splendour, adding exotic plants, pines and cypresses.

On a visit to Ravello in 1880, the German composer Richard Wagner

(1813-1883) is said to have been taken by its beauty and entranced with the storybook atmosphere of Villa Rufolo. He was moved to exclaim that he had found ... "*the magical garden of Klingsor*", a character in his three-act opera *Parsifal* that is based on a thirteenth century epic poem by Wolfram von Eschenbach.

In a long tradition of attracting artists and musicians, since 1953 a summer Chamber Musical Festival has taken place annually organised by the Ravello Concert Society. Popularly known as the Wagner Festival, more recently the prestigious event has expanded to include large orchestras, jazz, art shows, dance, photography exhibits, discussion groups and a chance to meet and talk with featured artists, many of whom are of world renown. For the duration, a special stage is erected projecting high over the sea at Villa Rufolo's upper gardens in a spectacular setting with wide views of the Amalfi coast.

Francis Nevile Reid (1826-1892)

An illustrated book with forty pictures and extensive notes is titled Francis Nevile Reid RAVELLO. With an introduction by Gore Vidal, it is based on the notes of Francis Nevile Reid, a Scots gentleman, who bought Ravello's legendary Villa Rufolo in 1851, where he remained until his death on 12 July 1892. The body of the text is in Italian and English and gives the historical and social context of what was then a remote village without a proper water supply or negotiable roads to the outside. Ravello and the neighbouring towns were only small hamlets of fishermen and peasants, ignorant of their own history. The art and history of Ravello, Scala, Minori, Atrani, were re-examined by the first foreigner that chose the Amalfitan 'Costa divina' as his adoptive country.

An Obituary Notice in the 'The Times' recalls the life of Francis Nevile Reid, who had lived in the beautiful region of southern Italy for some forty years. A member of a wealthy Scottish family, he suffered as a very young man from a delicate chest and, during a journey in Italy, he found great good from the air of Ravello above Amalfi. He proved a generous benefactor providing local needs and developing infrastructure. At one point with his wife and her mother he made a hasty escape down a long narrow path from Ravello after receiving a warning that local brigands were assembled to assault them. From the little seaport of Minori below they boarded a boat to the nearby island of Capri, until it was safe to return.

Alejandro ‘Bloody O’Reilly’ (1722-1794):

In the context of religious and territorial wars of past centuries, the exploits of Irish soldiers and officers are well chronicled by military and other historians. As professional soldiers they preferred to put their swords at the disposal of different European monarchs rather than fight for the colonisers who had overrun their country. They fought for the French, Austrian, Prussian, Spanish, Italian and Russian armies. Irishmen or their descendants became influential figures in many countries, achieving distinguished military careers that have left an indelible mark in the annals of world history.

O’Reilly (O Raghailigh) was a rather widespread family name in Ireland, especially in Co. Cavan. The head of this important sept was chief of Breffny O’Reilly. Up to the sixteenth century the location of the ancient territory of Breffny (Breifne) was Cavan and west Leitrim. Like others, they suffered greatly for their Catholic faith during penal times, losing land and extensive property.

The Irish army of King James II lists thirty-three O’Reilly officers under the command of a Colonel Edmond O’Reilly and sixteen under the command of a Colonel Mahon. Amongst notable Irishmen, Alejandro O’Reilly is chronicled for his presence in the Spanish Caribbean.* He became Spain’s man in Havana where he first landed on 3 June 1763. In 1764 he recommended Irish emigration to Cuba as a tonic for that island’s sluggish economy and in 1765 he reorganised Puerto Rico’s defences in collaboration with his compatriot Colonel Tomas O’Daly, chief engineer in San Juan.

Descendants of O’Reilly have been in Cuba for over two centuries where, as Counts of Castillo and Marquis of San Felipe Santiago, their lineage is to be found in the Havana archives. A main street in old Havana is Calle Orrely, marking the place of his arrival. There are streets in Madrid, Barcelona and Cadiz with the name. It was an O’Reilly of the St. Patrick’s Brigade in Mexico who induced Texas in the 1840s to join the USA.*

He was born at Baltrasna, Co. Meath where a military tradition ran in the family. His grandfather John O’Reilly was a colonel in the army of Catholic James II whose regiment ‘Reilly’s Dragoons’ fought at the siege of Derry and in other battles. His wife was Margaret O’Reilly of Co. Cavan and they had five children. Their youngest child Thomas was Alexander’s father who married Rose McDowell of Co. Roscommon. They had four children of whom the youngest was Alexander, later called Alejandro.

Thomas O’Reilly left Ireland with his family and settled in Saragossa

where Alexander was educated. Aged only eleven, Alexander joined the Spanish army as a cadet in the famous Hibernia regiment, formed in 1710. He was promoted to sub-lieutenant in 1739 the year that war broke out with Britain and Austria. He fought for Spain against Italy where he was badly wounded leaving him with a permanent limp, a particularly identifying feature.

In 1757 he transferred to the Austrian army where he distinguished himself against the Prussians at Hochkirchen in 1758. The following year he entered the French service and assisted at the battle of Bergen in 1759 and the taking of Minden and Corbach. War having broken out between Spain and Portugal, he re-entered the Spanish service, was made lieutenant general and defeated the Portuguese before Chaves in 1762.

The advent of an English army, under John Burgoyne, checked the Spanish successes and the Peace of Paris in 1763 deprived O'Reilly of an active military career. In 1765 he saved the life of the Spanish king Charles III (r.1759-88) in a popular tumult in Madrid. He reorganised the Spanish army and is said to have given it a Germanic discipline.

A personal humiliation was the disaster of an ill fated attack which he led on Algiers in 1775. It was later immortalised by the British poet, Lord Byron (1788-1824) who wrote ... *"Is it for this that General Count O'Reilly, who took Algiers, declared I used him vilely? Count O'Reilly did not take Algiers ... but Algiers very nearly took him"*. When hearing the shots of the Moors, a tremulous O'Reilly is depicted as saying in Spanish '¡Ay, que me meo!' ... 'Oh, I'm about to piss in my pants!'

At a time when many Irishmen held high positions for the Spanish crown, O'Reilly's selection to command the expedition to attack Algiers caused jealousy amongst the Spanish officers who felt foreigners were becoming too influential. Not daring to reinstall him in the government of Madrid, King Charles III (1716-88) appointed O'Reilly as Governor of Cadiz and Captain-General of Andalusia holding extensive military and civic powers. There is much biography and bibliography about this Irishman in the service of Spain. His portraits are in the Municipal Museum of Cadiz and the Louisiana State Museum.

Colonised by France in 1682, Louisiana was ceded part to Spain and part to England under the Treaty of Paris in 1763,. New Orleans became the capital of Spanish Louisiana when French and Creole residents frequently rebelled against the Spanish rule requiring the constant presence of Spanish troops in the city. Led by local political leaders, merchants and German, Acadian and French farmers and planters, these rebels appealed to the French

crown to resume control of Louisiana. France, however, assured Spain that it would support whatever measures were necessary to reoccupy and pacify the colony.

Forced from office, on 1 November 1768 Louisiana's first Spanish governor sailed out of New Orleans and it was Irish born General Alejandro O'Reilly who defeated the revolt. With over 2,000 prime troops he disembarked at New Orleans with an impressive show of strength and ceremony in August 1769. He immediately arrested thirteen rebel leaders and proclaimed amnesty for all other colonials who agreed to sign oaths of loyalty to the king of Spain. Following a trial, O'Reilly freed one of the thirteen leaders and sent six to jail in Morro Castle at Havana. He found the remaining six guilty of treason and sentenced them to death by hanging, even though one man had already died before the trial. On 25 October 1769 Spanish soldiers executed the five ringleaders by firing squad. Some colonials and scholars have referred to him as 'Bloody O'Reilly' because of his execution of the 1768 rebellion leaders.

Viewed by others as liberal and enlightened, Alejandro O'Reilly established law and order, developed major infrastructures, forbade begging and provided for the poor to be housed and fed. Irishmen of the Hibernia regiment who went with him to New Orleans were Charles Howard who remained in America and who distinguished himself in Spanish Florida and Louisiana, Arthur O'Neill who was an outstanding soldier and negotiator with the Indians and Maurice O'Connor who remained in charge of militia.

Alejandro O'Reilly was ennobled by the Spanish king, Charles III, who gave him a coat of arms and made him a count. Dubbed 'a monster of fortune', he retired on a modest pension. He had such high regard for his Irish heritage that, not long before his death, he sent home 1,000 guineas to have an Irish genealogist set out his pedigree for him. Aged 72, he died in Cadiz on 23 March 1794 and is buried in the parish church of Bonete in Castile-La Mancha, Spain.

Ita Marguet, ILO retired.

Art beyond frontiers, a dappled, exhilarating trans-frontier exhibition of modern and traditional sculptures

Once again the frontier communes of Collex-Bossy (CH) and Ornex (F) have successfully cooperated in mounting an artistic and educational venture that brought delight and inspiration to many visitors from July to mid-September 2013.

This was the fifth edition of the initiative *Art en campagne* -- art in the countryside -- dedicated this year to the real and figurative theme *Au-delà des Bornes – Beyond boundary stones*.

True enough, we live on the national frontiers of France and Switzerland, but as internationals we have the privilege to go in and out of many cultures, languages and cuisines, we are confronted with different musical expressions, religions and philosophies, transcending stereotypes and caricatures. Thus we grow richer and wiser by virtue of this multiculturalism that the United Nations and its specialized agencies consciously nurture and promote.

A well-indicated six kilometres circuit zigzagging from Switzerland into France and back to Switzerland, this clever exposition was composed of 26 works of art by professional sculptors and amateurs representing seven nationalities. From very young artists, to well-seasoned sculptors in their eighties, this exposition also included artistic ventures by schoolchildren from Collex, Ferney, Ornex and Versonnex.

What a delightful way to spend a sunny Sunday afternoon strolling through fields and forests adorned with art! All exhibits stood there, in the open, in the middle of nature, not in a gallery. There was no entrance fee and no museum guard or alarm system to dissuade visitors from getting too close or touching the art work.

In a world of increased video (and drone!) surveillance, it is particularly relaxing to be able to move about without supervision! And for those who might not have understood the message of the sculptures, each exhibit gave its own exegesis. The visitor, however, remained free to formulate his or her own interpretation, to personalize it, internalize it, and let the work of art deploy its magic. My wife and I decided to visit by bike and spent two good hours studying the eclectic, ingenious and inspiring constructions – an invigorating outing, humorous, surprising and surely enough to satisfy anyone's appetite for art.

The first exhibit was a wooden construction depicting a man and a woman

trying to decipher the frontiers – one by use of binoculars, the other by consulting the net. The artist, Marianne van der Hoeven, was born in Germany and lives in Collex-Bossy – she translates emotions into abstract paintings and sculpture, using all sorts of material – earth, metal, plastic, paper, wood and stone.

The fourth exhibit consisted of a series of sculptures and border stones by Henri Bertrand, a Swiss sculptor residing in Vaud, laureate of the 2012 edition of *Art en campagne*, which ran under the theme “Rousseau, solitary hiker”. This time Henri took up the new challenge and proposed a pragmatic approach to overcoming frontiers and other limitations: solidarity and cooperation. He depicts the *homo ludens*: man the playing being -- one boy jumping over another, representing the commonality of the “we” and “they”, and the commitment to build a common future.

Susanne Lewest, born in Berlin and residing in Collonges (F), offered us the sixth exhibit , a construction between two trees ,a frontier mark composed of many stones collected on both sides of the frontier. Hovering over this block of stones, hanging stones that swung lightly in the wind.

The ninth exhibit amused us particularly. In the middle of the forest we found a multicoloured Totem with the sign “beyond frontiers there are unexpected encounters”. The witty creator is Jacques Guillon, a resident of the Pays de Gex, who specializes on wood sculptures, with expositions in Belgium, France and Switzerland.

The tenth sculpture composition consisted of monumental Question Marks rising from open green fields and joined together in the centre by a hanging globe. The artist, Yann-Loü Lara, was born in Morocco at the foot of the Sahara, son of a Spanish father and a Breton mother. Proud of this heritage beyond frontiers, he expresses the euphoric dimension of diversity, here in monumental sculpture, but also in smaller structures intended to be allegories of mankind’s hopes. The question marks are not, however, constructions in grey concrete -- but see-through mirages.

As in previous years, visitors had the opportunity to vote for their favourite work of art, a choice that is not always easy. At the closure ceremonies on 8 September, Yann-Lou Lara, was awarded his laurels. I too had voted for him.

This fifth exhibition was prepared by a committee of Swiss and French art lovers, including Dr. Alfons Noll, retired legal advisor at ITU, and his wife Dr. Meike Noll-Wagenfeld, retired legal advisor at UNHCR.

The sixth edition of this fine initiative will be held in 2015, skipping one summer. For more information please consult www.artencampagne.org

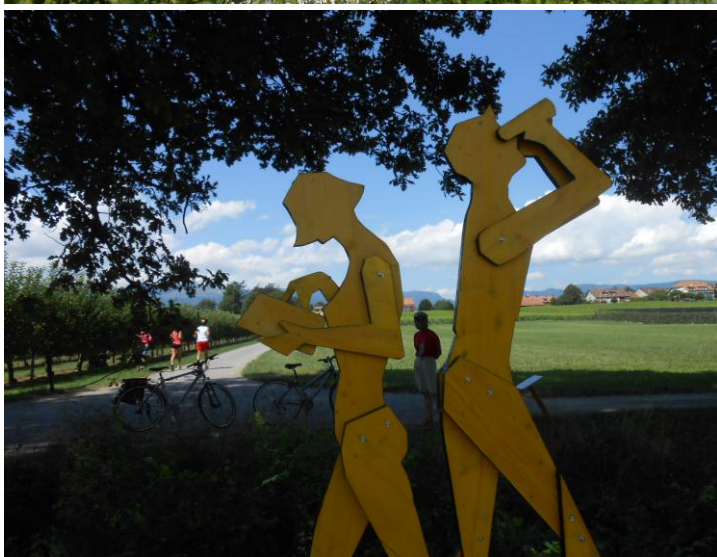
AdeZ, OHCHR retired



Lara



Bertrand



van der Hoeven

Just Nature Doing Its Thing

For Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677)

It was one of those picture-card-beautiful late-September days. I was walking, at a leisurely pace, on a path that led from Montagnier to Versegères. The sun was still high in the sparkling blue sky when I heard the bell of the big church in Le Châble toll five times. I still have plenty of time to go to Versegères, have a beer, and come back, I thought. The sun set behind the mountains at around 20h at that time of the year. Versegères is the village where the parents of my wife's father used to live. It is on the main road which continues to climb for about ten kilometers until it reaches the big dam of Mauvoisin at the end of the valley. Our house is in Villette, between Le Châble, the seat of the "Commune", and Montagnier, the small village where my sister-in-law and her husband live. Their house is situated right next to the Providence, the valley's old age home. The importance of Le Châble was enhanced when, many years ago, a cable-car station was built there to take skiers up to Verbier. I often watch from a window of our house as the cable cars go up and down the steep flank of the mountain.

In the summer of 2010, my wife and I decided to go and live in Val de Bagnes, one of several lateral mountain valleys that branch off and climb from the vast Rhone Valley below from which the Canton of Valais derives its name. We made that decision, after much soul-searching, because we believed that the quality of life in Geneva had deteriorated significantly, and also because we felt the need to re-establish our link with Nature that appeared to be broken. We became convinced that *Candide* was right when he said, at the end of Voltaire's novel, that the secret of happiness was to 'cultivate your garden'!

I walked on the path that in part runs alongside the Dranse River and which crosses the grounds of a large sawmill and the Commune's roads department. Cranes constantly move around the big logs piled up there. Further up are parked the numerous machines and vehicles that are used to repair the roads and, during the long months of the winter, remove the snow, and put salt on the roads and sidewalks. I listened to the ding-dong of the cowbells, stopping now and then to observe the bees going in and out of the hives, and the ballet of the butterflies fluttering around and settling on flowers, when, behind the fence of the property that belongs to

my brother-in law, my attention was caught by a large black patch on the green grass. A large cow, also black, its head bent down, was standing behind it. Curious, I approached and, suddenly, I realized that the black spot was in fact a newborn calf. I also could now see that the cow behind it was its mother, licking it...

I looked around. There was nobody. No farmer, no vet. Mesmerized, I watched, as if nailed to the ground, not daring to move, lest I disturb the mother. I lost the notion of time. Perhaps ten minutes later, the mother cow lifted her head, took a step back, turned left and started grazing. The little one wiggled about, thrashed, threw its legs around a few times, and suddenly, it stood up on shaky legs. It took a step or two, staggering, seeming close to falling a few times, but it didn't. The mother, during that time had gone on grazing, as if nothing of importance was happening. Her baby sauntered towards her, going directly to what it was looking for, and started to suck at her mother's udder.

That's it, I thought. Nothing out of the ordinary. No big deal. Nothing to worry about. It happens millions of times every day around the world. Just Nature doing its thing. And yet, it was a miracle too. The miracle of life.

I moved on, feeling happy, as if I had something to do with it...

As I walked on, watching the logs being moved around, I remembered a conversation that I had some time ago with a cowherd who was standing at the edge of a field and watching thirty or so cows. I had asked him the kind of questions that an ignorant city-dweller asks, and he had patiently answered me. Here is the gist of what he said:

"These cows belong to the famous wrestling breed of Hérens. They live on average 15 years, and start "calving" when they are three years old. A healthy cow gives birth to a dozen or so calves in her lifetime, doubles being very rare. She also produces 13 to 14 liters of milk every day. They are intelligent and affectionate animals. They know and love their masters. We grow attached to them too. We are sad the day we must take them to the slaughterhouse. We go and get drunk in the bistro afterwards."

He fell silent and looked away, and I left, thanking him and shaking his hand.

Zeki Ergas, UNSW/SENU

Les objectifs du développement durable

Au fil des années j'ai apporté aux soirées Ex Tempore de janvier quelques informations économiques aux membres et invités de la Société des Ecrivains des Nations Unies, à partir de réunions de l'ONU sur le développement, où je représente des organisations accréditées de la société civile. Je considère personnellement que l'économie est une science irrationnelle, mais obtenir un petit progrès çà et là peut avoir un effet bénéfique et sauver des vies. Aujourd'hui des "objectifs du développement durable" (ODD) sont élaborés pour relayer les "objectifs du millénaire pour le développement" (OMD), incomplètement réalisés. Trois propositions soumises au Service de liaison non gouvernemental UN-NGLS, et par ce biais au Secrétaire général, sont reproduites ci-après. La deuxième, concernant la préservation des ressources naturelles des pays en développement, a inspiré un intérêt particulièrement vif. Elle exprime des dispositions constitutionnelles et parlementaires sur lesquelles j'ai travaillé avec Djély Samoura, Président de la Coordination des ONG africaines des droits de l'homme et du développement (CONGAF), député de Guinée. Djély Samoura, qui appartient à une famille de griots, notant qu'un décollage économique est maintenant prédit à l'Afrique (souvent sans analyser les causes du manque de décollage antérieur, qui étaient surtout imputables aux vils prix payés pour les exportations africaines) tient à souligner que ce décollage doit survenir dans le respect des traditions et des cultures africaines. Sans cela les économies africaines seront dominées par des "requins noirs", eux-mêmes au service de "requins blancs". Les couleurs, pour les poissons comme pour les humains, sont schématiques, et symboliques.

La Coordination des ONG Africaines des droits humains s'est attachée à soumettre des propositions détaillées pour suggérer des moyens concrets, inspirés de son expérience de terrain, pour atteindre les objectifs esquissés pour l'après 2015. Elle se réfère aux objectifs explicités par le Panel de haut niveau sur l'après 2015.

Objectif 5 : Sécurité alimentaire

Il existe dans la plupart des pays africains et aussi sans doute d'autres continents une solution locale à la crise alimentaire. Des commerçants locaux se rendent dans les zones agricoles, même de monoculture, et achètent aux fermiers, à des prix très modiques mais qui cependant complètent les revenus des fermiers, des légumes et des fruits, et parfois des produits de l'élevage. Ils transportent ensuite sur de vieux véhicules, mis en état de rouler par des mécaniciens habiles dont la contribution est proverbiale en Afrique, ces denrées

alimentaires vers les villes, jusque dans les bidonvilles et dans les autres secteurs menacés par un manque de sécurité alimentaire et par la faim, et ainsi ils protègent les populations même les plus défavorisées. Ce dont je parle, ce sont des scènes familières dont j'ai été témoin, et où j'ai personnellement été client, et dont je pense qu'elles ne doivent pas être oubliées par les économistes. Elles peuvent contribuer à résoudre le problème alimentaire mentionné par la FAO dans son rapport annuel de 2012, qui selon cette organisation concerne moins la disponibilité de la nourriture que son accès. La question a été commentée au cours du débat de la session de l'ECOSOC qui se déroule à Genève.

Ensuite un rôle doit être joué au plan national, et même au plan des organisations internationales, dont la CNUCED, pour soutenir ce commerce local, source d'un développement qu'on peut appeler **endogène**, en appuyant ces cultures, notamment dans le cadre des activités d'animation rurale qu'entreprennent les ministères de l'agriculture. Ces ministères doivent aussi veiller, au plan national, à ce que les cultures de rente qui apportent des devises n'excluent pas trop le maraîchage et le jardinage, afin de ne pas défavoriser les populations au profit des exportations. La CONGAF pourrait se charger de contacter aussi bien les fermiers que les commerçants, ainsi que les points de distribution urbains, mais elle espère aussi un soutien international pour soutenir les acteurs concernés, et donner plus d'ampleur à des activités au fond traditionnelles, et inscrites dans les traditions africaines. Elle fait observer que cette amplification serait aussi une source d'emplois — pour prendre un exemple de mécaniciens pour l'entretien des véhicules vieillissants. La lutte contre la pauvreté serait aussi favorisée par le revenu supplémentaire assuré aux fermiers, dont les rémunérations même pour les cultures de rente laissent à désirer.

Objectif 9 : Gérer les ressources naturelles de façon durable

Les pays en développement qui sont dotés d'importantes ressources naturelles, notamment en Afrique, sont loin de tirer pleinement parti de ces ressources parce qu'ils doivent faire appel pour leur exploitation à des entreprises de pays développés ou émergents avec lesquelles ils concluent des contrats qui ne sont pas à leur avantage. La tendance commence à s'inverser, mais beaucoup de progrès sont encore nécessaires et possibles. Le président de la CONGAF a été élu au Conseil national de transition de son pays, la Guinée, et à ce titre il a pu s'occuper de l'élaboration de contrats miniers, car son pays dispose d'importantes ressources minérales. Dans le passé l'exploitation de ces ressources était effectuée par des multinationales étrangères dans des conditions peu favorables, où intervenait même un élément de corruption, ainsi qu'un risque de dilapidation. Le président de la CONGAF a notamment avec des

membres de cette organisation travaillé à l'élaboration de dispositions constitutionnelles visant à soumettre au parlement du pays les contrats commerciaux importants. Il y a là une contribution utile de la société civile, dont on peut souhaiter l'amplification. Un nouveau code minier a également été élaboré. Des multinationales ont manifesté l'intention, de leur côté, de tenir compte de l'intérêt des populations ainsi que du pays hôte. Une telle optique contribue aussi à la sécurité écologique et au développement durable. Cependant la question d'une gestion équitable reste une question délicate, qui doit encore beaucoup retenir l'attention, et qui appelle un soutien juridique de juristes compétents en la matière, y compris de juristes des organisations internationales. La mise au point de **contrats modèles** est d'une grande utilité. Les pays d'Afrique de l'ouest se concertent et s'informent mutuellement dans ce domaine, mais il faut encore renforcer les ressources humaines accessibles aux gouvernements et aux entreprises nationales impliquées dans la gestion des gisements miniers. La CONGAF souhaite en outre, conformément à son Mémoire, auquel il est fait allusion dans les lignes qui suivent, qu'une action internationale soit menée pour mieux valoriser l'exploitation des ressources naturelles, par une amélioration des **vils prix** sur les marchés internationaux trop longtemps imposés aux pays producteurs, au détriment de leurs populations.

