

Índex / Índice / Summary

Deuda [Castellano]

ABREU, Juan

Debt [English]

ABREU, Juan

Guerra e paz em Angola

AGUALUSA, José Eduardo

Cave Writing: New Adventures in Mot-Town

COOVER, Robert

Nanotechnology and the Body: The Convergence of Technologies and Human Potential

GOONAN, Kathleen Ann

War — Past, Present, and Future

HALDEMAN, Joe

Cantos from the Upside-Down Island. The Book of Centhini [English]

INANDIAK, Elizabeth D.

Les chants de l'ile a dormir debout. Le livre de Centhini [Français]

INANDIAK, Elizabeth D.

To Write in the Language of a Small Nation [English]

JANČAR, Drago

Pisati v jeziku malega naroda [Slovenščina]

JANČAR, Drago

La cólera de Aquiles [Castellano]

KADARÉ, Ismail

Zemërimi [Gjuha shqipe]

KADARÉ, Ismail

El cuerpo en la guerra [Castellano]

KEBO, Ozren

The Body in War [English]
KEBO, Ozren

Tijelo u ratu [Srpski]
KEBO, Ozren

Duro corte [Castellano]
KHAN, Shamshad

Hard Cut [English]
KHAN, Shamshad

Richard III dans les guerres de la Yougoslavie
MATVEJEVIĆ, Predrag

Dark Ladies
NADEL, Barbara

Mr. Snow's Parenthesis. Before and Beyond the Two Cultures
SAFIR, Margery Arent

Caóticas capilaridades [Castellano]
SÁNCHEZ LIZARRALDE, Ramón

Chaotic Capillarities [English]
SÁNCHEZ LIZARRALDE, Ramón

Destruir Europa [Català]
TORNER, Carles

Destruir Europa [Castellano]
TORNER, Carles

Detranslating Europe [English]
TORNER, Carles

Mortal Men, Immortal Crimes. My Life in Serbia
VELIČKOVIĆ, Dušan

CAFÉ EUROPA – LA HABANA

Café literario

Juan Abreu; **DEUDA**

1-En la década de los setenta yo vivía en un país con un centro de delación por cuadra. Este centro se encargaba de la vigilancia y guía ideológica de los vecinos. He aquí una lista mimeografiada de consignas que se repartían en los

- 1) Condenamos la intervención militar yanki en Cambodia
- 2) Honor a los mártires de Kent
- 3) Nixon asesino
- 4) Nixon esbirro
- 5) Nixon asesino de mujeres
- 6) Abajo Nixon
- 7) Nixon asesino de niños
- 8) Abajo el fascismo yanki
- 9) Viva la lucha del pueblo negro norteamericano
- 10) Viva el Frente Unido Nacional de Kampuchea
- 11) Viva el FNL de Viet Nam del Sur
- 12) Muerte a los mercenarios del imperialismo
- 13) Viva la lucha de los pueblos de Asia, África y América Latina
- 14) Paredón para los piratas
- 15) Paredón para los mercenarios
- 16) Honor a los mártires de Baracoa
- 17) En Baracoa y en Cambodia muerte al invasor
- 18) Muera el imperialismo Yanki
- 19) Viva la unidad anti-imperialista
- 20) Viva el invencible campo socialista
- 21) Saludamos Flota Soviética
- 22) Crear dos, tres, muchos Viet Nam es la consigna.
- 23) Nada hay más precioso que la independencia y la libertad
- 24) Vivan nuestros heróicos pescadores
- 25) No cambiamos trabajadoras dignas por gusanos
- 26) Viva el Marxismo Leninismo
- 27) Viva la Revolución
- 28) Patria o Muerte
- 29) A otra agresión, otro Girón
- 30) Viva Lenin
- 31) Viva el Che
- 32) Si vienen, quedan
- 33) Viva el gobierno de Unión Nacional de Cambodia
- 34) Abajo los gringos
- 35) Yankis asesinos
- 36) Paredón a los apátridas
- 37) Abajo la gusanería
- 38) Los hijos del pueblo no se cambian por gusanos
- 39) Apoyamos huelga estudiantil en los Estdos Unidos
- 40) ¡Con la guardia en Alto !
- 41) ¡ Estudio, trabajo y fusil!
- 42) Trabajaremos con el fusil al lado
- 43) Nada ni nadie detendrá la marcha de la Revolución
- 44) La Revolución es invencible
- 45) Viva el Internacionaismo Revolucionario
- 46) Vivan los Mártires de Bolivia
- 47) Comandante en Jefe ¡ Ordene !
- 48) ¡ Muerte al Invasor !
- 49) Frente al terror contrarrevolucionario, el terror revolucionario
- 50) Viva la dictadura del proletariado
- 51) Mueran los agentes del imperialismo
- 52) Nixon es peor que Hitler

llamados Comités de Defensa de la Revolución. Son las consignas que estábamos autorizados a vocear en la próxima manifestación convocada. La he conservado por motivos masoquistas:

2-En la década de los setenta yo vivía en un país donde se condenaba a escritores a la cárcel por tratar de enviar sus manuscritos a editoriales extranjeras. Aquí tienen las conclusiones del tribunal que juzgó a René Ariza, dramaturgo, escritor, actor y poeta. Se le acusó de: *Delitos contra la Integridad y Estabilidad de la Nación.*

Conclusiones del Tribunal

Que el acusado asegurado René Ariza Bardales, natural de La Habana, hijo de Ramón e Isabel, de 33 años de edad, con instrucción, casado, empleado como realizador de decoración del INIT y vecino de la calle 14 No 9, Aptdo 40, segundo piso E / Línea y Calzada, Vedado, Habana, desde hace algún tiempo viene dedicándose a escribir cuentos, ensayos y relatos cuyo contenido y enfoque se basan en el más amplio diversionismo ideológico y propaganda contrarrevolucionaria escrita. Que todo este material carente de valor artístico, escrito en contra de los intereses de nuestro pueblo, de nuestro Primer Ministro Comandante Fidel Castro Ruz, mártires de nuestra patria y demás dirigentes nuestros, fue tratado de enviar al exterior de nuestro país para mediante su divulgación incitar contra el orden socialista y la solidaridad internacional.

La sanción que debe imponerse al acusado es la de: OCHO AÑOS DE RECLUSIÓN.

La Habana 3 de julio de 1974 “Año del XV Aniversario”.¹

3- En la década de los setenta yo vivía en un país que fusilaba escritores (Nelson Rodríguez), encarcelaba dramaturgos y novelistas (René Ariza, Reinaldo Arenas), confiscaba manuscritos (Roberto Valero, Carlos Victoria); un país que acosaba a las más altas figuras literarias de la nación por ser “ideológicamente conflictivos” y por maricones (José Lezama Lima, Virgilio Piñera).

4- En la década de los setenta yo vivía en un país que no toleraba la libertad de pensamiento, ni de reunión, ni de expresión. En un país donde los escritores hacían una literatura agachada, complaciente, oportunista, cobarde, apologética y sumisa. Otras opciones eran escribir para la gaveta y esperar la oportunidad de enviar, subrepticiamente, la obra al extranjero. Con los riesgos ya descritos.

5- En la década de los setenta yo vivía en un país donde la miseria espiritual era el pan de cada día, donde se premiaba la sumisión, la vulgaridad, la ramplonería y se hacía, gubernamentalmente, apología de la delación. La literatura era considerada un arma de los que gobernaban y el miedo convertía el país en una peligrosa ciénaga.

6- En la década de los setenta yo vivía en un país donde, si no hubiera sido por algunos escritores de la Europa del Este, seguramente yo (y el pequeño grupo de escritores del que formaba parte) habría claudicado y terminado como parte de alguna comparsa que meneaba el trasero ante el poder. He aquí sus nombres: Fiodor Dostoievski, Alexander Solzhenitsyn, Witold Gombrowicz, Sergiusz Piasecki , Isaak Bábel, Mijaíl Bulgákov.

7- En la década de los setenta estos escritores me dieron lecciones fundamentales: escribe siempre contra el poder; no tomes precauciones ante la página en blanco; ¿quién necesita una patria?; ser un escritor es una maldición y se paga caro; jamás serás perdonado si traicionas tu destino de escritor.

Y también: nunca pertenezcas a una organización de escritores, todo lo oficial es anticreativo y antiliterario.

8- En la década de los setenta contraje una deuda que nunca podré pagar con escritores a los que conmutaron la pena de muerte delante del pelotón de fusilamiento y luego trabajaron acosados por los acreedores; contraje una deuda con escritores que sobrevivieron a monstruosos campos de exterminio; con escritores a los que torturaron, ultrajaron y luego les pegaron un tiro en la

nuca; con escritores que se dedicaron a violar fronteras, enamorados de la osa mayor, que se dedicaron al contrabando ¡qué hermoso oficio! y que desaparecieron como jirones de niebla en la madrugada; y, finalmente, contraje una deuda que nunca podré pagar con escritores que acorralados dedicaron toda su energía a la obra que nunca verían publicada, a la obra que constituía su venganza y no se rindieron, y no murieron hasta dejarla concluida.

9- ¡Apareció Gombrowitz! El alegre grito resonaba por toda La Habana. Corría de una a otra casa de los complotados y una emoción especial que ya nunca más volveré a sentir inundaba mi corazón. ¿Veinte años? ¿Veintidós? Quizás hasta ahí se extienda el territorio. Nunca volvemos a tener esa fe en la palabra escrita. O al menos no una fe inmaculada, exenta de cinismo, limpia de dudas. Eramos jóvenes y la aparición de *Ferdidurke* commocionaba nuestro mundo. ¿Quién lo había conseguido? El gran Reinaldo Arenas por supuesto. Cuando llegaba a nuestra secreta tertulia en las profundidades del Parque Lenin (¿quién dice que Lenin no sirve para nada?), donde nos reuníamos a compartir libros y lecturas, le palmeábamos la espalda, lo recibíamos como a un mago. Disfrutábamos de ser proscritos en aquel país de corderos. Los escritores oficiales del llamado “campo socialista” eran para nosotros cómplices del nuevo negrero, del nuevo colonizador. Y las víctimas de ese colonizador, nuestros héroes. Nunca olvidaré el día en que Rey trajo *El maestro y Margarita*... “A la hora de más calor de una puesta de sol primaveral en los Estanques del Patriarca”... Leyó para nosotros... He amado a algunas mujeres, pero no creo haber amado a ninguna como a Margarita. A partir de aquel día la Unión de Escritores y Artistas fue bautizada como la Massolit cubana. El país sucumbía al horror del “realismo socialista”, que constituía un requisito ineludible si se aspiraba a publicar o merecer la bendición oficial. Los escritores que no se adscribían a la tendencia importada de la Madre Patria (cuando aquello la Madre Patria era la Unión Soviética), eran automáticamente sospechosos del pecado de “diversionismo ideológico”. Recuerdo una joya de la época: “los escritores son obreros, pues escriben con la mano”; y otra; “lo mágico, lo real maravilloso es la visión caduca y pintoresca que va quedando atrás sobrepasada por la conciencia socialista, científica y revolucionaria”ⁱⁱ. La mayor

parte de la década de los setenta la pasé eludiendo movilizaciones políticas, en el esclavista Servicio Militar Obligatorio, en campos de trabajo forzado, husmeando en remotas bibliotecas de barrio en busca de tesoros escapados a la censura. Resultaba cada vez más difícil distinguir a un amigo de un delator. Pero renacíamos al tomar en nuestras emocionadas manos esos libros escritos por gente humillada, gente exiliada, gente encarcelada, gente fusilada, gente torturada, gente perseguida, gente insumisa y reconocíamos en ellos a nuestros hermanos. Y nos embargaba un profundo agradecimiento, una profunda humildad.

10- En la década de los setenta aprendí, gracias a estos escritores, a despreciar la nación (ellos, independientemente de sus puntos de vista acerca de la nación, me mostraron un territorio habitable más allá de ella; un lugar al que pertenecer sin tener que ser cómplice de múltiples barbaries e indecencias). La nación, a mis ojos, hasta hoy, suele estar asociada con lo abusivo, con la violencia, con lo estúpido, con lo uniformado, con lo vulgar, con lo que castra, con la persecución de lo individual. Gracias a estos escritores aprendí a venerar lo diferente, lo acorralado, lo indefenso, lo solo, lo asustado, lo perseguido, lo condenado. Aprendí a amar la santa cofradía de los que tiembran, aprietan los dientes se cagan en los pantalones pero siguen adelante. Y nunca traicionan a los amigos.

Conclusiones

El país en el que vivía en la década de los setenta, sigue, en lo fundamental, igual, en la década del dos mil.

Y en esto consiste mi relación con escritores de la Europa del Este.

ⁱ Este documento es copia directa de la sentencia dictada por el Tribunal Provincial de La Habana. René consiguió sacarlo cuando abandonó la isla después de cumplir cinco de los ocho años de la condena. En la prisión fue sometido a tratamientos de electroshocks que lo dañaron permanentemente. Cuando me lo encontré en Miami era una sombra de lo que fue en Cuba.

ⁱⁱ José Antonio Portuondo, "Introducción a la novela *La última mujer y el próximo combate*, de Manuel Cofiño", Editorial Siglo XXI, S.A. México, 1972.



CAFÉ EUROPE – HAVANA

Literary Café

Juan Abreu; *DEBT*

Translated by Debbie Smirthwaite

1-In the 1970s I lived in a country with a centre for informants on every block. This same centre was in charge of the vigilance and ideological guidance of the neighbouring residents. Here is a typed list of slogans that were given out in the so-called Committees for the Defence of the Revolution. These are the slogans that we were authorized to shout in the next demonstration to be held. I have kept it for masochistic reasons:

1. We condemn the military intervention in Cambodia.
2. Honour to the martyrs of Kent
3. Nixon murderer
4. Nixon henchman
5. Nixon woman-killer
6. Down with Nixon
7. Nixon killer of children
8. Down with Yankee fascism
9. Long live the fight of the American black people
10. Long live the United National Front of Kampuchea
11. Long live the FNL of South Vietnam
12. Death to the mercenaries of imperialism
13. Long live the struggle of the peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America
14. Firing squad for the pirates
15. Firing squad for the mercenaries
16. Honour to the martyrs of Baracoa
17. In Baracoa and in Cambodia, death to the invader
18. Death to Yankee imperialism
19. Long live anti-imperialist unity
20. Long live the invincible socialist field
21. We salute the Soviet Fleet
22. Create two, three, many Vietnams is the slogan
23. Nothing is more previous than independence and freedom
24. Long live our heroic fishermen
25. We will not change honourable workers for worms
26. Long live Marxist Leninism
27. Long live the Revolution
28. Homeland or Death
29. One more aggression, one more Girón
30. Long live Lenin
31. Long live Che

32. If they come, they stay.
33. Long live the government of National Union of Cambodia.
34. Down with gringos
35. Yankees murderers
36. The unpatriotic to the firing squad
37. Down with the worms (exiles)
38. The sons of the people won't be changed for worms
39. Support the student strike in the USA
40. Be on guard!
41. Study, work and rifle"
42. We will work with our rifle by our side
43. Nothing, nobody, will stop the Revolution
44. The Revolution is invincible
45. Long live Revolutionary Internationalism
46. Long live the Martyrs of Bolivia
47. Commander in Chief! At your orders!
48. Death to the Invader!
49. Against contra-revolutionary terror, the revolutionary terror
50. Long live the dictatorship of the proletariat
51. Agents of imperialism die
52. Nixon is worse than Hitler

2- In the 1970s I lived in a country where writers were sent to prison for trying to send their draft manuscripts to foreign publishers. Here are the conclusions of the court that judged René Ariza, playwright, writer, actor and poet. He was accused of: *Crimes against the Integrity and Stability of the Nation*.

Conclusion of the Proceedings

That the accused, René Ariza Bardales, native of Havana, son of Ramón and Isabel, aged 33 years, educated, married, employed as INIT decorator and with residence at Street 14 No 9, Aptdo 40, second floor, door E, Línea y Calzada, Vedado, Havana, has for some time been actively writing stories, essays and tales whose content and focus are based on the broadest ideological diversionism and written contra-revolutionary propaganda. That he attempted to send all this material, lacking in artistic value, written against the interests of our people, of our Prime Minister Commander Fidel Castro Ruz, of the martyrs of our homeland and of our other leaders, to places outside our country so that they could be disseminated in order to incite against the socialist order and international solidarity.

The penalty to be imposed upon the accused is that of: EIGHT YEARS OF IMPRISONMENT.

Havana, 3 July 1974 "Year of the 15th Anniversary".ⁱ

3- In the 1970s I lived in a country that shot writers (Nelson Rodríguez), imprisoned playwrights and novelists (René Ariza, Reinaldo Arenas), and confiscated manuscripts (Roberto Valero, Carlos Victoria); a country that persecuted the highest literary figures of the nation for being “ideologically conflictive” and for being homosexual (José Lezama Lima, Virgilio Piñera).

4- In the 1970s I lived in a country that did not tolerate freedom of thought, or freedom to meet, or freedom of expression. In a country where writers produced a literature that hung its head, that was complacent, opportunist, cowardly, apologetic, and submissive. Other options were writing for the “drawer” and awaiting the opportunity to surreptitiously send the work abroad. Running the risks already described.

5- In the 1970s I lived in a country where spiritual misery was the norm, where submission, vulgarity and commonness were rewarded and where the government encouraged informants. Literature was considered a weapon of those in government and fear made the country a dangerous swamp.

6- In the 1970s I lived in a country where, if it had not been for some writers from Eastern Europe, I am sure that I (and the small group of writers to which I belonged) would have given in and ended up as a part of some carnival group that played up to the authorities. Here are those writers’ names: Fiodor Dostoievski, Alexander Solzhenitsyn, Witold Gombrowicz, Sergiusz Piasecki, Isaak Babel, Mijaíl Bulgákov.

7- In the 1970s these writers taught me fundamental lessons: always write against the powers that be, never take precautions when faced with a blank page; who needs a homeland? Being a writer is a curse and you pay dearly; you will never be forgiven if you betray your destiny as a writer.

And also: never belong to an organisation of writers, everything official is anti-creative and anti-literary.

8- In the 1970s I incurred a debt that I will never be able to pay back with writers whose sentence to die in front of the firing squad was commuted and who then worked harassed by their creditors; I incurred a debt with writers who survived monstrous extermination camps; with writers who were tortured, abused and then shot in the back of the neck; with writers who worked to violate frontiers, lovers of the Great Bear, who devoted themselves to smuggling – what a marvellous trade! And who disappeared like threads of mist at dawn; and finally, I incurred a debt that I will never be able to pay with writers who, although completely cornered, devoted all their energy to the work that they would never see published, to the work that constituted their revenge, writers who never gave up, and who did not die until they had completed that work.

9- Gombrowicz is out! The happy cry echoed all around Havana. It ran from one conspirator's house to another, and a special emotion that I would never feel again filled my heart. Twenty years old? Twenty-two? Perhaps the territory spreads that far. We never again have that same faith in the written word. Or at least, we never have such an immaculate faith, exempt of cynicism, clear of doubts. We were young and the appearance of *Ferdydurke* shook our world. Who had managed it? The great Reinaldo Arenas, of course. When he arrived at our secret meeting in the heart of the Lenin Park (who says Lenin is good for nothing?), where we met up to share books and readings, we clapped him on the back, we welcomed him as if he were a magician. We enjoyed being outlaws in a country of lambs. For us, the official writers of the so-called "socialist camp" were mere accomplices of the new slave trader, of the new colonizer. And the victims of that colonizer were our heroes. I will never forget the day that Rey brought along *The Master and Margarita*... "At the hour of the hot spring sunset two citizens appeared at the Patriarch's Ponds"... He read for us... I have loved a few women, but I don't believe I ever loved any woman like I loved Margarita. From that day onwards the Union of Writers and Artists was baptised as the Cuban Massolit. The country was succumbing to the horror of "socialist realism", which constituted an unavoidable requirement if anyone aspired to publish or receive official approval. Those writers who did not subscribe to the imported trend of the Mother country (when the Mother country

was the Soviet Union) were automatically under suspicion of the sin of "ideological diversionism". I remember a pearl from that time: "writers are manual workers, because they write using their hands"; and another: "what is magical, what is really marvellous, is the outdated and picturesque vision that has been overtaken by socialist, scientific and revolutionary conscience"ⁱⁱ. I spent the greater part of the 1970s avoiding political mobilisation, as a slave to Compulsory Military Service, serving time in hard labour camps, snooping around remote neighbourhood libraries in search of treasures that had escaped censorship. It became increasingly difficult to distinguish a friend from an informer. But we were reborn when we took in our grateful hands those books written by people who were humiliated, people who were exiled, people who were imprisoned, people who were shot by a firing squad, people who were tortured, people who were persecuted and people who rebelled and in them we recognised our brothers. And we were overwhelmed with deep thanks and profound humility.

10- In the 1970s I learned, thanks to these writers, to despise the nation (they, independently of their points of view regarding the nation, showed me a habitable territory beyond it; a place to which you could belong without being an accomplice to numerous barbaric and indecent acts). The nation, in my eyes, even today, is usually associated with what is abusive, with what is violent, with what is stupid, with what is uniformed, with what is common, with what castrates, with the persecution of the individual. Thanks to these writers I learned to revere that which is different, that which is cornered, that which is defenceless, that which is alone, that which is frightened, that which is persecuted, that which is condemned. I learned to love the holy fraternity of those who tremble, clench their teeth, wet themselves in fear, but still press on. And those who never betray their friends.

Conclusions

In terms of all that is fundamental, the country where I lived in the 1970s remains the same in the 21st century.

And all this is what constitutes my relationship with writers from Eastern Europe.

ⁱ Based on a direct copy of the sentence passed by the Provincial Court of Havana. René managed to bring it out when he abandoned the island after serving five years of the eight year sentence. In prison he was subjected to electric shock treatment which left him permanently injured. When I met him in Miami he was a shadow of what he was in Cuba.

ⁱⁱ José Antonio Portuondo, "Introducción a la novela *La última mujer y el próximo combate*, de Manuel Cofiño", Editorial Siglo XXI, S.A., Mexico, 1972.

José Eduardo Agualusa. *Guerra i Pau a Angola*
Dissabte 18, 18.00h. Hall Proteu. Portuguès, amb traducció simultània

GUERRA E PAZ EM ANGOLA

A República Popular de Angola nasceu debaixo de fogo. Quando às zero horas e vinte minutos do dia 11 de Novembro de 1975 o Presidente Agostinho Neto proclamou formalmente a independência daquela que fora, até então, a jóia do império português, já a guerra se alastrara a todo o território.

No meu segundo romance, “Estação das Chuvas”, tentei reconstruir aquelas horas de medo e euforia:

“No Largo Primeiro de Maio o Presidente falava à multidão. Pouco antes de subir à tribuna um jovem oficial saltara de um jipe para lhe entregar uma mensagem do Comandante Jacob Caetano, mais conhecido por Monstro Imortal. A situação era crítica: as colunas sul-africanas tinham subido oitocentos e tantos quilómetros, pulverizando as frentes sul e centro. Agora, preparavam-se para tomar a pequena cidade de Novo Redondo. Em Quifangondo, a uma distância tão escassa que quando o vento soprava mais forte a praça se enchia da tosse nervosa das metralhadoras, militares cubanos combatiam ao lado das FAPLA¹ contra antigos comandos portugueses, tropas regulares do exército zairense e guerrilheiros de Daniel Chipenda² e Holden Roberto³. Balas coloridas riscavam a noite e ninguém sabia dizer se eram parte dos festejos ou do aparato da guerra. Os céus da cidade tinham-se transformado numa imensa armadilha. Era tão incerto o destino de Luanda que muitas das delegações convidadas a assistir às cerimónias, incluindo a da União Soviética, tinham preferido não comparecer”.

Era, evidentemente, a Guerra Fria em todo o seu brutal esplendor. Se quisermos ser exactos, porém, teremos de reconhecer que a guerra civil angolana, a qual se prolongaria por um quarto de século, tendo sido um dos mais longos e destruidores conflitos da história do continente, começou alguns anos antes, mais precisamente a 15 de março de 1961, quando a FNLA (então União dos Povos de Angola, UPA) atacou uma dezena de fazendas no norte de Angola, assassinando a tiro e à catanada, não apenas os fazendeiros portugueses e as suas famílias, mas também os trabalhadores de etnia ovimbundo, e os negros e mestiços naturais de Luanda.

Nos anos que se seguiriam, a FNLA, apoiada pelos Estados Unidos, o MPLA, apoiado pela União Soviética e, um pouco mais tarde, a UNITA, apoiada pela China, iriam dar continuidade ao horror, combatendo o colonialismo português

¹ O exército do MPLA.

² Um dos mais famosos dissidentes do MPLA, de etnia ovimbundo.

³ Outro dirigente histórico do nacionalismo angolano, presidente da FNLA.

ao mesmo tempo que se matavam uns aos outros. O tempo veio a demonstrar que aquilo que separava os diferentes partidos angolanos não eram tanto divergências de ordem ideológica, exploradas pelas diversas superpotências, e sim algo mais antigo, mais desesperado, e muito mais profundo. As sementes do ódio haviam sido lançadas muitos séculos antes.

A FNLA é, dos três partidos históricos do nacionalismo angolano, o mais marcadamente étnico, representando, desde a origem, a aristocracia rural do velho Reino do Congo. Nunca se conseguiu expandir muito para além da sua região de origem, abandonou a luta armada poucos anos após a independência, e é hoje um pequeno partido, em crise, e sem grande peso político, embora com representação parlamentar. O MPLA surgiu em Luanda, no seio da sociedade crioula euro-africana, integrando inicialmente apenas brancos e mestiços, mas rapidamente se alargou para o campo, afirmando-se como uma força nacional. A UNITA surgiu um pouco mais tarde, em 1967, fundada por um grupo de homens de diferentes etnias angolanas, do norte ao sul do país, todos eles, porém, de origem camponesa, e quase todos educados em missões protestantes.

Os principais dirigentes do MPLA revelaram desde o início graves distúrbios de identidade. Angolanos, sem dúvida, mas de origem portuguesa, ou, ao menos, formados dentro de um universo de matriz portuguesa, o seu combate nacionalista implicou uma ruptura com uma parte deles mesmos. Brancos ou mestiços, queriam ser negros. Homens da cidade, queriam ser camponeses. Vale a pena citar alguns versos, escritos em 1962, por uma das mais fascinantes personalidades angolanas daquela época, o jornalista Ernesto Lara Filho, o qual, após uma rápida e frustrante passagem pelo exílio, junto ao MPLA, regressou ao círculo de boémia da capital angolana:

*Sou sincero.
Eu gostava de ser negro.
Gostava de ser um Joe Louis, um Louis Armstrong,
Um Harrison Rillard, um Jess Owens,
Um Leopold Senghor, um Aimé Cesaire, um Diop,
Gostava de ritmar, de dançar como um negro.*

(...)

Vários dirigentes brancos e mestiços do MPLA, ou negros de língua materna portuguesa, escolheram nomes de guerra, ou, no caso daqueles que eram também escritores, pseudónimos literários, em línguas africanas. Foi o caso de Mário Pinto de Andrade, elemento central de todo o movimento literário que precedeu e preparou a insurreição nacionalista, o qual assinou, durante alguns anos, diversos artigos na revista *Presence Africaine*, de que era redactor, com o sonoro pseudónimo de Buanga Fele. Outro caso interessante é o de Pepetela. O mais famoso escritor angolano da actualidade, chama-se na realidade Artur Pestana, e é neto de portugueses, sendo Pepetela, simplesmente, a tradução para quimbundo da palavra pestana.

A FNLA, e mais tarde a UNITA, exploraram, com maior ou menor talento, a angústia existencial e as contradições do seu principal adversário. Jonas Savimbi, que antes de fundar o seu próprio movimento, a UNITA, hesitou durante algum tempo entre militar no MPLA ou na FNLA, optando depois por esta última organização, explicou assim a sua atitude: “Pode parecer racismo e não será certamente a forma como pensamos hoje, porque já aprendemos muito. Contudo é um facto que era muito difícil, naquela altura, para os Africanos, compreender porque é que os mestiços estavam a liderar um movimento de libertação contra os portugueses”⁴.

Mais estranho ainda é o caso de Viriato da Cruz, que foi, ao lado de Mário Pinto de Andrade, um dos fundadores do MPLA, afastando-se do partido, pouco tempo depois, por se opor à feroz liderança de Agostinho Neto. Poeta de escassa mas original produção, intelectual com sólida formação marxista, Viriato da Cruz veio a falecer na China, em 1973, abandonado por quase os seus antigos camaradas de luta e em ruptura, inclusive, com a nomenclatura chinesa. Tal como Jonas Savimbi, também ele aderiu, por um breve período, à FNLA, argumentando que só o partido de Holden Roberto reunia condições para representar a vasta maioria negra e camponesa de Angola. Viriato da Cruz, natural de Porto Amboím, pequena cidade no litoral angolano, trezentos quilómetros a sul de Luanda, era mestiço, de língua materna portuguesa, e formação europeia.

Fundada em 1576, pelo navegador português Paulo Dias de Novaes, São Paulo da Assunção de Luanda, a capital de Angola, é uma das mais antigas cidades da costa ocidental de África – mais antiga, aliás, do que a generalidade das grandes urbes norte-americanas. Séculos de presença colonial viram nascer e afirmar-se uma sociedade crioula, euro-africana, composta por famílias negras e mestiças, que o tráfico de escravos enriqueceu, e que até aos finais do século XIX deteve considerável poder político e económico. O Senado da Câmara de Luanda, por exemplo, era composto quase exclusivamente por angolanos negros e mestiços. Uma boa parte dos jornais que se publicavam então, e foram muitos, tinham a dirigi-los intelectuais e comerciantes angolanos. Finalmente, algumas das maiores fortunas dessa época estavam nas mãos de pessoas com sangue africano, como a célebre senhora Dona Ana Joaquina dos Santos Silva, a Dona Ana Mulata, cujo belo palácio resistiu até muito recentemente, tendo sido entretanto derrubado e substituído por uma infeliz réplica. Estas famílias tradicionais luandenses mantiveram sempre, salvo raras excepções, uma relação conflituosa e de grande desconfiança relativamente aos povos do interior, os quais desprezavam profundamente, e nem o seu empobrecimento, nem sequer a grande vaga colonial que se sucedeu ao fim da II Guerra Mundial, e que a todos prejudicou, conseguiu alterar tais preconceitos e mentalidades. Do outro lado, do lado da África profunda, o rancor em relação à cidade não era menor – mas tinha menos possibilidade de se exprimir.