Objectif 11 : Garantir des sociétés stables et pacifiques

Dans les questions qui précèdent et dans d'autres présentant un grand intérêt la CONGAF s'appuie sur un document fondateur, son **Mémoire**, adopté en 1998. Ce document analysait l'affaiblissement des sociétés africaines et les remèdes à cette situation. Outre les questions qui précèdent la CONGAF dans ce texte fondateur s'est souciee de lutter contre le racisme et la discrimination raciale, et elle a avancé dans ce but l'idée d'enquêtes globales permettant de mettre en évidence les discriminations sur un plan général. Cette méthode est applicable à l'**ethnisme** qui malheureusement menace de nombreux pays africains, et y provoque des ressentiments pouvant aboutir à des troubles politiques. Pour apaiser de telles tensions la CONGAF propose notamment des enquêtes dans les administrations nationales pour vérifier les proportions de fonctionnaires appartenant aux diverses ethnies des pays, quand un problème ethnique se pose. Mieux vaut une telle méthode franche que des dénis et des dérobades qui risquent d'accentuer les divisions et de déstabiliser des sociétés. Une telle évolution peut dans certains cas qui sont connus aller jusqu'à l'émergence de guerres civiles larvées ou ouvertes, désastreuses pour le développement des pays concernés. La CONGAF souhaite que ce genre d'approches figure parmi les objectifs du développement durable.

Claude Citon, ancien fonctionnaire ONUG, UNICEF, PNUE, OMM



Photo: Ahmed Hamouda

L'Égypte a-t-elle un avenir ?

Étrange coïncidence. Le musée Jacquemart-André à Paris a clôturé son exposition, *le Crépuscule des Pharaons*, le 23 juillet 2012, jour de la célébration en Égypte de la révolution des officiers libres de 1952¹.

Quel sens a porté pendant ces deux dernières années une date si chargée de symboles ? L'Égypte a attendu presque 60 ans pour mener sa deuxième révolution qui, à la différence de celle de 1952, porta au pouvoir Mohamed Morsi, membre de la confrérie des Frères musulmans, sous l'œil plus que circonspect des militaires qui ont partagé ce pouvoir avec lui.

Quelle révolution ?

Une fois les dés jetés, diverses franges du peuple égyptien redoutaient le nouveau régime, à commencer par les coptes qu'il ne faudrait minorer l'importance, tant qu'ils représentent 12% de la population de ce pays qui

compte environ 84 millions d'âmes. Des intellectuels, pour ne pas dire des libéraux, et parmi eux nombre d'artistes, quittèrent le pays. Les médias officiels se faisaient rassurants bien que sur la toile plusieurs sites décortiquaient faits et gestes du frère Morsi qui, faute d'initier un plan d'action concret, entama son mandat par amadouer l'Arabie saoudite, l'Iran et le Hamas. La presse, les médias locaux et quelques médias internationaux commentèrent l'évolution de la situation qui n'occultait guère le gouffre économique où gît le pays. Le niveau des réserves de la Banque centrale égyptienne est passé de 36% à 15% en une seule année. Et la Révolution continua.

Quelle révolution ? Et ces millions d'enfants et d'exclus qui attendent toujours un traitement médical décent, un salaire pour le moins correct ou une éducation scolaire non frelatée par la corruption, avaient-ils besoin d'une révolution permanente ? Qui les aide ? Je ne crois pas que les ONG gérées par quelques midinettes de la bourgeoisie égyptienne du Jazzera Club du Caire ou les projets caritatifs de quelques privilégiés allègent la souffrance du vrai peuple. Il serait ridicule de suivre les débats, dits contradictoires, de la chaîne Al'Jazira, sachant que nombre de mouvements radicaux en Égypte sont financés par le Qatar ! Et les femmes ? Sont-elles sorties travailler et participer à la vie du pays ou sont-elles restées confinées dans le rôle de gardiennes voilées de familles nombreuses ?

Quel débat ?

Le moment est venu pour se demander quel avenir aura l'Égypte dans les quelques années à venir dans le cadre d'un débat crédible qui proposerait des solutions réalisables. Le nombre de problématiques qui cernent le pays est en soi accablant. Quant commencera la reconstruction ? Ouvrir les chantiers vitaux, quitte à nettoyer des plaies qui saignent toujours !

À commencer par la nouvelle Constitution et les libertés citoyennes, les oulémas n'avaient point de compétence pour rédiger un tel document crucial. Leur opinion n'avait qu'une valeur indicative, puisque l'Égypte est un pays multiconfessionnel. Cette tâche incombera toujours aux juristes qui sont au fait des vrais problèmes. Quant à la liberté des cultes, il faudrait se référer à la situation d'avant 1952 pour prendre la mesure de la situation. Vient ensuite le rôle des militaires, 40% de l'économie locale. Leur mission de cordon sécuritaire est inévitable. Le gouvernement actuel souffrira d'une longue et délicate cohabitation jusqu'à l'application de la nouvelle constitution et la tenue des futures élections. Le bilan de la santé publique est catastrophique. Les cliniques privées qui ont pignon sur rue excluent davantage des populations déjà marginalisées par la pauvreté et par le chômage. Construire de nouveaux centres médicaux publics est indiscutable. L'argent ne manquerait pas si le

gouvernement imposait une taxe sur les banques d'investissement et les agences de change. Il suffirait que le secteur privé y participe. Quant au bilan de l'éducation nationale, il n'est guère brillant ; 30 pour-cent de la population ne sachant ni lire ni écrire.

Que nous dira Alaa Al'Aswani² avec sa perpétuelle verve révolutionnaire qui rappelle un militant de gauche des années soixante ? Où se trouve Boutros Boutros Ghali³ et pourquoi garde-t-il le silence, comme d'ailleurs nombre d'égyptiens vivant à l'étranger ? À part ses déclarations d'intérêt général, Farouk El'Baz⁴ ne propose rien de nouveau, lui qui avait énuméré des priorités d'action depuis une quinzaine d'années ? Suffirait-il d'honorer un cinéaste égyptien au Festival de Cannes de 2012 pour prétendre que le courant postrévolutionnaire France-Egypte passe toujours quand on devine le silence du pouvoir socialiste en France et le prestige dont jouit la présence culturelle française en Égypte ? Youssef Nasralla⁵ n'est pourtant pas Youssef Chahine⁶ qui a passé la moitié de sa vie à guerroyer avec la censure d'état tant ses films sont frappants d'une vérité que personne ne voulait voir en face. Chahine le visionnaire ne pratiquait ni de collage ni de superposition de scènes pour faire vrai.

Des signes d'espoir

L'héritage de l'ère Moubarak est certes lourd de conséquences pour l'avenir d'un pays qui n'a pratiqué l'exercice démocratique que récemment et dans la douleur. L'inertie bureaucratique, la résistance au changement et la corruption sont des maux bien ancrés dans la vie quotidienne. Cependant, un point d'honneur distingue ce pays, l'absence de la fibre sanguinaire dans la personnalité égyptienne profonde ; à savoir cette faculté innée de patienter face à l'adversité, de réfléchir et d'éviter le recours systématique à la réparation de l'injustice par le sang. Il suffit pour s'en convaincre de suivre les réalités de la rue en Iraq ou en Syrie pour constater que la scène dudit Printemps arabe n'a produit que le chaos et la montée des extrémismes ; même si la Tunisie et la Lybie entrevoient à peine le chemin de la pacification sociale. Il ne suffit pas de se révolter pour détruire mais se révolter pour ériger un lendemain décent et viable.

Une issue salutaire existe, le concordat social. Un effort constant pour informer et persuader la conscience égyptienne que les urgences du pays passent avant une personnalité, une autorité ou un parti politique donné : la santé, l'éducation, l'industrie à restaurer, la lutte contre le désertification, les défis de l'eau, l'équilibre des forces dans une région agitée, le cordon sécuritaire que maintient l'armée et surtout la paix sociale qui concerne la société toute entière. Il ne sert à rien de secouer le drapeau de l'Islam qui résoudrait tout. Le problème n'est pas

celui de la foi mais celui de la capacité de tout égyptien à se relever et travailler au lieu de détruire et brûler. Se regarder en face, regarder le monde autour de soi et agir. Un plan d'action, pas des luttes de pouvoir qui rappellent les incidents d'Alexandrie de 1954⁷!

L'Égypte parviendra-t-elle à éviter un crépuscule prévisible ou serait-t-elle à l'aube d'une ère porteuse d'espoir ? L'Islam ne serait la seule solution de l'Égypte du XXIème siècle. Le gouvernement de Morsi a agi avec la légendaire ambiguïté des Frères. Le peuple l'a attendu au tournant ; mais Morsi n'a pas encore répondu des ces actes. La révolution a aggravé une situation déjà désastreuse. Le peuple attend toujours des solutions.

Et maintenant, presque 3 ans après ?

L'Égypte aurait-t-elle un avenir ? Et quelles seraient les perspectives de cet avenir vue sa conjoncture actuelle ?

Le régime de Morsi n'a-t-il pas raté sa mission, pourtant urgente, de garantir le pain, la sécurité, l'emploi, l'éducation et le traitement médical à l'égyptien de base, broyé par la misère et le désespoir ? A cette question, le peuple égyptien a donné une réponse sans appel en déposant Morsi, pourtant venu au pouvoir par les urnes, livrant du même coup les clés à l'armée avec l'avènement du gouvernement transitoire actuel. L'armée, revenue en force au cœur de la crise, a fait preuve d'une prudente maturité dans ce climat de tension sociale et de chaos économique. Comme l'heure n'est plus à l'autocratie mais plutôt à la consultation, il est devenu évident que le temps du général Al'Sissi ne serait plus celui, révolu, de Gamal Abdel Nasser et que le rôle de l'armée ne serait limité à maintenir l'ordre et pourchasser les criminels, se substituant ainsi à celui des forces de l'ordre.

Ainsi, est il désolant de constater que la colère populaire qui a engendré la révolution de janvier 2011 et sa suite de juillet 2013 trouve encore toute sa raison d'être avec l'amenuisement de l'expression démocratique, l'effondrement des systèmes de la santé, de l'éducation et du logement populaire, le déclin du tourisme ainsi que le tarissement des ressources avec le gel des grands investissements et la paralysie du secteur immobilier. Désemparés suite à l'internement de leurs dirigeants qui a suivi la violence qui régna dans le pays après l'arrestation de Morsi, les Frères musulmans gardent le silence. L'Égypte affronte un phénomène inédit depuis 1919 : le départ de centaines de familles coptes cherchant refuge et sécurité à l'étranger. Un phénomène inquiétant qui contraste avec la nature historiquement tolérante du peuple égyptien.

Malgré les apparences d'un retour à la normalité, force est de constater que le pays traverse toujours un passage délicat de son histoire ; ce qui impose à tous les égyptiens la valeur capitale du dialogue et surtout la vertu d'admettre les critiques constructives afin d'extirper le pays de cette situation et parvenir par la suite à élaborer un projet pour son avenir dans ce siècle chargé de tensions à tous les niveaux. Je suis convaincu que davantage de confiance devrait être accordée à la jeunesse égyptienne ; comme l'avenir de la paix sociale en Egypte dépend avant tout du règlement du conflit religieux et juguler l'extrémisme. L'Egypte a besoin plus que jamais de la reconnaissance de la valeur de tous les égyptiens et non au recours à la violence pour faire prévaloir une opinion sur une autre. Que fera la jeunesse égyptienne afin que sa révolution ne se soit reléguée aux yeux de l'histoire au rang de simple révolte; à moins que le 25 janvier 2011 deviendrait un simple jour férié comme le 23 juillet 1952 ? L'histoire nous le dira.

- 1) Commandant des officiers libres, le général Mohamed Naguib mit fin le soir du 23 juillet 1952 au règne de Farouk 1^{er}, roi d'Égypte, à la suite de quoi la Première république d'Égypte fut proclamée
- 2) Alaa Al'Aswani, romancier égyptien, auteur du best-seller *l'Immeuble Yacoubian* qui fut porté à l'écran égyptien et connut un grand succès
- 3) Boutros Boutros Ghali, éminent diplomate égyptien, ancien Secrétaire général de l'ONU, ancien Secrétaire général de l'Organisation internationale de la francophonie après avoir été Ministre d'État des Affaires étrangères sous Anouar El-Sadate
- 4) Farouk El'Baz, scientifique américano-égyptien et éminent géologue de l'espace
- 5) Youssri Nassralla, cinéaste égyptien
- 6) Youssef Chahine, grand cinéaste égyptien, Palme d'or du Festival de Cannes 1997
- 7) Lors d'une réunion politique en Alexandrie en 1954, des coups de feu ont été tirés dans la direction de Gamal Abdel Nasser, fraîchement élu Président de la République égyptienne au lendemain de la révolution des officiers libres en juillet 1952. Une vague d'arrestation et de séquestration arbitraire s'en suivait parmi les rangs des Frères musulmans, à la suite de quoi une interdiction formelle de ce mouvement a été décidée. Aucune preuve n'a été établie à ce jour prouvant l'implication de ce mouvement dans cet attentat.

Alex Caire, UPU Berne, Poète, éditeur francophone d'origine égyptienne, ancien diplomate onusien

La Loi et nous

La loi serve maintes fonctions et correspond au désir de l'être humain de mettre l'ordre dans le chaos, afin de permettre une vie civilisée en stabilité et prédictibilité. Pourtant, la loi est faite pour l'homme, et pas l'homme pour la loi. Il est utile de comprendre la loi comme guide ou moyen et pas comme commandement ou comme expression du pouvoir. Toutes les civilisations du monde ont eu à faire avec la question de la légitimité de la loi, sa fonction pour la société. Il s'agit donc de la nécessité universelle de différencier entre la forme et la substance. La forme est la loi, la substance est la justice.

Nous voyons déjà cette différence chez Sophocle dans son drame « Antigone » (441 av. J.-C), la femme qui enterre son frère Polynice en dépit de l'interdiction du roi Créon et qui, de ce fait, est punie. Nous connaissons aussi la parole de Socrate devenue en latin *dura lex sed lex*, la loi est dure, mais c'est la loi, donc expression d'impuissance ou de résignation face à l'autorité, par contraste avec les mots de Cicéron *summum jus, summa injuria*, le sommet du droit peut être le sommet de l'injustice. D'où l'impérieuse nécessité de faire prévaloir le sens des proportions pour éviter qu'au lieu d'y remédier, la loi ne cause de l'injustice. Ce qui nous amène finalement à l'observation de Juvénal dans ses *Satires* : *quis custodiet ipsos custodes* ? Qui contrôle les contrôleurs ? Ce qui veut dire, qui va contrôler les spécialistes de la loi, les politiciens, les parlementaires?

Or c'est précisément à nous qu'il appartient de veiller à ce que la loi serve l'homme et la justice et non le pouvoir et les privilèges. La loi doit être justifiée, son but connu, et lorsqu'elle débouche sur l'injustice, nous devons la modifier. Positivismes, légalismes et conformismes sont donc à rejeter. Nous avons encore tous à l'esprit des lois qui sont ou étaient manifestement injustes – les lois du GULAG, du totalitarisme, de l'apartheid, de la ségrégation raciale, de la détention arbitraire. Hélas, cette corruption de la loi et de la pratique du pouvoir n'appartient pas au passé lointain... Elle persiste aujourd'hui encore dans des lois et des traités injustes de plusieurs pays, ainsi que dans la pensée politiquement correcte, qui nous intimide et nous amène à l'autocensure. **AdeZ, OHCHR retired**

Historia de la palabra poesía (Un pequeño resumen)

Etimológicamente la palabra poesía viene del latín *poésis*, y ésta a su vez del vocablo griego, que significa hacer en un sentido técnico, es decir como otros artesanos moldeaban el barro para hacer vasijas, el poeta moldeaba las palabras para hacer poesía.

En la antigua Grecia la poesía no estaba destinada a la lectura sino a su representación acompañada por algún instrumento frente a un auditorio. Es Aristóteles el primero en reflexionar de manera profunda sobre la poesía y lo hace con su obra "Poética", obra de la que no se conserva su totalidad y que no estaba destinada a ser leída sino que se trataban de un conjunto de cuadernos, de notas que servían de guía al maestro, y en donde define y caracteriza las artes imitativas: los medios de imitación son el ritmo, el lenguaje y la armonía, las artes se diferencian por el empleo de estos medios y porque unos se usan y otros no.

En un sentido más amplio el origen de la poesía se confunde con el de la escritura, de ello hay constancia desde tiempos inmemorables. De inscripciones jeroglíficas egipcias, sus canciones, de las que se han conservado la letra y que están asociadas a actos religiosos. Aunque no podemos saber cómo era aquella música que acompañaba a los primeros poemas de la humanidad, si se sabe del epitafio de Seykilos.

De todas las definiciones que se pueden dar de poesía, la que personalmente más me gusta es la que dice que la poesía es un pensamiento rítmico. Es pensamiento porque todos los grandes poemas contienen un tema profundo que interpela al lector y es rítmico porque expresa el pensamiento de una manera bella. Pero veamos que dicen algunos poetas sobre qué es la poesía:

"La poesía es un arma cargada de futuro" Gabriel Celaya;

¡Qué es poesía! ¿Y tú me lo preguntas? Poesía eres tú. "Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer;

"Poesía, verdad de todo sueño" Carlos Pellicer;

"Poesía Perdóname por haberte ayudado a comprender que no estás hecha sólo de palabras." Roque Dalton García;

"Ver en la muerte el sueño, en el ocaso un triste oro, tal es la poesía que es inmortal y pobre. La poesía vuelve como la aurora y el ocaso." Jorge Luis Borges. Poesía? Pensar por nosotros mismos, embellecer un chiste, un pensamiento atrofiado, un amanecer sin sueño, un amor sin esperanza.

Rosa Montoya de Cabrera, OHCHR retired

NOUVELLES

SHORT STORIES

NOVELAS



Caspar David Friedrich, *Schwäne im Schilf beim ersten Morgenrot*

Stop! Don't go!

You'll never reach a comfortable place, the best place. There is no such place.

Over there there's a place for killers. Killing. You're killing too. It's your line. Going as far as you can. I says stop. But you don't. You can't go on, I says. But you don't go back.

Le regard curieux et émerveillé de l'autre sur ton visage. Un frisson doux qui te pénètre et t'envahit faisant rebondir le désir, corps vibrant en complète harmonie avec l'organisme tout entier. Un équilibre exquis, soft, figé dans le plaisir et des jeux sans limites, dans les interstices du présent, du passé et de l'avenir, en correspondance avec ...

Ailleurs des contradictions, des inverses et des gouffres. Clashes suivis de compromis. Que de paroles, de textes, de messages et d'infos, toxiques, brouillés, argumentés et formés/déformés par le subjectif, l'intérêt, le vouloir... Pourtant la vérité ne pourra surgir que de ces sévères confrontations, complexe, certes, mais transparente. Comme les pièces d'un puzzle qui s'emboîtent et font du z !

- On fera un mixage, - dit une autre.

- Ah non, elles sont insoutenables, ces images. On les fera défiler en gardant seulement celles qui montrent des hommes de dos, gesticulant sur un terrain vague au milieu des immeubles en ruine.

- Alors on efface. On découpe, on modifie et on lance.

- On est pressé, faut envoyer.

- On trouvera une autre vidéo. On remplacera celle-là...

- Celle de l'équipe espagnole, le photographe Murillo.

- Il est mort. Peut-être ...

L'enfer. La mort. Renoncer, non, s'accrocher au désespoir pour continuer. Le soleil tape.

Un homme surgit de nulle part, le visage tuméfié, blessé à la jambe, clopinant à travers les murs de gravats, les voitures calcinées, les traces d'obus, de mortiers des rues livrées à elles-mêmes, empestées de l'odeur de sang, sans corps.

A quelques mètres la silhouette d'une femme courbée, tremblant de tout son corps, un pool de sang entre les jambes suivie par l'homme qui essaye de la rattraper: - Ne t'arrête surtout pas. Avance, je te dis. – Je, je... j'suis réduite en pièces détachées, mon corps écartelé en mille morceaux. Ils étaient cinq. Ils ont creusé un tel gouffre en moi. La plaie ne se refermera jamais. – Je t'amènerai au dispensaire, on va te soigner, tu vas *recupérer*.- *L'homme blessé la soulève enjambant les pierres glissantes recouvertes de liquides nauséabondes. Le soleil tape plus fort.*

Il y a un monde là-bas à mille lieux de notre monde à nous.

L'Occident. Avec ses têtes pensantes qui se réunissent jour et nuit dans des salons décorés, débitant des paroles transmis par des micros puissants et intransigeants placés devant eux. Elles scrutent des rapports, les papiers, des infos, le regard rivés à des écrans qui flashent. Personnages immaculés, des *think and solve tanks*, ils s'interpellent, se contredisent et se diplomatissent, figés dans leurs propres réseaux sociaux-personnels, dictés par leurs arrières et des valeurs spécifiques. Ils s'emparent du verbe et des projets, n'osant relâcher leurs savoir-faire conventionnels, émaillés de préjugés et méfiances classiques. Des non-dits et des silences viennent alourdir leurs discours. Difficile de tourner la page, de proposer de nouveaux prototypes. La boîte à supprimer ne désemplit pas.

Ainsi, le dos au le mur, l'Occident fort de ses cerveaux, de ses connaissances et de ses outils de négociation affronte la fureur aveugle des conquérants de la mort, arme à la main et bombe à la ceinture, déconnectés des réalités et des savoirs humains, instrumentalisés et financés pour produire de l'opposition. Déstabilisé par ses propres démons économiques, un Occident fragilisé qui dérive au milieu d'un chaos politique aussi absurde qu'incohérent. Impératif de sauvegarder à tout prix un modèle de société laïque et démocratique, aux principes fondamentaux des droits de l'homme.

- Va-t'en, *step down*, - lui répète-t'ont ! Ou alors, assieds-toi à cette table avec nous. Tes deals et tes actions, on les a ausculté et analysé des près. On les a condamnés et on t'a exclu. Toutefois on t'a laissé une porte ouverte pour un retour possible. On causera tant qu'il faudra, jusqu'aux aubes futures. Dans cette étrange petite ville au bord du lac.

- Non, - répond homme, se serrant la ceinture. Des armes et la violence régleront mes affaires. Je suis maître et garderai mon pouvoir contre tout groupuscule qui s'acharne à me l'enlever. Dialogues de sourd. Une longue suite sans fin.

- Je te défendrai, - dit un autre leader au mentir mode d'emploi dissimulant

son anxiété sous un sourire narquois. – Priorité à nos convergences d'intérêt et autres... Bien installé dans son fauteuil de dictateur : – Les revendications, la rue, on s'en accommode avec nos vieilles habitudes, – clame-t'il.

Les conférenciers se serrent les mains, s'enlacent, complaisants jusqu'au bout d'avoir écarté le danger des armes chimiques sans intervention militaire ciblée. Négation, mensonges, pouvoirs et compromis l'ayant emporté sur l'injustice, l'opacité et les fanatismes confessionnels. Cependant, la destruction, elle, continue avec d'autres armes conventionnelles. Et le combat perdure entre l'homme juste et le barbare, l'homme libre et le corrompu, la vérité et l'impunité.

Aline Dedeyan, retraité ONUG



At the 2013 UNSW/SENU general assembly, Aline Dedeyan (second from left), next to our new President Marko Stanovic

Jour de marché

Rue barrée, foule bigarrée qui s'affaire nerveusement, gestes désordonnés, cris, interpellations et rires, tapes sur l'épaule, serremments de mains. C'est jour de marché.

Tout est prêt, la rue s'anime. L'air est chargé d'odeurs salées, poivrées, sucrées. Les clients du petit matin arrivent, une liste à la main. Ils se précipitent pour être les premiers à acheter du poisson frais. La grosse poissonnière, bourrue, un poil au menton, répond à une cliente timide qui trouve le cabillaud trop cher : "Hé, bonne mère, t'as qu'à aller le pêcher !".

Le marchand de légumes, rougeaud et gras à souhait, gesticule devant ses tomates et ses salades. "Achetez mes belles laitues, pas chères, n'hésitez pas !". Le fruitier/épicié d'en face, un maigrichon moustachu, lui jette un regard courroucé et préfère exhiber ses pommes vertes, les meilleures de Nouvelle-Zélande...

La foule est dense, les bousculades commencent, les badauds se fraient un passage, s'interpellent. Il y a du lapin chez le boucher aujourd'hui, il faut se dépêcher, il n'y en aura pas pour tout le monde ! Une cliente s'approche et renifle une de ces malheureuses bestioles : "Il n'est pas très frais ce matin, votre lapin, il me semble !" Le marchand rétorque aussitôt : "si vous croyez ça, ma bonne dame, allez vous faire cuire un oeuf !".

Quelques jeunes filles sont arrêtées devant l'étal d'un marchand de pacotille : tout à 10 francs ! Les minuscules flacons de parfum capiteux s'écoulent comme des petits pains. Un peu plus loin, un illusionniste s'époumone. Un gratteur de guitare ramasse aussi quelques pièces...

Les monceaux de marchandises qui jonchaient les étals diminuent. On baisse les prix; les clients tardifs en profitent, nonchalants, mais les fruits et légumes sont moins frais que ce matin.

Des ménagères chargées de victuailles s'attardent, les cancans commencent. Les langues vont bon train. "Le charcutier vient tout seul ces derniers temps, on ne voit plus sa femme", dit l'une d'elles. "C'est que je crois savoir qu'elle l'a quitté", répond une autre. "Ah, vraiment ?" "Mais il s'est vite consolé, Madame Dupont l'a vu la semaine dernière avec une autre". "Ah, ça ne m'étonne pas", rétorque une troisième commère, "les hommes ont vite fait de trouver une remplaçante !". "A qui le dites-vous, allez donc, moi je ne le plains pas, le charcutier !"...

Les vieilles dames à petit chien elles aussi aiment se rencontrer à la fin du marché. Elles ne tarissent pas d'éloges sur leur animal de compagnie. "Si vous saviez comme il est gentil, et propre avec ça, un vrai p'tit amour de chien; n'est-il pas beau avec son p'tit ruban rose ?" "Moi aussi, j'ai de la chance, il est si câlin, et puis intelligent, vous savez, et même coquin; n'est-ce pas mon petit trésor ?".

Le marché se vide. Chacun s'en va de son côté. Les marchands, satisfaits ou déçus, rassemblent leurs cageots, font un brin de conversation en sirotant un petit verre de pastis, puis rechargent leur camionnette avant de rentrer chez eux...

Gilberte Furet, retraité ONUG



Moon Story

Starring *Lionel* and *Trampy*, with a special cast, including the *Moon Goddess*

PROLOGUE (confidential between us):

This is the beginning of a tape. Not a tape worm but just a tape, dictated during the night when the moon was bright.

I must start with Conny. Because hers is the face I see. With lips like someone else I've known. And a face that brings back memories of Ireland. We agreed that I should make this tape and there it is. And her kind, diligent fingers will type what comes. All the better, since now the words will not just evaporate into the night like our words in winter, summer, spring or fall usually do. Every beginning is a continuation of what went before and every end is a beginning. So why should I be afraid to write? Love is what sustains. And Connie told me not to worry about form. So this beginning is only an end. And this end is only a beginning.

Listen reader, whether you grew up with Lionel and Trampy or were baptized with some other water, whether you are a traveler passing by or an old friend.

Listen.

* * *

The moon shines tonight. I know it shines because it is always shining somewhere and for someone, overseas and continents, lakes, rivers, mountains, plains and cities. The moon is indeed what it seems to be. The first travelers to the moon were not the *astronauts* but

Lionel the Lion and Trampy the Elephant. That was after their trips to Africa. The starting place was a little house in Arlington, Virginia, in a park. *Lubber-Run Park* it was called. And the house was surrounded by trees – tall oaks, locust trees, maples, and a sycamore in front, on our circle, a cul-de-sac with other little houses around it, where the hornets

had attacked us on that day when we were leaving for Europe. Do you remember? As if they didn't want to see us go! A place where Pamie dreamed in the park, and walking backwards in the woods, met a prince. And where Liebgard tended the gardens, front and back, and Terry rode his tricycle on the sidewalk with such gusto that he got a lantern on his forehead—a big bump which he still wears, and which lights up in moments of anger, happiness or excitement.

And in those days there were four little “Klee steps”, evenly spaced: Joanie (Joan) the tallest and Terry (Terence) the smallest, and--in between--Pamie (Pamela) and Connie (Constance). And we had a Telefunken console on which we used to play records of a fairy tale series called the “*Tale Spinners*”, or of stories told by Danny Kaye such as the one about *Clever Gretel* or the *Pixie* on the glass mountain.

And all of this is gone, you might say. But no! All of this is still living and will never die. Just like Lionel and Trampy will never die but have just gone off traveling into space. If we could go fast enough, we could catch them and then we could start all over again. Or if we knew where the right place was – I mean in the universe – we could be waiting for them to come round again, for everything in the universe goes round in circles like a merry-go-round. Then, instead of going faster than the speed of light we could just stay where we were and wait, which is more comfortable, after all.

Members of the Arlington Virginia Klee family already know about Lionel and Trampy of course. But for other listeners, some of whom were not yet born, or who were perhaps waiting in line to be born, I guess I'd better say now who they were, and are. Lionel is a plush lion of a tawny color. (Don't ask me what color “tawny” is since I'm color-blind.) All I know is that that's the color they say lions are. Trampy, the plush elephant was, and is, grey, which is, I'm told, the color elephants usually are, except when they've had a mud-bath. In that case they could be brown. By the way, elephants invented the shower. There was once a native of Africa who became a coconut-millionaire with an elephant-shower establishment. But that is another story.

Now we'll have to get back to Lionel and Trampy and their present adventure, which is different from all the previous ones which took them to Africa. You'll have to read their “adventures-in-Africa” book for that. This time they went to the moon.

The moon?

More nonsense has been said about the moon than you could shake a stick at. Everybody knows that the moon has been visited by astronauts in this century—floating around in big blimpy suits like the Michelin tire man, and able to jump thirty feet with just a wiggle of their toes. Not only that, but they came back to earth, where people cannot really jump very far just by themselves, except, perhaps, with a rocket-propulsion pack strapped to their back.

To come back to the moon—or to Lionel and Trampy’s trip to the moon, I would like you to know this: The moon is, indeed, what it seems—despite the astronauts, and indeed because of them. By traveling into space, they found out what the moon was for them (and we found out what it was for them, too). And, of course, that is true, for me and for you

And indeed for us all
Like an apple will fall
And the earth is a ball

But I have heard said,
If you stand on your head
You’ll get a surprise,
For the apple will rise.

With your nose on the ground
The earth is not round.
If you ask any cat,
He’ll tell you it’s flat.

And as for the moon,
It’s purple in June.

If I rightly remember,
It’s green in December.

In January it’s hue
Will tend to be blue,
And in March a marshmallow
With a trace of the yellow.

This is true of the sun
And the moon and the stars.

It's true of this dear little
Planet of ours.

They are what they seem,
They seem what they are,
If they're near or they're far,
Whether moving or standing,
On take-off or landing.

Aurora or black hole,
Planet, comet, meteor,
Asteroid, twin dwarf or shooting star,
From tip to tip and pole to pole.

This reminds me of the story of the little boy who got a shooting star in his T-shirt. He grew up to be a famous astro-physicist. But let's get back to our story of Lionel and Trampy.

It was on the above principle that Lionel and Trampy undertook their expedition to the moon (that is to say, on the principle that things are indeed what they seem to be). I don't think I have to convince you of this. But to be convinced one would only have to think of a rainbow.. If a rainbow were not what it was, it wouldn't be what it is, or in other words, a bridge of the most wonderful colors from earth to sky and back: a pathway for angels and souls traveling to and from heaven, when conditions are right. And for conditions to be right, you must be in the right frame of mind.

Lionel and Trampy didn't put on their thinking caps to prepare for their trip to the moon. They knew that if they wanted to go badly enough, they'd always find a way. So it had been on their trips to Africa and so it would be now. No moon suits were needed, and no moon boots. Not even a radio, since they could communicate with the children through their thoughts, and no space ships, since, as you will see, they rode on a moonbeam.

Yes, a moonbeam--the same as those you see entering your window or bouncing off a pond on a moonlit night. And the moon just happened to be out on that night when they went, as it had been countless times before. They took along a lunch of animal crackers and green cheese, not sure about what food they'd find on the moon. But they were somehow confident that there would be something up there. One thing they were

careful about, however. You will remember that the moon is, indeed, what it *seems*. Well, as you know, it's constantly appearing and disappearing. It starts as a sliver on one side, a fine silver curved line, turns into a crescent or boat sailing through the clouds, fills out into a bright disc, and then slenders down to a silver crescent and sliver of silver on the other side until it disappears again altogether. This is what they call the "waxing" and "waning" of the moon. Lionel and Trampy planned their trip to arrive just as the moon was starting to appear and before it disappeared. On Earth, this takes about one month. But on the moon, time is different, as you will see.

When it was time to go, all the children, Joan, Pamela, Constance and Terry, assembled in the backyard of the house on the park surrounded by tall trees, through the tops of which the crescent moon was shining. It was in the middle of the night and everything seemed diffused with a magic glow. The trees and flowers seemed to be alive and as if they were listening and watching. Crowding around in every bush and on every branch, it seemed, were birds and animals, the silhouette of each being lit softly by the moon's glance. The children's parents were asleep and knew nothing about these mysterious goings-on.

Instead of saying "goodbye" as the children had expected, Lionel started to pull on something that the children couldn't see, like a big thread in the air. Gradually as he pulled and pulled, they saw that it was a silver thread which led up through the branches and as far as the eye could see to the moon. Soon Trampy and all the children were helping, pulling on this magic thread like sailors do, singing "heave ho" in rhythm and a sailor's chant: "Blow the moon down Billy, blow the moon down..." As they pulled they could see that the crescent moon, until then a thin sliver, was getting bigger and bigger. In fact it was coming closer and closer as they pulled, and the whole area around them was becoming lighter and lighter so that they could see all the animals and birds more distinctly. As the moon came closer they could see that its edges were not sharp as they had thought but encrusted with what seemed to be diamonds, pearls and precious stones formed into structures like little oriental towers and pagodas. Then they saw that the moon was like a boat with transparent gossamer sails and a crystal cabin amidships. All of this was held together by threads like spider silk.

The most interesting thing of all was the crew, made up of mice in sailor jackets, and the captain, looking for all the world like a big tabby cat. He just sat there at the wheel and looked very perplexed and annoyed to see that his ship was not going where he wanted it to go, since Lionel and

Trampy and the children had pulled it out of its course. When he saw, however, that it was Lionel and Trampy, he smiled a big cat smile and said:

“Oh, Lionel and Trampy, it’s you, but hurry up because I have to get back on schedule. According to the laws of gravitation and inertia we are supposed to be over Asia within a few hours. You can break these laws once every million years or so, but then you have to make up for it by going faster. So hurry up and get on board. But what about these children?”

“We’d like to take them along,” said Lionel and Trampy, both at the same time.

“Oh, I guess so, as an exception,” said the cat captain, “but don’t let them talk to the mice, who are much too busy to be bothered with silly children.”

Having said this, the captain gave the order to untie the moorings, for the ship had been attached at various places to trees, rocks and whatever the crew could get hold of. With everybody on board it began to rise like a big balloon, faster and faster, far above the trees, above the roads, buildings, lights, lakes rivers, mountains and soon the whole Earth. And as they rose they could feel that a wind began to fill the gossamer sails, so thin and transparent that you could hardly see they were there at all. Yet this was what propelled the moon forward on its course, faster and faster through banks of clouds which left wisps of vapor in their hair. All of the passengers were fascinated to look over the jeweled, crystal rail and see the big ball which was the Earth, their home. Would they ever come back? This thought didn’t occur to them because they had confidence in Lionel and Trampy and were too fascinated by everything they saw to think of anything else. There was not only the moonship but also the stars hanging there in the sky like so many guiding lanterns, and now and then a comet that came flashing by in one direction or another, on some errand, much faster than the moon itself, and wiggling its tail as a means of propulsion. One of these comets shot across the bow of the moonship, causing the cat-captain to yell: “Why can’t the watch where he’s going?”

Nowadays everybody has heard about astronauts, rockets, satellites and so forth. Of course, the moon is a satellite which revolves around the earth. But as we have already noted, the moon is also what it *seems* to be, and this opens up amazing possibilities. All you have to do is watch it on

some clear or not so clear night—especially during the early morning or early evening hours when it seems to be playing hide-and-seek with the sun or has gotten around too early or too late. Have you ever thought how strange it is to see the moon in daylight—almost as strange as it would be to see the sun at night. At such times it seems almost transparent and as if it could melt away, and when on the horizon, like the sun, it seems much bigger and nearer than before. In our story it is indeed bigger and nearer, since it is what it seems, and it *is* transparent.

Now, back to our moonship, silver and transparent, sailing over the world, over all the seas and mountains and all the peoples of the world, who look up and say: “Ah, the moon is back. How beautiful it is tonight.” For many peoples the moon has always been a goddess who influences their lives and even comes down to see them once in a while. And maybe they were (and are) right about the goddess, and maybe she does visit. On some nights that is the feeling one gets. And then you might ask why dogs bay to the moon (not because of the cat-captain, I suppose), or why people are called “lunatics” when they’re crazy. Lots of people think the moon has a magical effect, either on humans, animals or growing things. And perhaps it has. For some peoples the moon is a lady and for others it is a man, and the same is true of the sun. Perhaps it is both. Now in our case, as you will see, the travelers soon became aware of a presence which you could only describe as a moon-goddess because she was so beautiful and mysterious. Like the sails or the ship itself, she seemed to be almost transparent. One moment she seemed to be poised on the bow looking out over the blackness of space and the twinkling stars, and the next moment she was sitting on the masthead high above them, spreading out her wide silken garments like the sails themselves and seeming to urge the moon to go faster. Then she would be sitting next to each one of them, as if she had many selves, one for each, or as many as would be needed even for a thousand or a million people. And each of the passengers heard her talk to them, her voice sounding like the swishing of waves and in a language which they had never heard before but yet could understand. It was more a language of feeling than of thinking—like music.

Despite the strange and wonderful surroundings of the moonship, our friends soon got used to it and began to run around the deck and climb up and down the masts--of which there were three, two shorter, one fore and one aft, and a main mast in the middle--or about in the rigging. A remarkable thing about the sails was that they were so thin and light that you could go right through them, like clouds. The jewels and pearls of which the ship was made, including its sides, masts, deck and bowsprit

were, it seemed, made of a light and strong transparent crystal material would do anything you wanted it to do. For example, if you wanted to stand on it or climb up on it, it would let you do that, or let you use it as a jumping board. Or if you wanted to put your hand right through it or even lift it or throw it around, the same held true. But it always came back to where it had been before and to its original shape....
(to be continued)

Raymond Klee, UNIDO retired



Tracking station in Australia

A S T R A N G E R ' S D E M I S E

What an inglorious death! What a way to end a life! I get a hollow, empty feeling in my stomach just thinking about it. Nothing great, nothing heroic about his death. It just happened.

It was no one's fault. It did not occur because of his own carelessness or stupidity, for that matter. It was sheer bad luck. Circumstances had colluded with the Gods to extinguish his life.

But why him? Why not someone else? To this day, this question haunts me, as I am sure it does others who were present at the scene on that fateful moment. Chalk it to his karma, destiny, or whatever one's religion offers as an explanation. Adopt a fatalistic attitude towards this incident (that was how it was referred to by others- an "incident, sometimes with a qualifying adjective such as "unfortunate"), I was told by wise men in plush offices and shapely secretaries. Just as others had been too, I am sure. Yet it all seems so inadequate. An explanation does not alleviate the trauma of an experience. Especially one so powerful as watching a person die.

Was he a young man? I couldn't quite recall. I didn't notice him before as I was in a mad rush to get to my seat on the plane, as if I didn't get there soon enough, the plane would leave without me. Or God forbid, I wouldn't get the prime time overhead bin location for my carry-on baggage. I was part of the mob rushing to the gate, and then to our seats. I now realize, that I could have been courteous to my fellow passengers, greeted them, wished them a happy journey. But alas!

Did he also rush in rudely to his seat? Or was he a courteous gentleman who ensured that everyone had taken their seats before he did himself? I vaguely remember him sitting diagonally behind me. Aisle seat possibly. Maybe not. I was too busy complaining about my earphones to notice. Not to mention the seat back.

I think he was a young man. Or perhaps a middle-aged man with a young face. Maybe a young man with a slightly older face. Long straight hair? Curly short? Medium, I suppose. Average height, average build. I decided on retrospection that he must be an average person, for if he was short or tall, I would have assigned that attribute to him. But what is average? To my disappointment, I realized average meant a broad range of things. So, I couldn't quite remember anything about him.

Did he misbehave with the stewardesses on the flight? Was he a

complete jerk to other passengers around him? Don't know! Don't know! Pat came back the frustrating answers! Suddenly all these trivial and not-so-trivial details became very important.

The flight began in the same manner as it does every time. The stewardesses did their jobs informing us of all the actions and precautions to take during all foreseeable emergencies. I ignored them with utter disdain, probably thinking to myself 'I have been flying for years, and that stuff never happened to me before. Why would it happen now?' Suddenly, news from around the world was more important, which ironically, never interested me normally because I considered news as stuff irrelevant to my existence usually. Take-off happened, and as I flipped through the pages of the newspaper, I caught myself wondering what gross package would be served under the guise of flight food. Yet I looked forward to it. I believed that that the ticket price included a meal, so I deserve it. Subsequently, I would complain about it (that's my privilege as a customer, isn't it?) I figured I must like complaining- there is some sort of ego massage involved there. To talk contemptuously about others implies a superiority of oneself. What one doesn't understand is that it also implies one can do better than whoever was at work. So if in principle, one starts doing what one was complaining about, one would complain about the person on the other end, which was the same person to begin with. Complaining is a way of life, accepting things and carrying on is generally not an acceptable way of life.

The next part of the flight was a blur. About forty-five minutes is compressed in my memory as a one-second capsule. I wish I could recall every moment of that part of the flight vividly. After all, those were the last moments of his life on earth. What was he thinking during that time? Did he have a foreboding of events to come? Alas! No one will ever know.

Any dead person is generally classified into extreme categories: one is so evil that one deserved to die, or one is so good that this world didn't deserve this person, one is too old that it was one's time, one is too young that life is cruel, etc. But what of this average person who didn't seem extreme at all? My mind screamed at this ignorance. This person ought to have died only after giving us a glimpse of his character so we could discuss about it at cocktail parties ('He was such a nice guy, its awful he had to die.' 'He was such a rude man, I bet he is an abusive husband and father.' 'He was so young, he must have had so many dreams and aspirations.' 'He seemed a jocular old man who had accomplished much in his life'.) But no! I was too selfish to have noticed anything at all. Is the fact that I had no inkling at all of what was to happen justification for my behavior? After all, I pass a million faces every day, ought I try to remember everyone in case such eventualities occur, however remote

the possibilities are? This is the best justification I could give for my behavior, but it seems such a weak argument considering the enormity of what had happened.

Humans are perfectly capable of thinking, deciding and acting. There are several kinds of interactions. The one second variety on the street with pedestrians and motorists; the half-hour kind on the daily commute in a public conveyance; the two-hour ones on flights such as these; the two day version on long train journeys; the week longs on vacations; long term interaction with neighbors and friends; life-long ones with spouses. Depending on the kind of interaction, one can easily structure the way one interacts. Yet one chooses to go overboard with one's co-passengers on flights, who in all probability, one will never see again ('I am generally a very friendly person, and like to talk a lot') most probably, never, ever! Yet one remains aloof from those who live next door to one for years together ('I like to keep to myself'). The possibility of converting one form of interaction to another does exist (half-hour commute partner who becomes a tennis partner three times a week, and hence, a life-long friend), but one doesn't bank on it generally. It's a possibility, not a definite.

The entire incident (or if the reader wishes, 'the unfortunate incident') started quite suddenly with a loud pop. We looked around, out the window, and at each other, as we couldn't place where the sound came from. Then there was a wobble, followed by a violent rocking sensation. Then the plane steadied. Engine malfunction, we were told by a metallic voice. We were asked by the same metallic voice not to panic. We panicked and screamed. He might have screamed too. I don't know. Or perhaps he had been the calmest among us. I had been too busy panicking to have noticed his reaction.

We heard a splash, and felt ourselves bounce against our restraining seat belts. We heard another splash, this time over our rather loud screams. As the plane settled down to a complete halt, we became quieter. But our nerves were strained to the edge. I could take solace from the fact that I wasn't the only one feeling that way. But I couldn't get myself to do that.

The metallic voice reassured us that the situation was under control, and that we had made an unscheduled landing on a water body (that explains the splash, I might have thought this). But the reassurances were in vain. A set of instructions were given to be followed in a calm manner. A pandemonium ensued, as all of us rushed to be first to reach safety.

After the blur of the next few minutes, we were all lined up in front of one exit door. The captain came out of the cockpit and gave us very simple explicit instructions: we were to don our life jackets, jump onto the smooth

surface, slide down the incline, raise ourselves at the bottom and step onto the raft. He then proceeded to give us a practical demonstration of it.

This was followed by some minor altercations as to who would be first. Each of us put forth a good point as to why we should be allowed to go first. Did he also behave in a selfish manner then? Or was he altruistic? Maybe he was aloof to all of this. Perhaps he knew what awaited him, and spent his last few moments agonizing over his destiny, even briefly considering how to delay the inevitable. Oh how I wish I had even a faint recollection of the person!

Eventually we were controlled and made to line up in a certain order by the co-pilot and stewardesses. Several people went ahead of me, several were behind me waiting their turn, as anxiously as I had done. I impatiently waited for the old man to slide down the escape hatch ('God! How long does it take to slide? After all, it is gravity driven, not controlled by anything else'). He barely had gotten off the inflated incline when I jumped down it. Next thing I knew, I was aboard the raft, waiting for the raft to move towards shore. I couldn't wait for them all to join us. I was very impatient (Come on people, let's go! How long does it take to come down here?).