Aquilo que homens como Viriato da Cruz ou Mário Pinto de Andrade tentaram fazer, um tanto desajeitadamente, é certo, foi algo mais radical do que uma

⁴ Entrevista a Fred Bridgland, em “Jonas Savimbi – Uma chave para África” (Editora Perspectivas & Realidades, Lisboa, 1988)

simples opção de classe. Eles esforçaram-se, de forma honesta, no sentido de construírem um amplo movimento nacionalista, capaz de ultrapassar séculos de ódios, de rancores, e sobretudo de desconhecimento mútuo, reconciliando uma civilização urbana, crioula, fruto do pecado original do tráfico de escravos, com as diversas sociedades camponesas do interior do país.

O seu falhanço talvez fosse inevitável. Do lado do MPLA a linguagem oficial, nos anos que se seguiram à independência, enfatizava o combate contra o tribalismo e o regionalismo por forma a manter a unidade nacional. Desmontando este discurso, porém, não era difícil descobrir que sob ele se ocultava uma mentalidade colonizada, incapaz de perceber como uma riqueza, e uma enorme vantagem, a diversidade étnica e linguística do país. Quando os dirigentes angolanos gritavam “Um só povo, uma só nação” – a principal palavra de ordem daqueles dias – estavam na realidade a sugerir (e eles acreditavam nisso) que era impossível construir um país moderno respeitando as diferentes nações de Angola.

A impressionante afirmação e expansão da língua portuguesa desde 1975, e o consequente colapso de algumas das mais importantes línguas nativas de Angola, em particular do quimbundo, são, pelo menos em parte, resultado de tal mentalidade. Até à independência não haveria em Angola mais de cinco por cento de pessoas cuja língua materna fosse o português. Trinta anos depois pelo menos quarenta por cento dos angolanos têm no português a sua língua materna. Dois terços das crianças, com idades entre os seis e os catorze anos, só conhecem o idioma de Camões. O novo poder angolano revelou-se assim muito mais eficaz na política de enfraquecimento das línguas nacionais do que o regime colonial em cinco séculos de opressão e humilhação.

Jonas Savimbi, um homem poderoso, violento, com uma insaciável sede de poder e absolutamente destituído de escrúpulos, utilizou a seu favor a arrogância dos dirigentes do MPLA – que, para ele, representavam o mundo urbano e a sociedade crioula – explorando o ressentimento e a revolta das populações rurais. Savimbi não se limitou a aprofundar o fosso entre o campo e a cidade. Pouco a pouco, se necessário eliminando fisicamente os seus próprios companheiros, foi transformando um movimento de abrangência nacional, embora preponderantemente camponês, num partido étnico, autista, inteiramente fechado sobre si mesmo. Nos últimos anos em que esteve à frente da UNITA havia ainda militantes de outras etnias, que não apenas ovimbundos, em cargos de direcção. Eram, porém, cada vez mais raros. Savimbi tolerava-os dentro do movimento da mesma forma que um pastor-alemão, por exemplo, pode ser aceite por uma matilha de lobos – desde que não se lembre que é um pastor-alemão. Com a sua morte, e o abrupto fim da guerra civil, a UNITA iniciou um lento processo de democratização, que, se tiver sucesso, talvez contribua também para a democratização do MPLA. Enquanto optimista tenho esperança de que o MPLA consiga romper com o seu passado totalitário – um totalitarismo que de marxista se fez capitalista com a mesma facilidade com que qualquer camaleão muda de cor – e afirmar-se como um grande partido democrático. Seria bom para todos nós. Enquanto céptico, observando e analisando as atitudes dos seus dirigentes ao longo dos últimos tempos, receio que não o consiga fazer. Parece-me, contudo, que se o MPLA não for capaz de

se democratizar dificilmente conseguirá sobreviver em democracia. Não creio que disponha de energia para contrariar o processo de democratização. Teria para isso de enfrentar sozinho, ou quase sozinho, não apenas as forças democráticas nacionais, que estão em clara expansão, mas também, a opinião pública de muitos países ocidentais ligados a Angola. Muitos desses países, é certo, têm até agora fechado os olhos, na medida do possível, aos desmandos do partido no poder, até porque é mais proveitoso negociar o petróleo ou os diamantes com um governo corrupto e incompetente, do que com um governo democrático e competente. Esses países, porém, vivem em democracia, e os seus dirigentes não podem ignorar o poder da sua opinião pública. O MPLA teria ainda de enfrentar as, ainda frágeis, correntes democráticas dentro do seu próprio seio. Perseguir e silenciar essas correntes pode, no imediato, criar a ilusão de que no interior do partido só existe um pensamento. Pode mesmo atrasar o processo de democratização do país. A médio prazo, porém, à medida que a sociedade civil se for regenerando, à medida que o vírus da democracia se for propagando, essas vozes tenderão a ressurgir, cada vez mais fortes, cada vez mais consistentes, cada vez mais radicais, e o MPLA corre o risco de se fragmentar e entrar em colapso.

A democracia é, creio, o único sistema capaz de combater a cultura de exclusão que se instalou em Angola, o racismo e a xenofobia, promovendo o diálogo e expondo à luz franca do dia aquilo que para muitos de entre nós, aqueles que nunca deixaram de lutar pela paz, sempre foi uma evidência – existem onze milhões de maneiras diferentes de se ser angolano, tantas quantos os angolanos, e todas elas são legítimas.

José Eduardo Agualusa

Robert Coover. *Cave Writing: Noves aventures a Mot-Town*
Diumenge 19, 12.00h. Hall Proteu. Anglès, amb traducció simultània

Cave Writing: New Adventures in Mot-Town

Robert Coover

[Text for the translator.](#)

PROLOGUE

The impact of new technologies upon literature is both profound and negligible. Negligible in the sense that our oldest known narrative of any length, the Gilgamesh Epic, hacked out on clay tablets by the heirs to the inventors of writing itself, is still readable and can still touch us, and the same of course can be said of pre-Biblical, Biblical, and ancient Greek narrative and poetry, and of ancient Chinese literature as well. Indeed there are those who will argue that these great works have never been surpassed, and that all subsequent writing amounts to little more than footnotes to the original classics.

But it must also be said that changing technologies continually reshape the very nature of the artistic enterprise. The dominant narrative forms of recent times, the novel and the movie, for example, would not have been possible without the technologies that created, not so much the forms themselves, as the new audiences toward whom artists directed their endeavors, some translating the classic modes into the new technologies, others exploring the new technologies for new forms appropriate to them, Miguel de Cervantes being a classic exemplar of the latter.

Now, once again, in this era of the digital revolution, the audience is moving on into new realms, and consequently so are the authors and artists. As with the previous technological transitions, the book lives on in a more or less recognizable form within the new computer-driven technology, and at the same time totally new forms are emerging. Whatever one might feel about these changes, they cannot be ignored. It was an awareness of the irresistible and irreversible power of the digital revolution that provoked me into creating the Brown University hyperfiction workshops a decade and a half ago, so that, together with bands of young graduate and undergraduate students, we might begin to explore and understand the new electronic media as creative writing spaces. In that respect, as, now, Cave writers, we are no

different from the cave artists of Altamira—a new medium presents itself: you see what you can do with it.

PART I: BEFORE THE INTERNET

What we did with it at Brown back in the late 1980s had something to do with the visit to campus a decade or so earlier of yesterday's speaker, the revolutionary computer innovator Ted Nelson. Brown is widely regarded as a world leader in developing humanistic uses of the computer, of which Nelson's visit was part, and Brown's Program in Literary Arts is *the* acknowledged world leader in the development of creative electronic writing—or what we are now calling “literary hypermedia.” Brown is, literally, in the world of electronic literature, where it all began.

Manchester Baby/Alan Turing: Or, rather, perhaps *this* is where it all began, the first computer ever built, back in 1948, the University of Manchester's Small-Scale Experimental Machine, more commonly known as the Manchester Baby. It was essentially a very fancy calculator, but I cast out inquiries regarding early uses of creative text on the computer, predating our workshops and the era of hypertext, and learned that one of the Manchester Baby's key developers, Alan Turing, together with Christopher Strachey, produced in 1952, using a random number generator, what might be called the first “literature” on this mathematical instrument of ones and zeros: a love letter generator. One output (*translator: the following should be comically awkward, as in English; a very literal word-for-word translation should do it; “MUC” is Manchester University Computer*):

Darling Sweetheart,
You are my avid fellow feeling. My affection curiously clings to your passionate wish. My liking
yearns to your heart. You are my wistful sympathy: my tender liking.
Yours beautifully, MUC

Ted Nelson at Brown: I joined the Creative Writing faculty at Brown University some 25 years ago, at a time when the world was still in its cybernetic infancy. It was the era of big mainframes with monitors and keyboards cabled directly to them; to work on the Brown computer you had to go to the basement of the building where it was housed, and you pretty much had to create your own editing and formatting tools. When I started using the mainframe there on a more or less daily basis, I was the first humanist on the entire faculty to do so. I'd been a print writer for the quarter of a century before reaching Brown and

indeed still am—will be—so at the outset the computer intrigued me mostly as a writing tool. Little did I foresee the seductions that awaited me, seductions prepared in part by Ted Nelson.

I knew from a professorial friend that Nelson, known to me for his mid-1970s revolutionary book *Computer Lib/Dream Machines*, had been on campus a little over a decade earlier working with our own resident computer guru Andy Van Dam on something called a “hypertext editor,” my friend having attempted a poetry seminar in the mid-70s using the program. It was called simply the Brown University Hypertext Editing System, or HES, historically the first of its kind.

One reason I was fascinated was that I’d long been interested in “nonsequential writing,” as Nelson calls it. Not only had I been experimenting with form and disrupting linear time from early on, I had actually been playing for 15 years or so with a mechanical hypertext system of my own using edgenotch cards, punch, and needles—directly inspired, I might add, by the publication of Julio Cortázar’s *Rayuela* a couple of years earlier. Just as with the computer, I used it for research and for project development, and had begun work on a labyrinthine novel, which was to have been made up of a thick deck of such cards, punched in such a way that readers could, choosing their own routes, needle out sequences of stories all held together in what now I would call a loose webwork of nonlinear narrative. The project was abandoned when the coding and punching became excessively laborious, but the seeds had been planted.

Early pioneers visit Brown: Meanwhile a computers-in-the-humanities study group formed up on campus, and I became an irregular member, attending when topics seemed vaguely literary, and so was treated to the early experiments of such hyperfiction pioneers as Michael Joyce, Stuart Moulthrop and Nancy Kaplan, John McDaid and others, who were regular visitors in the 1980s.

Michael Joyce’s *afternoon, a story*. This is Michael Joyce’s famous *afternoon, a story* which I first saw demo’d, in a less sophisticated format, in the mid-1980s, and which was formally published by Eastgate in 1990. It is *the* original hyperfiction, and thanks to the quality of the writing and the subtlety of the links, it continues to be one of the two or three most widely read, quoted, and critiqued of all hypertext narratives. Michael not only had to compose a literary work, he had at the same time to introduce readers to hypertext itself, and how to read it. Here, at the outset, he invites us to consider the nature of our explorations of his text... What is perhaps its most famous line—“There is no simple way to say this”—has become identified with the effort to describe hypertext to the uninitiated, or indeed to explain to oneself the odd experience of reading in this unique environment. Of course, now everyone is completely familiar with hypertext, but in the early 1990s it was still a strange and mysterious concept. There is a

very high degree of intentional indeterminacy here, so it is not easy to pin down the “story” of *afternoon*, but it circles about a guilt-ridden poet/copy writer’s worry that his ex-wife and son may have been killed this day in a carwreck: “I want to say I may have seen my son die this morning.” It is the search to find out if that is true or not that lures the reader through the narrative.

Intermedia: In the mid-1980s, Brown’s impressive history of innovation won the university a large grant from Apple to develop a sophisticated hypertext authoring system, which became known as Intermedia, the fancy successor to the early efforts of Nelson and Van Dam, and it was on Intermedia, at the urging of scholarly and pedagogical hypertext pioneer George Landow, that I taught the first hyperfiction or electronic writing workshop in 1990-91. Like Ted Nelson, I believed that a central purpose of education is to unlearn the false assumptions and misrepresentations we’ve been taught, and I found these hyperfiction workshops a good pedagogical tool for doing that, proving to be especially useful in exposing young readers and writers to the invisible meaning-making strategies of print, freeing them from dogmas derived from the technology of the book and pointing them in intriguing new imaginative directions. Intermedia was made obsolete by the upgrading of Apple to Operating System 7, pointing up one of the major weaknesses of the tightly structured Macintosh topdown software control, what Nelson calls a “prison-a-go-go,” but by then Michael Joyce with a little help from his engineering friends had created Storyspace, the hypertext authoring system in which *afternoon, a story* is written. Designed specifically for writers by writers, it became our hypertext editor of choice.

Storyspace/Hypertext Hotel: That opening screen of all the boxes and arrows was a student Storyspace hyperfiction from that era, one of hundreds of individual works. This is a collaborative work begun in the first workshop, called “The Hypertext Hotel.” It was created as a kind of group playground: students through succeeding workshops could enter the Hotel at will, open up new rooms or services, create characters, interact with characters introduced by others, launch events, meditate on the architecture, alter narrative trajectories begun by others, use the house phone or organize programs in the grand ballroom. In the early days the young authors tended to gravitate to the bars, though swimming pools, golf courses, hair salons, chapels, day care centers, and rooftop bordellos also opened up.

What’s essentially new here is the linking mechanism. In hypertext, linkages become one of the central elements, the very place where narrative happens. These multiple links allow one to lay a story out spatially instead of linearly, inviting the reader to explore it as one might explore one’s memory or wander a many-pathed geographical terrain. Consequently, any document or set of documents created in hypertext will tend to be nonlinear or multilinear, and, since such a webwork of material imposes choices

upon the reader, reading becomes, as they say, interactive. With its intimate layering and fusion of imagined spatiality and temporality, the hyperlink, I believe, remains the most radical and distinctive literary contribution of the computer, though now it is just part of the everyday grammar.

One of the great advantages of Storyspace is how visible this is. As one builds one's narrative, one can actually see just how it is being structured by way of these navigational overview maps, which look a lot like those early sketches of Nelson, something that is so far impossible when working directly in HTML on the Internet, although that is mostly where the new writing is being done now...

(Eastgate Systems): These pioneer narrative hypertexts were mostly discrete objects, like books, saved on low-density floppies (this was before the Web and its browsers, remember, before CD-ROMs), and distributed by small start-up companies like Voyager or Eastgate or else passed around among friends by hand. Voyager has passed away, but Eastgate is still alive and well. Eastgate is where you can find *afternoon, a story*, as well as such renowned works as (*list*) and...

Shelley Jackson's *Patchwork Girl*: One of the most intricate and elegantly composed of these pre-Internet hyperfictions was Brown University graduate student Shelley Jackson's classic *Patchwork Girl*, a kind of parody of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. The very choice of the central metaphor of *Patchwork Girl*, the patching together of a new body, whether of flesh or text, from linked fragments of other bodies, also of flesh, also of text, once dead, now given new life, new form, if somewhat strange and "monstrous," was alone a stroke of genius. The work is divided into five linked sections, and one of these is the raiding of the graveyard for body parts—and for the stories attached to their previous owners. Thus, from the outset, this patching together of a physical body from disparate but harmonious parts was linked to a similar patching together of story materials, the body becoming text, text body, a traditional theme given its true hypertextual configuration with this multiply coded, larger-than-life patchwork girl. I have discussed this marvelous self-reflective work at length in "Literary Hypertext: The Passing of the Golden Age," which can be found at http://nickm.com/vox/golden_age.html, as listed on the Kosmopolis website.

Memory limitations. All this was happening back before the invention of Windows and the laptop computer in the days of slow modems tethered to the mainframe, back when hard-drive and floppy memory was still measured in kilobytes. That meant, since sound and graphics took up too much memory, the early experimental electronic writers, like those we've seen, worked almost exclusively in text. Moreover, most of the current software for generating sound and graphics had not yet been invented, the use for such tools being too limited for commercial development.

But then, suddenly, along came—not the Internet exactly, for it had been there all along—but the browsers and interfaces that made the Internet visible and widely accessible...

PART II: LITERARY HYPERMEDIA

Almost overnight it seemed, together with the new IBM Windows applications, the boom in laptop computers with expanded memory along with CD-ROMs and ZIP and JAZZ drives, the invention of Netscape and other browsers, the creation of HTML and Java and VRML and rapidly improving hypermedia, there came the sudden worldwide rush to the Web. The impact upon communication, expression, commerce, sex, politics, indeed all forms of human exchange, has been truly phenomenal, and one senses that that impact is only beginning to be felt.

Young-Hae Chang's *Dakota* intentionally avoids hypertext and interactivity, graphics and motion graphics, photos, illustrations, even color, leaving viewers simply with sound and black-and-white text (he writes in three different languages, by the way), but all those other elements are now available and many Net artists like to use them all.

Chang is based in Seoul, Korea, one of a multitude of Asian literary artists on the Web. Electronic writing has spread across the world with astonishing rapidity. It was just over a decade ago that I was able to persuade the *New York Times* to let me review every known published hypertext fiction in the world, something I predicted would only be possible that year, in the way that reviewing every book in print might have been possible three or four years after the invention of the Gutenberg press, but never thereafter. This was true, but even so, I proved a meager prophet, for I had not foreseen the Internet explosion which would happen within twenty-four months and overwhelm my little augury. There is now a vast worldwide community of electronic authors and far too many works for anyone to be able to experience them all, much less speak intelligently about them. There were hundreds of literary hypertexts; there are thousands of works of literary Net art.

There are a number of ways to locate these works, there are curators everywhere, but one good one is through the Electronic Literature Organization, created at Brown during a 1999 conference on literature and technology, and now based at UCLA in California. One service they provide is their directory of available works of digital literature.

Text Using Media.

The Unknown: I have chosen this one among the thousands in part simply because it is a hugely entertaining award-winning fiction of vast dimensions. I have visited the site many times and have rarely read the same page twice, always finding something new. *The Unknown* is about the imagined adventures of three supposedly rich and famous writers on a mock book tour all over the world. They meet famous local writers wherever they go and imitate their styles. It is genuinely multisequential and massively rich in story material, written collaboratively by three friends, William Gillespie, Scott Rettberg, and Dirk Stratton, and also starring them as characters in the fiction. Of course, just about everyone in the writing world is a character—here's a link for a fictional visit to Providence on their book tour... You can learn more about hypertext and digital writing from this fiction than from most theoretical or historical pontifications, including my present one...

I have chosen it also because it links to the ELO website—remember, linkages are the important thing here—in that it steps out of its fictional mode to describe the actual visit of *The Unknown* authors to Brown in 1999 when ELO was created, partly through their participation. Scott Rettberg was one of its principal creators and became its first executive director. And, incidentally, the gifted Oulipian electronic writer William Gillespie will be receiving his MFA in literary hypermedia from Brown this spring.

And finally I have chosen it because it marks a transition from classical pre-Web hypertext and the 21st Century convergence of all the digital arts into an essentially new art form, loosely called Web or Net Art, in which writing, or text, plays many different roles from traditional literary ones as here in *The Unknown* through a complete integration with other art forms, to a kind of supporting-actor role. We'll see a bit of each of these.

Talan Memmott: Some of the most distinctive literary hypermedia projects on the Web are being composed by the man who coined “literary hypermedia,” Talan does his own programming and consequently no other hypertexts out there, if we can still call them hypertexts, look quite like his. For many young writers now, learning to program is like learning to read and write—an elemental compositional tool. Though each individual work by Talan is relatively self-contained, they interlink in many ways, above all thematically, creating a larger ongoing opus of which they are each a part of a still developing whole. A vision of a sort, forming itself.

There are story lines and characters, some of which reappear from work to work, but these traditional narrative elements soon disappear into an embracing project of self-reflection and self-examination, the “self” here being more that of the form itself, than that of the author. It is as though Memmott is seeking to think as the machine thinks, his intricate and elegant designs, precise and

classical, being a way for that character, that ghost in the box, or beyond it, to dress itself up for spectators.

Structurally, I would describe Memmott's work as primarily theatrical: he brings text, immaculately costumed, on stage where it can strut its stuff, engage in rhetorical display, surprise the audience with various turns and tricks, then make, often with a deathly suddenness, its exit. This vision of the electronic writing medium as an imaginative theatrical space with the word itself as leading actor is, for me, one of the most promising and intriguing aspects of Memmott's art. In his "Lux: Bronzino 1540," we find ourselves literally—or at least virtually—onstage, but in a manner only possible in this medium.

Talan, who also edits and does all the creative programming for the brilliant online journal, *BeeHive*, received his electronic writing MFA at Brown last spring and is headed this fall to Georgia Tech. You will find the URL for *BeeHive* on the Kosmopolis website, along with a selection of other such e-publications.

Caitlin Fisher's "These Waves of Girls" which won the 2001 \$10,000 ELO fiction award, the last given before the collapse of the dot.coms who were the prize's sponsors, is a kind of fictionalized memoir of childhood, blending short narrative texts, photographs, artwork, sound and voice over, in a seamless mix that invites a sustained engagement even while avoiding a sustained plot. Much that exists in print literature does not yet translate well into this electronic medium. But personal memoirs: are they any better in print? No, they certainly are not.

John Cayley's "What We Will": The year that Caitlin Fisher won the fiction award, British poet John Cayley won the electronic poetry award. While still driven by text, now as voice over, John used QuickTime Virtual Reality, or QTVR, to create his lyrical, if melancholic "What We Will." Is this a narrative, a movie, or a poem? Many have already answered this. It is both all and none of the above. It is web art. And, pursuing our own theme of the moment, it is certainly theatrical. John spent part of a semester heading up a Cave research team at Brown last spring and produced some very beautiful new projects, as yet undocumented.

Media Using Text.

Those of us who are writers and readers tend still to privilege the word, for, in our perversely archaic love of storytelling and poetry, we cherish still the peculiar qualities of text, its intimacy, subtlety, vast expressive range and, through its very transparency, its power to stimulate thought and imagination, and then to reflect upon what it has done. It is true that the whole world is a text to be read, but it is also true that written literary text, standing alone on the tablet, the parchment, the page, the screen, is a unique and wondrous thing, nor so fragile as one might fear. Indeed, after a rough time of it for awhile, lost in all the hot hypermedia inventions of early Web days, it is not only making a comeback on its own, but is invading media like fine arts and film, or what we now often call motion graphics. Here, quickly, are a few examples of the way artists in other media are using text in the digital world.

Camille Utterback's "Text Rain." First, Camille Utterback's *Text Rain*, an interactive installation which she explains in the little film. Some of her work is in the collection of the Caixa Foundation (Fundacio La Caixa) here in Barcelona.

Noah Wardrip-Fruin & Camille Utterback: "Talking Cure." Net artist and electronic writer Noah Wardrip-Fruin, who received his MFA at Brown a year ago and is now working on his Ph.D. in New Media Studies, collaborated with Camille on an interesting installation piece called *Talking Cure*. Noah is teaching the Cave Writing workshop this year in my absence, and has several other works, including *The Impermanence Agent*, that can be located with a web search. *Talking Cure* uses the story of Anna O, a patient of Joseph Breuer, who gave to Breuer and Freud that infamous idea of psychoanalysis, or talking cures. Anna's snake visions are interwoven with imagery from the Gorgon Medusa. The reader or viewer has a microphone into which she can speak and add further text. The sound environment is a collage of all of these. Reading is accomplished with bodily movement. The reader sits in front of a video camera that displays her image on the screen as text. There are three colors, three layers of text, and words spoken by the viewer replace one of these layers. The video clip was shot at a large symposium where other things were going on nearby, but it gives some idea of how the piece works

Jeffrey Shaw's "Legible City." In this groundbreaking work of 1989, the viewer rides a stationary bicycle through a simulated 3D representation of a city—the actual ground plans of Amsterdam, Karlsruhe, and Manhattan are used—in which the buildings have been replaced by letters, forming a readable text. Thus, cycling through these cities of words is a journey of reading. The handlebar and pedals of the interface bicycle give the viewer interactive control over direction and speed of travel. Shaw likes to move the physical real world into the virtual environment, and he does that here through the physical effort of cycling. A small monitor screen in front of the bicycle shows a simple ground plan of each city, with an indicator showing the momentary position of the cyclist. In the Amsterdam and Karlsruhe version, the

letters are scaled to the same proportion and location as the actual buildings they replace, resulting in a transformed but exact representation of the actual architectural appearance of these cities, or at least their skylines. The virtual Manhattan version does not have that feature, but is more interesting hypertextually, as it contains eight separate fictional storylines to cycle through.

PART III: IMMERSIVE VIRTUAL REALITY

The Brown University Cave: Which cycles us right into the full immersive virtual reality of Brown University's **Technology Center for Advanced Scientific Computation and Visualization**, known best as "The Cave," one of several in the world, but the only one so far invaded by writers. It is, as its homepage says, an eight-foot cubicle in which high-resolution stereo graphics are projected onto three walls and the floor to create an immersive virtual reality experience. Special hardware and software, including head and hand sensors, keep track of the positions and movements of a person entering that environment, changing the images in the Cave in a way that allows the visitor to feel wholly immersed in the virtual space. It is, in short, a wow experience.

There are of course many other ways to deliver virtual reality experiences, many of them less cumbersome and expensive than a Cave. There are computer screen VR displays of course and wall-sized single screen "power walls," table-top 3D, and Caves can have more or less than four walls. When I was in Barcelona three years ago, Roc Pares' group at the Fabra used a booth or kiosk format. There are also the various head-mounted display systems as used in Shaw's *Legible City*, the sort of VR you're most likely to experience in a public exhibition, though I personally find these more like blindfolds with televisions inside than the real thing. In fully immersive Caves you keep your body; in typical head-mounted displays, you lose it, though Shaw, aware of this, integrates body and display with the stationary bicycle. An intriguing use of head-mounted display is that of Augmented Reality (AR), which allows the user to see the environment, but with virtual elements added to it. You might for example sit at an empty table and when you put the headgear on, you see people sitting in the other chairs with whom you can interact. It is very theatrical and, as such projects aspire to be interactive, they amount to realtime hyperdramas.

The Cave Writing Workshop: Though a facility built by scientists for scientists, the Brown Cave presented itself as an exciting new medium for writers. Just as we tested the future of literature on the screen and the Internet in our hyperfiction workshops, the challenge here was to see how the literary

word might fare in immersive virtual reality, convinced that virtual reality would inevitably be recognized as a viable narrative medium, along with film, books, theater, and electronic writing.

We were at first, not being scientists, excluded from the facility. But we noticed that none of the projects underway used text in any way, that the sound system was installed but not being used, the speakers dangling behind the screens, and that almost all projects were of static spaces or objects to be explored, like that of the ARCAVE project, for example. So, to get our foot in the door, we proposed a kind of scientific project to (1) introduce the word, both as visual text and as voice over, (2) augment the sound potential and work to develop positional or directed sound, and (3), using our decade or so of experience in hypertext, construct sophisticated narrative movements to complement the spatial ones presently in use. This was accepted, we brought a lot of new ideas into the Cave as well as new life, and now we're an integral part of the facility. Over two dozen different projects have been launched during the three active semesters of the workshop and three shorter research periods. This little demo film shows only a handful of them.

Of course, the film cannot deliver the experience of immersive virtual reality. For one thing, so as not to get a double image, we have to run the Cave in mono while filming, which means you are simply looking at four films running simultaneously on the four flat screens. In the stereo scenes, shot during actual Cave demos, you will see double images, which the viewers in the Cave will be seeing through their glasses as single images at various distances and directions from them—including right in front of their noses, as you'll hear. In the opening sequence, showing one scene from "Hypertable," the user is confronted by a virtual wooden table and a number of virtual boxes; he literally picks up one of the little boxes with his glove and sets it on the table, whereupon it explodes around him...

The Cave Writing Workshop Video script:

The Cave Writing Workshop is an advanced experimental electronic writing workshop, moving off the screen to explore the artistic potential of text, sound, and narrative movement in immersive three-dimensional virtual reality—what might be thought of as adventurous experiments in spatial hypertext. It represents a new way of thinking about and working with language that has all the power of film and theater, the intimacy of screen and book, and the direct interactivity of real-life encounters.

The workshop projects, collaboratively developed by teams of writers, artists, 3D modelers, electronic music composers, and creative computer programmers, have ranged from playful exercises as simple as puns and riddles to intricate poems, dramatic theatrical events, and complex narratives. One finds oneself, in effect, inside the book or play, able to interact intimately with it, uncovering hidden texts and sometimes helping to create the poem, scene, or story one is reading and hearing.

Here, for example, in a piece called "Screen," presented at SIGGRAPH in 2003, a haunting meditation upon memory and the loss of memory, the reader, confronted with the disintegration of a series of remembered tales, is drawn interactively into the effort to save them, engaging in a direct kinesthetic language confrontation that is utterly different from anything that has been attempted before, and one that is important for scientific visualization as well as for the liberal arts.

And in this piece, an interpretive voice-over reading of a memorial poem by A. R. Ammons, the reader is swept along in an experience that incorporates all three of the primary objectives of the workshop: to introduce (1) text, both visual and audio, and (2) positional sound, and (3) to create navigational structures more akin to narrative than to traditional spatial exploration. It moves from the vastness of outer space through green forests, fractal spheres, and Petri dishes with animated microorganisms, to the quiet interactive engagement with old family photos with their ghostly presences from the past.

For the first time, the reader is literally immersed in literature.

[NOTE: Much of the following may get cut.]

Telephone Flat: One project not shown in the film is the "Telephone Flat," so-called, an experiment in group narrative, that was launched the first semester. Somewhat like the earlier Hypertext Hotel, it allowed for any number of separate mini-tales created by various authors in a variety of voices. We already had a simple house model installed in the Cave and needed only to give it some character and fill it out. One relatively easy and memory-cheap way to enhance a space is to paste images on the surfaces of geometric or modeled shapes, a process called texture-mapping. One of the programmers said he'd just been to a party at a wild student flat with crawl spaces, basketball hoops, trampolines, and Spiderman on the ceiling, and he'd take his digital camera along to the next party there. He did much more. He took along a gifted 17-year-old 3D modeler who measured up the flat and completely reproduced it. For some reason it was called by its inhabitants the "Telephone Flat," and thus the project name. It was so beautiful we hardly knew what to do with it, especially since it already used up so many polygons we couldn't really introduce modeled characters. Eventually we settled on turning it into a sound story and began working seriously on positional sound.

Jeffrey Shaw's ConFIGURING the Cave: Jeffrey Shaw, who created *Legible City*, also moved into a Cave, creating one of the most fascinating VR projects so far, using a near-lifesize wooden puppet right in the

middle of the cubicle to make things happen, thus continuing his experiments of mixing real-body experiences with illusory VR. The figure, formed like an artists' mannequin, can be handled by the viewers to control the imagery and sound generated by the computer. CONFIGURING the CAVE has seven different audiovisual sequences. Movement of the puppet's body and limbs alter what you see and hear, while moving the puppet's hands to cover and then uncover its eyes causes the transitions from one pictorial domain to the next. There is no textual content in this project, but there is no reason why there could not be.

At Brown, we have separated our sound server, which is a Mac, from our graphic servers which are IBMs, the sound server files being triggered by signals from the graphic servers. Macs are more flexible, and read the signals easily enough, but it took us awhile to figure out how to get the graphic servers to read signals from the sound server. Now that we've accomplished it, electronic music composers can create midi keyboard projects that generate imagery in the way that Shaw's puppet does.

"Screen": "Screen," which was presented at SIGGRAPH 2003, and which you caught a glimpse of in the short film, is an experiment in interactive Cave reading, using only text, voice over, and reader movement. It is, in effect, though brief and unlike anything ever seen before, literature as we've always known it. This is the whole film, with which this talk concludes.

[May fast forward through the three stories in the middle, saying something like:]

The three screens tell tales of virtual experiences triggered by memory. The first screen tells the story of a woman, waking, imagining that the lover who has left her is in bed with her; the back screen is told by a man who senses his dead mother's fingers in his hair, cutting it; the third screen is a woman's waking remembrance of a room at her grandmother's house.

[Script of frame narrative of "Screen":]

In a world of illusions, we hold ourselves in place by memories. Though they may be but dreams of a dream, they seem at times more there than the there we daily inhabit, fixed and meaningful texts in the indecipherable flux of the world's words, so vivid at times that we feel we can almost reach out and touch them.

But memories have a way of coming apart on us, losing their certainty, and when they start to peel away, we do what we can to push them, bit by bit, back in place, fearful of losing our very selves if we lose the stories of ourselves.

But these are only minds that hold them, fragile data, softly banked. Increasingly, they rip apart, blur and tangle with one another, and swarm mockingly about us, threatening us with absence...

[END] We stare into the white void of lost memories, a loose scatter about us of what fragments remain. No sense but nonsense to be found there. If memories define us, what defines us when they're gone? An unbearable prospect. We retrieve what we can and try again...



Kathleen Ann Goonan. *La nanotecnologia i el cos*
Dissabte 18, 19.30h. Canal Alfa. Anglès, amb traducció simultània

Nanotechnology and the Body: The Convergence of Technologies and Human Potential

I have been envisioning a world in which a functioning, radical nanotechnology exists for the past ten years in my Nanotech Quartet, which consists of Crescent City Rhapsody, Queen City Jazz, Mississippi Blues, and Light Music. As is sometimes the case in science fiction, reality seems to have caught up with me. In 1990, I could never have imagined that what seemed a strange little corner of speculative thought would be the subject of a Forbes Nanotech Report to which one could subscribe in order to keep track of the hottest new investments.

Nanotechnology is, in fact, the magic word of the moment. It is nebulous enough to mean many things to many people: an enabling technology, a method of streamlining manufacturing, a visualizing technology, and a buzzword signalling that the world and our lives might change in the next few decades in ways that we cannot now predict. We are moving faster than the terrain our headlights reveal.

We are living in a very important age in human history. Never before has so much information, and so much transformational power, been at our command. And never before have we had the luxury of being able to think about what we want, or what we ought to do with the technologies we are inventing. It is our responsibility to find out all that we can about what is happening in the world of science and how that might relate to future social change.

I am not a scientist. When asked about my science credentials, I often respond that they are the same as Greg Bear's, who is a well-known science fiction writer: a degree

in English, and the ability to do research. I always have scientists vet my novels, and, in fact, a lot of scientists seem to enjoy them, so I guess I'm doing a good job in translating the worlds revealed by science into believable fiction. I speak to you as a writer, someone who deals in creating visions, and as a teacher who spent thirteen years learning how children learn. Writing science fiction and teaching are both ways to envision the future, which is what I seem to do.

The word matter, in its Latin root, means mother. All matter is, in this sense, of us. We are of it. But it is only in the twentieth century that, because we have developed finer and finer ways to look at matter, we have been able to manipulate it to any great extent. But how do we want to manipulate it? Who decides?

I assume that this audience is already conversant with not only the claims of nanotechnology, but with its history--beginning with Feynman's famous 1959 "there's plenty of room at the bottom" lecture and continuing through Drexler's *Engines of Creation*, which postulated both amazing possible social changes as well as the danger of "gray goo" -- the result of the creation of a universal replicator which could change all matter to just one thing. What I did not know until recently is that there exists a certain antagonism between Drexler and Richard Smalley, who received the Nobel Prize for Chemistry for his discovery of fullerenes. They ridicule one other's vision in print and on the internet. Who is right? Perhaps both of them. Drexler denies, for instance, that Smalley's characterization of his vision as one which requires "small, sticky fingers" is what he actually proposes or theorizes. When I saw him give a talk last spring, he said, "Where are these small, sticky fingers? They're not there." There is a schism in envisioning how the future of nanotechnology--and our future--will unfold. I find this fascinating, encouraging, and great stuff for the ongoing dialogue which takes place in science fiction. .

One problem with the various visions of nanotechnology is that they are so open-ended and speculative. Many doubt that Drexler's vision, which I call strong or radical nanotechnology as outlined in The Engines of Creation, is possible. But open any

technical or scientific journal today and you will see the prefix nano applied to information in every scientific sphere--biology, chemistry, and physics, to the extent that it may not be long before all of the disciplines develop at least a bit more commonality, a bit more linkage.

Here are some examples of the ways in which nanotech is referenced in recent issues of Science News:

"Dream Machines from Beans," September 20 2003 Science News Vol 164: Carlo Montomegano of the University of California Los Angeles says, "The more we understand how living systems work, the more we're going to find that they are designed and structured in ways that we would like to use to fabricate and engineer nanomachines."

This is one of the most promising avenues of what is called nanotechnology. By using or mimicking living cells and systems, we can vastly improve the efficiency of manufacturing, health care, and, I am hoping, education.

Here's another one: "Gas Sensor uses Nanotube Parts," July 19, 2003, Vol 164 of Science News:

"The device includes an electrode made from an array of carbon nanotubes that produce a strong electric field. Gas molecules subject to this field become ionized. The specific voltage needed to ionize a particular gas is an identifying signature." This device, developed by Nikhil Koratkar of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy NY, is "small, easily powered, safe, and fast."

Small, easily powered, and fast are hallmarks of what applied nanotechnology and nanoengineering promise to bring to the table in the very near future and, in fact, right now.

Certainly, a lot of what is presently called nanotechnology is not, actually, nano in scope. It is very small, but it is still macro. Start-up companies with Nano in their title, if pressed, will admit this.

One of the developments touted as true nanotech are quantum dots, called q-dots. These are semiconducting nanocrystals the size of one organic molecule or as large as twenty nanometers. They fluoresce, and can be used to locate and image very small tumors and to perform cheap, fast medical tests, among other things. This technology is already in production for use in various medical applications. You can buy q-dots, many different kinds of them, on the internet. Q-dots are also being used at Laurence Livermore Lab to enable bottom-up creation of computer chips, which are, of course, rapidly becoming the core of our civilization.

Some of us have internalized technologies, such as pacemakers, artificial heart valves, and prosthetics which respond to intentionality. Nanotechnology promises, and soon, smaller, faster, infinitely more sophisticated devices. They will not just be used to correct vision or hearing abnormalities, but may take the form of implanted monitoring bio-nano devices which scour the bloodstream, alert us to potential problems such as tiny and easily treated cancers, prevent Alzheimer's Disease, or cure cystic fibrosis and other genetically transmitted diseases. On the table in the blue-sky realm are biocomputers embedded in the body (actually, it is often pointed out that we are biocomputers, that we are nanotechnology in action) which will perform the function of personal aides, organizing data and our lives, and lightening our load. Implanted GPS's will communicate with information in the environment and let us know where we can find a restaurant in an airport, or a product in a grocery store. Sensors will respond to externally placed orienting information. Not only will this be good for business, but it will also help those of us who are hard of seeing, directionally impaired, or confused--either congenitally or because of age. As a science fiction writer, I can think of a lot of hazards. Will we be seeing this information through the Bill Gates empire? Will hackers insert confusing viruses which take us to a competitor's business? We'll see.

In the U.S., the National Science Foundation presently has a mandate to educate the public about nanotechnology. The book put out by the Nanotech Initiative last year, which is edited by Mihail Roco and William Bainbridge, is titled Converging Technologies For Improving Human Performance. Converging Technologies for Improving Human Performance sounds just a little bit Soviet-Union to me, but in essence, it is definitely my vision for the future. The subtitle is “Nanotechnology, Biotechnology, Information Technology and Cognitive Science.”

That just about covers it all.

And that's one of the points.

Nanotechnology promises to be multidisciplinary in a way that science has not been since the eighteenth century. In fact, it demands and involves the knowledge of every branch of science and engineering that now exists. I have read that some universities are now offering degrees in “nanotechnology,” which explains the television commercial. I am not sure what this really means. I suspect that this mythical nanotechnologist would be like the board certified emergency physician--someone who knows a lot about many different subjects, and coordinates that information.

Earlier this year I was invited to a conference called Imagining and Imagining Nanoscience and Engineering. Aside from its smallness, and the impossibility of seeing much of what is happening in this realm directly, another reason that nanotechnology must be imaged and imagined is because of its vastness, and because of its potential for both positive and negative outcomes. This is where the public dialogue comes in.

Nanotech has the potential to be invasive, to change the body, and even, most radically, the brain---mind and consciousness. The claims for nanotechnology are huge. It may give us very long lives, very cheap and easily reproduced and modified material goods, and make us very smart, and even mentally very different, via the hypertexting of

information and its melding into the biological sphere and through easy and precise access to any system in the human body. At this conference one of the remarks I thought important was that we ought to be speaking of nanotechnologies, rather than simply nanotechnology. The materials, potential, and scope extend into the realms of external and internal, and they extend farther than we can see or predict.

Part of the NSF initiative involves getting the scientists and engineers talking to one another. A few years ago I was talking to Gregory Benford, a noted astrophysicist and science fiction writer. I mentioned that my father is an electrical engineer and he said, Oh, an engineer, in rather disparaging tones. I thought, but he doesn't even know my dad and he's already prejudiced against him! But the sciences, among themselves, have the same problem.

In science--the root of which is “to know,” we are all looking at the same thing--the natural world, and ourselves as part of the natural world--but from different vantage points. A biologist sees a different cell than a physicist sees. The sciences speak different languages. They are cultures unto themselves. So although by now we have a lot of information, it is not very well cross-referenced. Is there any way to combine our information into a kind of Grand Unified Theory of Everything? Maybe not in the near future. After all, it's hard enough to come up with a Grand Unified Theory in just the field of physics--never mind throwing in everything else. But a true theory of everything would explain the natural world from the core. Physics, chemistry, biology, biophysics, biochemistry--perhaps there is a way to unite these visions, just as I often hope there is a way to unite the two cultures of science and the humanities which CP Snow defined in his famous lecture and book of that title in the late nineteen-fifties.

One very important aspect of nanotechnology, as far as I am concerned, lies in its potential for improving and enhancing the learning process. This excites me tremendously. Some of the claims for what I call in my books nanobiology are fanciful and outrageous, and most of them raise important ethical issues which require deep

and informed discussion, but they elicit a visionary approach to the future of humanity which I find as moving as any rhapsody.

It might be too late for those of us in this room to become as mentally enhanced as I envision, although I fervently hope not. But the possibility of this vision does rely on education--first, the sensible education of preschoolers, and, for the rest of us, the development of what I call brain plasticity enhancers. Or maybe sensitive period replicators might be a better term. I'm eagerly looking forward to them, and I'll define them a little more clearly later on.

As a former Montessori teacher, I will forever remain fascinated by the way that we as a species unfold in response to our environment, cued by an almost unfathomably complex series of biochemical events. By understanding and using these events, which evolved in order that we could survive and take full advantage of our environment, I believe that we can powerfully enhance the capability of every child to learn, to become a part of the community in which they live, and to contribute to that community at an optimal level.

First I want to offer some examples of how children learn. It is the common perception that although reading is key, it can be difficult to learn how to read.

It is not. It is simply not presented at the right time to most normal children, nor in the optimal way for them to absorb and then link all of the physical processes necessary to reading--left to right movement, in English; and top to bottom. Enough of English is phonetic so that learning the phonetic sounds of the letters, rather than the useless names and order of the alphabet, is one of the most important aids. Incorporation of physical motion is vital to mapping the brain. I taught for thirteen years, ten of those years in my own 100 student school, and with very few exceptions all of my four year olds were reading and writing three and four letter phonetic words, and this was a baseline. Most were doing more, and not because of any pressure. Writing, actually, occurs first, in normal children, about six months before they spontaneously begin to

read. By my calculations, I taught about a thousand children to read. I did not use expensive, fancy equipment, although it is available. I had a year's training--rather expensive, but in retrospect, excellent, during which I learned about the learning sensitivities children experience, which Dr. Montessori called sensitive periods. This method of education was developed almost a century ago. The point is this: with all that we have learned about humans since then, particularly with the type of imaging and other scientific tools and methods now at our disposal, one would think that we would be doing much, much better in educating all of our children. Because I am speaking to professors, teachers, and students, I am sure that all of you can appreciate the need for improvement in this area. None of us likes to waste our time, or to have our time wasted, and particularly in our public schools, despite the terrific dedication of teachers--I come from a family teachers, so I know how dedicated they are--there is room for a lot of improvement.

The cognitive sciences need to focus on the biological underpinnings of learning in a big way. We need to learn how to best teach children how to think, rather than how to follow directions. We need to learn more about neurological conditions during the classical "sensitive periods" for language, spatial understanding, and, in fact, for everything that the growing child incorporates so quickly. We need ways to look at each child as an individual, to give them the baseline information they need at the appropriate age--reading information when the sensitive period for language is active, not when it is over--and then move quickly to prolong in each of them the joy of learning and the ability to actually think, to pose and solve their own problems, to have some measure of independence in a system in which teachers are mentors and guides.

Though the ability to think in certain ways and in certain extremes now seems limited to a few individuals labeled as "gifted," might it not be possible to isolate the elements which cause this state and make them as easily manufactured and transferable as books, or as antibiotics? Would it be possible to re-create this ability to learn in adults who are interested in learning certain subjects, or in older children in need of a remedial sensitive period?

One science fiction staple is the "teaching machine." They are usually not described in great detail. But visions of the future do seem to include the possibility of enhancing the learning process, and probably some of the ways in which we can do this fall under the aegis of what is called nanotechnology.

Nanotechnology can help, not only with external aids such as the frequently envisioned wearable computers and personal aides, but perhaps with somewhat more scary, more invasive processes which, as I mentioned before, might allow my own aging brain to learn a language with the facility of a toddler, or understand a particular branch of mathematics. We know that during the course of brain maturation we lose billions of neuronal connections; it is an editing process. With the advent of a new understanding of neurons and of how the brain works, might it not be possible to mimic those developmental stages in which learning is occurring at a very deep level?

The senses are being mapped. Oliver Sacks has done pioneering work in this area, and this is just the beginning. There is a lot of research being done on synesthesia, which is when one sense is confused with another--for instance, musical notes give a sensation of color. Once the senses are mapped, it is conceivable that they could be re-mapped.

A few years ago, I had cataract surgery on both eyes, and had one lens replaced for distant vision and one for close, because, being a science fiction writer, I had a fear of a future in which I might not be able to get glasses, and therefore might not be able to read, which seemed like a horrific possibility to me. What I have, with my plastic implanted lenses which I was told will last for thousands of years, is called "monovision." I was assured that soon my brain would choose which eye to use depending on the situation. It sounded great.

The reality is that although my brain might have the ability to choose which eye to use, it has not yet decided to do so. I have brief flashes of how "monovision" might optimally

work, but so far my brain is very stubborn. I have decided that there is probably some very, very slow remapping work going on. It might never be completed. Although I might be seeing all the information, I'm still not integrating it. Perhaps it takes a long time to remap the brain in such a way that it can use this information. The plasticity nanodrug (it may be that soon things won't seem quite real unless prefaced by "nano") is definitely needed here.

Children learn by doing. You don't learn mathematical concepts by seeing them written on a white board or even by memorizing the times table or making computations on a computer. You can learn multiplication and what it really means--and again, all my four year olds could multiply, because multiplication is just adding the same number over and over again--by manipulating materials, by setting out beads or stones or checkers one by one in a grid and counting them, by counting bead chains consisting of groups of beads, by as many other manipulative situations as the teacher has the imagination to invent. You can see for yourself that four times eight can be represented as a rectangle or as a rectangular prism. With q-dot monitoring devices, perhaps the connections set up in the brain while the hand and the eye are doing this work can be visualized, so that we can see exactly where children who are having a difficult time learning a particular concept have a problem. Using similar technologies, perhaps we can cure the many forms of dyslexia at an early age.

I think that we, collectively, don't know much about the sciences, and that is one of the problems. Many children don't even learn how to read, so I suppose that it is optimistic of me to call for a lot more than that. I have spent years trying to catch up with science. Even though I have spent years absorbing the history of physics, the present state of physics, and using perhaps the more fringy aspects of physics in my novels, especially in The Bones of Time and Light Music, I still don't know much about it. The abstractness of these ideas is what attracts me. The more I read about them, the more I observe the realities of physics filtered through the English language, the more I realize that I am still not touching, as it were, what is really there, even though whatever it is comprises my very cells and surrounds me. I wish that I had become fascinated

with these things at a much younger age. I think that learning about the history of science and technology and the philosophy of science and technology could serve to excite children about the possibilities of science. The idea of competent scientists teaching children their subjects is unlikely to be executed soon--those specialists are reserved for graduate students. And the convergence of teaching ability with a gifted understanding of a subject is rare. But it is a hope.

However, another way that we can examine the possibilities of the sciences is through literature. We can look at the myths deconstructed in science fiction, and in the various futures portrayed therein. Reading science fiction is to fan out a deck of cards. Infinite games, infinite possibilities, are contained therein. Just as in any genre, including the genre of literary fiction, there are good and bad examples. It might serve us well, though, if the general stigma against reading science fiction--and there is a stigma; just observe Margaret Atwood's frantic distancing of her new novel from being labeled as such--were to abate, to have this literature as widely read and discussed by reading circles as are the most popular works of fiction, many of which come complete with a list of questions in the back. One of the questions in any sf book might be: is this possible? Why or why not? Is this possibility good or bad? Why?

Science fiction is uniquely situated to think about the issues posed by a presently developing nanotechnology from a human point of view rather than that of pure information. There are mental and emotional barriers against change. We have spent, literally, ages, trying to come to terms with our own mortality. We have developed elaborate visions of an afterlife, of which cyberspace is but a thinly veiled copy, where we might be immortal and limitless in terms of what we might conceive and what we might do. This long investment could account for negative attitudes toward bodily improvement and enhancements. The known -- death and a possible heaven-- is much more attractive to some people than the unknown, for instance, where are all these old people whose lives might soon be extended going to live, and who will pay for them, and what will they do? Continue to meddle in the lives of their children? Obviously,

new models of family and of society would evolve if the longevity aspects of nanotechnology came to pass, and that is scary for some people, and it ought to be at least thought-provoking to those of us who are not afraid. As has always been the case in technological leaps, a lot of work on nanotechnology is being done by those involved in defense, particularly in the fields of averting bioterrorism, and in enhancing the capabilities of the military and of soldiers in the field.

Our everpresent enemies, though, are starvation, disease, disability, pain, impairment of human function, and ourselves--the territorialism which makes us go to war rather than negotiate, and to feel rather glorious about the decision.

Biotechnology, and its new definition as nanotechnology, advances against an enemy which threatens to take our loved ones from us with an inevitability stronger than any pernicious political system.

The big question of early work in molecular biology was: Can humans be modified? We now know the answer. The answer is yes. We are already modified, with drugs, birth control pills, the possibility of in vitro fertilization, extremely specialized surgeries. The questions now are, how much, how fast, and most importantly, why. New brains for old? As is probably clear by now, I would like an approximation of my nineteen-year old brain--its speed of calculation, the way it made connections, its sheer optimism and sense of being unlimited and able to solve or create anything of its choosing. I am sure that at some point, Einstein wanted his younger brain back again. I would like enhancement of senses, a deeper appreciation of art, music, and literature. I would like a mathematical mind. I would like a pain-free, healthy body. I would like choices. I would like a permanent sense of appreciation of life which would not wane or be damaged. I am sure that this priority list would vary with every individual, who would have to know, as we now know about the drugs we are prescribed, what the benefits are, and the hazards of each of these possibilities as presented by enabling technologies.

When we study our fellow travelers on earth, we find astounding things. For instance, research on rainbow trout revealed, a few years ago, the process by which birds, fish, whales and turtles migrate via cells sensitive to magnetic stimuli. What if we could experience this deep orientation? I use this idea, magnified and changed in various ways, in Light Music.

Our very consciousness is based upon the fact that we are composed of biological programs which combined eons ago because of some benefit or some way in which one could be exploited by another and the exploitee would still exist. It is hard to get around this fact. Spirit and consciousness and all that we have so passionately ascribed to a realm other than bodily are, in fact, of the body. To me this is not depressing. It is exhilarating.

In Light Music, I foreground the fact that we live in the midst of a vibrational field, and that our senses have evolved to collect and interpret these frequencies. Much of the human brain is dedicated to the visual, our ears register sound, our other senses contribute data, and somehow our brain coordinates this information and gives us a sense of harmony, of time. What, I postulate, might happen to our identity, our sense of time, and the nature of our consciousness if we became capable of sensing other frequencies--for instance, bees see different wavelengths than we do. I try to put a very positive spin on this, and it is a process which takes a hundred years and then--much like what happens when children begin to talk--suddenly, the process has been integrated, and we grow and change. This is only one thread of a complex narrative, but it is integral, and it is the kind of vision that only science fiction is capable of examining. There is no other form of literature which looks not just at who we are but at what we might become. It is a way of thinking about our future and, at this particular juncture, it seems an important thing to do. Not didactically, and not in fear, but in a spirit of promoting understanding about what science and its practical handchild technology can do for us and against us.

We now have better and better tools with which to see that which actually surrounds us, and to see what we are made of and how we function. We are purely products of what works. There is no reason why we cannot improve on this, to think about what our goals might be regarding science and technology. We have the power to decide what to do according to what we deem is right and good through thoughtful consideration, dialogue, and what might be the most important characteristics of our species--intelligence, generosity, altruism, humor, love, and hope.

Happily, we live in an age in which there is a certain transparency. Any of us can read source articles and papers in scientific journals and if we cannot interpret them at first, we can learn the language and make more sense of them. We can talk to those who do understand. We can bring about a dialogue.

Science fiction is well-equipped to do this.

Science fiction is the literature of change. Paradoxically, it is the only literature that sees the world as it is now, not as it used to be. The potential for billing disputes aside, what present-day teenager would not welcome the implantation of a cellphone-like device within their body, perhaps even with quasi-telepathic properties much like E.O. Wilson's DNA based mode of communication in his scientific treatise Consilience, which he calls mindscript. We are all about communication right now. We are certainly not all about the joys of solitude and the fruits thereof. Even the most dedicated writer has succumbed to the invasiveness of email.

The texts of the real and of the possible are the stuff of present science fiction concerned with nanotechnology. But there is a divide here. Apparently the Nanotechnology Initiative at the National Science Foundation was dismayed that the movie of Prey is soon coming out. It is, like all of Crichton's books, a science horror story. A distributed consciousness, nanotech run amok, tries to "take over the world." The implication and the fear is that our product will be radically different than ourselves and will not share our values or our goals. But must that be so?

My future history is different.

First of all, broadcasting has been interrupted. That's a big one to swallow, especially for physicists, and because of that I submerged the causes until I wrote the book which is chronologically the first book in the nanotech quartet, Crescent City Rhapsody. But that was the third book that I wrote. The first one was Queen City Jazz, and it begins in the middle of things.

A new method of communication has been invented which is based on biology.

Information is carried by the DNA of specially engineered e.coli bacteria, which lives within vertical interstices which run from the top to the bottom of all the buildings in Flower Cities. It is translated into what I call metaphoromones, an artificial alphabet which operate much like our pheromones do, and connect directly to the user's brain via touch. The user touches the interstice with her hand, and information penetrates the membrane of the interstice, flows upwards, is collected at the top of the building by large bee-like creatures, and is transported to the appropriate building. This information can include any business or scientific information which we today communicate through print and visuals.

Though this may seem rather outlandish, I can assure you that it works. At least, when this book first came out in 1994, one of the questions interviewers asked was, is this going to happen, so readers thought that it might. My first answer was, I hope not; my second answer was that if there was any possibility of it happening I should be applying for patents.

In Queen City Jazz, what happens to Cincinnati, by that time a post-nanotech (and, in Vingean terms, a post-singularity) Flower City, is indeed disturbing. One person's vision of the American arts envelops an entire population, which relives the lives of jazz musicians, novelists, characters from American literature, and visual art endlessly and

without volition. I took my dream and made it their nightmare. The problem, again, is that of free will. And it comes about because of the ease with which, possibly, a radical functioning nanotechnology will be able to manipulate the stuff of mind. Mississippi Blues, which follows Queen City Jazz, is a book about our relationship with that which has been created. It is about identity, free will, choice, and about deep Americana in the form of Mark Twain and his own problems with identity, truth, and vision, and about the divide between the ideals and the realities of the history of the United States.

In Crescent City Rhapsody, I envisioned how this future might have come about, through the believable bunglings of governments devoted to secrecy and to exploiting science not for the prosperity and evolution of humans and of the planet at large, but for profit and for defense. In this near-future world, events move quickly toward the singularity, and the work of one individual, Marie Laveau, is instrumental in establishing a refuge, a place of scientific transparency, a floating apolitical Crescent City. And in Light Music, the concluding volume of the quartet, a form of human transcendence occurs, with the help of thoughts from science writers such as Brian Green and his beautiful explication of superstring theory, The Elegant Universe.

My sources are books about science written by scientists, and journals such as Nature, Science, and Science News. I assemble a possible vision of the present and of the future by taking into account things that are happening right now. Like most sf writers, I am an optimistic person. Writers such as Neal Stevenson in The Diamond Age, Wil McCarthy in Bloom, and Linda Nagata in The Bohr Maker create futures in which humans are transformed, but in which individuality and free will, though it may be submerged, do not utterly vanish. Instead, they are transformed and rejuvenated through nanotechnology.

Because nanotechnology is a fuzzy term, and because it encompasses many disciplines, it will continue to be a fruitful mode of science fictional inquiry into where our sciences and our technologies may take us both in the near and the far future. Despite the necessity of darkness for the sake of drama, science fiction is essentially a hopeful

literature which, by examining both the positive and negative potential in our world and in the information we are revealing and beginning to learn how to use, contains strong, socially useful narratives which can help us navigate the rapids we have already entered. I told Eric Drexler a few years ago that when finished with my nanotech quartet, I wanted to turn my mind to a different future. My problem was that I could no longer envision a future in which nanotechnology is not an important and powerful facet. He said, "I know what you mean."

I'd like to end with a quote from Alan Kaye: "The best way to predict the future is to create it."

By understanding the body through newly developed techniques which fall into the vast field of knowledge labeled as nanotechnology, and by using this information to educate all of us, perhaps in very new ways, I hope that we will be able to create the kind of future we would all wish to live in. The literature of science fiction has the potential to play a very large role in this endeavor.

Joe Haldeman. *La guerra: passat, present i futur*
Diumenge 19, 11.30h. Canal Alfa. Anglès, amb traducci" simultània

War -- Past, Present, and Future

by

Joe Haldeman

I want to start with a short article I wrote for Omni magazine at the end of Gulf War I, "Desert Storm", twelve years ago. The magazine folded before it could see print.

It occurred to me that very little would have to be changed for me to recycle it now, but I'd better do it soon. Gulf War II is going to last longer and be a lot more expensive -- in lives, in money, in America's international stature, and in our own sense of worth as a people.

But let's go back, as they say in the movies, to the thrilling days of yesteryear
....

Desert Storm as Science Fiction

by

Joe Haldeman

The war had a lot of the elements necessary for good fiction -- a beginning, a middle, and something like an end; a certain amount of suspense, interesting characters in an exotic setting . . . and of course violence, and even a little sex, since a picture of a pretty girl inspecting a rifle is sexier than no pretty girls at all.