What happened a little later, probably took a little more than one second. Perhaps two seconds. But it occurred in such slow motion, it felt like it took an eternity. After me, a couple of more people came down, after which he appeared. Even at this point, I was scanning the horizon for the shore, trying to see where safety was, while carelessly observing my fellow passengers through the corner of my eyes. Suddenly the whole plane lurched violently. Everyone inside the plane lost their balance. He was the next in line waiting his turn to come down to the temporary safety, when the lurch happened (as we all later described it as 'the lurch', it seemed an adequate word to describe what had happened as something special and unusual). He also lost his balance. The plane righted itself after a moment. But his body crashed against one side violently, and was thrown to the other side. One of the straps of his life-jacket got caught in the metal welding and tore. So, as he went careening towards the other side, his life jacket stayed clinging to the metal, as if to maintain its balance, remaining uncaring about the fate of the body that only moments earlier had donned it (or perhaps the life jacket had a foreboding of the destiny of the body it was donning, and decided it didn't want to share that same fate). Thus, the life jacket, along with the rest of us, watched what happened to the body it was supposed to protect.

He, having lost his balance, fell on the edge of the incline. The edges were over-inflated than the middle, so as to contain those sliding down the incline. Much like the ones in an amusement park (except one pays a fortune to

do it there, but that same person never wants to see it in any airplane). When he landed on the edge, he slid down a few feet down the slope. It appeared that he would do the entire trip down the edge. Just for a brief moment.

Inside the plane, there was a lot of screaming and shouting, while we gasped, our hearts frozen in our throats. My eyes were as large as saucers, mouth wide open, as I watched this man totter on the edge some three-quarters of the way from the bottom. Slowly he toppled over and went out of my sight. After what seemed an eternity, I heard a loud splash. My mind had quite simply frozen and went blank. For a long time (probably lasted a few seconds though) it remained numb, automatically registering the events without reacting.

The captain reacted immediately (probably one second later, or perhaps five seconds later, but ultimately too late as it turns out) by jumping into the water and swimming towards the spot where he had landed. We all rushed to the side of the raft from where we could get a better view of what turned out to be his watery grave.

After a very short period, the captain swam back to the raft, shivering and chattering uncontrollably- we realized the water must have been freezing cold. The captain might have mentioned it too, but I am not sure. I was still staring at the spot where he had landed, disbelievingly.

What a way to die! He hadn't attempted to save anyone, or help anyone out. He had merely stepped up to do what many of us had already done. Successfully. And what others were about to do. Also successfully. Yet, when he attempted it, he ended up dead.

It wasn't his fault. Neither was it anyone else's fault. No one made any mistake, nor did anyone overlook any important details. It was quirk of the water body on which we had set ourselves on. If anything, it is Mother Nature's fault. But Mother Nature is not someone we can pin faults on. It was of course easier to blame the airline for building faulty bodies with bad engines and equipping with unsafe things that end up killing people. Listeners to this tale of woe took back this message- it was acceptable to portray man-made creations as beasts designed to kill humans. Quite satisfying to hear for the average listener at cocktail parties. However, I, the storyteller knew this was far from the truth.

When someone falls ill and dies, we get a chance to spend some time with that person and determine some characteristics that we can talk about later (I didn't know him well, but he seemed full of energy and vigor till the end). Else a foolhardy attempt to achieve something that had fatal consequences can be talked about in great length (he simply shouldn't have tried to board the

running bus). Quirky incidents such as this one can be discussed as part of a bigger topic (life is strange, anything can happen at any time. Like just the other day...) But to talk about it in isolation requires more details than what I had.

I have been asked several times after that fateful day: “You were there. What exactly happened?” To which my answer would, in all honesty, would be, “Well, we took off, engine trouble developed, we landed on water, as we were getting out, there was a sudden inexplicable violent lurch, which caused him to slip, fall and drown.” This was inevitably followed by “Who was he?” for which I had no answer. Sure, I made up something like “He was a young man, average build, and average height, seemed happy...” But I can never be sure of anything I say about him.

After a few frozen moments on the raft, we looked at each other in disbelief. One old lady started to scream, as consciousness slowly started to creep back into her numb mind. There she was – excited, pointing in all directions, hoping he would surface somewhere.

Someone did ask the question, “Who was he?” and we responded with a blank stare. Once again, I was not alone in ignorance, and shameful behavior, yet this provided no solace for me. We looked away embarrassingly at the water surrounding us. His rescue, so far had been a matter of saving a human life, now became a matter of prime importance for us to save ourselves from embarrassment. I myself wanted to see him at least one more time so my cocktail conversations would be colorful (‘He put up a great fight against the mighty forces of Nature.’ ‘His eyes were still blazing with life when he went down.’ ‘Even though he had breathed his last, his brown eyes seemed alive.’ ‘As if he had foreseen his fatal destiny, he was wearing a black shirt to match our mood.’) I needed something to say. He may have been an average, simple, non-descript person, but I needed to have noticed it. I felt a sudden emptiness in me, which was to turn into a deep abyss with time.

Slowly, with extreme trepidation, more people slid down into the raft, enquire as to what had happened, got all the technical details of the unfortunate incident, enquired about the victim and got an embarrassed silence. This sequence continued until all of the passengers were on board the raft. We quickly figured out where he had been sitting. He had had no neighbors- the flight had been relatively empty. A later enquiry with the airline revealed his name and age. But at that moment, we knew nothing more about him except for the fact that he was the only one who met with unfortunate consequences.

Someone somewhere beat their breasts and felt distraught at this loss. The least we could have done is to say a few kind words to console them. But

we simply had none. He was a seat number, a statistic to us. How could we face his family and friends? What could we possibly tell them?

Our shame was overwhelming, our sadness as vast as the ocean. We were silent during the raft journey back to solid land and safety. We disembarked mutely, wept quietly, and went our ways to meet our near and dear ones. And related the unfortunate fatal accident that the stranger met. The stranger who none among us noticed, knew or even acknowledged his existence. For we were too busy being selfish.

NAJMIA RAHIMI, WIPO



LA MARIPOSA Y LAS AVISPAS

Érase una vez una mariposa de grandes alas azules que revoloteaba entre avispas, escarabajos, alguna abeja y muchos bichos, unos volando, otros arrastrándose.

Estaba tan impresionada y angustiada por todo ese mundo a su alrededor, que plegó sus alas y se quedó inmóvil, olvidándose de su fuerza y su belleza. Olvidó alimentarse del néctar de las flores que tanto la amaban y la necesitaban, y se quedó exhausta.

Hasta que, una noche, en sueños, la luna le susurró: “Estás demasiado pendiente de los demás. No son como tú. ¡Pon tu conciencia en el tesoro de amor que espera en tu corazón, aliméntate del néctar de las flores y del rocío del cielo! ¡Ten confianza en ti, despliega tus hermosas y ágiles alas de amor por la belleza y la justicia! Toda la naturaleza te ama y te necesita.”

Entonces la mariposa decidió sacarse las avispas y los bichos de la cabeza. Se fijó en el tesoro dorado de su corazón, recuperó fuerzas y volvió a revolotear entre las flores y los rayos de sol.

Y feliz de ser mariposa sigue revoloteando, para alegría de la naturaleza, del mundo entero y de los ángeles. Y Dios quedó contento al verla servirse de las centelleantes alas azules que Él le había regalado.

Jo Christiane Ledakis , ILO retired



[老龄化杂议之4]
老弱孕幼
(黄砥石)

今天下雨，决定不开车，乘公共汽车进城。车子摇晃得厉害，我使劲抓住身前的椅背。忽然座位上女郎站起身来给我让座，在瑞士？让座？还是女孩！我一时反应不过来，语无伦次地推托了半天，终于坐下了。

和中国比起来，欧美国家好像不怎么教育孩子给老人让座，但是人们都很自动地就给残疾人、孕妇和推着婴儿车的人让座，即便是男的。感觉起来，西方人在让座这个问题上似乎已经从形式深入到了内容：“让座”不是单纯的礼貌、教养的问题，而是对方需不需要照顾的问题。

这当然跟半个世纪以来老人体质的普遍改善有关系。十几年前我刚退休那时候，觉得身体好极了，伏地挺身可以做五十个，乘公共汽车根本不用手扶。还很绅士地老给别人让座。记得有一年在北京乘车去海淀，我一路站着，并不觉得累。这时候有人下车，空出一个座位来，空位旁边一位女学生看看我，我说你近，就坐下吧。忽听一位中年妇女大声说：“您就坐吧，这么大把年纪了。”

那年我大概六十四、五岁，退休以来回到中国才被人提醒，已经“这么大把年纪”了。说话的人是好意，完全是敬老的意思，我虽然不一定需要坐，但受到礼让，还是觉得挺温暖的。但这在欧洲，景观就大不相同了。一位晚我几年退休的女同事，退休以后喜欢作年轻打扮。一天穿着三寸高跟鞋上了公共汽车，车上一位乘客见她摇摇晃晃，便伸手去扶她，帮她坐下。岂料这位女同事勃然大怒，推开伸过来的手，大声说：我健康得很，不需要坐，你以为我老了吗？

不知老年人的这种反应，是不是日内瓦的公共汽车上年轻人，包括中、小学生，很少让座，车上也很少规定“老弱孕幼优先座”（“文明座”？“爱心座”？）的原因，不过其他欧洲国家如法国、奥地利、德国、捷克的公共交通工具上一般还是规定了这种“优先座”的，而许多老年人也确实把“优先座”认真地视为自己的权利。记得前几年在布拉格的公共汽车上就曾目睹一位老太太气势汹汹地把一个年青人从“优先座”上赶下来，然后自己理直气壮地坐上去，而年轻人也不以为意，一言不发地走开了。

光阴荏苒，时不我与。退休的日子过久了，就慢慢发现自己真的老了。不仅手脚开始有点不灵便，而且也容易累了。孔夫子说：[吾]七十而从心所欲不逾矩。这句话有人解释为孔子在阐述人生阶段境界段论时，指出自己七十岁时所达到的境界。对作此解释的人来说，孔子已达到了人生的最高境界。但从我退休以来一、二十年的经验来看，过了七十，做什么事，无论好事坏事，都会有点力不从心，所以这“不逾矩”在很大程度上是生理上的自然规律使然，未必与修养和境界有什么关系。（不过我确实很好奇，如果孔老夫子像我们今天这样，也活到达到八十、九十、乃至上百岁，不知在“不逾矩”之后还能体会出什么样的阶段性人生境界？）

我古稀之年的生日是和小老太婆一起在布拉格过的。有一天，我把小老太婆送进购物商场后决定一个人出去遛遛。布拉格是个历史名城，不同时代、不同风格的皇宫、教堂琳琅满目，古典建筑美不胜收，我东张西望，忽然一阵疲惫袭来，原来不知不觉已经溜达了几个小时，快要错过和小老太婆在城中相约的时间了。在焦急地等候公共汽车的时候，我有生以来第一次如此急切地希望车上能有人给我让个座。我是乐观的，因为我对捷克人的敬老文明有信心。车子来了，我登车后径直向“优先座”的方向看去。我傻了，车上不仅是“优先座”，所有座位都坐满了白发苍苍的老人，还有不少老人站着。我恍然大悟：所谓老龄化，不是我一个人寿命变长，而是大家都不死，都只管变老了。

[Translation]

Random notes on Ageing

Sit down, please!

It rained today, so I decided not to drive and took the city bus instead. Many people seemed to share my wisdom on such rainy days, so there was only standing room left when I got on the bus. The road was congested and the bus swayed more violently than usual so to balance myself I held on to the back of someone's seat. Suddenly the lady sitting in that seat stood up and begged me to sit down. I was startled: Someone ceding his seat in Switzerland? And a lady, at that? It took some doing to regain my composure, and finally, with some incoherent polite words, I accepted her offer.

Compared to China, the Europeans don't seem to educate their younger generation to cede their seats to the old people, but people voluntarily give up their seats to handicapped persons and pregnant women, including men with baby carriages. I have the impression that, in so far as ceding seats is concerned, the Europeans are more sophisticated and have reached the core of the matter. That is to say: "ceding your seat" is not simply a question of good upbringing, but one of whether the person concerned actually needs your caring.

This certainly has to do with the general improvement in the physical conditions of the old people in Europe, especially during the past half century. Some years ago when I had just retired from the UN, I felt myself in excellent health. I could do 50 pushups at one go and never needed to hold on to any support while riding the bus. In fact I often gentlemanly gave up my seat to the others in need. I remember once I was on a bus in Beijing to go to the suburbs. It was a long trip and I couldn't find a free seat on the bus, so I simply stood the ride and did not feel tired at all. At one point someone got off the bus and left behind him an empty seat. A girl student nearby nodded me a glance, so I said: "You are nearer, why don't you sit down." At this moment, I suddenly heard the booming command of a middle-aged woman: "I would take the seat, if I were at your age!"

I was about 64 or 65 that year. But only in China, one is constantly reminded of being at such "venerable" age. The person saying so only means sincere care and respect for the old age. So I might not need a seat, but the polite gesture really warmed my heart. But the same scenario would evoke a totally different reaction in Europe. A lady colleague of mine who had retired from her

post several years after me loved to dress up young. One day, she went on a bus in her new 3-inch high heels. A fellow passenger tried to give her his seat as he saw her struggling to keep still. To his surprise, this ex-colleague of mine flew into a rage. She angrily pushed away his hand and shouted proudly: “I am in good health. I don’t need to sit down. Don’t you ever take me for an old woman!”

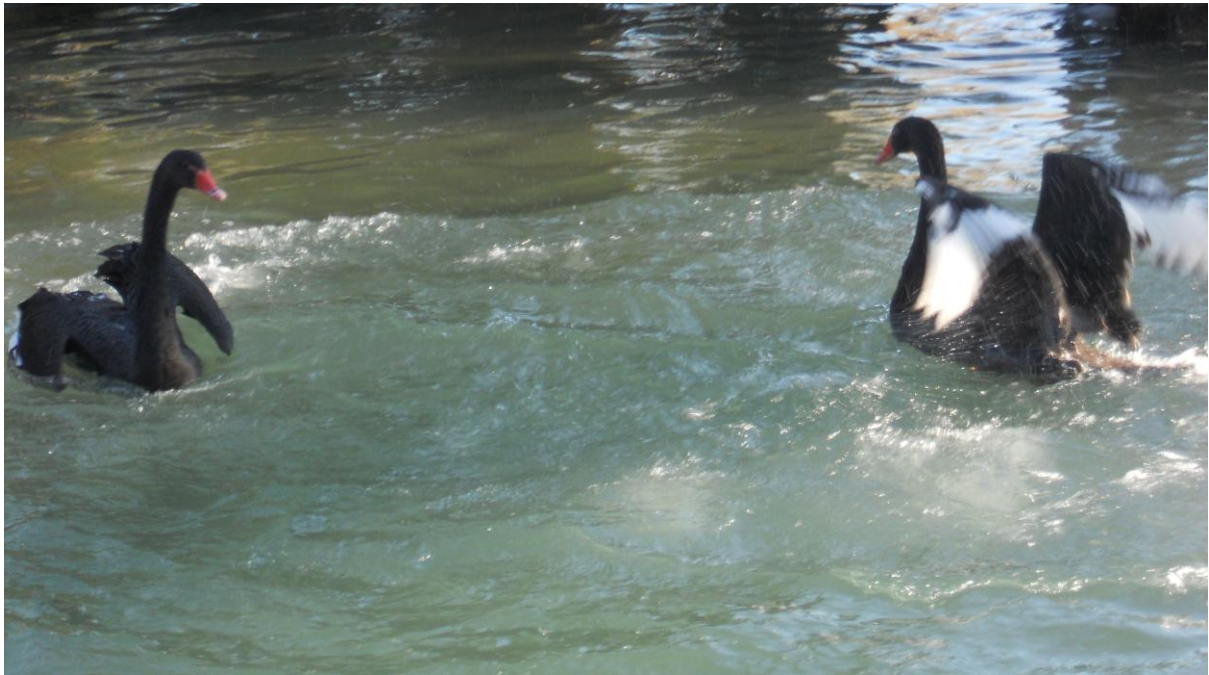
It might very well be such kind of reactions from the old people that have caused the younger generation, including primary and secondary school pupils, in Geneva to refrain from giving up their own bus seats to the elderly. The Geneva buses don’t have priority seats (or courtesy/compassion seats, as labeled in some Asian countries) for the old-weak-pregnant-minor passengers. But other European countries, such as France, Austria, Germany or Czech Republic do have such priority bus seats. In fact, older people in these countries actually take such “inherent rights” very seriously. A few years ago on a bus in Prague, I witnessed how an old lady righteously ordered a young man off the “priority seat” and took it herself. What struck me was the fact that the young man didn’t react at all. He simply stood up and moved to an ordinary seat.

Time flew and the years caught up. Just when you really ease into your retired life, you find yourself getting old. You not only lose your agility here and there, you get tired more quickly, too. Confucius said: when I reached 70 years of age, I was able to act without the fear of violating moral boundaries. Some scholars insist that by these words Confucius was explaining his stage theory of moral development and more specifically he was pointing out the exact stage of moral development he had reached at the age of 70. According to them, Confucius had reached the highest stage of moral development. However, observing from my humble experience of living these less than twenty years of retired life, a person beyond 70 years of age automatically feels inhibited to do anything strenuous, good things or bad things. Such inhibitions are more appropriately attributable to the law of nature and are not necessarily a result of the stage of moral development that a person finds himself in. Regrettably, Confucius lived only two years after reaching the stage of “faultlessness”. (But I am intrigued by what kind of moral development stage he would come up with if he had lived in our time where octogenarians, nonagenarians and even centenarians abound.)

I spent my 70th year birthday by taking a trip to Prague with my little old woman. One day, after escorting the little old woman to the shopping center, I decided to take a stroll all by myself. Prague is a famous historical city with innumerable palaces and churches exhibiting their times and styles. I feasted on the mesmerizing beauty of the city in abandon and soon realized the imminence of my date with the little old woman in town. When waiting for the tram, I was

hit by a sudden wave of fatigue and for the first time in my life I longed for the moment when some young person on the tram would give me his seat. About that, however, I was optimistic, because I had confidence in the Czech's civilities. The tram came and the first thing that I did upon boarding was to look in the direction of the "priority seats". It was the biggest dismay of my life. Not only the "priority seats", but every seat on the tram was taken by an old person in his white hair. Even more old people were standing. It dawned on me there and then: "Ageing doesn't mean one is living longer. It means no body dies any more. One simply grows old and older."

David Huang, UNOG retired.



Two black swans in Geneva's botanical garden

THEÂTRE

THEATRE

TEATRO

Manuscrit, Scribe, 4^e de couverture. 3 actes et un rappel.

Manuscrit. Pages blanches, plus il s'y écrit, plus nombreuses s'empilent et s'éparpillent, couper/coller, pages griffonnées, brouillons

entremêlés. Manuscrit qui nous écrit, Manuscrit qui nous emporte, nous charrie, nous arrache chapitres, paragraphes, dialogues infinis.

Manuscrit est rebelle. Manuscrit est vaniteux. Manuscrit est impudent.

Manuscrit ouvre les tiroirs, révèle les secrets de famille, devant les visiteurs, les curieux, le tout venant.

C'est bien connu les tiroirs dégorge le contentieux, les brouilles de famille, les plates excuses, le pardon, le remords, le 'j'attends ton appel',

le 'fais-moi signe', 'je saute dans le premier train', 'je ne t'oublie pas', 'tu es à jamais dans mon cœur'. « Tu es ma vie ».

(CHANT) « J'attendrai le jour et la nuit, j'attendrai toujours ton retour. Le temps passe et court, tou-lou-lou, tristement, ta-la-la ».

Tout secret de famille pour Manuscrit est pain béni: reconnaissances de dettes, neveu exilé aux colonies, querelles d'héritage sur feuillets

impairs, déchirés en travers, photos découpées, manquent belle-mère et l'ex mari; ici, conseils d'expert sur napperon en papier,

taches de café; comptabilité double pour bonnes œuvres.

Pour Manuscrit ça fera: rebondissements, nouveaux personnages, gonflement de pages.

Photos souvenirs de vacances; pendant la crise, « papa vend le restaurant 'au Lion d'or' et travaille pour la Mairie »; volley sur plage,

culotte courte, bikinis des filles; oubliées, là c'est tante Rosalie 'bon souvenir' d'Italie, quelques photos osées qui font sourire; mais

Manuscrit sait comment intéresser, même avec des images jaunies, avec du moins: en faire du plus en plus, c'est là tout son génie.

Manuscrit sait s'y prendre, rapprocher l'amant de sa bien-aimée, ni trop tôt ni trop tard, juste au moment où les larmes montent à la paupière,

mascara et fard. Manuscrit sait mettre son héroïne là où personne ne l'attend, à Pearl Harbour, et justement elle comprend le japonais et

son amant est javanais. A Hollywood le producteur lui reconnaît un talent certain, charmante, joli brin de fille, elle ira loin. Manuscrit se voit

déjà en scénario, appelé par les plus grands studios.

« Manuscrit mondain me diront certains ! et puis zut faut bien assurer son gagne-pain ».

Manuscrit a de qui tenir, n'a pas à rougir: Proust, Dostoïevsky, Kafka, une telle lignée, un tel pedigree. Manuscrit a de l'avenir !

Se pointe à l'horizon un nouveau Jean d'Ormesson.

Manuscrit n'a cure des dates, ni peur d'invéraisemblances: "derrière l'apparence il y a la substance ! "

Manuscrit est visionnaire, il est vraiment 3^e millénaire.

Manuscrit invente, brode, triche, ment, fait don Juan, joue Messaline, Narcisse, Ulysse, les forts à bras et poinçonneuses des Lilas.

Manuscrit se pousse, Manuscrit au premier rang, Manuscrit invité ici et là, Manuscrit rencontre rois et présidents, vedettes et ministres

bedonnants. Vanité qui écrit, pédant qui lit, fanfaron qui parle, glouton qui avale.

Manuscrit déclame, Manuscrit proclame, Manuscrit bondit de son fauteuil, Manuscrit invective, Manuscrit prend à témoin, attend/ entend

la foule qui applaudit ses premiers feuillets, qui exige la publication de tous ses carnets.

Sur la place l'estrade, sur l'estrade Manuscrit, Manuscrit qui lève les bras, prend à témoin le ciel, la terre et tous les citoyens.

Manuscrit s'assit, écoute, applaudit, signe, sert les mains.

Une clameur retentit, clairon, projecteurs, Manuscrit droit, compact, se raidit, sourire aux lèvres. Sur la voie impériale, Manuscrit immémorial

et foule en délire défilent.

Scribe. Tandis que Scribe, lui, ploie. Tandis que Scribe, lui, n'en peut plus, s'essuie le front, réclame à boire; Scribe ne suit plus, et rage

contre Manuscrit qui lui arrache la peau, n'en fait qu'à sa tête. Scribe est rouge de honte, demande compréhension, patience; on le bouscule,

on le met à l'écart, presque dans le placard. Manuscrit, lui, pavane, le marché le réclame, Radio Télé déjà l'acclame: manuscrit de la rentrée,

manuscrit de la décennie, du siècle, hystérie.

4^e de couverture. Mais déjà, redoutable, un RIVAL surgit, se dresse, en une immense masse gluante. Attachées de presse, publicitaires,

media sommaires ont trouvé mieux, mieux que scribe et manuscrit. Attachées de presse, publicitaires, media, twitter, se rengorgent,

pourquoi lire livre ou manuscrit quand on a, en 4^e de couverture, 20 lignes qui résument, et font ouverture et fermeture du livre,

en 2 minutes, à toute allure: tout est dit, tout est lu.