There was an obvious science-fictional twist to the war, too, with all the high-tech mayhem. But it's not just hardware. It's interesting to reconsider the war in terms of the various attitudes and metaphors familiar to science fiction readers.

What came to my mind, as I watched (from a London hotel room) the daily reports from Baghdad, was H. G. Wells's The War of the Worlds, where hordes of aliens roamed the landscape, invulnerable inside their awesome machines, destroying people and real estate with absolute impunity. That image is deeply ingrained in our culture, thanks to Orson Welles's radio play as much as the book -- and thanks to George Pal's movie, at least to people about my age -- but I don't think we were ever inclined to see ourselves as the martians. The story ends, of course, with the monsters having ingested, in the course of wreaking havoc, the seed of their own destruction. If we want to find a similar metaphor in our current situation, we do have to stretch. Maybe reach back to an earlier literary tradition, and find hubris as the bug we take back to our home planet. Maybe the next bunch of humans won't be so easy to conquer.

Another science fiction classic that comes to mind is 1984. We certainly had our share of Newspeak, with phrases like "collateral damage" and "friendly fire," but the official description of war damage always requires euphemism. What was much more disturbing was the perception of the press being virtually an arm of the government, relaying the official party line without question, for fear of being cut off from official sources.

For weeks we watched the same two pieces of footage showing how smart our "smart bombs" were, one going in the front door without knocking and the other zipping through a skylight. Did they forget to turn the cameras on during the other 20,000 sorties? Or is the underground press accurate in claiming that most of those super-sophisticated weapons missed their intended targets and often killed innocent people? (One positive note in favor of the military's news management: no one

pretended that "collateral damage" didn't translate into "dead civilians." In my war, Vietnam, once a civilian was dead, he or she was magically transformed into a Viet Cong insurgent.)

Star Wars was certainly there, in the different incarnations of both of those great 20th Century fantasists, George Lucas and Ronald Reagan. Lucas's "gang that couldn't shoot straight" alien bad guys were recapitulated in the pathetic sight of the skies of Baghdad continuously ablaze with futile random anti-aircraft fire, while stealthy jets and missiles slip in and nail their targets, or at least come close. And those two pictures of the smart missiles going in through the proper window are an apotheosis of Reagan's Star Wars -- proving conclusively that we can magically pinpoint a target at least two times out of 20,000 tries.

I was reminded of a now obscure but fascinating series from Analog magazine in the sixties -- Mack Reynolds's "Mercenary" stories. Those were about a world where gangs of professional soldiers fought carefully delimited wars, partly to resolve corporate conflicts, and partly to provide the televised "circus" part of the "bread and circuses" philosophy that kept the masses content. The epitome of this aspect of Gulf War I was the University of Oklahoma student who reportedly said, "Hey, I'm gonna go pop some popcorn and watch the war." He and a couple hundred million others.

There's even a touch of The Day the Earth Stood Still, with George Bush telling Saddam Hussein "Klaatu barada nikto," more in sorrow than in anger. (That phrase is Arabic for "Surrender your arms or you won't be able to find your country under all the rubble!") I also hear an uncomfortable echo of Starship Troopers behind the rhetoric praising our troops, and the xenophobia that informs hundreds of interchangeable novels and movies about "brave-Earth-soldiers-versus-the-inexplicable-wogs-from-Planet X."

Finally, the ecological terror tactics, millions of barrels of oil spilled and 500 gushers of flame and smoke, recall John Brunner's ecological horror novels Stand on Zanzibar and The Sheep Look Up. They also remind me of a story I planned to write for an anthology of alternative pasts. I never got around to it, but I think maybe now I will, because it has renewed relevance.

The year was 1906. This part of it actually happened: Henry Ford went down to the flat sands of Ormond Beach, Florida, to participate in a race. Some crucial parts for his car never arrived. But he was in the crowd that watched, awestruck, as a Stanley Steamer "Rocket" set the world speed record at 127.6 miles per hour. In 1906.

The alternative history that I proposed for the story simply had Henry Ford, impressed by the race, abandon the internal combustion engine in favor of steam. He still would change the face of the country over the next decade, and much the same way -- because it wasn't the superior design of the Model A through Model T that made Ford a millionaire; it was the factory techniques that put a lot of cars on the road, and a marketing and service philosophy that insured their profitability for all concerned.

Europe was already well on the road to gasoline power; Daimler and Benz had been making such vehicles since the 1880's. So my alternative history would develop that way, with Europe more and more dependent on imported oil and America needing none -- in fact, America, with no domestic gasoline market, exports so much oil that it becomes the leader of OPEC !

Meanwhile, we stayed out of WWI -- if oil wasn't a big factor in that one, why do you think they fought in Gallipoli? For the climate? We stayed out of WWII long enough to make an obscene profit and then stopped it with two nuclear weapons. (You can make up your own science fiction story by deciding where we dropped them.)

Since I'm not too interested in utopias, which are uplifting but boring, I think the story would end with a *Pax Americana* that suspiciously resembled the Thousand-Year Reich. But that's just a story, "just" science fiction. I hope that the kernel of truth in it is clear enough.

If George Bush the First had really wanted to build a new world order, or just wanted to make America safe from people who stand around in the hot sun in heavy blue robes, he could have taken an amount of money equal to the cost of the 100-hour war and dedicated it to the not-too-gradual conversion of America into total energy independence. We know how: conservation, natural gas, solar power, renewable energy crops, even exotics like wind and tide power and thermocline generators in the cold ocean currents. Make a deadline and make it stick, with punitive taxes on energy imports that increase exponentially as we approach the deadline.

That's real science fiction, of course, or fantasy, since so much of Bush's fortune, and his friends' fortunes, is tied to imported petroleum. But maybe some day, some less wimpish president might take a swing at it. Maybe some day before it's too late.

###

Isn't that interesting? Twelve years later, I can tell much the same story by inserting a W between "George" and "Bush."

Of course this second try was not over in a hundred hours; not in a hundred days. Not with house-to-house fighting in cities where every window can sprout a gun that fires and then disappears. (I had two days of house-to-house combat training

before the army sent me to Vietnam, and it made me glad that I wound up fighting in the jungle. There are lots of places to hide behind when the bullets start to fly.)

Before this iteration of the war, I was one of the millions who marched in the streets in protest. I'd done it before his father's war began, too, and it was equally effective both times. We walked along with our signs, and the police walked along with their guns, and then the government did what it was going to do anyhow. It was infuriating both times, but an interesting sociological demonstration -- freedom of expression can thrive in a police state, so long as the police and the demonstrators know the protocols and behave, and as long as no one really expects the government to respond to the protests.

Of course the clear difference between this war and the first one is the difference between a 100-hour war and a Forever War. Ignorance and hubris and mismanagement, and an unprecedented pattern of outright lies, turned what should have been an even easier war than the first into a potentially interminable guerilla situation.

This is certainly one face of war in the future. I wrote about it in my 1997 book Forever Peace, where the industrialized nations were fighting a diffuse war against guerilla forces representing a dozen different countries and transnational political groups. The war had been going on for a long time, and there was no end in sight. There had been one nuclear exchange, but basically the war was conventional guerilla tactics versus high-tech super-soldiers, one of whom was my book's protagonist. They were virtually unkillable, because the actual soldier was hidden underground hundreds of miles away, operating a huge robotic soldier by telepresence -- he thinks about doing something and the robot instantly does it. If the robot's destroyed, they bring another one out of storage.

The American army actually began planning a similar strategy soon after that book came out -- a lot of my military readers sent me journal clippings,

congratulating me on my predictive ability, but it was actually a pretty obvious thing to predict.

There's no such thing as telepresence yet -- the American army postulates, instead, a super-soldier inside a suit of high-tech armor, impervious to conventional weapons, with his or her strength and senses amplified mechanically. I predicted that in The Forever War, thirty years ago.

Let me digress a moment and consider the role of prediction in science fiction. If science fiction's only value was predicting the future, it would have a dismally poor record. Nobody predicted the internet; no one even saw that the first landing on the Moon would be a political demonstration. We aren't flying around in personal aircars or eating meals concentrated into handy pills.

Science fiction is usually about the present, using the future as a metaphorical tool. Thus The Forever War was largely about the effect of the Vietnam War on American society; Forever Peace is an extension of the Powell Doctrine to an absurd degree.

(To a soldier on the ground, the Powell Doctrine translates to minimum troop loss with maximum high-tech force. But Colin Powell's actual Doctrine justifies war only as a last resort, backed by strong public support and only undertaken with a well-defined national interest at stake. It should be executed with overwhelming force and a clear exit strategy. The only one of those five criteria satisfied in the latest war was the use of overwhelming force, which obviously was not enough.)

It's also pretty timid to predict that we will see more and more terrorist activity like the Madrid rail bombing and the 9/11 attack on America. In fact, I've racked my brain trying to come up with a believable science fiction story where it didn't happen, and terrorism dwindled away. But I can't make such a future believable.

It may seem odd, since I was a draftee and am a war protester, but the armed forces often call on me to participate in think-tanks about the future of warfare. I may be the only person around who's a combat veteran/science fiction writer/MIT professor, so they just overlook my pacifistic shortcomings.

Anyhow, this June I was asked to participate in a think-tank that was thrown by the CIA and the NSA, America's spy agencies, about national and international security in the near-future period 2005-2020. It was as interesting as I had hoped, and as scary as I had feared.

The "spooks," as we call them, are not sanguine about the next fifteen years. They believe that Al-Qaeda are jazzed up over their success in influencing Spanish politics -- that may be naive, but they are not politically sophisticated -- and plan to do the same thing in America before the November election, escalating the terror by using a weapon or weapons that will cause more deaths than 9/11. The spooks think it will be bacteriological or chemical, though there is some chance of a "dirty bomb," one that uses radiological material for its toxicity, rather than in an explosive device. That could wipe out and render uninhabitable a large part of a city, or all of a medium-sized town.

A curious aspect of this is that no one is certain what effect an act of mass terrorism would have on the election. Would people blame Bush and not vote for him, or would they respond to patriotic and bombastic rhetoric, and vote for him because he promises to go after the people who did it? Maybe this time he could actually find the right country.

It sounds like a good year to spend October and early November out in the country, or out of the country. [*Translator note -- if the second idiom doesn't translate, it could be left off.*]

The spooks know they will have plenty to worry about even after the American elections.

The probability of a terrorist organization eventually not using a dirty bomb, or even an actual nuclear weapon, is very small. There is enough radiological material unaccounted for to make hundreds of dirty bombs -- not from military sources, but from medicine and industry. And although a terrorist organization could never put together the technological base to manufacture a nuclear weapon, they could well put together the money to buy one. You don't have to invest in a missile or a B-52, either; just float it into New York Harbor in a boat. Or up the Thames, or the Seine. America is only the biggest target. The terrorists want to be feared by everybody.

A story I wish I'd never written is called "To Howard Hughes: A Modest Proposal." In it I describe how a wealthy man could use nuclear terrorism to blackmail the world into peace.

It was published in a science fiction magazine with a fairly large circulation. Of course few people read science fiction magazines. Perhaps they should.

The mayor of Los Angeles received a letter from a man who said he had constructed a small nuclear weapon. He detailed how he had gathered the fissionable material; how he was able to construct the bomb with less than a critical mass of uranium; how it was delivered and shielded against detection -- all of it straight from my story, but of course no one in the mayor's office had a subscription to The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction. He called in his science advisor and asked whether it was feasible, and of course it was; I do my homework.

The blackmailer demanded a million dollars in cash, to be packed in a suitcase and left in a downtown park by a mailbox at noon on Saturday. The mayor's office did it -- but of course everyone in sight of the suitcase at noon was a plainclothes policeman.

As soon as they set down the suitcase, a pimply-faced teenager came out of the bushes and snatched it -- whereupon he was himself snatched.

This is an old-fashioned story now, of course. Any idiot who knows how to use Google can find directions for making nuclear weapons -- or a bathtub of botulism toxin, or a truckload of bargain-basement high explosive. If knowledge is power, the forces of evil are more powerful than ever before in history. And it can only get worse.

The CIA had come up with some truly scary possibilities that I can't discuss in detail. For a few million dollars, terrorists could close down every major harbor in America, which would cause economic chaos all over the world. One researcher told of a project where his team was to come up with a way that ten men with ten million dollars could, in ten days, permanently change the government of the United States. Four of them came up with four separate ways.

Cities, obviously, are particularly vulnerable to terrorist action, a fact that could quickly change the nature of civilization. A dirty bomb could make the central cities of Paris, New York, London, Singapore, Madrid -- any or all of them -- uninhabitable for generations. Government, commerce, and education would decentralize in short order -- it's likely that most large cities would empty out after the first one was essentially destroyed. But every modern civilization revolves around its largest cities; they provide an economic and intellectual driving force and give a culture its identity. Imagine a Spain with the Prado entombed in perpetual radioactivity, along with all of downtown Madrid. It would still be Spain, and you would still be Spaniards. But it, and you, would be something very different.

Is there any way to stop it, any way to win a War on Terrorism? The geniuses currently in charge think you can do it by killing terrorists. That just makes new terrorists, especially when your weapons destroy more civilians than warriors. The strategy also ignores what we know is true about fanatics -- not just Muslim; fanatics of any stripe. When your enemy doesn't care whether he lives or dies -- when he desires death if it means killing you as well -- violence may not be the logical answer.

All Americans remember where they were on 11 September 2001, and most can remember what they were thinking. I recorded my thoughts in a poem, which I won't burden you with here, because it wouldn't translate. But this is the essence of it:

George W. Bush claims to be a fundamentalist Christian, so his main tool for considering moral issues is to ask "What would Jesus do?" Jesus was very clear about what he would do in this situation, but Bush's religious instruction seems to have stopped short of the Sermon on the Mount [*Translator: Sometimes "Sermon on the Plain," Luke 6:20 ff.*]. If someone smites you on the cheek, offer him the other. Love your enemies, be merciful; judge not, that ye not be judged.

This is pure fantasy, but what if Bush had said, "As a fundamentalist Christian, I am forbidden to avenge this deed. The man who did this also claims to believe in the literal truth of his holy book; I challenge him to justify the murder of innocents in its words.

"Millions of people are rejoicing in this cataclysm; from them I would like to know what they feel we have done to deserve it, and how we could change to assure that this will never happen again."

Of course Bush would be impeached the next day and wind up incarcerated in an insane asylum. But that silly story does provide a metaphorical arrow in the direction of a way to end -- not win, which is impossible -- the War on Terrorism.

Why does a parent applaud a son or daughter who straps on a bomb and walks into a market or a mall to commit suicide in hopes of killing a few civilians? They do it because life is hopeless, and no reasonable action will change things, so have to do something desperate and brave. It's not because they're Moslems; a Jew or Christian or Shinto or Hindu will do the same, in hopeless desperation.

The way to stop terrorism is to banish hopelessness from the world -- and not for some hypothetical reward in Heaven or because it will make us feel good. Do it because the people who now have Kalishnikovs and car bombs are soon going to have

Weapons of Mad Destruction. [*Translator: I feel your pain at the pun.*] Science and technology don't take sides; it's probable that revolutionary research in areas like the Human Genome Project and nanotechnology will produce weapons of unprecedented power, and perhaps of subtle and fatal selectivity.

You banish hopelessness by giving hope. That means literally sharing wealth and opportunity with the weak and marginalized.

Plain money would go a long way in this regard. Money can't buy happiness, the saying goes, but poverty makes hope a distant goal. You don't just give it to them, of course; you hire them to rebuild their own surroundings, their own lives, according to their own desires.

Education runs a close second. Fanaticism flourishes in ignorance. Teach them about the real world that they're invited to join.

No one likes to say this, but it has to be said: detoxify religion. This might be the hardest one. You can't do it by force, or by legislation -- that just makes the True Believers more determined to take their religion to the grave, and perhaps you with it. I think it has to be an eventual byproduct of education and exposure to other people's ways of life -- and comfort. If this world is pleasant, you might be less eager to seek the next one.

Many organizations are moving in these directions already, churches not the least of them. But we need more, and we need it fast. It's not socialism or communism or do-goodism. It's plain survival for ourselves and our children. The next generation of terrorists will make this generation seem tame.

Elisabeth D. Inandiak. *El libre de Centhini. L'obra mestra de la literatura javanesa*
Dijous 16, 21.30h. Hall Proteu. Francès i javanès, amb traducció simultània

A PERFORMANCE IN SONGS AND DANCE

CANTOS FROM THE UPSIDE-DOWN ISLAND THE BOOK OF CENTHINI

By Elizabeth D. Inandiak and Didik Nini Thowok

As is the case for all Javanese classical literature, *The Book of Centhini* was sung in fragments, and also danced to the music of a *celembung* (thirteen double-stringed cythara), a *gamblang* (xylophone) and a *gambus* (seven-string lute). In the process of rendering these cantos in French, Elizabeth D. Inandiak constantly sought to preserve their oral origin and ritual character. It is therefore under this sung and danced form that she is presenting some excerpts of her version of *The Book of Centhini*, in collaboration with the great Javanese dancer Didik Nini Thowok who incarnates all the characters of the poem, male and female, from the most refined to the most outrageous.

OPENING CANTO

1. Didik sings canto 1 in Javanese – *sinom* mode – behind the screen

Eli silent

Music Alex Dea – *Elemental A*

1.30mn

2. Eli reads canto 1

Didik sings canto 1 in Javanese – *sinom* mode

Music Alex Dea – *Elemental A*

CANTO 1

And so it came about that the crown prince of the Sultanate of Surakarta Adiningrat, on the island of Java, commissioned the three Great Commanders of Letters, Sastranagara, Ranggasutrasna and Sastradipura, to compose an ancient tale encompassing all the natural and supernatural sciences of Java, and even the Gaya Scienza, and to do so in sung verses in order to ravish its audience and awaken them to unreason.

He therefore endowed the three court poets with 10,000 golden *ringgits* and bid them to hasten, one to the eastern region of the island, another to its center, and the third to the Western Lands until Mecca, and gave them the mission to gather round all the wisdoms and their transgressions from hermits, sooth-sayers, blacksmiths, tumblers, robbers, female ulemas, shadow-players, professional dreamers, guardians of forgetfulness, masters of unveiling, and other free minds, runaways, outcasts, who roam through the snares of sex and spirit.

The heart of the tale follows the wandering journey of Jayengresmi, also called Amongraga, son of the king of Giri. This king had become renowned for the excellence and the perfection of his life, and equally for his refusal to pay tribute to the powerful Sultan Agung of the Mataram Kingdom.

This poem which celebrates Excess is titled *Suluk Tambangraras*, but it also bears the name *The Book of Centhini*. The writing started on a Saturday Pahing, the 26th of the month of *Muharam*, in the year 1230 of the Hegira, or the year 1742 of the Javanese calendar, (Gregorian year 1809), in the constellation of Marakeh, under the wing of the god Batara Surenggana.

A child born under this star, whether male or female, will have, it is said, a long life, a pure heart, very little luck and a tormented liver.

Such is the desire of the Prince to re-enchant this age of madness and to invert the world in revels of words.

3. Didik dances *Tari Persembahan* – Offering Dance

Eli silent

Music Alex Dea – Elemental A

2.00mn

4. Eli reads canto 6

Didik silent

Music Alex Dea – Elemental A

1.35mn

CANTO 6

*Long then clanged the gong
Carried by the din of clamors
To love's dizzy glamours.
The fierce fragrance of flowers,
His jewel-encrusted encrowned-powers,
His ears with wings of golden gauze,
Gathering the Word from Above.
As a rain of moths, hails of cloves,
My tears stared at the sky, clouds,
So many prayers, such vain votive deeds.
O! in the bed, this throne of heart and greeds,
Waves and winds of pungent balms,
The vulva free of thoughts and full of alms
Has turned into a lake, a lotus
In whose depths a glorious phallus,
Black Cyclops, marveled at the sun.
Alas, you my Love did shun
Thus teaching to mortals mired in shame
That, beyond praise and blame,
There can be no encounter
Save body and soul surrender.*

Thus wrote the majestic King who, as predicted by the blue augury, would soon subjugate Sunan Giri.

5. Didik dances *Tari Bedhaya* – Palace Sacred Dance

Eli silent

Music Surono and Eko - *Bedhaya*

1.30mn

6. Eli reads canto 7 until “almost died”

Didik dances *Tari Bedhaya* until “almost died”

Music Surono and Eko - *Bedhaya*

2.30mn

CANTO 7

From East to West, from South to North, in the Center and beyond, he was called Sultan Agung, sultan of sultans, for, it was said, he had possession of two palaces. The second palace pitched its black charms deep in the Red Lotus Ocean, off the southern coast of Java.

The sovereign of this palace was not the sultan himself but a stern Virgin, queen of the invisible realms of which this world is but a vain shadow. Ratu Kidul was her name. Her Majesty had sworn to rupture her hymen only when the world would be at the threshold of the Last Age, to take as a lover a handsome and majestic Muslim king, and when he died, all his successors in the Last Age until the end of time.

It was written that the kings of the Last Age would be the sultans of the Mataram Dynasty and it was said that none was so enamored of the Queen Ratu Kidul than Sultan Agung, for at the zenith of their coitus the Queen of the Seas was performing with her lover the martial and erotic duty of Java.

Alas ! Their coitus was as astounding as it was rare, for Ratu Kidul partook of the ether, Sultan Agung partook of the earth, so that in each of their soaring rapture from one shore to the other the Sultan almost died.

7. Eli reads canto 7 until “may Allah protect you”

Didik silent

Music Alex Dea – *Elemental A*

2.20mn

How to recover from the wounds of love if not by war ? Sultan Agung, weary and bitter, summoned his younger sister, Ratu Pandhansari, which he had bestowed to the prince of Surabaya to better chain this proud and rebellious province to his imperial ambitions.

Ratu Pandhansari was introduced by the councilors to the Secret in the Sweet Pavilion where Sultan Agung was sitting on a mat, flanked by ten guards armed with spears whose tips were aflame with a torch.

“O ! my brother, I was told that you are ill.

– Sister, the illness which afflicts me doesn’t wound my flesh, it decays my heart. Every time I inhale, sadness invades my chest as the sea bursts into a ship disemboweled by the storm, and therefore am I compelled during the night to hold my breath for fear of sinking in a bottomless pain.

– But, dear brother, why such distress ?

– Sister, know that there is only one man on the whole island of Java who refuses to submit to the sovereign laws of Mataram. He calls himself King of the Ulemas and his pride is such that none of my embassies could ever penetrate in his palace nor reach the throne-room. Yes, sister, Sunan Giri is the cause of my illness and I know of no remedy which can cure it. Except war.

– War ! Brother, perish the thought ! Isn’t Prince Pelik, to whom you have betrothed me, allied to the caliph of Giri by the bonds of kinship ?

– Sultan Agung recognizes neither caliphate nor kinship, sister. Hasten to prince Pelik and tell him that if his embassy fails, he will bear the blame for war. And if there is war, stay by his side until the end of the battle, for I believe you have more valor than your coward husband. Go and may Allah protect you !

WAR

8. Eli reads canto 8 until “the nighth prayer”

Didik silent

Music Alex Dea – *Elemental A*

0.25mn

CANTO 8

And it came about that on a hard rainy night, the prince of Surabaya arrived alone, with no escort, to the front of the veranda flanking the mosque of Giri.

The king of the Mountain stood there, chanting the Surat of the Dawn amongst his disciples who were wildly double-beating the double-skinned drum summoning the faithful to the night prayer.

9. Prayer's call and mosque's drum

**Music Ustadz H. Abdul Latief Ahman – *Bedug dan Adzan* – Puspita
Record Semarang**

0.30mn

10. Eli reads canto 8 until “same age”

**Didik silent
Music Alex Dea – *Elemental B***

1.15mn

Sunan Giri cut short the prayer and said : “Prince Pelik, what urgent business brings you here at this late hour of the night, when darkness conceals the world and rain has soaked your bones ? My heart is still knocked over by the shock. But before you answer me, do taste these exquisite delicacies made of rice boiled in coconut milk, and do not let timidity restrain you.”

In mid-air the drummers froze their strike over the drum, all the disciples lowering their heads kept quiet, while a brisk figure ruffled the silence and came to sit on the mat by the side of Sunan Giri. It was a handsome Chinese young man, whom the constraints of commerce had stranded far from the Celestial Kingdom, and who had been adopted by Sunan Giri as his own son, even though he already had a boy of the same age.

11. Didik dances *Tari Topeng Cina* – *Chinese Mask Dance*

**Eli silent
Musci Alex Dea – *Elemental B***

0.30mn

12. Eli reads canto 8 until “war has been declared”

**Didik dances *Tari Topen Cina* until “By Allah”
Music Alex Dea – *Elemental B***

2.00mn

Endrasena was his name, Islam his religion. When he saw him, the prince of

Surabaya shuddered with fear, for he sensed in the shadows behind him the tension of his escort, two hundred warriors of the same race, supremely skilled in the arts of the sword and the drunken dance.

Prince Petik, disdaining to taste the food he had been offered, approached Sunan Giri, his eyes were ablaze with anger at the ignominy of his embassy, but his voice remained soft and pleasant as he spoke freely and directly to the king of the Ulemas.

“O ! Sunan Giri, my orders come from Sultan Agung. If you truly seek peace for Giri, and desire prosperity, you must prostrate yourself in front of him. If you refuse, you will die without even leaving behind a corpse and the kingdom of Giri will be reduced to blood-dripping reef.”

Sunan Giri slowly turned to proud Endrasena, lifted his eyes to the heavens streaked by the break of dawn and said : “By Allah who is sufficient to Himself, Prince Petik, tell your sultan that my answer is No.”

Long then clanged the gong carried by the din of clamors, the armies of Surabaya moved forward as the swelling waves of the sea. Sunan Giri gathered his advisors and announced that war had been declared.

13. Eli reads canto 9 until “must happen”

Didik dances *Tari Topeng Jawa – Javanese Mask Dance*
Music Alex Dea – *Elemental C*

2.00mn

CANTO 9

Then came to him his first-born son, noble Amongraga, as tall and handsome as Endrasena the Chinese, for Sunan Giri often confused them in his heart. Amongraga bowed and said with a soft voice :

“Father, how is it that you took by yourself such a decision ? Did your holy ancestors invade your dreams and give you this dreadful advice ? If such is the case, may you rather follow the advice of your slow-witted son who knows nothing of the serious affairs of this world. If you can hear the pleading of my heart, then place yourself under the protection of Sultan Agung. It is not too late, the clash has not yet happened. Father, listen the advice of your humble son and do everything in your power to avoid war.”

Sunan Giri would not budge, deaf to the words of his own son, the crown prince, whom he dismissed by his silence. Amongraga withdrew, and as he

walked away his eyes filled with tears. He had tried the impossible : reverse the course of history. But in the deepest recesses of his heart, he knew : what is written must happen.

14. Eli reads canto 9 until “let war begin!”

Didik silent

Music Alex Dea – *Elemental C*

0.35mn

When the crown prince had left, Sunan Giri named Endrasena supreme commander of the army and asked him : “Tell me, Endrasena, have the soldiers of Surabaya already encircled the palace of Giri ?”

– Fear not, Father, the warriors of Giri are all standing by, ready to attack.
They are only awaiting the order of your Majesty.
– You, my son, will give the order. Let war begin !

15. Didik dances *Tari Kelana Topeng* – *Knight-errant Mask Dance*

Eli silent

Music *Topeng Klanan Cirebon gaya Ibu Suji* – MRT Record Cirebon

2.25mn

16. Eli reads canto 10

Didik silent

Music Alex Dea – *Elemental C*

2.30mn

CANTO 10

The clash was brutal. Spears against spears, *keris* against *keris*, until the warriors fought with bare hands to let divine preference speak its judgment. They sang words of enchantments and threw spells, conjurors and conjured merged in a whirlwind of breaths, war became a magical whisper whose overwhelming hum bewitched the mind of the warriors.

Endrasena was the most possessed and ferocious of them all. When Ratu Pandhansari saw him, she told her husband : “War has made this devilish Chinese delirious. The moment has come to strike him down.”

As the Prince Petik nodded in agreement, Ratu Pandhansari cocked her pistol, aimed and fired a shot against the right hand of Endrasena who recoiled and dropped his sword. His left hand tightened around his *keris* and his fury redoubled. But Ratu Pandhansari aimed a second shot and both hands of the young Chinese were cut off. Endrasena could barely scream for Ratu Pandhansari aiming yet again her pistol shot the left foot of her adversary who collapsed instantly.

A shower of spears fell on the body of Endrasena whose last gaze fell upon victorious Ratu Pandhansari:

“O ! Queen, now ends this small war. It was bloody, but in its rivers of blood you and I have sailed neither the deserts of the spirit nor the abysses of the flesh. Your victory has not brought you to the unveiling of the divine truths, and my fall will not, alas, open up for me the gates of the world of Vision. We must now depart for the Great War...”

A final spear pierced Endrasena. His fragmented body, in one last splendid embrace, united with the earth.

17. Didik dances *Tarian Dwi Muka Cina* – Double Faces Chinese Dance

Eli silent

Music Alex Dea – *Elemental C voices*

1.00mn

THE WANDERING

18. Eli reads canto 11 until “as a vagrant”

Didik dances *Tarian Dwi Muka Jawa* – Double Faces Javanese Dance

Music Alex Dea – *Elemental C*

1.10mn

CANTO 11

In the midst of this dark disaster, Amongraga looked for his young brother and his little sister, but could not find them. He fled Giri, his heart stricken by sadness, as gold is born from the swirling water.

“Do not worry, let your feelings follow the sadness of your heart. Remember that you are the descendant of a wondrous ascetic. A roaring fire will not be extinguished so easily, so let it burn. Later, when it expires of its own accord, then will the impurities also disappear. Therefore, let the beauty of this gold shine brightly.”

Thus disappeared the royal heir of Giri, no one saw him flee, and he himself did not know where his steps would lead him. Only Allah, who carefully leads all things, saw that Amongraga was entering the Way as a vagrant.

19. Eli reads canto 11 until “brother and sister”

Didik silent

Music Alex Dea – *Elemental C*

0.35mn

Amongraga wandered wide and far, until he reached the Koranic school of Wanamarta. There, he married Tambangraras, the daughter of the religious chief of the hermitage, Ki Panurta. Before the wedding feast, however, Amongraga confided in Tambangraras that as soon as they had made love he must leave her and search for his brother and sister.

FORTY NIGHTS AND ONE OF RAIN

20. Didik sings canto 376 in Javanese – *dhandhanggula* mode

Eli silent

Music Alex Dea – *Elemental C*

1.55mn

21. Eli reads canto 71

Didik silent

Music Alex Dea – *Elemental B*

1.50mn

CANTO 71

In the bridal chamber, Tambangraras sat on the bed covered with a white sheet of palm threads. She was still wearing her wedding gown. She had not removed the flowers in her hair-knot, and the night-beauties spilled over her their serene fragrance, the coconut-flowers bloomed in the bountiful darkness, while lunar orchids shone their bright pallor against the bed-dome drape filled with the stars of the Milky Way.

Her maid-servant, Centhini, was sitting next to her. When Amongraga came in, she slipped behind the buffalo-hide light screen and became as transparent as a vanishing shadow.

Amongraga disrobed and, facing his spouse, sat in a lotus position at the other end of the bed, far enough so that his naked body would not scare her, but yet close enough for Tambangraras to see the precise shape of his manhood.

Behind the light screen, Centhini felt the rousing breath of Amongraga and the quickened gasps of Tambangraras, the beads of sweat which glistened on their burning bodies and filled the room with mizzle and mist. Centhini kept watch since it was her duty to proclaim to the outside world the rupture of the hymen and thus signal that the blossomed decoction of rapture should be prepared without delay.

22. Didik dances Tarian Centhini – tari Jongkok – Danse de Centhini-danse Jongkok
Eli silent
Music Alex Dea – Elemental B

0.30mn

23. Eli reads canto 72 until “ablutions”
Didik dances Tarian Centhini –Jongkok – Danse de Centhini-Jongkok
Music Alex Dea – Elemental B

5.00mn

Amongraga laid his dazzled eyes on Tambangraras :
“Little Sister, there you are, sitting on the prow of the bridal bed while I sit at its stern. Even if we both extended our arm to the utmost, our two hands still would not touch each other, so great is the fear between us. But your heart is already in mine and mine in yours. Do you hear them both pounding with the eager beats of love ? Know that eagerness is an obstacle to our coitus.

If you agree, little sister, and by the grace of Allah, we will this very night leave together for a motionless journey where we will appease our breaths one

into the other and let you be the stern and me the prow. This journey will at first seem hard, bristling with taboos raised by the great risks of sinking. it will last forty nights and will take us across seven seas.

The first sea is the sea of water which bubbles and boils. A thick fog enshrouds it. The second sea is the sea of fire. There, be very careful, little sister, for the flames rise until they reach the heavens and these flames spread fearsome terrors whose numbers and fury will restrain the ship.

The third sea is the yellow sea, filled with temptations. The fourth sea is the blue-green sea whose countless dangers are mixed partly with the water and partly with the wind. The fifth sea is the sea of mud which is atrociously viscous. The sixth sea is the blue-black sea which doesn't herald any great danger even though we must remain alert, little sister.

Finally, the seventh sea is the sea of cane-juice whose water is white and bottomless. It is a quiet sea, windless, and though devoid of tempests, its waves yet rise higher than mountains. No vessel will challenge it. If a foolhardy craft dares to venture on its surface, the perils of the previous six seas and the winds from the nine directions gather round as one and strike it.

It is told that beyond these seven seas, there still is a vast ocean whose waters have lost their colors. No wave rides its surface, but it abounds with infinite abysses, blacker than the black night of the blind. One sees nothing but darkness on its surface, and neither the wind nor its nine directions can be felt. In its center, abides the void where there is neither star nor lightning.

There is only one bird which flies through the depths of the sea, which ascends then plunges again and again, ceaselessly. This bird is gigantic, neither the eyes nor the mind can grasp it. It is a white bird, whose beak, pecking at the wind-born pollen, is polished with gold. Its eyes are rubies, its claws pearls, its wings blue diamonds. The sound of its flight fills the universe..."

At the prow of the bed, Tambangraras bowed and said :
"O my fire, I hear and I agree. But see, the night overhead is already vanishing."
– Little sister, you are right. Then let us rise and pray."

Amongraga took Tambangraras by the hand and led her to the water basin used for the ablutions.

24. Eli reads canto 72 until "patience"

Didik silent

Music Alex Dea – *Elemental B*

0.45mn

In the kitchen, where embers glowed all night, Nyi Malarshi questioned his daughter :

“My sweet darling, did he make your blood stain the sheets ?
– Mother, must love begin with a stain ?
– Do you mean he hasn’t yet... ?

-Our lips haven’t even met, Mother.
– That man truly has great patience and few women have ever known such men. Rejoice, dear daughter, for *Allah stands with those with patience.*”

25. Didik dances *Tari Jathilan* – Mad Horse Dance

Eli silent

Music Kesenian Jaranan Senterewe, Turonggo Savitri Putro Tulungagung-
Jathilan – CHGB Recording Tulungagung

1.45mn

26. Eli reads canto 75

Didik silent

Music Kesenian Jaranan Senterewe – *Jathilan*

2.00mn

CANTO 75

Four nights have gone by, and in the hermitage of Wanamarta bustled : uncles, cousins, wizards, healers, notable, tramps, free thinkers and pious disciples. All these merry people ate yellow rice to their full.

They chanted verses of the Koran, sang cryptic poems, played at throwing doves in the air, talked about the joys of raising birds and the art of harmonizing the desires of the flesh with the laws of science, about chaos and death, usury and forbidden acts, about the favors and torments distributed by Allah.

And when they had exhausted subjects and issues, Jayengraga et Jayengwesti ordered Jamal and Jamil to beat the tambourines, blow the flutes, play the rebeccs, and shake the bamboo organs. Their songs were so sweet and so sibylline that in the night the trees of the hermitage felt their fruits ripen into rubies :

“A green wave up in the air
A white lotus on the ground.
Look at yourself :
This is the sign of the Lord’s power.
Where is your God ?
Where will I go after death ?”

At the end of each stanza, all the audience repeated as one voice : “Allah, Protector of lovers !” And when the night cooled, abruptly they all copulated under the bewildered stars.

27. Eli reads canto 110

Didik silent

Music Alex Dea – *Gandakusuma*

1.10mn

CANTO 110

In the bridal chamber, a motionless wind blew the candle. It was the thirty-ninth night. In the angel bed, no more did Amongraga and Tambangrararas see each other’s nudity, nor their distance from it. No more was there prow or stern or watershed line.

They felt their bodies melt as one in the warm flesh of the darkness. They were both each other and they were the black velvet of the twilight web which wedded them. Their voices flowed into each other and into the brimming night : “O ! My Fire ! My flower ! Let’s enjoy the tale of the Fool and his flying lantern.”

28. Didik dances *Tarian Wayang Golek* – Wood Puppets Dance

Eli silent

Music Anjar Ani dari Manthous Campursari Maju Lancar – *Adegan Wayang Golek, Bowo Lagu Nyidamsari* – Dasa Studio

0.30mn

29. Eli reads canto 112 until “mountain”

Didik dances *Tarian Wayang Golek* until “mountain”

Music Anjar Ani – *Nyidamsari*

1.20mn

CANTO 112

On the angel bed, Amongraga disrobed and sat knowingly into the red lotus of his bride. All night they remained knotted in a deep embrace, vigilant and surrendering to one another.

In the first hours, the feelings of Tambangraras distributed themselves in the proportion of two-thirds for science and one-third for the male, those of Amongraga in the proportion of two-thirds for the female and one-third for science. From deep inside their bodies they prayed the Almighty not to let their embrace disintegrate in such a division and to unite all the flavors in the miraculous science of coitus.

A warm rain fell in the night, like boiling water which, thrown on a dry tea leaf, frees in the mouth the tanned scents of the mountain.

30. Eli reads canto 112 until “meditation”

Didik silent

Music Alex Dea – *Gandakusuma*

2.00mn

Behind the light screen, Centhini understood that the prayer of the lovers had been granted. She went to the well, filled a jar with water and laid it down at the foot of the angel bed where dawn softly unknotted the embrace of her masters.

As day began to rise, Centhini went out to inform Ki Panurta and his wife that the hymen had been ruptured. Forty nights had the old couple sleeplessly expected the event : “*Alhamdulillah !* Hurry, Centhini, wake up at once the young Daya, and tell her to prepare the ritual decoction !”

Young Daya swiftly gathered the medicinal herbs. She chopped up the buds of white grenades, the bark of cinchona, gallnuts, cardamom, clove, black datura and stamens of *lawe*. Inside a mortar she ground them to a fine powder to which she added basil flowers, betel lime, curcuma, worm saliva, ashes of golden banana leaves, a scarlet snake skin, nutmeg, cubeb, the shell of a newly laid egg, and ginger. She boiled the mixture and poured the decoction in the hollowed shell of a coconut.

Tambangraras drank the intricate beverage while young Dana sprinkled her breasts with rainwater sweetened by the three flowers. When his bride dipped

her lips in the coconut, Amongraga started a word-fast and settled in meditation.

31. Didik sings while dancing *Tarian Centhini – Centhini Dance*

Eli silent

Music silent

1.15mn

32. Eli reads canto 113

Didik silent

Music Alex Dea – *Elemental C*

3.50mn

CANTO 113

Amongraga meditated for seven days and seven nights without moving, without performing any of the five ritual prayers. He had emptied his mind, his eyes and his ears, he contemplated nothing but Allah. At times his gaze fogged with an unexpected rain of tears whose sight wrinkled the heart of Tambangraras sitting silently not far from him.

Finally, one night, he belched, slowly moved his limbs, and summoned his mind back in the flesh. He drew his wife to him and spoke softly :

“My dearest, for seven days and seven nights, you have stood by my side. At times you have seen tears behind my eyelids. They are the tears of wandering. Inexhaustible tears. Yes, my dearest, I shall have to leave you and search for my younger brother and my little sister. Who knows if they are still alive ? I might have to walk until the final boundary. But I will come back to you as soon as I have found them.”

When she heard these words, the eyes of Tambangraras filled with darkness, stones sank in her belly, marrow fled her bones which were torn out of her body and scattered in the air. With a sad voice, she said : “My love, if Allah consents, I will follow you wherever you go, even if I should collapse on the road or die in your footsteps.”

The moon hurried in the night-sky. Amongraga stretched out Tambangraras on the angel bed and bathed her body with tears. They had already penetrated together in the singular game of love, where there are neither rules nor aim, neither victory nor defeat. Some time before dawn, Tambangraras fell asleep at the extremity of their coitus.

Amongraga gently withdrew from her sleep. Over her naked body he spread the sheet of a shroud to cover the remains of their embrace. He wrote a letter to Tambangaras :

“Dearest, a journey is filled with meetings and returns. But one can only journey alone. I carry my body in the maze of this poem whose harmonious voice you are. You believe I have left whereas I am wandering in you.”

- 33. Didik sings canto 722 in Javanese – Asmaradana mode – while dancing Tarian Centhini behind the screen**
Eli silent
Music Alex Dea – Elemental B voices

1.00mn

THE END



KOSMOPOLIS. Festa Internacional de la Literatura
Del 14 al 19 de setembre de 2004
Barcelona – CCCB

Elisabeth D. Inandiak. *El libre de Centhini. L'obra mestra de la literatura javanesa*
Dijous 16, 21.30h. Hall Proteu. Francès i javanès, amb traducció simultània

PRESENTATION CHANTEE ET DANSEE

LES CHANTS DE L'ILE A DORMIR DEBOUT
LE LIVRE DE CENTHINI

CHANT D'OUVERTURE

1. Didik chante le chant 1 en javanais - mode *sinom* – derrière l'écran

Eli silence

Musique Alex Dea – *Elemental A*

1.30mn

2. Eli lit le chant 1

Didik chante le chant 1 en javanais – mode *sinom*

Musique Alex Dea – *Elemental A*

3.00mn

CHANT 1

Voici que le prince héritier du sultanat de Surakarta Adiningrat, sur l'île de Java, a ordonné aux trois grands officiers des lettres, Sastranagara, Ranggasutrasna et Sastradipura, de composer une histoire ancienne qui embrasserait toutes les sciences naturelles et surnaturelles de Java, et jusqu'au gai savoir, sous une forme versifiée et chantée, ceci afin de ravir les auditeurs et de les éveiller à la déraison.

Pour ce faire, le prince Anom Amengkunagara III a pourvu les trois poètes palatins de dix mille *ringgits* d'or et les a dépêchés, l'un à l'est de l'île, le deuxième au centre et le dernier à l'ouest jusqu'à La Mecque, avec pour ambassade de recueillir toutes les sagesse et leurs transgressions auprès des ermites, sibylles, forgerons, bateleurs, brigands, femmes oulémas, montreurs d'ombres, rêveurs professionnels, gardiens de l'oubli, maîtres du dévoilement et autre gent libre, fugitifs ou parias qui vagabondent dans les embuscades du sexe et de l'esprit.

Le cœur du récit s'attache à l'errance de Jayengresmi, surnommé aussi Amongraga, fils du souverain de Giri. Ce dernier s'est rendu célèbre pour l'excellence et la sainteté de sa vie, ainsi que pour son refus de payer tribut au tout-puissant Sultan Agung du royaume de Mataram.

Ce poème de la démesure a pour titre *Suluk Tambangraras*, mais on l'appelle le *Le Livre de Centhini*. Sa rédaction a débuté un samedi *Pahing*, le 26 du mois de *Muharam*, en l'an 1230 de l'hégire, soit en 1742 de l'an javanais (1809 du calendrier grégorien), dans la constellation de Marakeh, sous l'aile du dieu Batara Surenggana.

D'un enfant né sous cette étoile, aussi bien garçon que fille, il est dit qu'il aura longue vie, le cœur limpide, mais peu de chance et le foie tourmenté.

Tel est le désir du prince de réenchanter ces temps de démence et d'invertir le monde dans la ripaille des mots.

3. Didik danse *Tari Persembahan* – Danse d'Offrande

Eli silence

Musique Surono et Eko - *Persembahan*

2.00mn

4. Eli lit le chant 6

Didik silence

Musique Alex Dea – *Elemental A*

1.35mn

CHANT 6

*Alors le gong retentit, sourd
Porté par le fracas des clameurs
Jusqu'à l'étourdissement de l'amour
La fragrance folle des fleurs
Son diadème serti de joyaux
Ornait ses oreilles d'ailes en gaze d'or
Qui recueillaient la parole d'En Haut
Pluie de phallènes, lotus morts
Mes pleurs contemplent les cieux
Tant de prières, vains gestes pieux
O, dans le lit, trône du cœur
Ondes de baumes et de saveurs
La vulve s'était vidée de ses pensées
Et faite lac, miroir
Au fond duquel le phallus magnifié
Se pâmaît, cyclope noir
Aux plus belles heures du jour
Las ! Amour
Ta fugue aux mortels montre
Par-delà la louange et le blâme
Qu'il n'est point de rencontre
Sinon d'abandon corps et âme.*

Ainsi écrivait l'auguste roi qui, conformément à l'augure bleu, soumettrait bientôt sunan Giri.

5. Didik danse *Tari Bedhaya* – Danse Sacrée Palatine

Eli silence

Musique Surono et Eko - *Bedhaya*

1.30mn

6. Eli lit le chant 7 jusqu'à « mourir »

Didik danse *Tari Bedhaya* jusqu'à « mourir »

Musique Surono et Eko - *Bedhaya*

2.00mn

CHANT 7

De l'est à l'ouest de Java, du sud au nord, au centre et au-delà on l'appelait Sultan Agung, le sultan des sultans, car il possédait disait-on, deux palais. Le deuxième palais plongeait ses charmes noirs dans l'océan du Lotus Rouge, là-bas, au large de la côte méridionale de Java.

Le souverain de ce palais n'était point le sultan, mais une vierge sévère, reine des royaumes invisibles dont ce monde-ci n'était qu'une vaine image. Ratu Kidul était son nom. Son Excellence avait fait le voeu de ne déchirer son hymen qu'à l'entrée du monde dans le Dernière Age, de prendre pour amant un grand et beau roi musulman, et à sa mort ses successeurs, tous les rois du Dernier Age jusqu'à la fin des temps.

Il était écrit que ces rois du Dernier Age seraient les sultans de la dynastie de Mataram et l'on disait qu'aucun n'avait été plus épris de Ratu Kidul que Sultan Agung, car au plus profond de leur coït, la reine des mers accomplissait avec son amant la charge martiale et érotique de Java.

Las ! Leur coït était aussi fulgurant que rare car Ratu Kidul participait de l'éther, Sultan Agung de la terre, si bien qu'à chaque transport d'une rive à l'autre, le sultan manquait mourir.

7. Eli lit le chant 7 jusqu'à « Allah »

Didik silence

Musique Alex Dea – *Elemental A*

2.20mn

Comment se guérir de l'amour sinon par la guerre ? Sultan Agung, las et amer, manda sa sœur cadette, Ratu Pandhansari, qu'il avait mariée au prince de

Surabaya afin d'enchaîner cette province fière et rebelle à ses grandioses ambitions.

Ratu Pandhansari fut introduite par les conseillers au Secret dans le Pavillon Sacré où Sultan Agung se tenait sur une natte, flanqué de dix gardes armés de lances dont les pointes étaient doublées de l'ardeur d'un flambeau.

« O mon frère, on me fait dire que vous êtes souffrant.

-Ma sœur, le mal dont je souffre n'entame pas mes chairs. il corrompt mon cœur. A chaque inspiration la tristesse afflue dans ma poitrine telle la mer dans un navire éventré par la tempête, et me voilà réduit la nuit à suspendre mon souffle de peur de me noyer dans la peine.

-Mais pourquoi tant d'affliction, mon frère ?

-Sache, ma sœur, qu'il n'est plus qu'un seul homme sur toute l'île de Java à refuser de se plier aux lois souveraines de Mataram. Il se dit roi des Oulémas et son orgueil est tel qu'aucune de mes ambassades n'est parvenue à pénétrer dans son palais jusqu'à la salle du trône. Oui, ma sœur, sunan Giri est la cause de mon mal et à ce mal je ne connais aucun remède. Sinon la guerre.

-La guerre ! mon frère ! Vous n'y pensez pas ! Le prince Pekik à qui vous venez de donner ma main n'est-il pas lié au califat de Giri par quelque parenté ? !

-Sultan Agung ne connaît ni califat, ni parenté, ma sœur. Porte au plus vite mes ordres au prince Pekik et dis-lui que si son ambassade échoue, à lui la charge de la guerre. Et si guerre il y a, demeure à ses côtés jusqu'à l'issue du combat car je te prête plus de bravoure qu'à ton couard d'époux. Va et prends refuge en Allah ! »

LA GUERRE

8. Eli lit le chant 8 jusqu'à « prière de la nuit »

Didik silence

Musique Alex Dea – *Elemental A*

0.25mn

CHANT 8

Voilà que par un soir de lourde pluie, le prince de Surabaya se présenta seul, sans escorte, devant la véranda de la mosquée de Giri. Le roi de la Montagne se trouvait là à réciter la sourate de l'Aurore parmi ses disciples qui frappaient dans une folle alternative le tambour à double face conviant à la prière de la nuit.

9. Appel à la prière et tambour de mosquée

Musique Ustadz H Abdul Latief Ahman *Bedug dan Adzan* – Puspita

Record

Semarang-

0.30mn

10. Eli lit le chant 8 jusqu'à “du même âge »

Didik silence

Musique Alex Dea – *Elemental A*

1.15mn

Sunan Giri écourta la récitation et dit : « O Prince Pekik, quelle affaire urgente t'amène ici à cette heure tardive, alors que les ténèbres se referment sur le monde et que la pluie déjà trempe tes os ? Mon cœur en est encore tout culbuté de surprise. Mais avant de répondre, goûte à ces petites fantaisies de riz au lait de coco et ne fais pas de manières. »

Les disciples suspendirent leur frappe au-dessus du tambour, tous s'étaient tus et gardaient la tête baissée tandis qu'une silhouette alerte froissait le silence et venait prendre place sur la natte aux côtés de sunan Giri. C'était là un jeune et beau Chinois que les nécessités du commerce avaient chassé loin de l'Empire Céleste et que sunan Giri avait adopté comme son propre fils bien qu'il eût déjà un garçon du même âge.

11. Didik danse *Tari Topeng Cina* – Danse du Masque Chinois

Eli silence

Musique Alex – Elemental B

0.30mn

12. Eli lit le chant 8 jusqu'à « houle de l'océan »

Didik danse *Tari Topeng Cina* jusqu'à « par Allah qui se suffit... »

Musique Alex Dea – Elemental B

2.00mn

Endrasena était son nom, musulmane sa religion. A sa vue, le prince de Surabaya frémît car il pressentait dans l'ombre, derrière lui, la tension de son escorte, forte de deux cents soldats de sa race, virtuose du combat à l'épée et de la danse de l'homme ivre.

Le prince Pekik s'avança vers sunan Giri sans daigner toucher aux mets offerts, son regard tremblait de colère contre sa propre indignité mais sa voix demeura douce et aimable lorsqu'il s'adressa sans gêne et sans détour au roi des Oulémas :

« O Sunan Giri, je suis ici sur ordre de Sultan Agung. Si c'est vraiment la paix que tu désires pour Giri, ainsi que la prospérité, alors prosterne-toi devant notre sultan. Si tu refuses, alors tout ce que tu es mourra sans laisser même de cadavre et le royaume de Giri sera réduit à un écueil de sang. »

Sunan Giri se tourna lentement vers Endrasena au port altier, puis il leva les yeux vers le ciel fendu par l'abord de l'aurore et dit : « Par Allah qui se suffit à Lui-même, Prince Pekik, fais savoir à ton sultan que ma réponse est non. »

Alors le gong retentit, sourd, porté par le fracas des clamours, les armées de Surabaya s'ébranlèrent telle la houle de l'océan.

13. Eli lit le chant 9 jusqu'à « est dû »

Didik danse *Tari Topeng Jawa* – Danse du Masque Javanais

Musique Alex Dea – Elemental B

2.00mn

CHANT 9

Or voilà que s’avança à lui son fils aîné, le très noble Amongraga, qui égalait en taille et en beauté Endrasena, le Chinois, tant il est vrai que sunan Giri les confondait souvent l’un et l’autre dans son cœur. Amongraga se prosterna et dit d’une voix pleine de douceur :

« O, Père, se peut-il que vous ayez pris seul une telle décision ? Auriez-vous, en rêve, été mal conseillé par vos saints ancêtres ? En tel cas, puissiez-vous plutôt suivre l’avis de votre idiot de fils que voici et qui ne connaît rien aux affaires sérieuses de ce monde. Si vous consentez à entendre mon désir, alors placez-vous sous la protection de Sultan Agung. Il n’est pas trop tard, l’affrontement n’a pas encore eu lieu, O Père, écoutez le conseil de votre humble fils et mettez tout en œuvre pour contenir cette guerre. »

Sunan Giri demeurait inflexible, ignorant les paroles de son propre enfant, le prince héritier, qu’il congédia par son silence. Amongraga se retira, en chemin ses yeux se trempèrent de larmes. Il avait tenté l’impossible : inverser le cours de l’histoire. Mais au fond de luit-même il savait : ce qui est écrit est dû.

14. Eli lit le chant 9 jusqu’à « la guerre commence »

Didik silence

Musique Alex Dea – *Elemental B*

0.35mn

Lorsque le prince héritier se fut éloigné, sunan Giri s’adressa à Endrasena qu’il venait de nommer commandant en chef des armées :

« Dis-moi, Endrasena, les soldats de Surabaya encerclent-ils déjà le palais de Giri ?

-N’ayez crainte, Père, les combattants de Giri sont tous à leur poste, prêts à l’attaque. Ils n’attendent qu’un signe de Votre Majesté.

-A toi mon fils de battre le rappel, que la guerre commence !

15. Didik danse *Tari Kelana Topeng* – Danse Masquée du Chevalier Errant

Eli silence

Musique Alex Dea – *Elemental B*

2.25mn

16. Eli lit le chant 10

Didik silence

Musique Alex Dea – *Elemental B*

2.30mn

CHANT 10

Le choc fut brutal. Lances contre lances, *keris* contre *keris*. On en vint au combat aux mains nues pour laisser parler la préférence divine. On chantait des mots enchanteurs, envoûteurs et envoûtés se fondaient dans la puissance des souffles, la guerre devint un murmure magique, une rumeur subjuguante qui frappait les guerriers de déraison.

Endrasena était le plus possédé de tous. A sa vue Ratu Pandhansari souffla à son époux : « Voilà que ce diable de Chinois est enivré de guerre. Le moment est venu de l’abattre. »

Comme le prince Pekik acquiesçait de la tête, Ratu Pandhansari arma son pistolet, visa et fit feu sur la main droite d’Endrasena qui bondit de stupeur et lâcha son épée. Sa main gauche se resserra sur son *keris* et redoubla de fureur, mais Ratu Pandhansari tira un deuxième coup et les deux mains du jeune Chinois s’en trouvèrent sectionnées. Endrasena n’eut pas le temps de hurler sa douleur que Ratu Pandhansari déjà saisissait une nouvelle fois son pistolet et faisait feu sur le pied gauche de son adversaire qui aussitôt s’effondra.

Une pluie de lances s’abattit sur le corps d’Endrasena qui offrit son dernier regard à Ratu Pandhansari triomphante :

« O, Reine, voici que s’achèrera la petite guerre. Elle fut sanglante, mais dans son sang nous n’avons parcouru vous et moi ni les déserts de l’esprit, ni les précipices de la chair. La victoire ne vous a pas portée jusqu’au dévoilement des réalités divines, et ma chute ne m’ouvrira pas hélas au monde de la Vision. Il nous faut à présent partir à la grande guerre... »

Une dernière lance transperça Endrasena. Son corps pulvérisé, dans une étreinte éblouissante, s’unit à la terre.

17. Didik danse Tarian Dwi Muka Cina – Danse Double Face Chinoise

Eli silence

Musique Alex Dea – Elemental B voix

1.00mn

L'ERRANCE

18. Eli lit le chant 11 jusqu'à « dans la voie »

Didik danse Tarian Dwi Muka Jawa – Danse Double Face Javanaise

Musique Alex Dea – Elemental B voix

1.10mn

CHANT 11

Au plus fort de la débâcle, Amongraga chercha son jeune frère et sa petite sœur, mais il ne les trouva pas. Il quitta Giri le cœur battu de tristesse, comme l'or naissant des tourbillons de l'eau.

« *Ne t'en fais pas, laisse ton sentiment suivre la tristesse de ton cœur. Souviens-toi que tu es le descendant d'un ascète remarquable. De même que le feu qui flambe est bien difficile à étouffer, mieux vaut le laisser brûler. Plus tard, quand il s'éteindra de lui-même, s'en iront en même temps toutes les impuretés. C'est pourquoi garde à découvert la beauté de cet or !* »

Ainsi s'éloigna le prince héritier de Giri sans que personne n'en connût rien et sans que lui-même ne sût où diriger ses pas. Seul Allah, qui dirige toute chose avec attention, vit qu'Amongraga entrait, vagabond, dans la Voie.

19. Eli lit le chant 11 jusqu'à « et sa sœur »

Didik silence

Musique Alex Dea – Elemental B voix

0.35mn

Amongraga vagabonda longtemps, jusqu'à l'ermitage coranique de Wanamarta. Là il épousa Tambangraras, la fille du chef religieux de l'ermitage, Ki Panurta. Toutefois, avant que les noces ne fussent célébrées, Amongraga fit savoir à Tambangraras que dès qu'ils auraient fait l'amour, il la quitterait pour repartir à la recherche de son frère et sa sœur.

QUARANTE NUITS ET UNE DE PLUIE

20. Didik chante le chant 376 en javanais – mode *dhandhanggula*

Eli silence

Musique Alex Dea – *Elemental B voix*

1.55mn

21. Eli lit le chant 71

Didik silence

Musique Alex Dea – *Elemental B voix*

1.50mn

CHANT 71

Dans la chambre nuptiale, Tambangraras était assise sur le lit couvert d'un drap blanc tissé de fibres de palme. Elle était encore vêtue de son habit de noces. Elle n'avait pas même retiré les fleurs de son chignon, si bien que les belles-de-nuit embaumaient ses cheveux d'un doux ferment, les fleurs de coco s'ouvraient à la faveur des ténèbres tandis que les orchidées de lune réfléchissaient leur pâleur lumineuse contre le ciel de lit pareil à la voie lactée.

Sa servante Centhini était assise auprès d'elle. A l'approche d'Amongraga, elle se glissa derrière le paravent en peau de buffle ajourée et se fit ombre de l'oubli.

Amongraga se dénuda et s'assit en lotus face à son épouse, à l'autre extrémité du lit, suffisamment loin de sorte que sa nudité ne l'alarmât point, mais suffisamment proche pour que Tambangraras vit la forme précise de sa virilité.

Derrière le paravent ajouré, Centhini percevait l'haleine émoue d'Amongraga et le souffle précipité de Tambangraras, la sueur qui perlait de leur corps brûlant et qui emplissait la chambre d'embruns et de bruine. Centhini veillait car elle avait la charge d'annoncer au dehors la rupture de l'hymen afin qu'on préparât sans délai la décoction de la fleur dérobée.

22. Didik danse *Tarian Centhini* – Danse de Centhini

Eli silence

Musique Alex Dea – Elemental B voix

0.30mn

23. Eli lit le chant 72 jusqu'à «ablutions »

Didik danse Tarian Centhini

Musique Alex Dea – Elemental B voix

5.00mn

Amongraga posa ses yeux éblouis sur Tambangraras :

« Petite sœur, te voilà assise à la proue du lit nuptial et moi à la poupe. Quand bien même nous étendrions l'un et l'autre notre bras à l'extrême, nos deux mains ne se toucheraient point tant la crainte entre nous est grande. Mais ton cœur est déjà dans le mien et le mien dans le tien, les entends-tu battre tous deux, affolés d'amour ? Or l'affolement est un obstacle au coït.