Manuscrit bien refermé: sur toutes les lèvres, bouches grandes ouvertes.

Manuscrit codifié, étiqueté, classé, rangé sous le nom

du scribe au rayon: *chimères et fantaisie*.

Rappel de l'artiste

Quant au scribe il promet qu'on ne l'y reprendra plus. De nuit, le voilà qui empile pages blanches sur pages bien remplies. « Cette fois-ci,

dit-il, j'ai pris mes précautions ». Précautions d'attacher les pages avec trombones, agrafes; précautions: la main à l'imprimante, chaque

feuillet numéroté; disques, DVD, clé USB enfermés sous la soupente. Vigilant, scribe surveille jour et nuit. Certaines pages rebelles,

cependant, aux premières heures ouvrent: enveloppes, tiroirs et caisses à la cave; gros dossiers bien scotchés, mallettes verrouillées

sous le lit; certains bahuts au grenier étiquetés: compromis, médiations, à brûler à la première occasion.

Cette fois-ci scribe, vraiment sur ses gardes, est sûr, assuré, se rassure qu'il n'en fera qu'à sa tête, à lui, et qu'aura à bien se tenir: ce traître, cette canaille, ce pervers de manuscrit.

J.A. Koutchoumow. UNSW/SENU présenté à la soirée Ex Tempore du 25 janvier 2013



BLACK BOX

Cast: Col. Paul Blaise, stationed in Rwanda
Freddie, a staff member for the Office of Legal Counsel
Mary, a staff member from the Commission of Human Rights
Ngami, chargé d'affaires of the Tanzanian Mission to the UN
Sophia, waitress at the UN Delegates lounge
Henri, French Ambassador
Claude, British Ambassador
Georges, Belgian Ambassador

Opening-- Blackness – full stage video projection of plane crash
(piercing sounds, screams, etc. Then silence, lights out)

Lights up empty black stage.
Enter Col. Blaise carrying the “black box” BB, from the crashed plane.
Col Blaise wanders searchingly from side to side of the stage looking for what?
Finally, frustrated. He walks to the back of the stage; an elevator door opens
The black doors close and a disembodied voice announces “S-G’s Office”

Lights come up. The office of the conference room of the S-G – long table and
chairs. Behind each chair are the portraits of former S-G’s. Sitting at the head
of the table is a black man in a black suit with black glasses.

Col. Blaise enters and is welcomed by the Chief of Protocol. They whisper
together, after which the Chief approaches the table.

Chief of Protocol:
Mr. S-G, I have the honor to introduce Col. Blaise, just returned from Kigali.

Col Blaise stands holding the box.

Col. Blaise:
Where should I put this? (indicating the box)

Chief of Protocol looks at the box, a bit repugnantly, takes out his handkerchief
and accepts the box. He proceeds to shove it under the far end of the
conference table.

Chief of Protocol:
There, there. Nice and cozy. Fits perfectly under the table. Sit down here
please.

Col. Blaise circles the immense table and takes a seat under the portraits, facing the audience. The Chief of Protocol sits at the extreme end, his back to the audience.

Col. Blaise:

As you know, after the plane crash that killed two presidents, the situation in that country deteriorated rapidly. I managed to get the black box of the plane in situ and brought it for you to have the contents analyzed to investigate what really happened on that plane. An investigation **MUST** take place, there is a pending blood path. I beg you to insure that action is taken without delay.

Secretary-General:

Indeed.

Chief of Protocol:

Before we have the chance to discuss this further, we have to suspend our present meeting. The S-G has to attend a reception in five minutes.

The Chief of Protocol dismisses the Colonel and leads him out.

The Chief of Protocol and the Secretary-General exchange knowing looks, and the Chief kicks the box further under the table.

(lights down)

Loudspeaker: [rising voices, Whispers, jokes, announcements of meetings]

(lights up – change of scenery)

The Delegate's Lounge, a few tables with chairs and a bar counter facing the audience

Waitress Sophia is putting finishing touches on the bar. She is all in black with a white apron. People start wandering in. Freddie staggers up to the bar already cocktailed up. He tries to get her attention, but she is jotting notes in her little black book – taking note of who is arriving with whom.

Sophia:

Let's see what the crazies are up to today.

She puts a dish towel over her arm and approaches a table where three very posh looking gentlemen are sitting, the Ambassadors to Belgium, France and UK.

UK Ambassador:

I do hope that both of you gentlemen are going to make it to our dinner next week. We're celebrating the birthday of our Queen, the Queen's Foreign Minister will be there and fortunately we will be joined by the Duchess of Pork.
(laughter)

Belgian Ambassador:

Well, dear me I understand that the lady is quite a beer connoisseur. Be assured that we'll send over a couple of cases of our finest Belgian Lager.

French Ambassador:

Non, mais non, chéri, I have met the Duchess and know quite well that she loves nothing better than our finest French champagne.

Belgian Ambassador:

Ah! But of course, if only to bathe in. (peals of laughter)

Sophia comes to the table of the Ambassadors and begins chatting them up, but we do not hear what they are saying.

(focus of light changes to another table)

At another table sits a dark man, Ngami, the Tanzanian chargé d'affaires, reading some documents. He is approached by a beautiful woman (Mary). He stands up, they cheek kiss and he invites her to join him.

Ngami:

Mary, my dear, I thought you'd be in Geneva for the human rights meetings.

Mary:

Ngami, aren't you looking handsome. I understand congratulations are in order. Chargé d'affaires, indeed. Darling you'll soon be an Ambassador.

Ngami:

Thank you, Mary, I'm not so sure. To tell you the truth, things are not as they seem in my country. I'll either become a dead Ambassador or remain a live chargé d'affaires. What I really am trying for is a post at the UN, any post, well almost any post. I've been trying to see the Secretary-General for weeks. What do you think, any opportunities in Human Rights? They can surely use another decolonized African.

Mary:

Oh darling, certainly, if you're willing to return to the dark continent. But I'm afraid that the places they might send you might have an even shorter life

expectancy than where you are now. Hell, I understand that your PM may be looking for a post himself. So if you're looking to make a move make it quickly.

Ngami:

I know. I know. And to tell you the truth my worst fear is to be called home. With all the tribal confusion, I could end up heir to the PM or his very lunch. It's a joke you know. He is definitely NOT a vegetarian. (laughter)

(focus of light changes again)

Sophia is talking to the Ambassadors

Sophia:

Oh Mr. Ambassador, you are a riot. I just refuse to believe what you're telling me. Brrr. It all sounds just too grisly. But gentlemen, you must be thirsty. Let me slip over to the bar and get you your drinks.

Col Blaise enters the lounge, and looks around a bit lost. Ngami sees the Colonel and shouts.

Ngami:

Colonel, hello there, are you back for good?

Col Blaise:

I'm afraid for bad, very bad.

Ngami:

Mary, excuse me for a moment.

Ngami walks to Col Blaise and they start to talk amiably.

In the meantime, Sophia is beginning to mix drinks behind the bar while talking to a gentleman seated at the bar.

Sophia:

Oh Freddie, sweetheart, I've left you here high and dry. I do apologize. Here sweetheart, the drinks are on me. Your usual?

Freddie beams.

Freddie:

Thanks Sophia, you're the best. So, how are the high and mighty over there? (he motions slyly to the Ambassadors)

Sophia:

Oh Freddie, you know, the usual bull. They do seem to be plenty agitated about some plane crash in Africa. Apparently not one but two Presidents brought it upon themselves. Although their remains were so scorched that nobody can even recognize who the crash victims were. The Belgian Ambassador, he seems ready to have a baby over the whole mess.

Freddie tastes his drink.

Freddie:

Sophia you are my very favorite bartender, no one knows how to make a drink like you. The Belgian Ambassador, you say? Could they be talking about the crash in Kigali?

(light focuses on the Tanzanian chargé d'affaires' table)

He returns to his table with his arm around Col Blaise.

Ngami:

Mary, have you met Col Blaise?

Mary:

Hello Col. I'm Mary Smith from Human Rights in Geneva. Just here for a seminar, catching up with my dear pal, Ngami. What brings you to HQ, Col?

Col Blaise:

Ms. Smith, *enchanté*.

Mary:

Oh Please Col, it's Mary. I'm afraid I've never been one for formalities.

Col Blaise:

In that case, Mary. I'm Paul. Paul Blaise.

Mary:

So what does bring you back to us?

Col Blaise:

I just had a meeting with the S-G.

Ngami:

I'm very impressed.

Col Blaise:
To see me here?

Ngami:
No, impressed by the fact that you met with the S-G.

Col Blaise:
Is it that difficult?

The Ambassadors at the next table have stopped talking and are paying rapt attention to the conversation.

Col Blaise:
I brought something for the S-G. In fact, I managed to get hold of the Mirage's black box after the crash. I brought it back to HQ and have just now left it with the S-G in his conference room.

Ngami:
Really? Do you believe there is any relevant recorded information that can be retrieved from the box?

Col Blaise:
From the time the plane exploded, even before the box hit the ground, I felt things were changing, like the whole country was descending into the underworld and that there would be no humans left, just shadows.

Ngami:
I'm sure that sometimes it feels good to be a white man in a black country.

Col Blaise:
This is no time for jokes. I believe right now the situation may be taking a turn for the worse. Time is of the essence before tragedy strikes.

Mary:
You really believe that it could be that bad?

Ngami:
I guess that country will always have a problem with colonial loyalties.

Col Blaise:
What do you mean by that?

Ngami:

Look, in Tanzania, we remain what we have always been, slaves and slave traders, but we remain loyal to our colonial culture. We don't change mentalities. And try to switch to another language.

Col Blaise:

Neither language nor colonialism has anything to do with it. It is different ethnicities and conflicting financial interests that cause the problem.

Ngami:

You believe so? Who backs whom?

Mary:

It might be a case for a human rights investigation, like we had in Iran after the Ayatollah Revolution. I was part of that inquiry and proud of it too. We interviewed more than 600 people.

Ngami:

Not very talkative, were they? Considering the final report of the investigation to the General Assembly was less than 50 pages.

Col Blaise:

(looks troubled) You're missing my point. It is important for the common man to feel important as a human being, and that the international community is aware of his/her sorrows and complaints. People should be able to feel that they also have a say in their destiny.

I think this time around we'll be able to avoid disaster. I'm sure that right now the S-G is taking action. If the truth is obtained from the tapes of the black box and knowing what the presidents' last concerns were, we can have a clue as to who was involved and who has interests in it before all hell breaks loose.

Mary:

I'm sure it will all settle down, but I guess that nobody can help worrying about what could happen, even if it's something that could not happen.

Col Blaise:

Oh, I see my ambassador at the next table. Will you excuse me while I go over to present my respects?

French Ambassador:

Ah Colonel, hello. So are you here on leave?

Col Blaise:

Actually Mr. Ambassador, I am here on my own initiative. There is a matter of utmost importance, something I have just now drawn to the personal attention of the S-G.

Belgian Ambassador (interrupting):

Ah yes, yes there are some matters of which my foreign office has alerted me to. But, Henri, this is something that we should be discussing with maximum discretion. A possible imbalance of power in Central Africa deserves maximum attention. I'm sure you agree.

UK Ambassador:

Ah Colonel, so I take it that this has to do with the crash, and the untimely loss of the two presidents? So tell me, have you actually listened to the tapes from the black box?

Col Blaise:

Sir, as you will understand my duty is not to listen to the contents but to deliver the black box into the hands of the S-G for his considered assessment and action.

UK Ambassador:

Ah yes, quite so. (turns to French Ambassador) Well Henri, perhaps your man here deserves a medal

French Ambassador:

Thank you Claude, but my government will be the best judge of what to do to, with the Colonel's personal initiative. (turns to Col Blaise) Now Colonel, I suggest you remove yourself from here and report immediately to the French Military Attaché. Thank you Colonel. That is all.

Belgian Ambassador:

Henri, I agree with your view, with the caveat that any disruption to the diamond, gold or mineral trade in the region would be viewed by Belgium as aggression against our citizens' commercial rights and privileges.

UK Ambassador:

So Georges, will your Princess Royale be attending our Queen's birthday celebration?

French Ambassador (to Colonel Blaise):

You're dismissed Colonel.

(to the UK Ambassador):

Oh are we back to that tedious birthday guest list, really Claude!

Colonel Blaise steps away, suddenly looking like a lost soul without a country.

(light focus changes to the bar again)

Freddie:

Well it looks like whatever that Frenchie in uniform had to say to the three stooges, he just laid a very big egg. If you ask me, there's a man who really needs a drink.

Sophia:

Oh that's that colonel, what's his name. Just back from – what's it called? Oh yeah, Kigali. I hear he's the one who retrieved the black box from the still burning wreckage of the plane. Brave man, maybe even a hero but a fool, if you catch my drift. Excuse me just a sec, honey.

(Sophia gets out her little book and jots down a couple of lines)

Sophia and Freddie continue huddled at the bar but silent.

Mary:

Oh, forgive me, Paul. Come over here and join us again. Leave the high and mighty to their ruminations.

Col Blaise:

Mary thanks (he sits).

Ngami:

So Colonel, you say you just left the Black Box with the S-G? Was there anybody else at the meeting?

Col Blaise:

Non. Not really, oh of course the Chief of Protocol. He ...

Ngami:

Chief of protocol you say. Oh excellent. Good man, seconded from one of our regional group members. I wonder ... Paul, be a good chap and don't mention this to anybody. (Looks at watch) Maybe I can catch him before the reception. (Gets his papers together to leave) I know the S-G will be needing a special representative to whatever this thing is about to become. There may be an opportunity for me. See you soon, Colonel.

Mary:

Oh Paul, I've got to move on myself. I have to check in with our liaison office before they close for the day. But Colonel, I'd be delighted if you could accompany me to the reception later. I'd make quite an entrance with a handsome French officer on my arm. What do you say?

Col Blaise:

Well, I don't know.

Mary:

Do say yes, I hate leaving you alone like this

Col Blaise:

Then yes, thank you Mary.

As Ngami and Mary get up to leave, Sophia comes to the table with a drink for Col Blaise.

Sophia:

Colonel, a drink from an admirer.

Col Blaise:

Do I have an admirer?

Sophia:

A drink from Freddie, the dean of the Delegates Lounge bar flies. *Santé*.

Col takes a sip.

SOLILOQUY

Col Blaise:

(stands up, facing the audience) To come here I gave up my security access, my travel stipend, so as to be in a position to save lives. Maybe. I believe in what we at united countries peacekeeping operations are doing. This country is a very poor country, located between other countries also very poor, but with great natural resources, such as gold, diamonds, and oil. The population is genetically and politically polarized, one tribe is short and squat, the other tall and slim. International interests are bringing economic pressures between all of them to a paroxysm. If we don't provide a measurable response to prevent panic and slaughter, the consequences will adversely affect not only Africa but the whole planet. Just speaking of economics, can you imagine what would be the

expenses involved in united countries peacekeeping operations to control mutual massacres. They are not prepared for an action of that magnitude, nor will the state members with their own problems be able to assist. I am not naïve, I also have heard the rumors of free market exploits including foreign and mass provision of machetes to both parties. I came here to bring evidence that might be helpful in giving a measure of information that would permit dialogue and negotiations. I reserve judgment until the S-G's investigation is finalized. My own opinion will not be a factor in the immediate action resulting from it, which could prevent and hold back the violence that I feel in my bones has already started, and soon will be out of control. We, the united countries peacekeeping operations, have a unique opportunity in the history of mankind to stop this imminent tragedy -- before it happens.

(he sits down with a sigh)

Change of focus to the Ambassador's Table.

Belgian Ambassador:
This man makes dangerous assumptions.

British Ambassador:
Well well, I had thought that military forces were made of grown-up men.

French Ambassador:
By the time he gets back, he'll have been suspended. (Pulls his cell phone out)
Actually, as a matter of fact, dismissed effective immediately. I believe we are all expected at the reception.

(They stand up and start to leave. The lights start to dim. Fred goes to the phone and speaks in Spanish).

(Sophia takes a tape recorder from her apron pocket, mumbles into it, and clearly says in Russian "Understood, *spasiba*")

Act II

Lights up – Colonel Blaise looking slightly disheveled, crumpled uniform, enters the delegates bar.

Fred, looking drunk, is at the bar.

Fred:

Look who we have here! Come and have a drink with me.

Col Blaise

I can't believe it. Nothing has been done. People are being murdered by the thousands every day. What can they be thinking?

Fred:

“What may within him hide, though angel on the outward side”?

Col Blaise:

I could not have described the powerful better. Congratulations.

Fred:

It wasn't me actually. Shakespeare said it first.

Col Blaise:

Good man. Do I know him?

Fred:

Never mind Shakespeare. What are your plans?

Col Blaise:

I have no plans. I have been suspended from the French Army and advised that my contract with the united countries peacekeeping operations has been terminated. I am thinking of submitting recourse to the Tribunal to redress what has been done to me and expose the facts behind this blatant discrimination against me personally and the crimes against humanity now unfolding.

Fred:

You assume that we will help you or the poor dead brothers of your great chief.

Col Blaise:

(looking confused) I just don't know anything anymore. What would you do in my place?

Fred:

Sophia, drinks please. Make them double. Well well... who am I to give advice. Do you have good relations within the French international community?

Col Blaise:

I suppose so.

Fred:

Well, do you know a certain *soi-dissant* French doctor at the medical services?

Col Blaise:

As a matter of fact I do, but I'm not sick.

Fred:

If I thought you were sick, I wouldn't recommend you to see her. She is a certified forensic pathologist which means she is not qualified for treating people more or less alive. (laughs) Although most of us who work here, as the saying goes, turn into dead wood.

Col Blaise:

(impatient) So what has that got to do with me?

Fred:

Rumor has it she is a very close friend of your dear ex-boss who went personally to the hiring committee to ensure she was given a contract to the UN medical service at a very high level.

Col Blaise:

So? I am not sick.

Fred:

She could certify you are shell-shocked from your experience. That would give an out for the international tribunal to salvage your contract and your career without public exposure of confidential facts.

Col Blaise:

I was trying to save lives, not to do something for myself, especially things I don't believe I need. (Finishes his drink and walks out)

Sophia:

(approaches and says) Good try, Fred. Some people just don't understand the facts of life.

Fred:

Or of death, as a matter of fact.

(Loudspeaker announces that the S-G has won the Nobel Peace Prize.)

(Light changes. The elevator door opens to the S-G's office)

Chief of Protocol:

What are you doing here, Colonel Blaise? You have no business or appointment.

Col Blaise:

(pushes him aside, walks into the conference room, leans to look under the table, yells) My god, the black box is in the same place after all this time! Nothing has been done.

Chief of Protocol:

Security! Help! I am being assaulted by a crazy Peace Corps officer!

(Two security men appear, grab Colonel Blaise and drag him towards the elevator)

Chief of Protocol:

The nerve of this nut! Today, of all days, to barge into our inner sanctum!

Secretary-General:

(walks in through the other door) Indeed.

(back to the UN delegates' lounge. The same tables are occupied by the same people.)

Loudspeaker:

A great honor for the organization, the S-G has just been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

(Col Blaise appears at the end of the room, between two security officers. On hearing the announcement he struggles and pulls out one of the security guards' pistols.)

Mary:

(at her table, stands up and screams) No, no!

(Col Blaise shoots himself in the head and is pushed out, leaving behind a trail of blood on the floor. The rest of the people in the lounge stand up, holding up their glasses, saying together)

People in Lounge

Hear, hear!

Fred:
(at the bar, with a smirk) A great day for the organization.
Indeed.

Leonor Sampaio, UNOG and UN retired



Leonor and AdeZ in New York on 29 October 2013



Ex Tempore Salon in Geneva on 25 January 2013

REFLEXIONS

REFLECTIONS

REFLEXIONES

Purple cows

Social musings:

Ephemeral encounters, anonymous eye contact, passive observations enter our subconscious and settle in. They dwell imperceptively in us as ghosts and vague impressions that return metamorphosed in dreams.

The archeology of our collective memory reveals broken marbles of faith, ruins of good intentions, fossils of injustice, traces of old animosities, but also archaic torsos of heroism and the granite of our ancestors' will to live.

Celebrating the myriad good things of life, dwelling on nature's generous bounty, grasping those transcendental moments of genuine elation is decidedly more gratifying than keeping book on the faults and frailties of others, focusing on imperfections, counting wrinkles or worrying about what might go wrong.

Flesh is weak, but so too is the spirit. We're still working at the *mode d'emploi* to strengthen both.

Future generations will surely think of us, because -- by thinking too little of them -- we have ruined their environment.

Living on the edge is a youthful ideal of glorified danger with attendant adrenaline rushes.

Rhetoric has little to do with truth or sincerity. Rhetoric is the art of seduction through the word, which frequently enough is neither sincere nor truthful.

Beauty has a lot to do with aesthetics, but little to do with goodness. A handsome face does not guarantee a merciful heart.

The capacity for intellectual dishonesty of many "intellectuals" is phenomenal. These virtuosi of sophism indulge in a form of self-deception that deploys its own logic and dynamic, quite impervious to factual evidence.

It is more important to deal with the causes than with the consequences of conflict. Rearranging the deckchairs on the Titanic is not an option.

Civilization is the long journey from predator behavior to interdependence, rule of law and *caritas*.

Fantasies are invigorating for the spirit, but their magic escapes if we try to concretize them. Living out our fantasies *hic et nunc* is dangerous business.

Neither can we ski as the pros, nor can we sing as Met soloists, but we sense the divine in them and their transcendental *humanness*. They too, Olympic champions and opera singers, are members of our species, have two eyes, two ears, one mouth -- and though their achievements are bound to pass, we prolong them when we celebrate and internalize them.

Irony and cynicism are not siblings. Whereas irony endeavours to understand paradoxes, cynicism takes perverse and destructive pleasure in them.

The pessimist is one who thinks he has been sinned against more than he himself has sinned against others. The optimist does not focus on past injuries but develops strategies how best to duck future injustice.

For as long as the *homo sapiens* species exists, it is our moral duty to be optimistic.

Taste – as love – is arbitrary.

When society loses the sense for the sacred, it declines.

Education and culture:

It is good that youth does not always listen to the older generation – does not always follow their bad habits and patterns of behavior, and remains free to test new ways and learn from personal experiences and mistakes.

Education should teach young people how to think independently, how to put things into context, compare, imagine, invent. Alas, only few teachers bother to instill curiosity in their pupils or teach them how to think outside the box, how to dare, how to create. What is mostly taught in high schools and colleges is how to adjust to the spirit of the times, how to be a loyal fan of a given sports club, how to jump on bandwagons, how to function within a system of political correctness, and how to respect the many red lines imposed by society to maintain the *status quo*.

The artistic terms “*nature morte*” or “*naturaleza muerta*” are bizarre oxymorons. Nature may appear motionless on a painting -- but it is anything but dead. The English term “still-life” and the German “*Stilleben*” express far better that special magic of the *genre*.

Excessive individualism is suicidal for every culture.

Laughter is a seasoned pedagogue.

There is a vast gulf between scepticism and denial. Whereas scepticism is a useful procedural tool in every investigation, denial is often a form of bigotry: a refusal to question the validity of one's premises, to consider certain hypotheses, to accept the conclusion of an investigation, or its logical consequences. Scepticism is prior to both affirmation and denial. There is no justification for continued scepticism or stubborn denial, if a methodologically thorough investigation has been conducted.

Embarrassment is for adolescents.

History:

Written history is but a caricature of lived history.