Si tu veux bien, petit sœur, et par la grâce d'Allah, nous allons dès cette nuit partir ensemble pour une traversée immobile afin de pacifier nos souffles l'un dans l'autre et faire que tu sois poupe et moi proue. Cette traversée nous semblera à ses débuts sévère, hérissée d'interdits car les risques de naufrage sont grands, elle durera quarante nuits et nous fera parcourir sept mers.

La première mer est la mer d'eau qui mousse et bout. Une épaisse fumée l'enveloppe. La deuxième mer est la mer de feu. Là, sois très prudente, petite sœur, car les flammes flamboient jusqu'à toucher les cieux et dans ce feu se déploient de très grandes terreurs qui par leurs multitudes et leurs clamours retiennent le navire en arrière.

La troisième mer est la mer jaune et pleine de tentations. La quatrième est la mer bleu-vert dont les dangers innombrables sont mêlés en partie à l'eau, en partie au vent. La cinquième mer est la mer de boue qui est affreusement gluante. La sixième est la mer bleu-noir qui ne présente pas grande difficulté bien qu'il faille rester en alerte, petite sœur.

Enfin la septième mer est la mer de jus de canne dont l'eau est blanche et le fond invisible. Elle est calme, sans vent, mais bien que toute tempête en soit absente, les vagues y sont plus hautes que des montagnes. Aucun navire ne s'y risque. Si quelque folle embarcation s'y aventure, les périls des six mers précédentes surgissent et se lèvent unifiés contre elle dans les neuf directions du vent.

On raconte qu'au-delà de ces sept mers, petite sœur, il y aurait encore une vaste mer dont les eaux ont perdu toute couleur. Elle est sans vague aucune mais creusée de gouffres insondables, plus noirs que la nuit de l'aveugle. On ne voit rien à la surface que ténèbres, on ne perçoit plus le vent ni aucune de ses neuf directions. Au centre il n'y a rien, ni étoile ni éclair.

Il n'y a qu'un oiseau qui vole dans les profondeurs de la mer, s'élève puis s'abîme dans un va-et-vient sans fin. Cet oiseau est immense, on ne peut le saisir ni par la vue ni par la raison. Il est de couleur blanche et son bec, qui picore le pollen du vent, est poli d'or. Ses yeux sont des rubis, ses serres des perles, ses ailes des diamants bleus. Le bruit de son vol remplit le monde... »

A la proue du lit, Tambangraras s'inclina et dit :
« O, mon Feu ! J'entends et j'agrée. Mais voilà que la nuit déjà au-dessus de nous se retire.
-Petite sœur, tu dis vrai. Allons, levons-nous et prions. »

Amongraga prit Tambangraras par la main pour la conduire jusqu'au point d'eau des ablutions.

24. Eli lit le chant 72 jusqu'à « patients »

Didik silence

Musique Alex Dea – *Elemental B voix*

0.45mn

Dans les cuisines où la braise n'avait pas pâli de la nuit, Nyi Malarsih questionna sa fille :

« Alors, ma chérie, a-t-il taché le drap de ton sang ?
-Mère, l'amour doit-il s'inaugurer par une souillure ?
-Tu veux dire qu'il ne t'a pas encore... ?

-Nos lèvres ne se sont pas même encore effleurées, Mère.
-C'est que c'est là un homme d'une grande patience comme en connaissent peu les femmes. Réjouis-toi, ma fille, car *Allah est avec ceux qui sont patients.* »

25. Didik danse *Tari Jathilan* – *Danse du Cheval Fou*

Eli silence

Musique Kesenian jaranan Senterewe, Turonggo Savitri Putro Tulungagung – *Jathilan* - CHGB Recording Tulungagung

1.45mn

26. Eli lit le chant 75

Didik silence

Musique Alex Dea – *Elemental B*

2.00mn

CHANT 75

Depuis quatre nuits, l'ermitage de Wanamarta ne désemplissait pas : oncles, cousins, cousines, enchanteurs et guérisseuses, notables et va-nu-pieds, libres penseurs et pieux disciples. Tout ce beau monde mangeait du riz jaune jusqu'à plus faim.

On récitat des versets du Coran, on chantait des poèmes à clé, on s'amusait à des lancés de colombes, on discutait du plaisir d'élever des oiseaux, du désir de la chair à accorder avec la science, du chaos et de la mort, de l'usure, des interdits, des grâces et des tourments dispensés par Allah.

Et quand les discussions s'épuisaient, Jayengraga et Jayengwesti commandaient à Jamal et Jamil de faire résonner les tambourins, les flûtes, les rebecks et les orgues de bambous. Leurs chants étaient si suaves et sibyllins que les arbres de l'ermitage sentaient dans la nuit leurs fruits mûrir en rubis :

« *Une vague verte en l'air
Un lotus blanc par terre
Regardez-vous,
Voici le signe du pouvoir du Seigneur
Où se trouve votre Dieu ?
Où irai-je après la mort ?* »

A la fin de chaque strophe, les spectateurs répétaient tous en choeur : « Allah, Protecteurs des amants ! » Et quand la nuit fraîchissait, tous copulaient sans façon sous les étoiles ahuries.

27. Eli lit le chant 110

Didik silence

Musique Alex Dea – *Gandakusuma*

1.10mn

CHANT 110

Dans la chambre nuptiale, un vent immobile avait soufflé la lampe. C'était la trente-neuvième nuit. Sur le lit d'ange, Amongraga et Tambangraras ne voyaient plus la nudité l'un de l'autre, ni la distance qui les en séparait. Il n'y avait plus ni proue ni poupe, ni ligne de partage des eaux.

Ils se sentaient fondre en un seul corps dans la pulpe chaude des ténèbres. Ils étaient à la fois l'un et l'autre et l'étoffe noire du soir qui les épousait. Leurs voix

coulaient l'une dans l'autre et dans la nuit en crue : « O, Ma Feu ! Mon Fleur !
Laissons-nous conter la fable du fou et de sa lanterne volante. »

28. Didik danse *Tarian Wayang Golek – Danse des Marionnettes de Bois*

Eli silence

**Musique Anjar Ani dari Manthous Campursari Maju Lancar – Adegan
Wayang Goleg, Bowo Lagu Nyidamsari cip. – Dasa Studio**

0.30mn

29. Eli lit le chant 112 jusqu'à « montagne »

Didik danse *Tarian Wayang Golek* jusqu'à “montagne”

**Musique Anar Ani dari Manthous Campursari Maju Lancar – Adegan
Wayang Goleg, Bowo Lagu Nyidamsari cp. – Dasa Studio**

1.20mn

CHANT 112

Sur le lit d'ange, Amongraga se dénuda et s'assit savamment dans le lotus rouge de son épouse. Ils restèrent ainsi enlacés toute la nuit, vigilants et abandonnés l'un dans l'autre.

Dans les premières heures, les sensations de Tambangraras allaient aux deux tiers pour la science et à un tiers pour l'homme, celles d'Amongraga aux deux tiers pour la femme et à un tiers pour la science. Du fond de leur corps, ils prièrent le Divin de ne pas désagréger leur étreinte en la divisant de la sorte et d'unir toutes les saveurs dans la science miraculeuse du coït.

Une pluie chaude tomba sur la nuit pareille à l'eau bouillante jetée sur la feuille de thé sèche qui libère soudain dans la gorge les parfums bruns de la montagne.

30. Eli lit le chant 112 jusqu'à « méditation »

Didik silence

Musique Alex Dea – *Gandakusuma*

2.00mn

Derrière le paravent ajouré, Centhini comprit que la prière des amants étaient exaucée. Elle s'en alla au puits et remplit d'eau la jarre qu'elle déposa au pied du lit d'ange où l'aube déjà dénouait doucement l'étreinte de ses maîtres.

Centhini sortit dans le petit jour informer Ki Panurta et sa femme que l'hymen avait été rompu. Le vieux couple attendait la chose depuis quarante nuits sans prendre aucun sommeil : « *Alhamdulillah ! Vite ! Centhini, réveille tout de suite la jeune Daya, qu'elle prépare la décoction rituelle !* »

La jeune Daya rassembla sans tarder les plantes médicinales. Elle hacha les bourgeons de grenade blanche, les écorces de quinquina, les noix de galle, la cardamone, le girofle, les daturas noirs et les étamines de *lawe*. Elle broya le tout dans un mortier en une fine poudre à laquelle elle ajouta des fleurs de basilic, de la chaux de bétel, du curcuma, de la bave de ver, des cendres de feuilles de bananes dorées, une peau de serpent piment, de la muscade, du cubèbe, la coquille d'un œuf de poule frais pondu ainsi que du gingembre. Elle fit bouillir le tout puis versa la décoction dans la coque évidée d'une noix de coco.

Tambangraras but le savant breuvage tandis que la jeune Daya aspergeait ses seins d'une pluie aux trois fleurs. A l'instant où son épouse trempait ses lèvres dans la noix de coco, Amongraga entamait le jeûne de la parole et entrait en méditation.

31. Didik chante tout en dansant *Tarian Centhini* – *Danse de Centhini*

Eli silence

Musique silence

1.15mn

32. Eli lit le chant 113

Didik silence

Musique Alex Dea – *Gandakusuma*

3.50mn

CHANT 113

Amongragag médita sept jours et sept nuits sans bouger, sans même accomplir aucune des cinq prières rituelles. Il avait vidé sa raison, ses yeux et ses oreilles, il ne contemplait plus rien, sinon Allah. Parfois son regard se voilait de larmes comme une pluie hors saison et ridait le cœur de Tambangraras assise en silence non loin de lui.

Enfin un soir, il rota, il remua lentement ses membres et fit redescendre son esprit dans sa chair. Il attira sa femme à lui et lui parla lentement :

« Ma chérie, voilà sept jours et sept nuits que tu ne m'as pas quitté un seul instant. Souvent, derrière mes paupières, tu as vu mes larmes. Ce sont là les larmes de l'errance. Intarissables. Oui, ma chérie, je vais devoir te quitter pour

repartir à la recherche de mon jeune frère et de ma petite sœur. Qui sait s'ils sont encore en vie ? Il me faudra peut-être marcher jusqu'à la dernière frontière. Je reviendrai auprès de toi sitôt que je les aurai retrouvés. »

A ces mots, les yeux de Tambangraras se creusèrent de ténèbres, son ventre s'emplit de pierres, ses os se vidèrent de leur moelle et furent comme arrachés de son corps, projetés pêle-mêle dans le ciel. La voix brisée, elle dit : « Mon amour, par la grâce d'Allah, je te suivrai où que tu ailles, dussé-je m'effondrer en chemin ou mourir dans tes pas. »

La lune s'avança dans le soir, Amongraga allongea Tambangraras sur le lit d'ange et baigna son corps dans ses larmes. Déjà ils entraient ensemble dans le jeu rare de l'amour, sans règle ni but, sans gagnant ni perdant. Quelques instants avant l'aube, Tambangraras s'endormit tout au fond du coït.

Amongraga se retira doucement de son sommeil. Il déploya sur son corps nu le drap comme la dépouille de leurs étreintes. Il écrivit une lettre à Tambangraras :

« *Ma chérie, sur le chemin il y a des rencontres et des retrouvailles. Mais on chemine seul. Je porte mon corps à travers la démesure de ce poème dont tu es le chant harmonieux. Tu me crois parti alors que j'erre en toi.* »

33. Didik chante le chant 1 en javanais – mode *sinom-* tout en dansant *Tarian Centhini* derrière l'écran

Eli silence

Musique Alex Dea – *Elemental B voix*

1.00mn

FIN

CAFÉ EUROPE – HAVANA

Literary Café

Drago Jančar; *To Write in the Language of a Small Nation*

Translated by Tamara M. Soban

When giving a reading abroad, I am often asked by my foreign readers what it actually means to write in the language of a small nation. How does it feel, for an author, to write in a language that is spoken and read at best by two and a half million? In recent years, since it became clear that quite a few new “small” languages would appear in the European Union, and more notably, in European culture, this cute question was joined by another, a favorite of the members of the press: Aren’t you concerned about the survival of Slovene culture, in particular the Slovene language? In Slovenia too, I have heard not just anybody, but a Slovene author say: What is the point of writing in Slovene, since these works might only survive in some library or other, to be studied by eccentric scholars, similarly as dinosaurs are studied today? Somewhat irritated, I replied to my fellow writer that all my books have been translated into so-called “big” languages, so he need not worry about me. But that is of course no answer. Librarians will tell you that the paper used in book-printing today is very short-lived, it disintegrates, turning some books into dust in a matter of decades. Just as we can only guess what treasures of ancient Greek drama and philosophy disappeared in the flames that engulfed the library of Alexandria, it may be up to conjecture in a hundred years’ time what Slovene literature used to be like, even if it is translated into the languages of big nations. Not only will dust cover our books, they may even turn to dust, just as literatures published in “big” languages will — together with Slovene literature, be it original or in translation. True, books of great importance are, for fear that they too will turn to dust, being transferred onto microfilm and into digital form, but — what evidence do we have of the durability of these media? Everything goes the way of all flesh, ashes to ashes, dust to dust, people and books. Why then should, in an absolute sense, the question of the meaning of writing in a language of a small nation be essentially any different from the question of the meaning of writing in general, of the meaning of indulging in such a useless thing as art, as Oscar Wilde would put it?

Obviously I realize that my German or Russian — let alone American — readers won't be satisfied with this answer. They have long known that bit about transience and eternity, what they want to know now is what it's like to live with a small language, and moreover, to write in it, that's the part they don't know, that's the unusual experience they lack, because after all, how could they possibly have it? Surely it can't be an advantage to write in a language understood by not very many people, surely it must occur to a great number of people, not only authors, that this language will disappear some day, or will be relegated to the level of private and literary usage, a fate that has in the past befallen many languages in Europe and the world, also very prominent ones in terms of literature. But what do we know about that, how can we see into the future of a globalized world? In Austria there lives a Slovene speaking minority whose numbers have fallen drastically in the last century on account of Germanization. Despite this, there are a few authors there who write wonderful literature in Slovene. The following true anecdote also comes from those parts: An expert on linguistic studies attended a meeting of an organization for the protection of minorities, and he told the representative of the Slovene minority, an island amidst the German-speaking majority, that he had a piece of bad news for him. In the next hundred years, he said, a lot of languages will disappear, and Slovene among them. The Slovene representative was saddened by this. But I also have a piece of good news, said the expert. Among the languages to disappear will be also German.

When I now think of my readers who speak the language of a large nation and benevolently ask me how I feel as an author who writes in the language of a small nation, I realize that they look upon me — even if with admiration — as a member of an endangered species: He writes such beautiful things in such a small language. Strange: I have never felt like a member of an endangered species. Thus the portrait of an artist as a young man was — minus a few problems with the political police and censorship of the previous political regime — very similar to such portrait molded by any other linguistic or literary environment: A young poet strolling the streets of a small town on the Slovene-Austrian border who knew by heart pages upon pages of Baudelaire in French; a friend of mine was enthusiastic about Dadaism; rivers of verse by Slovene poets flowed through our artistic souls, to say nothing of Eliot, Pound, Kafka and Dostoevsky. It never occurred to any of us that the lack of a Slovene word for a coffee-house wooden newspaper holder might pose any sort of creative problem. A person who has truly decided to take the uncertain path of art, who has sailed on the translucent, airy currents of language or followed Orpheus into the underworld, does not deliberate about large and small languages, they just take

hold of a subject, a story or a poem, and work with the matter in the language and life that they have at hand, in their head and their heart.

There is an old story about two young writers: One opted for literature because he dreamed of the glory, the money, and the admiration of beautiful women it would bring him. But he grew old embittered by failure and angry at literature, himself and the whole world. The other delved into language with passion and wrote his stories, caring about nothing else, and his books brought him everything the first writer had dreamed of. Nowadays, some of my fellow writers invest a much greater effort in searching for translators and foreign publishers than in their sentences, and pay much more attention to these tasks than to thinking, reading and writing. And more than a few blame not being known by the world on the fact that they write in the language of a small nation. Would anyone know of Joyce today, they say, if he had written in Irish Gaelic? In saying this they forget not only the specific Irish historical situation, but also the fact that Joyce's literature, in all its universality, is also very Irish, Irish down to its last association and metaphor.

Today there are no insurmountable barriers preventing authors writing in the language of a small nation from crossing their linguistic borders with translations of their works. The world is becoming smaller, more readily understandable and accessible than ever before. Back in 1982, when I found myself in the United States on a Fulbright grant for artists, I wrote a postcard to my professor of Slovene language on my first day in New Orleans: *They say Slovene won't get you anywhere. Look where it got me — to America.* I do not rank among the famous authors who sell soaring numbers of copies and have their pictures taken with film stars. Neither do I recognize myself in the above anecdote about the two young authors. Of course, it would be a lie to say that I couldn't care less about the glory of the world, of course I am pleased to have readers in towns whose names I don't even know, and books in languages I don't understand. I am glad to be somehow at home in far-away cultures and lands, but that has nothing to do with writing per se, nor with the question of how I feel, writing in the language of a small nation.

Why do small nations exist at all? asks the Croatian poet Vlado Gotovac in his essay "Svetovna uganka" (The Enigma of the World). Nobody wants a weakness — and that's what a small nation is, a weakness. Gotovac considers this phenomenon mysterious in its unnaturalness, concluding that the enigma of small nations is the enigma of the diversity of the world. And despite its mystery, there is nothing so irrational about this phenomenon that it could not be easily understood. Just as the diversity of nature and life is at the same time both understandable and mysterious. We all gaze at the same sky, says Gotovac, there

is no such thing as a provincial sky or a provincial landscape. What is provincial, say I, is fear of oneself and one's own potential.

So the next time I give a reading in Germany or somewhere else and someone in the audience stands up and asks me the question of how an author writing in the language of a small nation feels, I'll have some sort of answer ready. But it will still not be a perfect or full answer — I don't have that. The real answer is shrouded in the mystery of earthly variety and diversity which makes life interesting, beautiful and exciting. There is an odd secret to writing — it can, with the mere twenty-five letters of the Slovene alphabet or whatever number of letters are in the alphabet of any other language, express the multifariousness of human life, and poems and stories can reach amazing fantasy landscapes. In an era of the global Internet, literary art goes on creating its universal worlds, worlds of a most profuse heterogeneity. A simple invention called the alphabet enables us to browse an infinitely more fascinating network than one based on silicon crystals. The network of the human creative imagination.

CAFÉ EUROPE – HAVANA

Literary Café

Drago Jančar; *Pisati v jeziku malega naroda*

Moji bralci na tujem me na literarnih branjih pogosto sprašujejo, kaj pravzaprav pomeni pisati v jeziku majhnega naroda? Kako se počuti avtor, ki piše v jeziku, ki ga govori in bere v najboljšem primeru dva in pol milijona ljudi? V zadnjih letih, odkar je jasno, da se bo v Evropski uniji, vse izraziteje pa tudi v evropski kulturi, pojavilo kar nekaj novih »malih« jezikov, se je temu prisrčnemu vprašanju pridružilo še eno, najraje ga imajo novinarji: se ne bojite za obstoj slovenske kulture, še posebej literature? In tudi v Sloveniji sem navsezadnje slišal govoriti ne kogarkoli pač pa slovenskega pisatelja: kak smisel sploh ima pisati v slovenščini, mogoče se bodo ta dela obdržala v kakšnih knjižnicah, kjer jih bodo proučevali čudaški učenjaki, kakršni danes proučujejo dinozavre. Temu kolegu sem nekoliko slabe volje odgovoril, da so vse moje knjige prevedene v tako imenovane velike jezike, naj ga torej vsaj zame nič ne skrbi. Ampak to seveda ni pravi odgovor. Knjižničarji namreč vedo povedati, da je papir, na katerem se danes tiskajo knjige, hudo neobstojen, razpada, nekatere knjige se že po nekaj desetletjih spremenijo v prah. Kakor lahko samo domnevamo, kakšne lepote grške dramatike in filozofije so izginile v plamenih aleksandrijske knjižnice, tako bodo lahko čez sto let samo slutili, kakšna je bila slovenska literatura, tudi če bo prevedena v jezike velikih narodov. Ne samo, da bo morda naše knjige pokrival prah, zna se zgoditi, da bodo tudi prah postale, v

prah se bodo skupaj s slovensko, izvirno ali prevedeno spremenile tudi literature, natisnjene v knjigah velikih jezikov. Res je, da pomembnejše knjige – iz strahu, da se ne bi spremnile v prah - že prenašajo na mikrofilme in na računalniške programe, toda kakšno izkušnjo pa imamo z njihovo obstojnostjo? Vse je minljivo, prah si in v prah se povrneš, ti in tvoje knjige. Zakaj bi torej v absolutnem smislu bilo vprašanje o smislu pisanja v jeziku malega naroda kaj bistveno drugega od smisla pisanja naplalah, o smislu ukvarjanja s tako nekoristno stvarjo, bi rekel Oscar Wilde, kot je umetnost.

Seveda vem, da moj nemški ali ruski, kaj šele ameriški bralec s tem odgovorom ne more biti zadovoljen. To, kako je z minljivostjo in večnostjo, že zdavnaj ve, njega zanima, kako je, če človek živi z majhnim jezikom in celo piše v njem, tega ne ve, ker te nenavadne izkušnje nima, kako bi jo imel? Gotovo ni nobena prednost pisati v jeziku, ki ga ne razume prav dosti ljudi, gotovo marsikdo, ne samo med pisatelji, kdaj pomisli, da bo ta jezik izginil ali prešel zgolj na raven zasebne in literarne rabe, kakor se je to zgodilo z mnogimi, literarno tudi zelo pomembnimi jeziki v Evropi in svetu. Toda kaj sploh vemo o tem, kako lahko vidimo v prihodnost globaliziranega sveta? V Avstriji živi slovensko govoreča manjšina, število njenih pripadnikov se je pod vplivom germanizacije v zadnjem stoletju drastično zmanjšalo. Kljub temu nekaj avtorjev tam piše imenitno literaturo v slovenščini. Od tam prihaja tale resnična anekdota: nek ekspert za proučevanje jezikov je na zasedanju organizacije za zaščito manjšin predstavniku slovenske manjšine, otoka sredi nemško govoreče večine, rekel, da ima zanj slabo novico. V prihodnjih sto letih, je rekel, bodo izginili mnogi jeziki, med njimi bo slovenski. Mož se je razžalostil. Imam pa za vas tudi dobro novico, je dodal ekspert. Med jeziki, ki bodo izginili, bo tudi nemški.

In če zdaj pomislim na tiste moje bralce, ki govorijo v jeziku velikega in me ljubeznivo vprašujejo, kako se počuti pisatelj, ki piše v jeziku majhnega naroda, potem mi postaja jasno, da me pravzaprav gledajo, kot pripadnika ogrožene vrste, čeprav z občudovanjem: v tako majhnem jeziku piše tako lepe stvari. Čudno: jaz se nikoli nisem počutil kot pripadnik ogrožene vrste. Če izvzamemo nekaj problemov s politično policijo in cenzuro v prejšnjem političnem režimu, je bil portret umetnika kot mladega moža precej podoben tovrstnemu portretu, ki je nastajal v katerem drugem jezikovnem ali literarnem okolju: po malem mestu na slovensko avstrijski meji je hodil mlad pesnik, ki je znal v francoščini na pamet cele strani Baudelaira, mojega prijatelja je takrat navduševal dadaizem, skozi naše umetniške duše so tekle reke slovenskih pesnikov, da ne govorimo o Eliotu, Poundu, Kafki in Dostojevskem. Nikoli ni nihče pomislil, da je odsotnost slovenske besede za kavarniško leseno držalo za časopise kakršenkoli ustvarjalni problem. Kdor se je zares odločil, da bo stopil na negotovo umetniško pot, kdor je zaplaval v prosojnih zračnih jezikovnih tokovih ali se spustil za Orfejem v podzemlja, ta ne razmišlja o velikih in malih jezikih, v roke vzame snov, zgodbo ali pesem, jezikovno in življenjsko snov, ki jo ima pri roki, v glavi ali srcu.

Obstaja stara zgodba o dveh mladih pisateljih. Prvi se je odločil za literaturo, ker je sanjal o tem, da mu prinesla slavo, denar in občudovanje lepih žensk. Toda postaral se je zagrenjen od neuspehov ter jezen na literaturo, nase in na ves svet. Drugi se je strastno poglabljal v jezik in pisal svoje zgodbe, za nič drugega mu ni bilo mar, toda njegove knjige so mu prinesle vse, o čemer je sanjal prvi. Danes se mnogi moji kolegi bolj kot s svojimi stavki ukvarjajo z iskanjem prevajalcev in založnikov na tujem, nekateri posvečajo tem opravkom veliko več časa, kot premišljevanju,

branju in pisanju. In ni jih malo, ki za to, da jih svet še ne pozna, krivijo dejstvo, da pišejo v jeziku majhnega naroda. Ali bi kdo danes vedel za Joycea, pravijo, če bi pisal v irščini? Pri tem ne pozabljajo samo na specifično irsko zgodovinsko situacijo, ampak na dejstvo, da je Joyceova literatura, kakor je univerzalna, tudi zelo irska, do zadnje asociacije in metafore irska.

Danes res ni več nepremostljiva ovira, da avtor, ki piše v jeziku majhnega naroda s prevodi svojih del ne bi prestopil svojih jezikovnih meja. Svet postaja manjši, preglednejši in dostopnejši, kot je bil kdajkoli poprej. Ko sem se davnega leta 1982 znašel v Ameriki s Fulbrightovo štipendijo za umetnike, sem prvi dan iz New Orleansa napisal razglednico svoji profesorici, slavistki: Pravijo, *da se s slovenščino nikamor ne pride. Vidite, kam se pride: V Ameriko.* Ne sodim med ravno slavne avtorje, ki dosegajo vrtoglage naklade in se njihove fotografije pojavljajo v družbi filmskih zvezd. Tudi se ne prepoznam povsem v tisti pisateljski anekdoti, ki priповедuje od dveh mladih pisateljih. Seveda bi se zlagal, če bi rekел, da se povsem požvižgam na slavo sveta, seveda me veseli, ker imam danes bralce v mestih, ki jim niti ne vem imena in knjige v jezikih, ki jih ne razumem. Veseli me, da sem nekako doma v daljnih pokrajinah in kulturah, ampak s pisanjem samim, kakor tudi ne z vprašanjem, kako se počutim, ker pišem v jeziku malega naroda, to nima nobene zveze.

Kako, da sploh obstajajo majhni narodi? se sprašuje hrvaški pesnik Vlado Gotovac v svojem eseju *Svetovna uganka*. Saj si slabosti – majhen narod pa je slabost – nihče ne želi. Že zaradi nenanavnosti tega dejstva, je po njegovem to skrivnosten pojavi. Uganka malih narodov, odgovarja, je uganka zemeljske pestrosti. In v tem pojavu, čeprav je skrivnosten, ni nič tako iracionalnega, da ne bi bilo zlahka razumljivo. Kakor je razumljiva in hkrati

skrivnostna raznolikost narave in življenja. Vsi gledamo isto nebo, pravi Gotovac, ni provincialnega neba in ni provincialnega pejsaža. Provincialen, dodajam jaz, je strah pred samim seboj in svojimi sposobnostmi.

Ko bo torej na mojih naslednjih branj v Nemčiji ali kje drugje spet vstal kateri od poslušalcev in mi zastavil vprašanje, kako se počuti pisatelj, ki piše v jeziku majhnega naroda, bom imel pripravljen nekakšen odgovor. Vendar pa to še zmeraj ne bo pravi in popolni odgovor. Tega namreč ne poznam. Pravi odgovor je potopljen v skrivnost zemeljski pestrosti in različnosti, ki dela življenje zanimivo, lepo in razburljivo. V pisanju je čudna skrivnost, da lahko s samo petindvajsetimi črkami slovenske, ali poljubno drugačnim številom črk abecede kateregakoli jezika, izrazimo raznovrstnost človekovega življenja, da se lahko s pesmimi in zgodbami dotaknemo čudežnih domišljijskih pokrajin. V dobi globaliziranega interneta literarna umetnost še naprej ustvarja v malih in velikih jezikih svoje univerzalne svetove, svetove najbogatejše možne različnosti. Preprost izum, ki mu pravimo abeceda nam omogoča potovati po medmrežju, neskončno zanimivejšim od onega, ki ga ustvarjajo silicijevi kristali. Po medmrežju človeške ustvarjalne domišljije.



KOSMOPOLIS. Festa Internacional de la Literatura
Del 14 al 19 de setembre de 2004
Barcelona – CCCB

Ismail Kadaré. *La còlera d'Aquil·les*
Dijous 16, 19.30h. Hall Proteu. Albanès i francès, amb traducció simultània

Ismail Kadare

Tirana, 2004

Traducción del albanés: Ramón Sánchez Lizarralde

La cólera de Aquiles

Si nos propusiéramos divagar acerca de la parte de la literatura mundial que tiene por motivo o por tema la guerra, dicho de otro modo, que es producto de la guerra, nos encontraríamos con una verdad sorprendente. Todas las guerras que ha librado hasta hoy la humanidad, y ello para su vergüenza, ya que no han sido pocas sino alrededor de 14.500, pues todas esas guerras tomadas en conjunto no han generado tanta literatura como ha producido una sola de ellas: la guerra de Troya. No son sólo los dos poemas homéricos, sino la parte principal del teatro trágico griego lo que no puede entenderse si ella. Es una gran parte de la poesía, de la prosa, de los diálogos y la filosofía griegos y latinos. Sin hacer mención de las obras perdidas. Sin incluir centenares de obras más que se escribieron con posterioridad y que continúan escribiéndose todavía hoy en decenas de lenguas. Sin referirnos a otros miles donde sus autores se vuelven hacia esa guerra como si se empeñaran en no abandonar este mundo sin haber dicho algo acerca de ella.

Por sus dimensiones, por los ejércitos que se enfrentaron en ella, por las armas, los ataques y los contraataques, por los horrores, los

cadáveres y las matanzas, la guerra de Troya, comparada con las atrocidades militares que ha experimentado más tarde la humanidad, no es más que un juego de niños. Sin embargo es ella y sólo ella la que domina en solitario y sin rival alguno en la literatura mundial. Y por lo que parece dicho dominio será perpetuo.

¿Existe algún secreto que explique este desafío, este reinado o esta soledad, llámenlo como quieran?

Naturalmente que existe, incluso no solamente uno sino varios secretos.

Hemos leído muchos, muchísimos libros sobre Homero y los poemas homéricos, pero debemos admitir que aún no hemos logrado descifrar el enigma de ese soberano desprovisto de ojos.

Le hemos dado vueltas durante años, muchas veces nos ha parecido que encontrábamos la hendedura que nos permitía penetrar en su bruma. Hemos abierto y vuelto a abrir los diccionarios para iluminar la significación olvidada de alguna palabra. Hemos abandonado los diccionarios y hemos empuñado los picos para excavar el territorio donde tuvieron lugar los sucesos de Troya. Hemos corrido como posesos tras cada vaso o tras cada lanza rota con los que los personajes hubieran podido beber o darse golpes de muerte. Hemos hecho infinidad de esfuerzos semejantes hasta llegar a comprender que, justo en el momento en que creíamos acercarnos a la solución, precisamente entonces nos alejábamos más que nunca de ella.

¿En qué consiste entonces ese misterio?

Antes de continuar con la palabra “misterio”, debo recordar una vez más que no se trata del sentido del texto homérico, sino ante todo de explicar lo que mencionaba al comienzo: por qué entre la interminable multitud de guerras de los hombres, esta, como ninguna otra, ha atrapado como en un cepo la imaginación de la humanidad. Junto con ella ha

atrapado también su inquietud, su necesidad de emociones, de arte. En 1913, en vísperas de la carnicería de la Primera Guerra Mundial, en Asia Menor se desarrollaban con brío las excavaciones y las polémicas acerca de Troya. En 1938, en vísperas de la Segunda Guerra Mundial, finalizaban por fin las excavaciones para dejar paso a las polémicas. En 1958, cinco años después de la muerte de Stalin y casi los mismos años antes del asesinato de Kennedy, los problemas se encontraban en un nuevo apogeo. Hoy, tras los horrores de los Balcanes, de Ruanda, de la Nueva York del 11 de septiembre, de Afganistán y de Irak, las gentes, luego de escuchar las noticias, cuando llega la hora de la lectura o del cine, prefieren, al igual que hace dos mil años, descubrir lo que sucedía en las puertas Esceas de Troya y qué duras palabras intercambiaban Aquiles y Agamenón en aquella tienda que tan poco se parecía a la sede actual de la OTAN. De la irritación de los jefes de esta última pueden depender muchas cosas en la vida de las personas, sin embargo, a la hora de la lectura o del cine, esas mismas personas se toman más en serio el encono de Aquiles, aunque tenga que ver con una esclava, que, pongamos, el del presidente norteamericano con el asunto del terrorismo mundial.

Entonces, si es verdad que existe un misterio, ¿dónde se encuentra? Y nosotros que hemos llegado a desentrañar toda suerte de secretos planetarios, ¿por qué nos quedamos paralizados ante este?

Ordenemos algunas de las presunciones que pueden acercarnos a la verdad oculta.

La guerra de Troya, tal como nos la presenta Homero, es más que una guerra. En esta idea nos resulta fácil coincidir a todos. La guerra de Troya, en realidad, fue tanto guerra como preguerra y como postguerra. Horror, festín y diplomacia. Ritual, aventura y nostalgia. No obstante, ese carácter suyo global no basta para explicar el secreto. Otras guerras la sobrepasan con mucho en todo lo aludido.

Continuemos. La guerra de Troya fue poetizada, es decir convertida en arte, en el tiempo en que la escritura aún no había aparecido. En otras palabras, su poetización se llevó a cabo en una época en que la tiranía sojuzgadora de las letras no existía. No obstante, dicha oralidad difícilmente puede constituir una ventaja. Otras obras orales se han recordado a través de los siglos sin beneficiarse en modo alguno de ella.

Con la ausencia de la escritura se vincula en cierto modo otra ausencia: la del testimonio. Ninguna de las partes contendientes dio testimonio de la guerra de Troya. Representarse a Homero como un corresponsal de guerra es algo categóricamente rechazado por todos. El tormento derivado de la ausencia de testimonio nos recuerda la crónica de las guerras entre los hititas y los hurritas, poco anteriores a los griegos, cuando el principal problema de los ejércitos que partían con intención de enfrentarse no era la propia guerra sino encontrar al ejército enemigo en el desierto. Tal como se sospechaba, diversos ejércitos, tras no conseguir dar con el contrincante, regresaban y se inventaban una guerra no librada, y por supuesto, una victoria inexistente.

A la ausencia de testimonio está igualmente vinculada la sospecha, ya de sobra conocida, de que la guerra de Troya no se produjera nunca. Las polémicas acerca de ello prosiguen incluso hoy. La ausencia de testimonio tal vez sea una de las claves que expliquen las sorprendentes relaciones de dicha guerra con la poesía. Es, según parece, una de las ventajas por las que la poesía, y tras ella toda la civilización griega, escogió esta guerra. La ausencia de testimonio es, por tanto, una condición que permite el ensanchamiento de nuestra mente, de nuestra visión, de la carrera hacia límites que se antojan inalcanzables.

Dicho en pocas palabras, la ausencia de testimonio, al liberarnos de numerosos pactos antiguos, nos infunde arrojo y nos torna capaces de formular ciertas preguntas que de ningún modo hubiéramos hecho en otras

condiciones.

He aquí algunas de las preguntas: Si es que no quedó testimonio de la guerra de Troya, tal como reclaman nuestros cánones, ¿qué fue entonces esa guerra? ¿Una confrontación invisible, secreta, de las que tienen lugar en la conciencia? ¿Otra cosa, pongamos una reforma, una superación, una despedida de algo, enmascarada, revestida de la apariencia de la guerra? ¿Un invento, una falsa alarma? Finalmente, ¿un sueño, una pesadilla, una pesadumbre oculta de Grecia?

Incapaces de dar respuesta a tales interrogantes, nosotros hemos preferido, como solemos hacer, una disyuntiva convencional y medrosa: ¡la de si existió o no existió la guerra de Troya! En una disyuntiva, por lo general, una parte tiene razón y la otra no. Acerca de la disyuntiva mencionada he utilizado el calificativo de medrosa porque pienso que las dos partes están igualmente equivocadas. Quienes niegan Troya dan a entender que, junto con su negación, queda resuelto un problema. En cuanto a cual es ese problema que se resuelve, estoy seguro de que no están en condiciones de decirlo. La otra parte, la contraria, la que defiende la existencia de Troya, por supuesto proclama triunfalmente que el problema queda solucionado. En cuanto a cual es el problema que se soluciona, estoy seguro de que tampoco ellos lo saben.

Las dos partes olvidan que la zozobra homérica por esa guerra, dicho de otro modo, la guerra misma, no tiene necesidad de ellos. En sus esfuerzos, ambas partes, aunque recurren sin descanso a Homero, están en realidad en contra de él. Porque ambas partes operan una transferencia imperdonable, la conversión del relato de Troya del mundo de la literatura al mundo del testimonio. En otras palabras, las dos partes olvidan que dicho acontecimiento, dicha guerra, dicha zozobra, se convirtió en alimento espiritual de toda la civilización griega, no por ninguna razón militar, histórica ni política, sino por la sola razón de que fue cantada

homéricamente por un poeta o por un grupo de poetas.

Con los poemas homéricos son innecesarias tanto la frialdad escéptica de los negadores de Troya como el regocijo ingenuo de sus defensores. Detengámonos en estos segundos, los “positivos”, los magnánimos, los que pretenden consolarnos con su benevolencia sin comprender que nos ofenden. Ellos esperan nuestro agradecimiento y naturalmente se sorprenden ante nuestra ingratitud. Desconocen que con su esfuerzo no consiguen otra cosa que corroborar la existencia de una ciudad muerta. Entretanto esa ciudad, merced a la poesía, permanece viva entre las vivas, al lado de Nueva York, París, Tokio, Jerusalén o Roma. Hace más de un siglo que ese ejército de investigadores de buen corazón, creyendo que nos hacen un regalo, están cometiendo un sacrilegio. Dicho sacrilegio puede denominarse así: secuestro, usurpación de Homero. Prácticamente el noventa por ciento de los libros escritos en el último siglo sobre los poemas homéricos no tienen nada que ver con la creación poética. Antes y después de Schliemann, de Dörpfeld, otros investigadores como von Hahn, Meyer, Blegen, Schuchhard y demás, se han situado al frente de una partida interminable que ha llevado a cabo una verdadera invasión, en otras palabras una violación de la poesía antigua. Por si no bastaran los historiadores y los arqueólogos, todo un batallón sin fin viene tras ellos: filólogos, geólogos, etnólogos, meteorólogos, sismólogos, grafólogos, numismáticos, *asirio-babilonólogos, brujólogos, megalopólogos*, antropólogos, folcloristas, ceramistas, urbanistas, moralistas, hititistas, geógrafos, *iconógrafos*, cartógrafos, topógrafos, etcétera, etcétera.

Todo este batallón, enarbolando restos de piedras, arcillas y armas oxidadas, han cortado, han borrado el camino que conduce hacia Homero. La versión homérica del drama de Troya, antes que la descripción de una guerra y de una posguerra, es otra cosa. Es la turbación que provoca la

matanza, lo que en algunas lenguas se llama “presa de la sangre”. Es la historia de un arrepentimiento, el más grande arrepentimiento que ha conocido hasta hoy nuestro planeta. Es el cepo primero, y por desgracia el último hasta el presente, en que quedó atrapada la conciencia griega y junto con ella la de toda nuestra civilización. Todas las guerras que en conjunto ha librado la raza humana no han dado lugar ni a la mitad de ese arrepentimiento.

Desde este punto de vista, la guerra de Troya, su versión homérica, es no solamente una guerra distinta, sino que es una guerra irrepetible hasta el momento, una guerra que tiene vínculos con el futuro. Dicho en pocas palabras, es la guerra más nueva de la humanidad. Para referir con un ejemplo sencillo esta superioridad suya, basta con que recordemos que, sólo algunos años después del Holocausto, el arrepentimiento era tan insuficiente que el odio que lo engendró experimentó un renacimiento y aún está presente en nuestro tiempo.

No tengo ninguna inclinación a idealizar la antigüedad griega, y mucho menos a situarla en relaciones favorables de comparación con nuestra época. Ninguno de nosotros puede ser tan ingenuo como para, tras la cara deslumbrante de los inicios de nuestra civilización, no distinguir sus máculas, y en primer lugar la mácula colosal: la aceptación unánime de la esclavitud. Debe decirse por otra parte que hace tiempo que se observa cierta simetría sorprendente entre dos épocas distantes: la antigua y la moderna. En ocasiones, parece que debido a un equilibrio misterioso, un equilibrio que sólo una visión de la historia desde lo alto puede discernir, se establece cierto paralelismo, siquiera sea vago, entre las dos épocas. Observando las bondades y los males de ambas, se nos torna en extremo arduo establecer cual de las dos sale victoriosa en esa competición. Nosotros nos sentimos orgullosos hoy de los derechos humanos, ahí donde la antigüedad aparece impregnada de fango, pero la

balanza comienza a estremecerse de manera inmediata cuando se trata del arrepentimiento posterior al crimen. Ahí los manchados somos nosotros, y los triunfadores, ellos. Triunfadores gracias a los poemas homéricos, como hemos visto más arriba.

Homero, nuestro padre, lo sabe todo. Una sola cosa no conoce: el odio. El odio es hoy la más grande inmundicia de nuestro planeta. Es, por desgracia, criatura del hombre, y no puede combatirse más que por medios humanos. En la lucha contra el odio, máquinas como los poemas homéricos son insustituibles. De ahí que la deformación, la destrucción de estas máquinas, resultaría fatal para la humanidad. En el caso de la guerra de Troya, ganaríamos la topografía de la ciudad masacrada, pero perderíamos su espíritu. Expresado de otro modo, entregaríamos ese espíritu a cambio de una momia.

El genio humano del tiempo, Dante Alighieri, como si presintiera el peligro del ataque de los arqueólogos y los geógrafos, proporcionó un territorio a su poema, la *Divina Comedia*, inalcanzable para ellos: el infierno, el purgatorio y el cielo.

No soy en absoluto partidario de la indagación aséptica de la poesía, del temor antojadizo a los hechos, a la circunstancias, incluso a las curiosidades. Como todo lector normal, cuando leo la *Ilíada*, siento deseos de tener acceso a toda suerte de comentarios históricos que expliquen, completen, incluso contradigan la visión poética.

Es una satisfacción saber, por ejemplo, que la confrontación de los héroes montados en carros de guerra fue una fantasía poética, y que en realidad dichos carros no eran más que medios de transporte, unos taxis, por así decirlo, que conducían a los combatientes distinguidos hasta la primera línea, al igual que llevan hoy a los actores famosos al platón cinematográfico.

Y así sucede con el resto de las obras maestras. Si por medio de los

comentarios históricos llegamos a saber, por ejemplo, que el cadáver del rey Duncan, a quien dio muerte Macbeth, no fue encontrado por la mañana en el dormitorio sino a dos millas de distancia, en el lecho de un canal lleno de fango, ello nos induce a reflexionar sobre los secretos de la creación. La mente nos dice que tal vez Shakespeare no habría alterado este hecho estremecedor en caso de que su Macbeth no hubiera sido un drama sino poesía o novela.

Para retornar a la *Ilíada*, sentimos curiosidad por conocer el perímetro de Troya, pero no por causa de la topografía sino porque se nos proporciona así una oportunidad de darle vueltas a cómo pudo ser en realidad y cómo fue recreado por la poesía el duelo más famoso de la literatura antigua, el que enfrenta a Aquiles y Héctor.

Llevamos más de dos mil quinientos años creyendo en la lectura superficial de esta descripción. Incapaces de poner en duda la huida del aterrado Héctor ante Aquiles, nos hemos precipitado a acudir a los instrumentos de medida para averiguar el perímetro de Troya, como si ese perímetro pudiera proporcionarnos el cansancio, el resuello o quién sabe qué más de los dos contendientes. Mientras hacemos resonar las herramientas de medición, ni por un instante nos hemos preguntado: ¿cómo es posible que el primer héroe de los troyanos eche a correr como un conejo delante de Aquiles? ¿Cómo es posible que después de eso continúe siendo honrado como el primer héroe de Troya? Finalmente, ¿cómo es posible que Homero, tan atento a las hazañas, las jactancias, las vanaglorias y las vergüenzas de los héroes, ni por un instante considere un baldón, un incidente al menos, la retirada de Héctor?

Paralizados por el colosal aparato que acompaña al texto de Homero, leemos y releemos el duelo famoso sin reparar en que hay algo que no funciona en esa historia. Pero el aparato accesorio, ese aparato repleto de instrumentos, arados primitivos, placas de arcilla, canales de

riegos, monedas, fragmentos de tela, etcétera, no sólo no nos ayuda a obtener una visión poética del texto sino que empobrece desesperadamente nuestra mirada hasta ofuscárla por completo.

Así, medio ciegos, pasamos sobre las líneas en las que tal vez se esconde la verdad. Entre el texto considerablemente largo del duelo aparecen las palabras: “como en sueños se perseguían”, donde según parece se encuentra la clave del enigma.

De acuerdo con esta iluminación poética, el cuadro se presenta del revés: en verdad tiene lugar un enfrentamiento a vida o muerte entre Aquiles y Héctor, pero no hay huida de Héctor en torno a los muros de Troya. Y mucho menos una segunda carrera, que sería doblemente denigrante. Y todavía menos una tercera, que significaría la muerte moral del líder de los troyanos y de la propia Troya.

Héctor es derribado con el primer golpe, eso es todo. Su carrera para salvar la vida es un ensueño y nada más. Es pura alucinación la aparición de la sombra de su hermano, Deifobo, para tenderle una nueva pica. Es producto de la pesadilla su diálogo con Aquiles, antes de la confrontación, y sobre todo su parte más inasequible, el ruego de que no le deforme el rostro, un ruego prematuro, que no se produce jamás entre los contendientes. Es nuevamente alucinación, la más triste de todas las quimeras, ese intento de buscar por segunda vez con la mirada la sombra del hermano para pedirle de nuevo una pica, y el hecho de que el otro no aparezca.

Todo eso que nos parece que sucede ante los muros de Troya y los ojos de miles de testigos, sucede en realidad en la mente de él, que va siendo ofuscada por la muerte. Ante los ojos de los presentes sucede tan sólo el arrastramiento despiadado del muerto.

Regresando a la sorprendente versión del duelo, tal como hace dos mil años que leemos, dos preguntas resultan imposibles de contestar a este

propósito.

La primera: ¿cómo puede ser que Homero haya hecho algo así?
¿Para denigrar a Héctor porque es troyano, por tanto vencido, y Homero
es del país de Aquiles, por tanto del bando de los vencedores?

Todos sabemos que tal cosa está descartada. Homero es imparcial.
El más imparcial de todos los poetas. Su imparcialidad no puede ser
aparente ya que no se pone de manifiesto en una obra donde se describa
un conflicto de manera indirecta. Se evidencia en una epopeya en la que
ambos bandos se enfrentan de forma directa, en la que atacan, retroceden,
hieren, son golpeados, esquivan, engañan, gritan, ensangrientan y gemen
frente a frente, a la vista los unos de los otros.

Algunos estudiosos se han apresurado a entresacar de aquí y de allá
algún verso o epíteto para evidenciar la supuesta parcialidad del poeta en
favor de los griegos. No es sólo que ello resulte increíble, sino que en la
balanza general nuestra simpatía y sobre todo nuestro dolor se inclinan de
manera clara en favor de los vencidos.

El dolor por Troya pasó de los poemas de Homero a la tragedia
griega e inmediatamente después al arte griego. Cuando comenzó la
guerra, uno de los objetivos, uno de los sueños de la victoria griega era el
saqueo de los tesoros de Troya. Estos fueron en efecto saqueados, y así,
medio chorreando sangre, fueron cargados en los navíos para enriquecer a
Grecia. Grecia se enriqueció en verdad. Pero no con los tesoros pillados.
Tal como se dijo al principio de este ensayo, se enriqueció con el
arrepentimiento por Troya.

Regresemos al duelo Aquiles-Héctor. El interrogante ¿qué le
sucedió de pronto a Homero?, continúa produciendo inquietud. ¿Un olvido
en el texto? ¿Una pérdida posterior durante la transmisión oral de un
rapsoda a otro? ¿Un traslado de las palabras “como en sueños se
perseguían” del comienzo del episodio, donde debería encontrarse su lugar

natural, hacia la mitad de él?

Tras la pregunta ¿qué le sucedió a Homero?, aparece la siguiente, todavía más inquietante: ¿qué nos ha sucedido a nosotros? ¿Cómo hemos podido aceptar durante tan largo tiempo este duelo desconcertante?

Resulta difícil dar una respuesta. Antes de culpar a nuestra confusión histórico-topográfica, tal vez podríamos consolarnos diciendo que con la poesía, y sobre todo con Homero, suceden cosas imprevisibles.

Una nueva lectura, más exactamente un retorno al arte, quizás nos ayudaría a abrirnos paso entre la niebla. Aparecen ante nosotros dos poemas homéricos. No sé si a alguien se le habrá ocurrido pensar en un tercer poema. Un poema en modo alguno perdido, sino ausente. Un poema intermedio, en el cual deberían encontrarse visiones, sucesos, sueños y vigilias sucedidos entre la *Ilíada* y la *Odisea*.

En este poema inexistente podría encontrarse tal vez lo sucedido en la preguerra y sobre todo en la posguerra troyana. La caída y el espanto de Ilión deberían aparecer allí por entero. Y después de ello el regreso triste, como en un mal sueño, de los vencedores. La “presa de la sangre”, la maldición que caía ora sobre uno ora sobre otro, y por fin el principio del arrepentimiento. Allí reencontraríamos con seguridad a la hermosa Helena, pero no con veintitantos años, espumeante de pasión, sino con treinta y tantos, ahora una mujer pecadora, amante y viuda a un tiempo, y finalmente, al borde de los cuarenta, tal como aparece en la *Odisea*, cuando, de regreso junto al primer marido, se ha convertido en moralista ¡y condena toda aventura de mujer!

Este tercer poema no fue escrito por Homero ni por los homéridas. No fue obstaculizado por cosa alguna, fue sencillamente considerado innecesario. Lo declaró así una orden, que para muchos puede parecer absurda pero no para nosotros, la gente del arte. Es la orden suprema: ¡el tercer poema no tenía sitio en este mundo!

Siempre de acuerdo con esta orden, el poema de este modo ausente, aunque no aparecido, aunque sin lugar en este mundo, tiene vida en la total de la poesía.

En la literatura mundial son numerosos los ejemplos en que, entre dos capítulos, actos, dípticos o trilogías, hay un texto ausente. A nosotros esto nos parece natural, pero pocas veces se nos ocurre pensar que así es como ha nacido la gran literatura: una obra tangible y otra intangible. Una sombra complementaria, una suerte de espíritu o de sueño que la acompaña.

En este poema inexistente cabe en lo posible que encontremos respuestas a muchos enigmas. Quizás podamos también hallar allí algo acerca del sorprendente duelo Aquiles-Héctor. La *Ilíada*, merced a una simetría de las que nos resulta fácil calificar como divinas, se abre con el nombre del primero y se cierra con el nombre del segundo. La carrera de Héctor, que tal como se dijo más arriba debió de suceder no en la vida, sino en la conciencia, o más exactamente en el inconsciente de Héctor, testimonia que éste, al igual que todos los demás, incluyendo también a los héroes, conoce el miedo. Por otra parte, según los retazos de la bruma de la cual han salido los poemas homéricos, nosotros sabemos que Aquiles, este superhéroe, este supersoldado, ha conocido asimismo un instante nada digno en su vida. Cuando se emite el llamamiento contra Troya y se abren los centros de reclutamiento, Aquiles, vestido de mujer, ¡se ocultó entre las jóvenes sirvientes para eludir la misión! Muchas cosas encontraríamos en el tercer poema, podríamos llamarlo la “Ausenciada”. Y entre otras encontraríamos tal vez la completa explicación de por qué los dos gloriosos combatientes, Aquiles y Héctor, son a un tiempo combatientes y desertores de guerra, héroes y antihéroes.

Para concluir estas notas, permítanme regresar al primer verso, o mejor dicho, a la primera palabra del doble poema homérico. Se trata de la

palabra “*meni*”, que en griego antiguo significa “manía”. “¡La manía canta, oh musa!” ¿Debemos tomar por una señal de advertencia, por un mal augurio, el hecho de que la primera palabra con la que da comienzo la literatura europea sea precisamente esta?

Hace un siglo, un ensayista albanés de nombre Faik Konica escribió un ensayo provocador y desafiante en el que de manera categórica proclamaba que desde hace más de dos mil años el primer verso de la *Ilíada*, “Canta o musa la cólera de Aquiles Peleida”, se ha traducido y continúa traduciéndose de forma radicalmente incorrecta en casi todas las lenguas del mundo.

Según él, a excepción del nombre de Aquiles, nada es exacto en este verso. Siempre de acuerdo con él, el principal error se comete con el término “*meni*”. Explica que esta palabra, que por lo común se traduce por cólera, en griego antiguo tiene un significado más hondo y complejo. La palabra “*meni*” designa un malestar hondo, prolongado, enfermizo, un estado de depresión, como se diría en el tiempo de Konica y todavía más en el nuestro. Para captar mejor esto, Konica nos recuerda el paso de ese término al latín y tras los latines a todas las lenguas europeas, en la forma tan extendida de “manía”, palabra que se encuentra en la raíz de decenas de otras, una parte de las cuales designan graves estados psíquicos.

Así pues, no de “cólera” que por lo general es pasajera, sino de “*meni*”, que no puede ser sino prolongada y abrumadora, en otras palabras en un grave estado de depresión, padece Aquiles al inicio de la *Ilíada*. Es este grave estado el que ha conducido al héroe a la decisión de abandonar el campo de batalla.

Podemos decir que, en cierta manera, desde la primera palabra de la *Ilíada* se proporciona una parte del código descifrador de esta epopeya. Comienza con una manía (*meni*), de igual modo que la propia guerra de Troya se ha iniciado en un mar de indecisiones, para acabar en un

arrepentimiento. Una guerra diferente, una guerra de nuevo tipo, que se niega, que se sobrepasa, que se da muerte a sí misma. Una victoria que no es victoria, un triunfo seguido de una maldición. Dicho en breve, una guerra y al mismo tiempo una anti-guerra.

Por continuar con la idea de Konica, es posible que la traducción errónea del comienzo de la *Ilíada*, más que una casualidad, sea un reflejo de nuestro pensamiento limitado, conformista acerca de las guerras. La sustitución de la palabra “manía” por “cólera”, se adapta como anillo al dedo a nuestros clichés sobre el odio, la propaganda belicista, la brutalidad, la victoria, la aclamación de los vencedores, etcétera, etcétera. Queramos o no queramos, nuestra humanidad, todos nosotros formamos parte del sistema de la guerra. Esta es la mayor maldición, la vergüenza absoluta de nuestro planeta. Hace siglos que hemos caído en ese foso, en ese mal sueño, no somos capaces de salir de él. Esta es al parecer la razón de que el código de la guerra de Troya, versión de Homero, su hondo mensaje, aún continúa siendo ajeno y distante para nosotros como un fantasma cuyas señales, por mucho que nos esforzamos, no somos capaces de entender.

Ismail Kadaré. *La còlera d'Aquil-les*
 Dijous 16, 19.30h. Hall Proteu. Albanès i francès, amb traducció simultània

Zemërimi

Në qoftë se do të përsiatnim për atë pjesë të letërsisë botërore që ka për motiv apo për subjekt luftën, thënë ndryshe, që është pjellë nga lufta, do të ndesheshim në një të vërtetë befasuese. Të gjitha luftërat që ka bërë gjer më sot njerëzimi, dhe ato për turpin e tij, kanë qenë jo pak, por rrëth 145.000, pra të gjitha këto luftëra bashkërisht, nuk kanë pjellë dot letërsi sa ç'ka prodhuar vetëm njëra prej tyre: lufta e Trojës. Nuk janë vetëm dy poemat homerie, është pjesa kryesore e teatrit tragjik grek, që nuk mund të kuptohet pa të. Është një pjesë e madhe e poeziës, prozës, dialogëve dhe filozofisë greke dhe latine. Pa përmendur veprat e humbura. Pa përmendur qindra të tjera që u shkruan më pas e që vazhdojnë të shkruhen edhe sot në dhjetëra gjuhë. Pa përmendur mijëra të tjera ku autorët i kthehen kësaj lufte, si të donin të mos e linin këtë botë, pa thënë diçka për të.

Për nga përmasat e saj, për nga ushtritë që u ndeshën, për nga armët, sulmet e kundërsulmet, për nga tmerret, kufomat dhe masakrat, lufta e Trojës, e krahasuar me lemeritë ushtarake që ka përfjetuar njerëzimi më pas, nuk është veçse një lodër fëmijësh. E megjithatë është ajo dhe vetëm ajo, që sundon e vëtmuan dhe pa asnjë shemër në letërsinë botërore. Dhe ky sundim, me ç'duket, do të jetë i përfjetshëm.

A ka një të fshehtë që ta shpjegojë këtë sfidë, këtë mbretërim apo këtë vëtm, quajeni si të doni?

Natyrisht që ka, madje jo një, por ndoshta disa të fshehta.

Kemi lexuar shumë libra, jashtëzakonisht shumë libra për Homerin dhe poemat homerie, por duhet të pranojmë se ende nuk e kemi zbuluar dot enigmën e këtij monarku pa sy.

I jemi vërtitur vite me radhë, shumë herë na është dukur se e kemi gjetur të çarën për të depërtuar në mjegullën e tij. Kemi hapur e stërhapur fjalorët për të ndriçuar kuptimin e harruar të ndonjë fjale. Kemi lënë fjalorët e kemi rrëmbyer kazmat për të gërmuar truallin ku ka ndodhur ngjarja e Trojës. Kemi rendur si të marrë pas çdo poçje a pas çdo heshte të thyer, me të cilat personazhet mund të kenë pirë verë a të jenë

goditur për vdekje. Kemi bërë shumë mundime të tilla, gjersa e kemi kuptuar se shi në kohën kur kemi kujtuar se i jemi afruar zbërthimit, pikërisht atëherë i jemi larguar më fort se kurrë.

Çfarë është atëherë ky mister?

Përpara se të vazhdoj me fjalën “mister”, duhet të them edhe një herë, se nuk është fjala për kuptimin e tekstit homerik, por në radhë të parë për shpjegimin e asaj që thamë në fillim, se përse nga moria e pafund e luftërave të njeriut, kjo luftë, si asnje tjetër, e ka zënë si në grackë përfytyrimin e njerëzimit. Bashkë me të ajo ka zënë në grackë trazimin e tij, nevojën për emocione, për art. Më 1913, në prag të kasaphanës së Luftës së Parë Botërore, në Azinë e vogël, vazhdonin me vrull gërmimet e polemikat për Trojën. Më 1938, në prag të Luftës së Dytë Botërore, gërmimet më në fund po mbaronin për t'u lënë vendin polemiëkve. Më 1958, pesë vjet pas vdekjes së Stalinit, dhe gati po aq vjet përpara vrasjes së Kenedit, problemet ishin me një kulm të ri. Sot, pas tmerreve në Ballkan, në Ruanda, në Nju-Jorkun e 11 shtatorit, në Afganistan, e në Irak, njerëzit, pasi dëgjojnë lajmet, kur vjen ora e leximit ose kinemasë, parapëlqejnë, ashtu si dy mijë vjet më parë, të dinë se ç'ndodhë në portën Skye të Trojës, dhe ç'fjalë të hidhura këmbyen Akili me Agamemnonin, në shatoren që aq pak i ngjante selisë së sotme të NATO-s. Prej acarimit të shefave të kësaj të fundit, mund të varen shumë gjëra në jetën e njerëzve, megjithëse, në orët e leximit ose të kinemasë, ata e marrin më seriozisht mërinë e Akilit, ndonëse ajo ka të bëjë me një robinë, se sa ta zëmë atë të presidentit amerikan për punë të terrorizmit botëror.