History writing and teaching have always been co-opted by the elites in order to legitimize and consolidate their position and continued exercise of power. Yet, whoever has the temerity to do independent research into the past, visit the archives, analyze documents, compare primary and secondary sources, meet with doers and diplomats, interview witnesses who may still be alive -- discovers crucial facts, deliberately omitted by the court historians, new perspectives, dimensions, nuances that fundamentally change our understanding of events and differ substantially from media caricatures, popular misconceptions and *Zeitgeist*. No one pretends that we can arrive at the "truth" in all of its manifestations, but surely a better approximation is possible.

Surely there were good Neanderthals and good *Cro Magnons*, good Greeks and Persians, good Israelis and Philistines, good Athenians and Spartans, good Romans and Carthaginians, good Crusaders and Fatimids, good Protestants and Papists, good French revolutionaries and royalists, good Unionists and Confederates, good Marxists and capitalists. There is bad in the good and good in the bad. The individual always makes the difference. Guilt, like innocence, is never collective but necessarily individual.

Human beings of all cultures and colors share a common physiognomy, basic functions and needs. Over thousands of years they have built diverse civilizations in which individual members have shown virtue and vice, generosity and greed. Collectively, however, no civilization was ever all good or all bad, all constructive or all destructive, all innocent or all guilty – these are unhistorical categories. From the perspective of the 21st century, we can observe the progress and retrogression of peoples and detect a growing consciousness of the need for human solidarity. Perhaps we will someday learn to build on our 99% commonalities, instead of fighting over the 1% that separates us.

Nomen est omen (a name is an omen, a signal) remains valid in many ways. On the positive side, ascribing names to things has the salutary function of a short-cut and saves time in classifying things. On the negative side, it is a powerful weapon used to label people and defame them without bothering to adduce facts. If a person is called a communist, a fascist or a paedophile – a whole world of negative connotations attach to the etiquette and therefore to the person, who frequently cannot get rid of the stench, no matter how often he attempts to clear his name. When a person is vilified, even if subsequently cleared, generally some vestige of the smear remains, a vague suspicion, an aura of imperfection. A cloud still hovers over the victim, who continues to suffer from the consequences of the defamation. The Romans knew the phenomenon: *Calumniare audacter, semper aliquid haeret* (“defame with bravado, always something sticks”). Thus I prefer Cicero’s observation: *Nomina sunt odiosa* (naming things is odious, *Pro Roscio Amerino*).

It takes temerity to envisage the possibility that we may be wrong, that we may have been wrong for a long time, that we may have been misled, that our governments may have lied to us in essential matters, that our leaders may not always be the good guys, that sometimes their methods have been closer to those of the bad guys. Once we have arrived at this state of resigned consciousness, anger begins to swell and we start imagining how to remedy the abnormal situation. Alas, it may be too late and we may have no other choice but to feign our love of Big Brother.

To become an apostate is an act of intellectual liberation – and maturity. It presupposes the capacity to think outside systems, escape indoctrination and relentless brainwashing, arrive at new syntheses, remaining open to new inputs, patient with a world that lags behind, never abandoning hope in the power of reason over force, of the *λόγος* over chaos and nihilism.

Throughout the ages hegemonial powers have exercised exceptionalism, claiming to be *legibus solutus* and placing themselves above the law. Power abhors the pedestrian limitation of objective norms.

History is a more or less arbitrary reconstruction of the past, a selective listing of events, frequently anachronistic, a mixture of fiction and non-fiction assembled with poetic license. Alas, that’s all we’ll ever get.

History without memory, without chronology, context, causality or comparison is the great triumph of Big Brother. The eternal present exudes the “consensus” that we are the good guys, that happiness is consumerism, that our well-being derives from the providential blessings of a mild divinity that has bestowed on us our well-deserved wealth and damned the poor to their squalor.

Human rights:

Equality is a question of mathematics. Equity, by contrast, infuses ethics into equality, transcending mere equations. Ethical equality is inspired by a vision of justice.

Human rights are not just the “flavor of the month” but rather a daily commitment to human dignity.

Beyond the codified civil and political entitlements, other more transcendental principles do exist, even if they have not attained codification or even recognition as rights deriving from human dignity. Spiritual rights are very much human rights and encompass the rights to our identity, to our secrets, to our transcendental soul.

War crimes and crimes against humanity are perpetrated by ordinary people inspired by the philosophy “the end justifies the means”, and indoctrinated into believing that the envisaged end is noble, divinely ordained, or inevitable. Deviation from this conviction is often perceived by the powerful as “unpatriotic” or even “treacherous”.

The struggle against impunity cannot be selective nor can it be instrumentalized against a particular country or people – its added value depends on the globalization of concern, investigation, punishment and reparation to all victims without privilege.

Positivist norms have the delayed legitimacy of codification. Positivism is *ex post facto* – because rights predate codification.

Everyone has a human right to identity, history, folklore, literature, music, cuisine – and can be proud of family, home, heritage, traditions. Everyone should believe in himself and pursue happiness whether he/she is European, Asian, African, indigenous, black, white, brown or yellow. A world of self-confident citizens who respect each other’s right to identity avoids conflict. The recipe for peace is thus “live your life and let others live theirs!” It is arrogance, chauvinism, envy, greed --- and ultimately lack of respect for others – that generates discord.

When in your mind you dehumanize your adversary, competitor or enemy -- in fact you dehumanize yourself.

Human rights are not a beauty contest, but a balancing act.

The widespread practice of naming and shaming has relatively little effect, because it rests on multiple fallacies: first, that the party doing the naming has nothing to be ashamed of and possesses moral authority to shame the other; second, that the impugned party is generally open to criticism; third, that the target of the naming and shaming acknowledges the legitimacy of the namer to act as judge. Experience shows that the namer frequently has a closet full of skeletons and that therefore the target of the naming and shaming has no inclination to bow to the namer's pretense to moral superiority or justification to hurl the first stone at the adulteress. Instead of raising fingers and pointing at others, it would be better if those States and ngo's who claim to know better would instead offer advisory services and technical assistance so as to enable impugned States to improve their human rights practices and infrastructures.

The all-too-frequent instrumentalization of human rights for political purposes and the abuse of the concept of human rights as a selective weapon against others demonstrate how little politicians and media care for the essence of human dignity -- which entails respect for the other person's identity, diversity and his/her right to hold different opinions. We need neutral brokers, not rhetoric with that all-too pervasive geopolitical after-taste. We need intellectual honesty -- not international law *à la carte*.

All human rights derive from human dignity – not from their utility for business and commerce.

Politicians often banalize and instrumentalize the idea of human rights for short-term advantage, instead of being oxygenated by them for the long term.

Giving disproportionate attention to one privileged category of victims may be a deliberate strategy to continue violating the rights of others.

International relations and political science:

Great powers tend to be more narcissistic than hypocritical. The leaders actually believe their own propaganda and see themselves as the bringers of progress, civilization and/or democracy to those whom they intend to exploit or neo-colonize. Self-deception is a common ailment of hegemonial leaders.

Governments -- as individuals -- are sometimes good, sometimes less so. They can be hypocritical, opportunistic, unjust, disappointing ... But just as individuals, governments also have the opportunity to accept responsibility for the consequences of actions and omissions and to offer remedies to the victims.

Globalization is a smokescreen for neo-colonialism.

We do not live in an information age, but rather in an age of ‘safe’ and selective information, disseminated by corporate media. This repetitive but sophisticated indoctrination does not always look like propaganda, but is served as a kind of entertainment. We live in the age of Big Brother’s media triumph.

The “ethical” foreign policy of most politicians is a hoax. But that will not prevent our leaders from invoking moral values and even human rights to advance selfish and unjust agendas.

We have a “free” press – of sorts. Excellent books do get published and innovative ideas and commentary abound in the internet, but nothing *can* change, because powerful vested interests have permeated the infrastructures at all levels of governance. Elites are primarily concerned with preserving privileges and the *status quo*, and fail to realize that reforms are indispensable to stability and sustainable development. The diagnoses of pundits and think tanks are often correct, their recommendations implementable – in principle – but the great blockage remains the betrayal of trust by politicians and parliaments sold out to financial institutions and the military-industrial complex. We, the citizens, are rather irrelevant.

War is not a given in life, but rather a crime willed by megalomaniacs, organized by bureaucrats, made plausible by media propaganda and suffered by soldiers and civilians alike. There are no "good wars", for all are bloody, dehumanizing, nasty, unjust and eminently avoidable.

Ideally, nation-building should stand on historical truth, but almost invariably it rests on myths and collective amnesia.

The rule of law is more than a platitude, and much more than mere positivism. It entails predictability, uniformity of application, absence of arbitrariness. Most importantly, the rule of law must be the rule of justice. Laws that perpetuate privilege and injustice must be replaced by laws that serve human dignity. Some countries pay lip service to the rule of law while practicing the antediluvian might is right paradigm.

True power is also the freedom not to exercise power.

When a sense of community goes astray, soul control goes with it.

Democracy

Democracy is not an end in itself, but a means to achieve the sacred promises of human dignity, justice and peace.

Democracy is not just the ballot box, nor is it mere majority rule. It is a form of government based on respect and solidarity with other members of society. It is a Covenant to listen to all members of the *demos*.

Elites do not want greater participation by the *hoi polloi* – that’s why they provide *panem et circensis* as political entertainment for the *demos*.

Democracy is more than rooting for a sports team. It entails real choices, options, alternatives, especially on matters of constitutional importance, on how the budget is determined and spent, on peace and war.

“Democratic structures”, “free markets” and “noble intentions” are frequently weasel phrases to hide other agendas.

Religion and ethics

Religion, properly understood, facilitates soul-searching and self-criticism. It should promote a desire to be fair, honest and generous to others. A religion of self-righteousness is an oxymoron and will take us straight to hell not to heaven.

Arrogance should feature prominently among the proscribed sins of the ten commandments, since it is a facilitator of all the rest.

Learning how to love ourselves, how to forgive ourselves, is undoubtedly an important lesson for a good and healthy life. While evil and guilt do exist, they can and must be marshaled. A guilt fixation or obsession is in itself a fault, a sin. Guilt must be tempered by mercy and by a sense for proportion. How else can we love others, if we do not respect ourselves first? It should be obvious to everyone that if we are to love others as we love ourselves (golden rule), we must also know and accept our own wrinkles, sins and imperfections.

Admittedly, we neither love nor condone sin, but we must exercise the faculty to rise above sin and to continue testing our conduct against universal ethical principles day by day. Only thus can we develop a life strategy to deal with the reality of evil, evil which predated our birth, evil and injustice which existed even before Adam and Eve. We must reject the paradigm of original sin and embrace instead the paradigm of grace.

Butterflies are – in a way -- proof of God’s existence. One cannot but marvel at the beauty of their design, the harmony of colours, the immense variety of species, their amazing agility in flight. We should spend more time admiring butterflies instead of engaging in martial pursuits.

We are all in some degree agnostics. It is another thing to go around peddling atheism – this is tantamount to militant intolerance.

Co-opting religion for short-term political gain is terribly unoriginal – and historically quite effective. It remains a favoured recipe for demagogues.

Peace is not eschatological.

AdeZ, OHCHR retired



Ex Tempore Evening 25 January 2013

POEMES

POEMS

POEMAS

Sous l'orage d'un songe d'antan

Oh mon amour tourmentes moi
Tourmentes moi jusqu'à satiété
Car un beau jour quand les blés s'élanceront sous la lumière divine
Que le maïs jaillira sous sa rousse moustache coquine
Peut être ne t'aimerai je plus
Et l'orage retentira dans ce fougueux été

Oh mon amour mon amour si cher
Que la souffrance m'est douce
Que le bonheur des larmes versées est suave
Dans la verte campagne aux pas du promeneur balayée
T aimer sans que le ruisseau jaillissant ne soit une ombre
T aimer sans que la fleur au bas côté ne soit bannie

Oh mon amour mon amour tourmentes moi sans pitié
Si je devais t enlacer maintenant
Oh mon amour mon bel amour
Peut être ne t aimerais je plus ô mon grand, mon si grand amour
Et l'orage retentirait dans ce fougueux été
Et mon âme gronderait
Et mon amour mon amour tant aimé
Ce serait la chronique de notre mort déjà annoncée
Oh mon amour perdu de t avoir tant attendu

Recueillement

Une nuit claire-obscur
Au bruit des vagues susurrant les ondes du vent
Filet brillant de l'étoile au firmament
Moi qui n'avais jamais rien vu
Autant que cette douce lenteur du temps
Lorsque la fraîcheur des embruns n'est plus qu'un délice,
Mes pas entamaient la valse du bonheur.
Le sable fin et savoureux dans tes bruns cheveux
Ballade enivrante des guitares au loin
Qu'elle était somptueuse cette langoureuse soirée d'été drapée dans nos bras
enlacés.

Mais la lune dans un clin d'œil furtif m'a parlée
Elle m'a suppliée de fuir et s'est arrondie belle lune avant de disparaître
Je n'ai pas compris
Mais je l'ai écoutée.

Je ne sais toujours pas pourquoi je l'ai fait
Mais je suis partie à en verser les larmes de tous les océans de toutes les mers,
de tous les univers
A en déchirer toute l'immensité du ciel
Ne me dites pas que j'ai eu tort
Ou je vous enverrai là-bas, vous asseoir sur ce doux rocher seul au monde
Souffrir la pénitence d'être heureux sans pouvoir embrasser l'horizon.

Me lover sans satiété là-bas, tout là-bas,

Même le majestueux coquillage mort sur la rive en rêve encore

Martine Thévenot, OMPI



On frappe à ma porte –

je sais que c'est toi !
Mon cœur bat,
j'ouvre... et je te vois planté là:
incertain,
pas sûr de toi
pas sûr de moi..

Je te bois des yeux,
l'âme en émoi -
Ma Joie, tu reviens,
mon Disparu, tu es là !

Après des jours d'attente
Mon cœur chante !
Effacés inquiétude,
questionnements,
chagrin,
ressentiment !
Mon cœur rit.
Bienvenu, Ami chéri !

Je te souris.
Alors, rassuré,
tu entres enfin.
Je t'ouvre mes bras,
et du fond du cœur
je bénis ce bonheur
qui m'enveloppe maintenant..

peu importe, pour combien de temps !

*Pour Daniel
Octobre 2010*

The tap-dancer

Il voltige, il virevolte, l'artiste aux pieds agiles,
tel un papillon, une hirondelle, qui en battant des ailes
dessine dans l'espace
des figures pleines de grâce !

La musique aux rythmes changeants
l'accompagne et le guide,
mais c'est le crépitement
que font ses pieds rapides
qui suscite notre émerveillement
devant ce percussionniste dansant !

Les bras écartés,
il marque un temps d'arrêt -
puis - pirouette - et il reprend
son mouvement endiablé -
Souriant,
Léger,
Elégant !!

Dina Levias, UNSW/SENU

LE LIEU FONDAMENTAL

Qu'un décalage infime
Entame le présent
Et tout devient étrange
A l'œil désorienté.

Au paysage familier
Se superpose l'inconnu
Non encore éprouvé,
A découvrir d'un coup.

Le vrai serait-il faux ?
Le ciel bascule-t-il ?
Quel siècle et quelle année ?
Quel mois, quel jour, quelle heure ?

Je promets d'ajuster mes pas,
D'éclaircir ma vision troublée,
Et d'apprendre à cerner
Mon lieu fondamental !

Luce Péclard, UNSW/SENU



DIEU SAIT

Qui sait comment
Il te reste à goûter la vie ?
Tu as pris tant de raccourcis,
Déjà compté tant de miracles !

Qui sait pourquoi
Tu descends le cours des années,
Alors que ta jeunesse
Remonte l'échelle du temps ?

Qui sait combien d'aurores
Regagneront leurs crépuscules,
Et combien de midis
Rejoindront leurs minuits
Avant que tu recenses
Les seuls dons du présent ?

Qui sait quelle habitude
Il te faudra quitter encore
Pour distinguer la route
A portée de ton pas ?

Qui sait quand,
Qui sait où
Tu sauras accueillir
Ton illumination ?

Luce Péclard, UNSW/SENU

Le chemin du temps

Sur mon chemin j'ai rencontré
tant d'êtres que j'ai aimés
sur mon chemin certains sont restés
derrière moi, derrière mon avenir
d'autres m'ont accompagné
longtemps, longtemps
avant de me laisser
rejoindre celles et ceux
qui m'avaient précédé.

il y eut mes chemins de Compostelle
et mon temps des cerises
j'ai connu le temps de l'enfance,
le temps du bonheur
avant le temps des regrets...

Je me souviens du chemin de l'école
et de la route des vacances
J'ai couru sur le chemin de l'espoir
jusque au temps des désillusions
j'ai rencontré ma terre d'asile
après le chemin de l'exil

j'ai trouvé ma voie,
j'ai suivi mon chemin,
j'ai croisé le sien, puis le tien ,
j'ai même perdu le mien
et me suis retrouvé plus loin
j'ai couru ma distance
et perdu de mon insouciance
j'ai gardé ma fidélité
et gagné ma lucidité.
Sur le chemin du temps
le temps d'une vie
de ma vie qui continue...

Le Temps

On l'a, on ne l'a pas
Il paraît que c'est de l'argent
on le perd, en tout cas, aussi facilement
on se plaint qu'il passe aussi rapidement

Le temps
qui nous regarde, confiant
du haut de sa pendule d'argent,
est un compagnon si changeant
imprévisible, parfois navrant.

Ainsi, souvent,
il nous donne de lui-même
pour espérer un amour
ou en soigner les blessures
enfin, servir de pansement

Mais ces moments
ne s'amuse-t-il pas à les créer
pour mieux jouer les utilités ?

Le Temps
compagnon fuyant
qui nous laisse souhaiter grandir
pour ensuite, regretter de vieillir,
ou, ce qui est pire
d'avoir vieilli !

Et pleurer notre jeunesse enfuie !

L'enfant , devenu vieillard
observe ainsi sa vie bien remplie
quand l'autre est tant triste de l'avoir manquée.

Faute de temps, faute du temps !

Et pourtemps, si on peut
pleurer les aimés disparus
on se souvient des moments
qu 'avec eux on a eus !

Alors,
Autant en emporte le Temps
Aide-toi et le temps t'aidera !

Daniel Thierry Coulon, UNSW/SENU

Horripilation

Industrie d'un massacre à grande échelle,
Les fours brûlants de l'enfer
Et de sinistre apothéose,
Font jaillir cris et gémissements
Suppliants et sans ailes;
D'êtres dont nul ne pense
Et qui vont mourir pour la cause,
Laisant devant eux les futurs héros
De l'imbécilité humaine.
Pleurons les rescapés de cette tragédie, sans trêve,
Car voici les visages d'enfants
Ravagés par les larmes de l'innocence.
Tel est le long tribut récolté
Par les horreurs de la guerre.
Ils sont le miroir des âmes nues,
Perdues sous la lave;
Ceux-là mêmes qui naguère
Vivaient en paix.
Hurlons sans pitié contre ceux
Qui tuent sans honte des innocents
Qu'un destin n'aurait jamais choisi,
Si dans ce monde, au nom de l'amour et de la raison,
L'Homme n'avait point oublié
Qu'un Dieu l'a créé
Afin qu'il vive.

Songe au jardin

C'est par analogie
Un peu de mon cheval de bronze
Qui sied à mon jardin,
Sauf que son pied droit levé,
Me fait penser
À l'opiniâtreté fantasmagorique
D'un centaure en rut d'écriture
Et de poésie.

Lettre à Maryse

Dis Maryse,
Te souviens-tu de Paris,
De la petite accordéoniste de Montmartre
Habillée d'un chapeau-coquelicot,
De ce dîner à deux
Au sommet de la tour Montparnasse,
Alors qu'une lune radieuse et jalouse
Se profilait à l'horizon,
Jouant à cache-cache
Derrière l'élégante Dame-de-fer.
Et de tous ces voyages romantiques à souhait
Qui fleurissaient notre amour réciproque;
Tant de soleils d'ici et d'ailleurs
Dans nos jardins d'un été partagé,
Que de parfums éternels!

C'est au soleil d'automne
Et dans mon jardin de solitude,
Qu'un cerisier sauvage rit jaune,
Perdant ainsi une à une
Les feuilles mortes de son amour envolé,
Alors qu'un saule pleureur
Balaye de sa chevelure fatiguée
Le sol froid de ses chagrins.

Comme un chien perdu et sans amour...

Nous voici à nouveau dans l'automne
de la vie; le troisième âge...
Et la nostalgie dûe à ton absence n'a cesse
de torturer mon âme!
Tout de toi m'interpelle, car dans l'insistance
de mes rêves diurnes et nocturnes,
je te sens toujours auprès de moi,
telle une ombre bienfaisante mais toujours fuyante,
et qui me poursuit sans relâche
au tréfonds de mon être.

Pareil, ce songe où je me retrouve irrésistiblement
attiré par l'auberge de Conflignon, admirablement fleurie
par mon ami Donato. C'est là, où j'aimais sous la charmille,
penser, puis écrire en toute sérénité le jardin des mots
qui m'aidait à vivre.

J'avais le cœur serré, car non seulement je m'ennuyais
de ce village qui m'accueillit pendant vingt-ans,
mais je voulais te revoir, te serrer dans mes bras,
à défaut, m'enquérir de tes nouvelles auprès de lui,

lorsque ce dernier, emprunté, porta à ma connaissance
que désormais, tu partageais ta vie avec quelqu'un d'autre.

Cette nouvelle me bouleversa, et quittais l'auberge.
Dehors, alors que la nuit tombait, je me mis à vagabonder du côté
du chemin des Lutins numéro 35, vers ta maison
que j'avais baptisée "Le petit jardin".

La chaumière n'avait guère changé d'aspect.
Derrière les vitres éclairées, "embrumées par un hiver",
l'on pouvait entendre quelques rires sarcastiques (certes insensés),
alors que s'échappaient de la cheminée,
les rubans gris et tristes d'une âcre fumée
qui montait, imperturbable, vers un ciel infiniment
constellé par des souvenirs évanouis.

Au loin, déchirant la nuit, un chien se mit à aboyer.
Subitement je me réveillais dans la douleur ;
-L'étoile que je recherchais (en vain),
déjà ne brillait plus.

ROGER CHANEZ, UNSW/SENU

UN SERPENT JAUNE D'OR

Sans crainte
Par dessus le fleuve ténébreux,
Majestueusement
Et très lentement
Volent
Deux oiseaux.

Un corbeau rit
Au sommet d'une montagne.

Au milieu
D'une sombre forêt,
Un serpent jaune d'or
Se mord la queue
Et la mange.

Qu'il se vomisse!
S'exclame l'oiseau noir:
Ma joie est d'autant plus grande
Que ma douleur
Le fut jamais!

SERPENS LUTEUS

*Sine metu,
Super flumen fuscum,
Auguste
Lentissimeque
Duae aves
Volant.*

*Montis in excelso
Corvus ridet.*

*In medio
Caliginosae silvae,
Serpens luteus
Suam caudam
Mordet et ingerit.*

*Se revomat!
Avis nigra clamat:
Tantum gaudium
Mihi est quantus
Dolor antea fuit!*

SOLEIL INVAINCU

Je te verrai bientôt.
Soleil invaincu,
Roi de l'Univers.

Nous sortirons demain
De cette mauvaise
Région d'ombre.
Tu dissoudras
La noirceur de la nuit.

Que veux tu voir
Au milieu des ténèbres
Ô être humain né de la poussière?
Réponds moi!
Parle, par tous les dieux!

Je n'aperçois rien
Dans tes yeux.
Ni le moindre mot ne surgit
De tes lèvres.

Tais ti et écoute!
Cet aigle surgi
De la nuit miraculeuse
Et noire
Plane
au-dessus de la plaine.

De même que nous attendons la lumière solaire
Le soleil semblablement nous attend

SOL INVICTUS

*Mox te videbo,
Sol invicte,
Rex orbis mundi.*

*Cras e hac mala
Umbrae regione
Exibimus.
Nigram noctem
Dissolves.*

*Quid videre vis
Mediis in tenebris
Homo e pulvere nate?
Mihi responde!
Per omnes deos dic!*

*Nihil in oculis
Tuis video.
Minimum verbum
Nec e labris
Tuis surgit.*

*Huc veni, siderate homo!
Ad mensam auream
Naturae legum
Ibimus.*

*Tace audique!
Aquila ista
E portentosa
Nocte nata
Super campum
Pendet.*

*Sicut lumen solis exspectamus
Sol similiter nos exspectat.*

Haïkus écrits lors de la journée internationale du bonheur – 20 mars 2013
Ecriture collective sur le principe des cadavres exquis

Chante, danse la joie
Cadeau de la pluie
Quelle révélation !

La brise vernale
Le bonheur est dans le pré
Nu je voudrais être

Arc-en-ciel doré
Jour de bonheur ensemble
Retour d'étourneaux

Le vin délicieux
Comme des fleurs au printemps
Joue la vie, amour

Le soleil brille
Relents dans ma tête
Comme la vie est belle

Le sourire des femmes
Aime, aime sans limite
Tu me souris

Jour ensoleillé
Oh joli printemps d'amour
Illumine mon cœur

Rayon de soleil
Ta robe ouverte sur moi
Le rebond est bon

Cœur ouvert sur toi
Le ruisseau fuyant est grand
Le ciel est bleu clair

Ma peau est mouillée
Les nuages voyagent
Je veux m'enivrer

La page blanche
La branche du châtaigner
Pourquoi travailler ?

Bibliothèque des Nations Unies, atelier du 20 mars 2013



A la frontière de nos vies, à la croisée de nos destins.

Il est des fronts froids
Dont on ne retourne qu'à force de résilience,
Les ailes ployées, le cœur en errance.

Il est des fronts chauds
Dont on renaît vainqueur,
L'âme en émoi, le cœur empli d'ardeur.

Et de revenir de loin pour aller encore
Au-delà de ces frontières qui nous éloignent de nous-mêmes,
Tour à tour enchanteresses et désolantes,
Qui pressent notre course à la dérive
Pour nous ramener sur la jetée en déshérence,
Orphelins sans descendance, le cœur serré dans un étau.

Du printemps, on ne se rappelle que de la neige de décembre
De l'été, des feuilles qui n'en finissent de tomber
Pour venir ensevelir nos âmes embrumées,
Au creux d'un lit solitaire et glacé
Que ne réchauffe aucun soleil, aucune aurore,
Et nous abandonner, sans boussole, le cœur en bandoulière.

Et qu'il faut être vaillant pour reprendre courage,
Pour crier doucement en redessinant sans peine
Notre carte aux mouvantes frontières,
Et emprunter ces labyrinthes, dédales de nos cœurs,
Traverser le delta de notre Danube avec ferveur pour sentir qu'enfin,
Sous le ciel gris, palpitent mille et une étoiles, le cœur en
constellation.

À la frontière de nos vies, à la croisée de nos destins.

Deux ans, un joli mois de mai

J'ai pris ta main, la clé des champs
Et j'ai tourné, tourné, tourné
Ma vie comme un manège.

Mille couleurs au sourire de velours
Mille senteurs au parfum de violette
Entourent le cheval de bois béat
qu'enlacent tes petits bras.

Tourne, tourne autour de moi
Sur cette musique en fête
Mon pompon à moi, c'est toi.

Ma friandise aux yeux câlins
Ma bille gagnante aux mille reflets
Mon 4 heures de toute heure
Ma lumière au fond du jardin.

Tu es mon tout, mon ciel étoilé
Ma muraille d'amour
Mon horizon enchanté.
Et tu brilles comme une constellation
Du haut du ciel de tes deux ans.

Cecile Barayre, UNCTAD

Crosswalk

He is pulling her
by the hand, across the crosswalk
more than middle-aged, a Chinese couple.
She in lantern red tunic
he in straight black pants, thin
hurried shoes, eyes down
rushing his wife along.

I see her stop mid-street, raise her eyes
absorbing the majestic building
on the other side.

He gently touches
the small of her back
and I witness years and years
of being, inner leaves
of a cabbage nestled together,
banquets of happiness
seasons of leanness, births

and deaths, holding out against
snow and loss, holding on.

Silken love so fine
strong as her ink-black hair
it can tug a loved one across
a busy street
into the safety of another world.

In Fate

Boats in winter
some masts straight
others slant,
some silver, some black
the harbour is bleak at night.

Birds believe those mountains
lining the other side
could hitch up
their twinkling lights
and walk across the lake.

Old men that sit
on benches, some straight
some leaning forward
into thought, listen to the rattle
of pulleys and clinks of masts.

Lights begin to wink
from the other side
of the lake.

They appear, stars,
so close the men could rattle them
in their hands, throw them
like dice.

Beth Peoch, UN Non-Governmental Liaison Service, UNCTAD



Call to Arms in DRC

The stress, criticism and the need to stay strong
Day after day -- it wears one down.

Poverty, sickness and stoned eyes of soldiers,
Chaos, disaster, rebellion through mutiny – it all lurks so near
That one forgets enjoyment of life can also be found here.

So what to do when surrounded by despair
In a country where optimism and hope are as slim as my quickly thinning hair?

Find cause and point the blame is one way out
But why not take up arms in a futile fight
When all it takes is lying awake throughout the night?

Fight against pessimism, apathy corruption and greed,
Fight for singular moments where peoples' humanity is seen more than their
need.

Yes I will fight, but know not for how long.
Keep close those I love, my cigarettes, good humor and a spirited self,
If it can be done here, it can be done anywhere else.

Charlie Sell, IOM



CONCERT OF WORDS

They come from all corners of the world,
wearing pin-stripes, djellabas, grand boubous,
turbans or kaftans,
each armed with an attaché case,
for an exchange of thoughts
on how to make the world a better place,
according to their views.

Their most precious possessions,
carefully worded, cabinet-level approved,
printed on paper with the state seal:
speeches,
stored in laptops, iPads, Galaxy tablets—
closely guarded megabytes of wisdom,
styled and shined to deal
with each point on the agenda,

to be delivered on behalf of an entire country,
its inhabitants, in the hundreds of thousands,
millions or even a billion,
in wording originally conceived, maybe,
in Swahili, Urdu, Farsi, Guarani,
or others from the multiple range
of tongues, slimmed to an orchestra of eight
(English, French, Spanish, Russian, Chinese,
German, Arabic, Japanese)
for the fateful, continents-spanning exchange.

The jugglers of their words—
wonders of audition, erudition, volition,
to secrecy bound, pros all—
cloistered
in booths at the back of the assembly hall,
a fully relayed, multilingual team,
connected, simultaneously tuned
to resonant vocal chords and acute ears in need,

capture the speeches read out at great speed,
one after another, a continuous stream,
disentangle meaning from sound,
put in one language,
put out, in another, feed
back to the assembled round
threads of arguments, reasons and visions,

converted from the foreign to the familiar,
based on fleeting, fast-flowing decibels.
One day, the juggler-in-chief—
unflagging in his belief
that striving for excellence is a shared mission
and munificence an ally of perfection—
projected onto the assembly-room wall,
in rainbow-colored characters of eight tongues,
a plea:
that the jugglers, relying on the heard,
and attuned to their inordinate sixth sense,
as visual safeguard also receive
the printed brief—

forestalling intermittent mumbling
or aggravated loss of the speedometer—
thus helping them achieve
the desired translucent unison
when re-stringing sequences of syllables, bent,
in obeisance to syntax and grammar,
on replicating the clearly stated
or, on occasion, the purposely left nebulous
intent.

Speeches, once shuttered out of sight,
are Xeroxed and sped to the jugglers,
in an awakening to the delight
of a well-reasoned insight
(sparked by the one-field theory)
that in this world, of which we all are part,
instead of pondering doom,
there is room to develop the art
of pooling resources
and creatively joining forces
for one another's cause.

Multiple webs of words,
spun minute by minute,
glistening with dew drops of intent,
born of different perspectives, freely told,
capture the rare butterfly of consensus,
aflutter with the promise to prevent
a tornado of conflict
in a far corner of our world.

Jo Christiane Ledakis, ILO retired and freelance interpreter

Spring Thaw

On a snowy riverbank I listen
to water murmuring clean-picked secrets.
Regrets bubble up, then drop one by one
while the dipper bird plunges greedily.
Fingers in green algae, I quench my thirst.

Geneva Storm

Gulls ride silt clouds, screech frostbitten vowels,
a flag flaps savagely, neutrality splayed across its chest.
What meaning are our words for peace and tolerance
when nature slashes hope from lake, land, and sky?

House Painter

in my kitchen, he tells me
about Sarajevo
his family hovers around us
their story is one of horror
he alone survived to tell it
I cannot offer much comfort
only a capacity to listen
and another cup of coffee

Night at Noon

beeswax candles burn
like tiny summer days
winter seeking light

In the Forest

padding gently
on fallen pine needles
I am animal

Elegy for Pierre Baum's Orchard

I am performing a post-mortem on the next-door orchard,
meticulously dissecting wreckage, a war-zone
of rotting apples, stumps, splinters, clods of dried soil
where a swarm of maggots hatch and crawl.

I watched when the cherry tree died. We said farewell,
my arms barely reaching half-way around its trunk,
autumn leaves falling, tears buried in mossy bark.
It comforted me, as trees do.

I see no sign of the old man's ashes, scattered carelessly
just weeks ago. The fox family has been gouged out of its den.
I find only a garden glove, fingers torn.
A toy discarded.

My wandering spirit settled here, followed a flock
of waxwings fluttering among unfamiliar trees.
Now I retreat from this once natural place
before a concrete building shows its face.

Jo Ann Hansen Rasch, UNSW/SENU

Stereotypical Truths

When did you find out your other name

Soul Sista

Geisha Girl

Burka Terrorist

Loca Latina

Pauvre Con

Dutiful Daughter

Trouble Child...

?

That you were born into an
administrative questionnaire

multiple choices of

categories of

preconceived notions

(please tick all that apply)

to live out life as a

Bureaucratic Profile

for the sake of

convenience

that sense of relief

when faced with

complicated classifications

rather than

similar subtleties,

for the sake of

a peace of mind.

Yes, I am Asian:

3.8 billion souls

50 countries

countless ethnicities

too many languages

trying to believe

the myth of homogeneity

and divine hierarchy

to cope

between

Pacific Ocean, Mediterranean Sea

Himalayas, Krakatoa

Desert Dunes, coral reefs

Ganges and Euphrates

Tiger spirit, Lion of Judah
Umbilicalled
to community
Driven to achieve
my own merit
my own right
to flash honour
Stiff upper lip with a tropical passion
I drag other generations' guilt
and carry other people's expectations
motivated by my *han* and theirs
but tell me where it's not the same?

Man, I am woman
Mother Nature
Mother Nurture
I am the X to your Y
and more
50% more
to be exact
so be careful who you think submissive
and you say it's easier to marry a stereotype
than to court a bigger heart
flesh and womb
generational guilt
external expectations
hormones
You say I'm only being angry
I am not angry
I love to laugh
showing all my teeth
each painful pair of wisdom received
Do not make my kitchen
my cage
it is my studio and your art gallery
a sanctuary
for our shared soul
Don't you know
I come from you so you can come from me?
So how different can we be?

And so we become too simple-minded
to understand

this simple truth:
 we are all the same
 by differing degrees
And so we have come to forget how
 to marvel at the sameness
 by celebrating the differences,
 the day we chose to buy
 with a piece of mind
 stereotypical truths
 comfortable lies.

Min Ji Kim. ILO

The sweltering Washington Mall in Midsummer

The night lies heavy on the Mall;
Stretch though it will, it is too small:
Legs and feet, hands and faces,
Sticking out in many places.

Hearts are bumping underneath,
Noses trying to catch breath,
Fingers seeking to be sweet,
Lovers trysting there to meet.

So many thoughts in gazes lost,
So many sighs in tempests tossed.
(I think a storm will break the spell--.
Heaven knows, but will not tell!)

Raymond Klee, UNIDO retired

Rebel Species

We are all different
In shape, colour and size,
In the chances we are given
And the objectives we prize.

Some become strong and proud,
Others remain humble and cowed.
There are the rich, and more of the poor,
There are the silent and the loud.

Some live to be a hundred,
Others do not last even a day.
What fortune has in store for us,
Not even the brightest of all can say.

So what is it that unites us,
In such diversity provides a common streak?
That makes us all part of humanity,
Whether saint, sinner, genius or freak?

What links us over the ages,
From Neanderthal to the Homo Sapiens of today?
From the shamans and priests of ancient times,
To the clergy and prophets who now hold sway?

What makes of an animal a human
With the ability to transform or destroy the earth,
Driven to explore distant planets,
Determined to control procreation and birth?

A species unsure of its origins
And ready to believe in a life beyond.
Bristling with intelligence and know-how,
Yet so vulnerable to being conned.

Sensitive, caring, generous and warm,
Yet also selfish, cruel, and cold.
Man's best friend is his fellow human,
But he's also his greatest enemy of old.

The fact of mortality and inevitability of death

Are certainly a common source of our drive,
But animals too know when death is present
And instinctively have the will to survive.

Animals like humans are sentient,
Though of course it's a question of degree,
They also care for their close ones,
Have memories, and want to be free.

So what is special to the human condition
That helps to define our common lot,
That goes beyond the mysterious thing called life,
And joins the spaces between dot and dot?

The level of intelligence developed in humans
Is a critical factor that sets us apart,
As is our self-awareness or consciousness,
And the feelings that make up matters of the heart.

The ability to communicate on a level so refined,
The sense of the present and memory of the past,
The hopes and fears for the future,
Amid the realization that things do not last.

To deceive oneself and delude others,
Creating illusions and making promises blind,
To create religions and ideologies
Which enable control of hearts and the mind.

Music, poetic and artistic imagination,
The romanticization of confusion, pain and loss,
Notions of the heroic and noble,
All place on human limitation a gloss.

But despair is also a human trait,
As well as suicide in response to the vagaries of life.
So is the readiness to kill off one's own species,
Despite our supposed will to survive.

The contradictions which make up the human psyche,
Also define us and set us apart,
Our balancing of compassion and cruelty,
Our juggling of priorities between the selfish and the smart.

It is what stems from intelligence and awareness,
And fashions the human attitude towards death and life,
That separates people from the animal kingdom,
And is the source of movement, but also strife.

Humans are rebels – not content with their earthly lot,
Who question the very meaning of life.
The constraints of mortality they seek to defy,
Protesting their destiny, their complaints so rife.

Having invented the notions of god, time, and space
They act as if they were lords of creation and fate.
But aware destiny is too complex to comprehend,
They are nevertheless unsure of what is innate.

Using their dominance to rule over animal and nature,
They are of this world, and yet act as if they were not.
By projecting their aspirations to virtual realms,
The ambitions of gods to themselves they casually allot.

Humans, with the physical attributes of mortals
Act as titans, the offspring of Heaven and Earth.
It is their positioning between the real and the imagined
That allows them to transcend their existential girth.

Our Lot

We are all different
But in essence we are all the same.
Mortal humans adrift in time,
Not knowing why into this world we came.

Explanations as to the purpose
Some pretend to find.
But it's only self-deception,
The blind leading the blind.

It's such a challenge,
Just to live and survive,
Fortunate are those
Able to be happy and to thrive.

Synergy

You can have my heart
But don't claim my soul.
Love and affection are yours to have
But don't expect to have it all.

Each one of us is special
You, but also me,
Each individual is sovereign,
Together, yes, but respectfully, free.

Sharing our life is about choice,
Not a matter of to have and to hold,
A daily referendum about options,
And not of being into bondage sold.

Some cannot live with others,
They prefer to stay alone,
Others suffer from loneliness
And wilt, or turn to stone

I want to be with another
So as to live better and thrive,
Not to be constrained and remolded,
But to be more fully alive

Hommage

As you stare in admiration at Mandela
In this famous South African Square,
I watch you from a café table
And admire a woman so graceful and fair.

We have statues of the heroic and the brave
Of the wise, the bold and the good,
But also of those abundant monsters
Who have imposed themselves and drunk our blood.

You, my darling, with all your elegance and charm
Turn heads, but won't go down in history.
Unfair, I know, but forget what's fixed in stone:
Better a living monument now, than in antiquity.



THE ONE YOU LOVE

Have you ever spent a night tossing, turning,
wanting to sleep but your body burning,
thoughts in your brain wildly churning,
yearning for the one you love?
You try to reason away desire
but cannot put out the fire
devouring you, the bed your pyre
impossible to resist this dire
possession beyond logic, reason.
Images appear of times together
hand in hand among the heather,
regardless of rainy weather,
heart aflutter like a feather,
loving words and arms encircling.
Or perhaps when the hour is late,
clanking of the iron gate,
steps across the garden, your fate
approaching; jasmine permeate
balmy air, roses intoxicate,
you tell your heartbeat to abate
as two souls, two hearts, two lovers meet.
Scenarios of this kind
Are sometimes merely in your mind.

Bohdan Nahajlo, UNHCR

BACKWARDS HO FOR PEACE !

In India there lived a man
Who longed for peace with Pakistan.
For years he racked his brain to find
Solutions to unknot the bind.

One day his car produced a hitch
The gears he could no longer switch.
Oh foulest fates, now what to do?
He pushed the gearshift fro and to,

Then right and left and roundabout
And then he coaxed for one more bout,
Turned the ignition off and on
And pushed the clutch first up then down,

When at long last the fates came round
And with a grating, grumbling sound
The gearshift groaned, stiff and averse,
But deigned to twitch into reverse.

The Indian backwards had to drive
And hoped and prayed to stay alive
Through busy streets, past market stalls
Cats, dogs, goats, rickshaws, garden walls

Through frightened crowds with mouths agape
Who thought it urgent to escape.
Policemen started with a jerk,
Gesticulated, went berserk.

Smack on the road a holy cow
Was misdirecting traffic now.
Object of love and adoration,
No mortal could perturb her station.

Perpetual bliss which was her due
Shattered by what came into view.
Seeing the strange thing going past,
She stared, then bounded off so fast

She very nearly lost her udder.

A cobra awriggle and ashudder,
Hissed and reversed into his basket,
The charmer grabbed and clutched his musket.

Our man reached the garage a nervous wreck
With aching back and twisted neck,
Glad to arrive without a crash,
When wisdom hit him in a flash.

He heard a voice from somewhere then
From far beyond his modest ken.
He understood his new vocation
Was to hit the road and save the nation.

He would give up his life of ease,
Henceforth he would drive for peace.
He said, I must do all I can
To bring the truce to Pakistan.

From that day on our man decided
The gods had through his car provided
An answer he had always sought
To divisions with bias fraught.

Driving backwards he would reverse
The hate and conflict and the curse
Of constant violence, loss of life
And ... who knows? He might find a wife ...

Pictures of both countries' leaders
On back and sides to act as levers
He's on his way to Pakistan
To do his bit and make a stand.

Equipped with mirrors large and small
Collisions, neck pains to forestall,
Burning the road 10 miles an hour,
To this hero be all the power!

**BACKWARDS HO ! BACKWARDS HO !
BACKWARDS HO FOR PEACE !**

Livia Varju, UNHCR retired

Vacationing Down Under: A rhymed essay

An urge of old nomadic restlessness
induces temporary homelessness.
An animus to disconnect by choice
allows a reconnect with primal joys.

Adventuring in endless roads of dust,
accustomed to the laws of getting lost,
we boost our confidence to find the way,
at least before the end of any holiday.

The yellow road signs often make us smile,
recurrent wildlife crossings in Australian style.
Clear hiking panels give the history of sites,
the rules of camping setting forth the outback's rights.

The coastal winds and surf roar on the shore,
while inland bakes the sun, as eagles soar.
The waterfalls bring welcome cool to woods,
while aviary concerts liven up our moods.

We love high mountains, rugged cliffs, majestic trees,
exotic flowers swaying in the breeze,
mysterious billabongs, secluded creeks,
white ibis, kookaburras, black swans with red beaks.

Grey and brown koalas grunt in eucalyptus.
Down in streams and lakes swim skilful platypus.
Red kangaroos with joeys hop about,
black wallabies and wombats won't come out.

On balmy nights sea turtles come ashore to nest,
they struggle up the tempered sand and have no rest,
until in trance they lay a hundred eggs, year after year.
The mystic task achieved, they turn to sea and disappear.

Green turtles, loggerheads and flatbacks hatch at dawn
in Queensland's golden beaches. Instinct drives them on
to seek the light in the horizon, head to sea,
escaping crabs and seagulls in a run to be.

The natives called this weathered land their home,
a habitat to hunt, to fish and roam.
Here lived and loved for sixty thousand years a heart
that pulsates still in music, dance and art.

Rock paintings, etchings feature lizards, crocodiles,
anatomies of rainbow snakes, whose wiles
created hills and billabongs. Bark paintings dream
of barramundis, boomerangs and birds that teem.

Aborigines know nature still and seasons,
live according to ancestral reasons.
We can learn from them the harmony
of cosmic forces and the will to be.

They managed fire, vast forests and the desert sand,
until white settlers came in ships to claim the land.
The settlers brought the cows, the rabbits and the sheep;
they opened mines, built roads, raised buildings steep.

As awesome as the fauna in the parks,
art galleries and orchestras deserve high marks.
The sails of Sydney's Opera take us in flight.
Killara's Seidler house breathes art and light.

There's music too in chequered cultivated fields,
There's drama in plantation and in harvest yields,
There's pride in macadamia, ginger beer, superior wine,
There's joy in living, mate! "No worries" — Life is fine!

Ephemeral as dappled butterflies,
invigorating as the radiant skies,
vacations mean discovery and learning,
shifting gears and reassessing, dreaming, yearning.

Ethereal as a passing cloud,
ephemeral as silence in a crowd,
vacations hover timelessly,
and soon - too soon - recede in memory.

AdeZ, OHCHR retired

Mon constat à Bamako

Para Sylvain

Este amor no es frágil.
Se adapta
Como plantas de camello
Se desliza
No sabe a donde quiere llegar
Pero si que no se quiere alejar
De esa línea
En donde un abrazo es la certitud
De que la muerte no nos matará.

Soy fuerte
Porque me amas
Y ser amada es pasearme tranquila
Por tu espalda que duerme.
Caminan los dedos
Con la confianza
de quien sabe
Que mi aliento en la mañana
no determina
tu deseo de despertar
conmigo.

Son tus ojos abrevadero
De todos los miedos que vacían su sed.
Para olvidar su avidez
El temor solo aspira a ser aceptado.
Pero el amor va mas allá
De esta verdad
El amor rompe sonidos de cigarras
No necesita de nada
Se basta a si mismo
Se dibuja en tinta de limón
No requiere ser develado
El amor sabe que está,
que solo hace falta el respiro tenue del otro
Para confirmar que existe
El amor es el núcleo
Energía, karma, Dios,
Como le llamen (Dios es necesitar nada)
Mi amor se regocija en tu placer.
Nada hay más extremo en su calma
Nada hay más allá de tu amor.

Noemy Barrita, OHCHR

AL POETA

Al poeta
que le den vino
y tristeza
para cristalizar
en burbujas de luz
sombras grises
que caen

que le den al poeta
sueños
y rezos
para construir
sobre abismos sin fondo
puentes
de clarividencia

Amor
 gaviota
 y mar
el amor, es imaginación
que vuela sobre el espacio—
precisa agua y tierra, y volar —
 el amor
 la gaviota
el mar

Jo Christiane Ledakis, ILO retired

A mi hijo

(Anibital -hijo distante)

Quisiera traspasar cielos y montañas
Para estrechar tus manos juguetonas
Y estrecharte entre mis brazos con amor.
Es un deseo que me invade a toda hora.
Oh, hijo del corazón.
Quisiera contarte viejas historias
O cantarte la canción que siempre pides
Esa que al nacer te arrulló
Cuyos versos me repito y te repito con amor.
Oh hijo, siempre presente en mi memoria,
Te siento tan distante y tan cerca.
¿Cómo puede a una madre el destino
Arrebatarle parte de sus entrañas?

Recuerdos

Bajo el cielo estrellado de mi tierra,
al vaivén de las olas encarceladas
te contemplo melancólico, encorvado
como una sombra solitaria sin gemela.

Triste, a pasos lentos y quejumbrosos
Con andar lento y pesadumbroso
Recordando aquellos años que de mozos
Correteando alegres jugueteábamos.

Al vaivén de esas olas encarceladas
sin mirarnos nos decíamos tantas cosas,
sin pronunciar palabras, sin mirarnos
en esos años jóvenes, vida color de rosa.

¿Sabes? yo también soy una sombra triste
Como tú... sin sombra gemela.
Todo ha cambiado para los dos.
Solo queda incólume el cielo estrellado
y el vaivén de las olas encarceladas,
Recuerdos... recuerdos color de rosa.
Hoy, tú y yo solo somos una sombra.
Somos una sombra. Vagos recuerdos.
Somos nada.

Rosa Montoya de Cabrera, OHCHR retired

Solo pasar de largo

Si me quedo contigo moriré definitivamente
seré tu agonía
seré tu soledad
seré tu amor
seré lo que ignoro
pero habré perdido la posibilidad de cuestionarte
de explicar la culpa cada tarde que te empeñas en escucharme
porque encontrar un balcón sin perro y sin nadie
será sentir el abandono que te cuento.

Algo como la navidad

En ocasiones la verdad no importa
hasta ocupa un lugar innecesario
porque la mente extrañamente silencia sus elaborados motivos
toda idea lleva oculto o evidente un sentimiento
libre o esclavo
pero puede no ser así
nuestro deber es interpretar el fragmento de un plano que ocupamos/
inevitablemente
y desconfiar de todos los instrumentos que nos dieron para hacerlo
el fin está extraviado
pero no fuera de nosotros.

De finales evidentes

Siempre llegamos a donde termina tu imaginación
la satisfacción alimenta un sueño próximo
el pequeño muro que casi circunda a la verdad
amanece lejos y más alto
como si dormir fuese la hora de trabajo del constructor
reconocemos las huella de algunos que han partido con el alba
sus restos de cansancio son migas para el destino que sigue
caminos innumerables
jugando a sentir que son distintos pero no
la memoria registra que alguna vez se encontró un final sin muro

y se miró algo como las espaldas de la noche
pero solo era una cortina

ya muchas ideas se han estrellado en su piedra filosa y transparente
ayer llegamos a la sombra de este muro sin luz
me mantuve despierto
pero ahora atrás está vacío.

En ruta de colisión

Siempre vamos de vuelta porque la vida es redonda
pero si alguna cosa le es extraña a Dios son los círculos
algo tan definitivo solo es posible al tener la evidencia que
desconocemos
la teoría establece que en el juego de los sinsentidos
todo resultado es igual a cero y es verdadero
también puede ser falso
o falso y verdadero
hasta lo inagotable
en esta parte volvemos a la razón de las esferas
lo que no es termina siendo

y el aparte que espero de tu mente que lee
complementará la idea más simple del universo.

Casi algo

Le he dicho todos mis sentimientos a un papel pero nunca a alguien
más
eso es un buen problema para un principio
pero un mal camino para una confesión
porque es repetir lo mismo al oído del silencio
y sacudir una alfombra con la esperanza del polvo
necesito algo más que no tengo
descubrir el nombre de ese extraño sabor de la vida
que nos recuerda absolutamente nada
precisar el día en que perdimos algo
para ganar un final al que no le falte seguir.

Veladora

Seguramente terminaré siendo otra palabra muerta
y con eso ya conseguí una eternidad igual
a la que sin querer me dará tu pensamiento
pero tener un lugar en siempre es ser vecino del olvido
y lo cotidiano tomar monstruosas formas divinas
hago esto para no quedarme en ninguna parte y
remitir mi voz a falta algo
ese lugar hastiado
que cuando lo dejes hará que su creación
sea un altar para tu regreso.

Yo me quedo

Ha habido innumerables finales y la vida lo sabe
el de mañana fue hace mucho tiempo
lo recuerdo con la frescura de todo lo que no ha pasado
inevitable y cansado
porque mirar las cosas subido en el tiempo de cada elaborado/
fragmento que compone un instante
inventó la locura

no hace falta mucho para agotar las posibilidades del yo
unas palabras
un resto de tinta
el espacio disponible de un papel

y regularmente hablamos
contamos
pensamos
o escribimos de más
pero es herencia divina de madre y padre

mejor quedarnos con la primera frase
la cosa es que el mundo se acaba sin mí
y ese es un problema.

Brújula y dos nortes

Recuerdo que entretener la dulzura de los momentos me resultaba fácil
lo amargo eran sorbos que no tomaba en cuenta
la imperfecta línea del tiempo en alguno de sus baches
debe guardar memoria del instante donde la realidad apacible de la/
ignorancia se resquebrajó

como ahora que los ladridos del perro irrumpen en las palabras
pero no dañan la historia

alguien sembró algo en nosotros que inevitablemente sucede
pero como sus raíces beben nuestra agua
recibe noticias de dos mundos
y agazapada en esta hoja mira destinos parecidos
pero uno simula ser el otro
con una perfección muy arriesgada.

Dios poeta

El cielo se está llenando de una espuma gris
un poco de horizonte permanece con luz
otra parte parece limpia

la tarde repite sus historias de manera imprecisa
sus razones son tan conocidas que reparar en ellas
es jugar una partida de agujero negro contra nadie

supongo que en alguna parte
la especulación se impone límites
algunos están mucho antes que ella
no tenerlos
puede llegar a cosas tan absurdas
como que este poema
tenga igual sentido que la creación.

Luis Aguilar Contreras, UNSW/SENU

ДОМ

Он нашел подходящее место,
Чтобы выстроить правильный дом.
Забродило цементное тесто,
Потянулись возы с кирпичом.

Закипела большая работа.
Через месяц - хоть сказку пиши -
Ладный домик стоял на болоте
В непролазной медвежьей глуши.

Ему не было там одиноко.
Из трубы вечно шел пряный дым.
Он камин угощал Набоковым,
А голландку кормил Толстым.

Он стихи сочинял на веранде
Под нестройный лягушечий хор.
Написал два трактата о Канте
И эссе - "Идиот и топор".

Взялся было писать мемуары,
Настрочил триста дум о былом.
А как начали мучить кошмары -
Бросил в печку увесистый том.

Из кувшинок готовил салаты,
Из пивок - форшмак и азу.
Провожал с края крыши закаты,
На осоку роняя слезу.

Вечерами в ненастную пору
Созывал из болот мертвых душ
И под брагу захлеб с ними спорил,
Нес вселенскую пьяную чушь.

Уверял, что истерлись скрижали
Словно мельничные жернова.
Души робко ему возражали,
Говорили, мол, вечны слова.

Ну, а он упирался ретиво

Заплетенным в косу языком:
"Это всё лишь по форме красиво,
А по сути - обрыв и облом!

Слово, может, и не умирает,
Но теряет исконную твердь.
Тихой сапой личину меняет,
Что похуже, чем честная смерть."

Разом мертвые души вскричали,
От обиды искрясь прелым пнем.
На палас две искринки упали,
Занялись подкововерным огнем.

И почуяв в обличье забавы
Революции жуткий оскал,
Мудро молвил он: "Есть у вас главный?
Атаман ли, патрон, аксакал?"

Пусть один он за всех отвечает
Благородно и чинно, как встарь."
Мертвяки черепами кивают:
"Есть у нас подходящий главарь!"

Мы давно за вождя его держим.
Он один нам указ и закон.
На жердинах сражался он с лешим
И прогнал его из лесу вон.

На кулачки кикимору вызвал
И кастетом загнал ее в гроб.
Водяного убил коромыслом,
Замочив его выпадом в лоб.

"Вот он, вот он, сидит тише мыши!
Он у нас очень скромн в быту.
Не смотри, что плешивый и рыжий:
Зато мыслит за всю Катманду!"

Только вождь с табуретки поднялся,
Чтобы верный дискурс очертить,
Как в гостиной пожар разыгрался -
Не унять его, не утолить!

Затрещали обои, картины
Бесшабашным, задорным костром,
Загорелись из пакли гардины.
Глядь - пылает уже целый дом!

Мертвяки дружно кинулись в окна,
Схоронились в болоте на дне.
Только он в страшных муках и воплях
Извивался в дыму и огне.

Поздно ночью лишь черные палки
Озаряла слепая луна.
В камышах голосили русалки,
Мертвяки подвывали со дна.

Так печально кончается сага
О борце за затерянный мир.
Для кого-то он - шут и бедняга.
Для меня же - герой и кумир.

ЧТО ЖЕ Я ТАКОГО

Что же я такого худого сотворил?
Раньше я как сокол в небесах парил
А теперь прикован намертво к земле
Маюсь-спотыкаюсь в непроглядной мгле

Что же я такого худого сотворил?
Раньше я красавиц миловал-любил
А теперь в лохмотьях по улицам хожу
От голода икаю, от холода дрожу

Что же я такого худого сотворил?
Раньше с двух ударов я быка валил
А теперь насилу ноги волочу
По кривой дорожке костылем стучу

Что же я такого худого сотворил?
Раньше я в хоромах жил и не тужил
А теперь в ночлежках коротаю век
Поделись чем можешь, добрый человек

Александр Логинов, ALEXANDER LOGINOV, ONUG

ERINNERUNG

Es war, als habe alle Zeit
auf diese eine Stunde hingelebt,
wie wenn nach langen Regens Traurigkeit
die Sonne Licht um nasse Blueten webt.

Es gibt Geheimnisse, die viele nicht gewahren,
denn alles Grosse bleibt im Grunde ungenannt:
wir fuehlten nur, dass wir vor Tausenden von Jahren
uns einmal lange, lange schon gekannt.

Hafenschenke

Knisterndes Feuer,
Rum- und Whiskyflaschen.
Wind im Kamin.
Kaffeeduft und ein weiches Ei.

Rotgesprenkelte Katze
schlaeft unter bunten Gardinen,
blauer Wollpullover
lehnt am Fenster,
starrt in die Nacht.

Und der Johnny besingt
in der Musikbox
vergilbte Postkarten
verblasster Tage –

Und die Zeit tropft
langsam
langsam.

Jo Christiane Ledakis, ILO retired

TRADUCTIONS

TRANSLATIONS

TRADUCCIONES

Heinrich Heine (1797 - 1856)

Auf Flügeln des Gesanges, Herzliebchen,
Trag ich dich fort,
Fort nach den Fluren des Ganges
Dort weiß ich den schönsten Ort

Dort liegt ein rotblühender Garten
Im stillen Mondenschein,
Die Lotosblumen erwarten
Ihr trautes Schwesterlein

Die Veilchen kichern unnd kosen,
Und schau nach den Sternen empor,
Heimlich erzählen die Rosen
Sich duftende Märchen ins Ohr.
Es hüpfen herbei und lauschen
Die frommen, klugen Gazelln,
Und in der Ferne rauschen
Des heiligen Stromes Well'n.

Dort wollen wir niedersinken
Unter dem Palmenbaum,
Und Liebe und Ruhe trinken
Und träumen seligen Traum

Sur les ailes de mon chant, Bienaimée,
Nous allons nous envoler
Au loin, là-bas, vers le Gange et ses prés
où je connais un lieu de toute beauté.

Là, au clair de lune, dans un silence feutré,
S'étale un jardin tout de rouge fleuri.
Les fleurs de lotus attendent
Qu'arrive leur sœur chérie.

Les violettes batifolent en riant,
contemplant le firmament étoilé;
les roses, en chuchotant,
se racontent des histoires parfumées.

Timides, les sages gazelles, par petits bonds
S'approchent pour écouter :
Au loin on entend gronder
Les ondes du fleuve sacré.

Là, sous le palmier,
Nous allons nous allonger,
Savourant amour et sérénité,
Perdus dans un rêve de félicité.

DINA LEVIAS, UNSW/SENU

4 poems by Tibor Tollas translated from the Hungarian by Livia Varju

ODE TO FREEDOM

Wounds slowly heal,
Merciful time gently falls on them.
The dead don't dispute,
Forgetting is a heavy blindfold.
Why raise the past?
Weeds of daily care grow.
Heroes of the past, fugitives,
Now travel home for holidays,
Roaming shadows don't haunt
Above unmarked cemeteries,
And peace of prison weaves a net
Around struggling future.
And you, Freedom, who then
were born and incarnated in a people,
They can't bury you in a grave,
Ten deaf winters cannot conquer you;
For you have been and will be evermore
As renewing, life-giving wind.
On mouldy walls of prison cells
Your absence penetrates and gleams,
You are the wing of forbidden words
That rise from the silence,
And what yesterday was stifled underground
Will be heard by all the oppressed.
Just give me loyalty: among traitors
Let me not be accomplice or heretic
When the green serpents of temptation
Wind around my body;
He will be richer on bread and water
who remains always true to you.
And so will I also be true to
those I abandoned then,
who today are still defiant for you,
Not with great breast-beating words
But patiently, like roots,
While foreign land runs under me.
Freedom, nourish also me
who have grown human through you.
Though I may wander across seven lands,
Let me not have a minute of rest.

And let me not find calm or homeland
Till the day I am absolved by my people.

(Note: Tollas is writing about the Hungarian Revolution of 1956. He escaped to the West after the Revolution.)

SURVIVORS

for the 30th anniversary of the 1956 revolution
and fight for freedom

May their dreams be silent
for they did not die in vain.
They lie at attention
like trees of a devastated forest.
Their mouths full of earth
shout a mute timeless oath,
their bodies naked to the bone
are seeds sown in the soil.
On their ravaged graves, sanctuary lamps,
fire-flowers of October
question by the right of the dead,
no longer expecting an answer.
They have robbed us of our past,
the bleak present remains silent.
They - the dead – are the survivors
of the victorious revolution.

MAGIC CIRCLE

You were born not only from your mother's lap,
the house too has become your crib,
your protecting nest, village of your birth which
calls you, native land - your country too.
The first word you breathed in,
silence of mute mountains,
are not lost but remain with you forever;
you carry them without end.
The human chain of ancestors,
radiant memories of childhood,
and the silence of the dead
tie you as a brother, like roots the trees.
You belong to them. A magic circle
protects you till you return to dust

from which you came; you can't break away,
it guards your past and absolves.
Stars that call you like far-away lanterns
accompany your steps. Your mother,
the landscape, are mute shadows behind you,
and remain your homeland to the grave.

PRAYER OF THE FOREST

(After a sign on environmental protection)

Lord of the Earth, Man, who comes this way,
don't lift your hand against my trees;
in freezing cold winter nights
I am your protecting fireplace.
On a hot summer noon
I am shadow covering your terrace,
you quench your thirst with my fruit,
your garden is full of my flowers.
Even dead, my body serves you:
the pillars holding up your house,
the top of your table set for a meal,
the chair you sit on – are all me!
The bed made up, guardian of your dreams
where your tired body comes to rest,
spicy nest of beautiful love,
Eden from where no one will drive you out.
The threshold where you start your way,
the open gate that awaits your return,
the wood of your crib and your coffin ...
I am with you on your path in life and death
as your faithful servant –
and without pay, will be
the carved cross on your grave
preserving your vanished name ...
So don't raise your hand against me!

Livia Varju, UNHCR retired

... Et remerciez la chance !

Dans les grandes guerres, les sales guerres, les guerres dignes
d'être vantées par les conteurs et truquées par les historiens,
beaucoup d'êtres meurent, des gens, des rêves.
Meurent des arbres, des bestiaux, des créatures indéfinies.
Meurent de naïves tortues qui flânaient au bord des tranchées.
Meurent des charretiers, des mulets, des sacs de marchandises.
Meurent des amoureux qui s'envoyaient des baisers d'un balcon à l'autre.
Meurent des enfants terrifiés qu'un papillon avait attirés hors de leur abri,
des vieillards gamins qui n'aimaient échanger des souvenirs
que là où tomberait l'obus,
des clochards heureux,
rêvant sous les ponts des capitales qu'ils étaient rois en congé.
Meurt un Arménien à la Mecque, un bouddhiste à Bethléem,
un communiste dans les latrines d'un temple.
Meurt une colombe dans un dépôt de munitions,
un poisson dans le hall d'une banque.
Meurt qui n'était pas bon à mourir.
Meurt qui n'avait jamais pensé à la mort.
Meurt la vie.

Vous !
Vous qui ...
Qui vous êtes réveillés ce matin
et avez découvert que vous n'étiez pas encore morts,
faites vite !
Allumez un cierge pour la paix de l'âme des tortues, des arbres,
des Arméniens, des bouddhistes, des mécréants,
des excentriques d'inconnue lignée,
remerciez la chance,
les bévues des tireurs
et qui a été le premier à vous dire
en frappant à votre porte :
« Bonjour, voisins ! »

**Claude Krul, UNSW/SENU : poème de Nazib Abou Afach, poète syrien, lu en arabe en
en français lors de la soirée *Ex Tempore* du 25 janvier 2013**

.. واشكروا حُسْنَ الحظ!

" يموتُ شاعرٌ كلَّ مطلعِ شمس

وفيلسوفٌ كلما أفلستُ خزينة

ونخّاسٌ كلَّ نهايةِ دهرٍ.. "

وثيقة تاريخية

في الحروب العظيمة / الحروب الوسخة / الحروب الجديرة بأن يتغنى بها الرواة،
ويُزوّرَ أحداثها المؤرّخون..

يموتُ ناسٌ كثيرون، وكائنات كثيرة، وأحلام.

تموتُ أشجارٌ، وبهائم، ومخلوقاتٌ غامضة الشأن.

تموت سلاحف غشيمة تتسكع على حواف الخنادق.

يموت حوذيٌّ، وبغلٌ، وأكياسُ أمتعة.

يموتُ عشاقٌ يتقاذفون قُبَلَ الهواء على الشرفات.

يموت أطفالٌ مذعورون أغوئهم فراشة على باب ملجأ

وعجائز متصابون لم يرقّ لهم تبادلُ الذكريات

إلا حيث كانت ستسقط القذيفة.

ومتشردون سعداء

يحلّمون، تحت جسور العواصم، أنهم ملوكٌ في إجازات.

يموت أرمنيٌّ في مكة، وبوذيٌّ في بيت لحم،

وشيوعيٌّ في مرحاض معبّد.

تموت حمامة في مستودع ذخائر

وسمكة في بهو مصرف.

يموتُ مَنْ لم يكن صالحاً للموت.

يموت مَنْ لم يكن على بالله الموت.

: تموت الحياة.

..

..

أنتم!

أنتم الذين....

أنتم الذين أفقتم هذا الصباح

واكتشفتم أنكم لم تصبحوا بعد أمواتا..

لا تترددوا!

أشعلوا شمعة لراحة أرواح السلاحف والأشجار والأرمن والبوذيين والكفرة
والأغراب مجهولي النسب..

واشكروا حسن الحظ

وأخطاء الرماة

وأول مَنْ دقّ عليكم الباب

وقال لكم: "صباح الخير يا جيران".

South Africa

The massive torso of black Africa
Immensely extended
Becomes foggy
In the Heaven's vault, overlooking
A sea of mourning clouds
Diving birds rush
Into a dead-end dark alleyway.

Wolf and man
Will no longer be enemies
Wheat will feed the cow
The cow will suckle
The starving tiger.

Milk extracted
With splashes of bloody stripes
Milk where sweat drips
Milk diluted
In the source of tears

Milk altered
Mixed with mud.

The melancholy song of the century
Escapes from the prison
Wings
Over the bell tower
Disturbing the earth
With its tail of typhoon.

The man roars in fury
The woman consoles, calms him down
The black hand is bleeding
The children shout loudly.

Moon and galaxies look on
Ashamed
Hurt, the sun is crying
Turned shy.

May a spark of light shine
And illuminate the black life
That has no hope !

My skin, honey yellow
Yours, ivory white
Yours, ebony black
Who among us
Is not endowed with a human heart ?

Nguyễn Hoàng Bao Việt (1959)

English version by the author (1994).

L'Afrique du Sud

Le torse massif de l'Afrique noire
Immensément étendue
S'embrume.
Dans la voûte céleste, surplombe
Une mer de nébulosité funèbre
Les oiseaux s'engouffrent
Dans une impasse obscure.

Le loup et l'homme
Ne seront plus hostiles
Le blé nourrira la vache
La vache allaitera le tigre
Affamé.

Lait extrait
Panaché de sang
Lait où dégoutte la sueur
Lait dilué
Dans la source de larmes
Lait altéré
Mêlé de bourbe.

Le chant mélancolique du siècle
S'évade de la prison
S'envole
Au-delà du clocher
Perturbe la terre
De sa queue de typhon.

L'homme rugit de fureur
La femme le console, le calme
La main noire saigne
Les enfants crient à tue-tête.

La lune et les galaxies regardent
Honteuses
Le soleil pleure
Embarrassé.
Qu'une flammèche luise
Afin d'éclairer la vie noire
Sans espoir aucun !

Ma peau, jaune miel
La vôtre, blanche ivoire
La tienne, noire ébène
Qui donc parmi nous
N'est pas doté d'un cœur humain ?

Nguyễn Hoàng Bao Việt (1959)

Traduction française par Mme Hoàng Nguyễn (1982)

Nam Phi

Bộ ngực chứa sương mù

Miền Nam Phi bao la

Trời là biển mây tang

Chim bay vào ngõ tối.

Chó sói và con người

Không còn hiềm khích nhau

Lúa mì nuôi bò cái

Bò cái nuôi hổ đói.

Sữa vắt ra màu đỏ
Sữa nhều giọt mồ hôi
Sữa hòa dòng nước mắt
Sữa pha chất bùn lầy.

Tiếng hát buồn thế kỷ
Thoát ra khỏi nhà giam
Vượt lên nóc giáo đường
Bão rút đầy mặt đất.

Người đàn ông gào thét
Người đàn bà vỗ về
Bàn tay đen chảy máu
Trẻ con đua nhau la.

Trăng sao nhìn mắc cỡ
Mặt trời khóc hổ người
Xin cho một đóm lửa
Soi sáng đời tối tăm.

Dù da tôi màu vàng
Dù da anh màu trắng
Dù da chị màu đen
Người nào không trái tim ?

Nguyễn Hoàng Bao Việt UNSW/SENU

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and [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ex_Tempore_\(journal\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ex_Tempore_(journal))