Atëherë, në qoftë se ka një mister, ku është ai? Dhe ne që kemi arritur të zbërthejmë gjithfarë të fshehtash planetare, përse ndihemi të paralizuar përballë tij?

Le t'i renditim më radhë disa nga hamendjet që mund të na afrojnë te e vërteta e mbuluar.

Lufta e Trojës, ashtu si na e jep Homeri, është më tepër se një luftë. Me këtë mendim e kemi lehtë të bashkohemi të gjithë. Lufta e Trojës, përnjëmend, ka qenë edhe luftë, edhe paraluftë, edhe pasluftë. Edhe tmerr, edhe gosti, edhe diplomaci. Dhe ritual, dhe aventurë, dhe nostalqji. Ndërkaq, ky karakter global i saj nuk është i mjaftueshëm për të shpjeguar të fshehtën. Të tjera luftëra ia kalojnë dukshëm asaj në të gjitha ato që përmendëm.

Vazhdojmë. Lufta e Trojës u poetizua, pra u kthye në art, në kohën kur shkrimi nuk ishte shfaqur ende. Me fjalë të tjera, poetizimi i saj, u krye në një epokë kur tirania pranguese e shkronjave nuk ekzistonte. Ndërkaq, ky oralitet i saj, vështirë se mund të

përbëjë një përparësi. Të tjera vepra gojore janë kujtuar nëpër shekuj, pa përfituar kurrsesi nga gojdhanizmi.

Me mungesën e shkrimit lidhet njëfarësoj një tjetër mungesë: ajo e dëshmimit. Lufta e Trojës ka qenë e padëshmuar nga asnëra prej palëve ndërlufuese. Përfytyrimi i Homerit si korrespondent lufte ka qenë përjashtuar katërcipërisht nga të gjithë. Krusma që vjen nga mungesa e dëshmimit na kujton kronikën e luftërave midis hititëve dhe huritëve, pak përpara grekëve, kur problemi kryesor për ushritë që niseshin për t'u kacafytur, nuk ishte vetë lufta, por gjetja e ushtrisë armike në shkretëtirë. Siç është dyshuar, disa ushtri, pasi nuk e gjenin dot kundërshtar, ktheheshin duke shpikur një luftë të pabërë, e natyrisht një fitore të paqenë.

Me mungesën e dëshmimit lidhet kështu dyshimi i njohur tashmë se lufta e Trojës nuk është bërë kurrë. Polemikat për këtë vazhdojnë edhe sot.

Mungesa e dëshmimit ka qenë ndoshta një nga çelësat që shpjegon raportet e çuditshme të kësaj lufte me poezinë. Është, me sa duket, një nga komoditetet që poezia, dhe pas saj gjithë qytetërimi grek e zgjodhi, e shenjoi këtë luftë. Mungesa e dëshmimit pra, është kusht për të lejuar zgjerimin e mendjes tonë, e vizionit tonë, e turrjes drejt caqeve që ngajnjë të paarritshme.

Thënë shkurt, mosdëshmimi, duke na çliruar nga shumë pakte të vjetra, na jep guximin e na bën të aftë të bëjmë ca pyetje që kurrsesi nuk do të mund t'i bënim në kushte të tjera.

Ja disa nga pyetjet:

Në qoftë se lufta e Trojës nuk dëshmohet, ashtu siç e duan kanunet tona, atëherë ç'ka qenë kjo luftë? Një ndeshje e padukshme, e fshehtë, nga ato që ndodhin në ndërgjegje? Një tjetër gjë, ta zëmë një reformë, një kapërcim, një lamtumirë me diçka, e maskuar, e veshur me trajtat e luftës? Një trillim, një alarm i rremë? Së fundi një èndërr, një makth, një brengë e fshehtë e Greqisë?

Të paaftë për t'u dhënë përgjigje pyejeve të tilla, ne kemi parapëlqyer, ashtu siç bëjmë shpesh, një alternativë të rëndomtë e burracake: alternativën, ka patur apo s'ka patur luftë të Trojës!

Në një alternativë, zakonisht njëra palë ka të drejtë, e tjetra jo. Për alternativën e mësipërme përdora fjalën “burracake”, sepse mendoj se të dy palët janë njëlloj të gabuar.

Ata që mohojnë Trojën lënë të kuptohet se bashkë me mohimin e tyre, një problem mbyllët. Se cili është ky problem që mbyllët, jam i sigurt se nuk janë në

gjendje ta thonë. Pala tjetër, e kundërtë, ajo që e mbron ekzistencën e Trojës, natyrisht që ngadhnjyeshëm shpall se problemi zgjidhet. Se cili është ky problem që zgjidhet, jam i sigurt se as këtë nuk e dinë.

Të dy palët harrojnë se trajtimi homerik për këtë luftë, thënë ndryshe, vetë kjo luftë, nuk ka nevojë për ta. Në rropatjet e tyre, të dy palët, ndonëse e përmenden pa pushim Homerin, janë në të vërtetë kundër tij. Sepse të dy palët bëjnë një transferim të pafalshëm, kthimin e tregimit të Trojës, nga bota e letërsisë në botën e dëshmisë. Me fjalë të tjera, të dy palët, harrojnë se kjo ngjarje, kjo luftë, ky trazim, u bë ushqimi shpirtëror i krejt qytetërimit grek, për asnjë arsyе tjetër, arsyе ushtarake, historike ose politike, po për arsyen e vetme sepse u këndua homerikisht nga një poet ose nga një grup poetësh.

Për Trojën homerike janë të panevojshme si ftohtësia skeptike e mohuesve të Trojës, si gjëzimi naiv i pohuesve të saj. Le të ndalemi te këta të dytët, “pozitivët”, zemërmirët, ata që duan të na ngushëllojnë me mirësinë e tyre, pa e kuptuar se po na fyejnë. Ata presin falënderimin tonë dhe natyrisht befasohen nga mosmirënjojha jonë. Ata nuk kuptojnë se me rropatjen e tyre nuk arrijnë gjë tjetër veçse të vërtetojnë qenien e një qyteti te vdekur. Ndërëaq, ky qytet, falë poeziës, është i gjallë ndër të gjallët, krahas Nju-Jorkut, Parisit, Tokios, Jerusalemit, Romës.

Ka më shumë se një shekull që kjo aradhe hulumtuesish zemërmirë, duke kujtuar se po na bën një dhuratë, po kryen një sakrilegj. Ky sakrilegj mund të quhet: rrëmbimi, uzurpimi i Homerit.

Pothuajse nëntëdhjetë për qind të librave të shkruar në shekullin e fundit për poemat homerike nuk kanë të bëjnë me krijuimin poetik. Përpara dhe pas Schliemann-it e Dvrpfeld-it hulumtues të tjerë, si von Hahn, Meyer, Belgen, Schuchhard, e të tjerë, u vunë në krye të një aradhe të pafundme që ka kryer një pushtim të vërtetë, me fjalë të tjerë një dhunim të poeziës antike. Si të mos mjaftonin historianët e arkeologët, një taborr i pambarim vjen pas tyre: filologë, gjeologë, etnologë, meteorologë, sismologë, grafologë, numizmatologë, asyrbabilonogë, shtrigologë, folkloristë, qeramistë, urbanistë, megalopolistë, moralistë, hititistë, antropologistë, gjeografë, ikonografë, hartografë, topografë, etj., etj.

I gjithë ky taborr, duke tundur mbeturina gurësh, argjilesh, armësh të ndryshkura, kanë prerë, kanë shtupuar shtegun që çon drejt Homerit. Versioni homerik i dramës së Trojës, përpara se të jetë përshkrimi i një lufte e i një paslufte, është tjetër gjë. Ai është turbullimi që sjell ploja, ajo që në disa gjuhë quhet “zënie e gjakut”. Është

historia e një pendimi, më të madhit pendim që ka njojur gjer më sot planeti ynë. Është gracka e parë, dhe për fat të keq, e fundit gjer më sot, ku është zënë ndërgjegjja greke e bashkë me të ndërgjegjja e krejt qytetërimit tonë. Të gjitha luftërat që bashkërisht ka bërë raca njerëzore, nuk kanë pjellë as gjysmën e këtij pendimi.

Nga kjo pikëpamje, lufta e Trojës, versioni homerik, është jo vetëm një luftë *ndryshe*, por ajo është një luftë e papërsëritshme gjer më sot, një luftë që ka lidhje me të ardhmen. Thënë shkurt, ajo është lufta më e re e njerëzimit. Për të treguar, me një shembull të thjeshtë, këtë sipëranë të saj, mjafton të kujtojmë se, vetëm disa vite pas Holokaustit, pendimi ishte kaq i pamjaftueshëm saqë urrejtja që e polli atë pësoi një ringjallje dhe ende është e pranishme në kohën tonë.

Nuk kam asnjë prirje të idealizoj antikitetin grek, e aq më pak ta vendos në raporte të favorshme krahasimi me epokën tonë. Asnjë nga ne nuk mund të jetë aq naiv saqë prapa anës së ndritshme të fillimeve të qytetërimit tonë të mos dallojë njollat e tij, e në radhë të parë, njollën kolosalë: pranimin njëzëshëm të skllavërisë. Duhet thënë ndërkaq se prej kohësh është vënë re njëfarë simetri e habitshme e dy epokave të largëta: antikes dhe modernes. Herë-herë duket se për një drejtpeshim misterioz, drejtpeshim që vetëm një vizion nga lart i historisë mund ta pikasë, njëfarë krahasimi krijohet, ndonëse i mjegullt, midis dy epokave. Duke hetuar të mirat dhe të këqijat e tyre, ne e kemi tepër vështirë të gjejmë se cila prej të dyjave del fituese në këtë garë. Ne ndihemi krenarë sot me të drejtat e njeriut, aty ku antikiteti del i njollosur me baltë, por peshorja, aty për aty, tronditet, kur vjen fjala te pendimi pas krimtit. Aty të njollosurit jemi ne, dhe fitimtarët ata. Fitimtarë falë poemave homerike, siç e pamë më lart.

Homeri, ati ynë, di gjithçka. Ai s'njeh veç një gjë: urrejtjen.

Urrejtja është ndotja më e madhe e planetit tonë sot. Ajo është, për fat të keq, pjellë e njeriut, dhe nuk mund të luftohet veçse me mjete njerëzore. Në luftën kundër urrejtjes, makina të tillë, si poemat homerike, janë të pazëvendësueshme. Ndaj dhe përcudnimi, prishja e këtyre makinave, do të ishte fatale për njerëzimin. Në rastin e luftës së Trojës, ne do të fitonim topografinë e qytetit të masakruar, por do të humbim shpirtin e tij. Thënë *ndryshe*, do ta jepnim atë në këmbim të një mumjeje.

Gjeniu i radhës i njerëzimit, sikur ta ndiente rrezikun e sulmit të arkeologëve e gjeografëve, i gjeti poemës së vet “Komedia Hyjnore” një truall të paarritshëm prej tyre: ferrin, purgatorin dhe qiellin.

Nuk jam kurrsesi ihtar i hulumtimit të pastër të poezisë, i frikës naziqe prej fakteve, rrethanave, madje kurreshive. Si çdo lexues normal, kur lexoj Iliadën, kam

dëshirë të di gjithfarë shënimesh shkencore që shpjegojnë, plotësojnë, madje kundërshtojnë vizionin poetik.

Është kënaqësi të mësosh, për shembull, se ndeshja e heronjve të hipur mbi qerre luftarake ka qenë një fantazi poetike, dhe se në të vërtetë qerret nuk ishin veçse mjete transporti, si të thuash ca taksi që i çonin luftëtarët e shquar në vijën e parë, ashtu siç çojnë sot aktorët e famshëm te sheshi i xhirimit.

E kështu ndodh me të tjera kryevepra. Në qoftë se nga shembujt historiko-shkencorë ne mësojmë për shembull se kufoma e mbretit Dunkan të vrarë prej Makbethit nuk u gjet në mëngjes në dhomën e gjumit, por dy milje larg, në një kanal ujites plot llum, ne biem në mendime për të fshehtat e krijimit, dhe mendja na shkon se Shekspiri nuk do ta ndryshonte ndoshta këtë fakt rrëqethës, në qoftë se “Makbethi” i tij nuk do të ishte dramë, por poezi ose roman.

Për t'u kthyer te “Iliada”, ne jemi kurresttarë të dimë perimetrin e Trojës, jo për topografinë, por sepse na jepet një rast për të vrarë mendjen sesi mund të ketë qenë në të vërtetë, e si është dhënë nga poezia dyluftimi më i famshëm i krejt letërsisë antike, ai midis Akilit dhe Hektorit.

Ne kemi më shumë se dy mijë e pesëqind vjet që i besojmë leximit të sipërfaqshëm të këtij përshkrimi. Të paaftë për të vënë në dyshim ikjen e Hektorit të tmerruar përpara Akilit, ne kemi vrapuar te veglat matëse për të gjetur perimetrin e Trojës, thua se ky perimetër do të mund të jepte lodhjen, dihatjen apo zoti e di çfarë, të dy dyluftuesve. Duke tringëllitur veglat matëse, për asnjë çast ne nuk kemi bërë pyetjen: si është e mundur që heroi i parë i trojanëve vrapon si një lepur përpara Akilit? Si është e mundur që pas kësaj ai vazhdon të nderohet si heroi i parë i Trojës? Së fundi, si është e mundur që Homeri, aq i vëmendshëm për bëmat, për mburrjet, kapardisjet dhe turpërimin e heronjve, për asnjë grimë nuk e quan një cen, apo qoftë një incident, sprapsjen e Hektorit?

Të mpirë prej aparatit kolosal që shoqëron tekstin e Homerit, ne e lexojmë dhe e rilexojmë dyluftimin e famshëm, pa e vënë re se ka diçka që nuk shkon në këtë histori. Mirëpo aparati shoqërues, ai aparat i mbushur me vegla, parmenda parake, pllaka argjili, kanale ujites, monedha, endje pëlburash etj., jo vetëm nuk na ndihmon për të patur një sy poetik mbi tekstin, por dëshpërueshëm varfëron vështrimin, gjersa na i myll krejt. Kështu, gjysmë të verbër, ne kalojmë sipër rreshtave ku ndoshta fshihet e vërteta. Midis tekstit tepër të gjatë të dyluftimit janë fjalët: “si në ëndërr ata ndiqeshin”, ku, me sa duket, gjendet çelësi i enigmës.

Sipas këtij ndriçimi poetik, tabloja përmbyset: ka vërtet një ndeshje për jetë a vdekje të Akilit me Hektorin, por nuk ka ikje të Hektorit rrith mureve të Trojës. E aq më pak një rendje të dytë, që do të ishte dyfish poshtëruese. E aq më pak një të tretë, që do të ishte vdekje morale e prijësit të trojanëve dhe e vetë Trojës.

Hektori është rrëzuar qysh në goditjen e parë, kjo është e gjitha. Është makth dhe asgjë tjetër, rendja e tij për t'i shpëtuar vdekjes.

Është halucinacion i pastër shfaqja e hijes së vëllait të vet, Deifobit që i zgjat një heshtë të re. Është pjellë e makthit dialogu i tij me Akilin, përpara dyluftimit, e sidomos pjesa e tij më e pakapshme, lutja për të mos ia gjymtuar fytyrën, lutje e parakohshme, që nuk ndodh kurrë midis dyluftuesve. Është përsëri halucinacion, më i trishtueshmi i gjithë shajnive, kërkimi me sy për herë të dytë i hijes së vëllait, për të lypur prapë një heshtë, dhe mossħfaqja e tjetrit.

Të gjitha këto, që na duket se ndodhin përpara mureve të Trojës, në sytë e mijëra shikuesve, ndodhin në të vërtetë në mendjen e tij, që po errësohet nga vdekja. Në sytë e shikuesve ndodh vetëm zvarrisja mizore e të vrarit.

Dy pyetje janë të pashpjegueshme me këtë rast. E para, si është e mundur që Homeri e ka bërë këtë? Për ta poshtëruar Hektorin, meqë Hektori është Trojan, pra i mundur, e Homeri është nga vendi i Akilit, pra nga krahu i fitimtarëve?

Ne të gjithë e dimë se kjo përjashtohet. Homeri është i paanshëm. Më i paanshmi i gjithë poetëve. Paanshmëria e tij s'mund të jetë mashtruese ngaqë ajo nuk dëshmohet në një vepër, ku tërthorazi përshkruhet një konflikt. Ajo dëshmohet në epopenë ku të dy poetët ndeshen drejtpërdrejt, ku sulmojnë, sprapsen, theren, grihen, bishtnojnë, mashtrojnë, klithin, përgjaken e rënkojnë sy më sy e gjoks më gjoks.

Disa studiues janë ngutur kur kanë qëmtuar aty-këtu ndonjë varg ose ndonjë cilësor, për të treguar kinse anshmërinë e poetit në favor të grekëve. Jo vetëm që kjo ngjan e pabesueshme, por në peshoren e përgjithshme, simpatia jonë, e sidomos dhembja jonë anon në mënyrë të qartë nga të mundurit. Dhembja për Trojën, nga poemat e Homerit kaloi në tragjedinë greke e fill pas saj në ërejt artin greë.

Kur lufta nisi, një nga qëllimet, një nga èndrrat e fitores greke ishte grabitja e thesareve të Trojës. Dhe ato u grabitën vërtet, dhe ashtu, gjysmë të llangosura nga gjaku, u ngarkuan në anije për të pasuruar Greqinë.

Greqia u pasurua vërtet. Por jo nga thesaret e grabitura. Siç u tha në fillim të kësaj sprove, ajo u pasurua nga pendimi për Trojën.

Të kthehem i te dyluftimi Akil-Hektor. Pjetja, ç'ka ndodhur befas me Homerin? mbetet gjithmonë shqetësuese. Një harresë në tekst? Një humbje e mëvonshme gjatë tejçimit gojor nga një rapsod në tjetrin? Një zhvendosje e fjalëve “si në èndërr ata ndiqeshin”, nga kreu i episodit, ku duhej të ishte vendi i tyre i natyrshëm, në mes të tij?

Pas pyetjes, ç'ka ndodhur me Homerin? vjen pyetja tjetër, edhe më shqetësuese: ç'ka ndodhur me ne? Si e kemi pranuar për një kohë kaq të gjatë këtë dyluftim të çuditshëm?

Është vështirë të jepet një përgjigje. Përpara se të fajësonim trullojen tonë historiko-topografike, ndoshta do të ngushëlloheshim me atë, që me poezinë, e sidomos me Homerin ndodhin përherë gjëra të paparashikueshme.

Një rilexim, më saktë një rikthim në art, do të na ndihmonte ndoshta për të depërtuar nëpër mjegull. Përpara nesh janë dy poema homerike. Nuk e di në qoftë se dikujt i ka shëuar mendja për një poemë të tretë. Një poemë aspak të humbur, por të munguar. Një poemë midisëse, me të cilën duhej të ishin pamje, ngjarje, èndrra ose zhgjëndrra, të ndodhura midis Iliadës dhe Odisës.

Në këtë poemë të aspaktë (inekzistenete), do të ishin ndoshta ato që ndodhën në paraluftën e sidomos në pasluftën trojane. Rënia dhe lemeria e Ilionit duhej të ishin të plota aty. E pas saj kthimi i trishtueshëm, si në një èndërr të keqe, i fitimtarëve. Zënia e gjakut, mallkimi që i binte herë njërit, herë tjetrit, e së fundi fillimi i pendimit. Aty do të rigjenim me siguri Helenën e bukur, por jo njëzetecavjeçare, të shkumbëzuar nga pasioni, por tridhjetëvjeçare, tashmë grua mëkatare, dashnore e vejushë njëherësh, së fundi, në prag të të dyzetave, ashtu siç jepet te Odisea, kur e kthyer te burri i parë, është shndërruar në moraliste dhe dënon çdo aventurë gruaje!

Kjo poemë e tretë nuk u shërua as nga Homeri, as nga homeridët. Ajo nuk u pengua nga asgjë, ajo thjesht u quajt e panevojshme. U quajt kështu nga një urdhër, që për shumëkënd mund të dukej absurd, por jo për ne, njerëzit e artit. Është urdhri sipëran: poema e tretë nuk kishte vend në këtë botë!

Gjithmonë sipas këtij urdhri, nga poema e munguar kësisoj, ndonëse e pashfaqur, ndonëse pa vend në botë, në gjithnjë e poezi të ka jetën e saj.

Në këtë poemë të aspaktë ka gjasë që të gjejmë përgjigje për shumë enigma. Atje mund të gjejmë ndoshta diçka edhe për dyluftimin e çuditshëm Akil-Hektor. Iliada, falë një simetri, nga ato që e kemi lehtë t'i quajmë hyjnore, hapet me emrin e të parit dhe mbyllët me emrin e të dytit. Rendja e Hektorit, ajo që siç u tha më lart, duhet të ketë ndodhur jo në jetë, por në ndërgjegjen, ose më saktë në ndërdijen e tij, dëshmon se

Hektori, ashtu si të gjithë, duke përfshirë këtu edhe heronjtë, e njeh frikën. Ndërkaq, sipas dromcave të mjegullnajës, prej të cilës kanë dalë poemat homerike, ne e dimë që Akili, ky superhero, ky superushtar, gjithashtu ka patur një çast aspak të denjë në jetën e tij. Kur kushtrimi kundër Trojës në qendrat e rekrutimit, Akili i veshur si grua, ishte fshehur midis vajzave shërbëtore, për t'iu shmangur detyrës!

Shumë gjëra do të gjenim te poema e tretë, ajo që do ta quaja “Mungesiada”. E ndër të tjera do të gjenim ndoshta shpjegimin e plotë se përsë dy dyluftuesit e lavdishëm, Akili me Hektorin, janë njëherësh luftëtarë dhe dezertorë lufte, heronj dhe antiheronj.

Duke mbyllur këto shëname, më lejoni të kthehem te vargu i parë, ose më mirë, te fjala e parë e dypojemshit homerik. Kjo është fjala “menin”, që në greqishten e vjetër do të thotë “mëri”. Mërinë (menin) këndo o muzë! Ta marrim për një shenjë paralajmëruese, për një ogur të keq, që fjala e parë me të cilën nis letërsia evropiane është pikërisht kjo?

Një shekull më parë, një eseist shqiptar me emrin Faik Konitzë shkroi një sprovë provokuese dhe sfidante, ku në mënyrë të prerë shpallte se ka më shumë se dy mijë vjet që vargu i parë i Iliadës, “Këndo o muzë mërinë e Akil Pelidit”, është përkthyer e vazhdon të përkthehet krejtësisht gabim në pothuajse të gjitha gjuhët e botës.

Sipas tij, me përashtim të emrit të Akilit, asgjë nuk është e saktë në këtë varg. Gjithmonë sipas tij, gabimi kryesor bëhet te fjala e parë “mëri”. Ai shpjegon se kjo fjali, që zakonisht përkthehet me fjalin “zemërim”, në greqishten e vjetër ka një ëuptim më të thellë e të ndërlikuar. Fjala “menin” është një hidhërim i thellë, i gjatë, i sëmurë, një gjendje depresioni, siç do të thuhej në kohë të Konicës, e aq më tepër sot. Për ta kapur më mirë këtë, Konitzë na kujton kalimin e kësaj fjalë në latinisht, e pas latinëve në gjithë gjuhët evropiane, në trajtën aq të përhapur “mania”, fjali që qëndron në rrënjen e dhjetëra të tjerave, një pjesë e të cilave tregojnë gjendje të rënda psikike.

Pra, jo nga “zemërimi”, që zakonisht është i shkurtër, por nga “mëria”, që s'mund të jetë veçse e gjatë dhe kapitëse, me fjali të tjera nga një gjendje e rëndë depresioni vuan Akili në fillim të Iliadës. Është kjo gjendje e rëndë që e ka çuar heroin në vendimin për të braktisur fushën e luftës.

Mund të themi se në njëfarë mënyre, qysh në fjalin e parë të Iliadës, jepet një pjesë e kodit zbërthyes të kësaj epopeje. Ajo nis me një mëri (menin), ashtu si vetë lufta e Trojës, ka nisur plot mëdyshje, për të mbaruar me një pendim. Në një vizion të përgjithshëm gjithçka është harmonioze në këtë epope. Një luftë ndryshe, një luftë e

tipit të ri, që mohon, që tejkalon, që mbyt vetveten. Një fitore që s'është fitore, një ngadhënjam që ndiqet nga një mallkim. Shkurt, një luftë e njëherësh një antiluftë.

Për të vazhduar mendimin e Konitzës, ka gjasë që përkthimi i gabuar i fillimit të Iliadës, më tepër se rastësi, të jetë një pasqyrim i mendimit tonë të cekët, konformist për luftërat. Zëvendësimi i fjalës “mëri” me “zemërim”, i shkon për shtat klisheve tona, për urrejtjen, propagandën luftënxitëse, egërsinë, fitoren, brohoritjen e fitimtarëve etj., etj. Kurse kodi i luftës së Trojës, version i Homerit, kumti i thellë i saj, ende mbetet i huaj e i largët për ne si një fantazmë, shenjat e së cilës sado që përpinqemi, nuk i marrim dot vesh.

Ismail Kadare

Tiranë, 2004



Ozren Kebo. *Bòsnia: un tríptic*

Divendres 17, 11.30h. Observatori d'horizons. Anglès, amb traducció simultània

EL CUERPO EN LA GUERRA

(Autor: Ozren Kebo)

Selección de observaciones útiles relativas a los cambios que experimenta nuestro cuerpo en tiempos de guerra.

1.

El hombre se comporta como una tortuga. Cuando amenaza un peligro, es decir, cuando hay tiros, esconde la cabeza. El único problema es que nosotros, a diferencia de las tortugas, no tenemos caparazón. De modo que nuestro intento de esconder la cabeza no es una acto de salvación, sino una demostración de miedo e impotencia.

2.

Nadie teme la muerte. Todos temen la invalidez. Entre la invalidez y la muerte, la mayoría de los sarajevitas, si hubieran tenido que elegir, habrían elegido la muerte. La muerte es el final, mientras que la invalidez es sufrimiento más infelicidad. El final, según todos los criterios, es una solución preferible.

3.

Un hombre que carece de la pierna izquierda describe su dolor. Mucho tiempo después de la amputación tenía dolores insoportables en la planta del pie izquierdo. Todavía hoy, a pesar de los años que han transcurrido, a menudo, cuando se va a producir un cambio de tiempo, le duele esa parte del cuerpo perdida hace tanto.

4.

Después de años de hambruna, nuestros padres se ponen sin ningún problema los trajes de los sesenta. Durante los últimos veinte años no cabían en ellos.

Habían engordado demasiado. El sitio de la ciudad, sin clemencia, ha logrado lo que ninguna dieta consiguió: nos ha reducido a nuestras proporciones naturales.

5.

Metamorfosis de los cuerpos femeninos. Al cabo de medio año de sitio, las mujeres son más bellas que nunca en la vida, porque han perdido la grasa superflua. Después de un año han adelgazado más de lo que debieran. Transcurridos dos años de hambre, ya no se diferencian de los hombres, porque sus formas se han desvanecido sin dejar rastro. Y a los tres años, comienzan de nuevo a engordar, porque nuestro organismo se ha acostumbrado a ese sistema de alimentación.

6.

Cuando salen del campo de concentración, la mayoría de los prisioneros engorda. Es una suerte de reacción psíquica ante los extremos que han padecido. Asimismo es una suerte de resistencia. A la exagerada delgadez forzosa a la que otros los han sometido, ellos oponen inconscientemente una obesidad también exagerada, que es elección propia. Un antiguo prisionero del campo de Dretelj me contó que el primer mes, después de salir, todas las noches se despertaba a la una y se ponía a comer sin pausa hasta las tres. Luego pasaba por periodos inexplicables en los que no soportaba mirar ni tocar la comida. Su organismo está en manos del trauma, bajo su control absoluto.

7.

Lo primero que cortaron fue la electricidad. Por la noche no tenemos luz. El organismo se adapta rápidamente y, ya al cabo de unos meses, nos las apañamos a las mil maravillas en la oscuridad: reconocemos las sombras, las siluetas, incluso las caras. El problema es que a la luz del día no reconocemos a esas mismas personas.

8.

Nuestros oídos por fin vuelven a su ser. No hay electricidad, lo que significa que han desaparecido los principales agresores del oído: la radio, los aparatos de música y la televisión. La consecuencia es que el sentido del oído se agudiza, se concentra: soy capaz de oír el canto de un gallo a un kilómetro y medio de distancia.

9.

El organismo humano puede adaptarse al hambre como un estado permanente. A eso se denomina "pasar hambre de manera controlada": se cortan las largas pausas con raciones escasas. Nunca estás ahíto, pero tampoco al borde de la inanición, y así se puede soportar.

10.

En invierno oscurece a las cuatro de la tarde. Más exactamente, a las 16:25. A las siete ya estamos acostados. Por eso nos despertamos hacia las cinco de la mañana. Hay que esperar dos horas a que amanezca. Y el cuerpo no debe asomar ni la nariz de debajo del edredón. Fuera de él, reina un helor insopportable.

11.

El hombre con el frío se encoge un tres por ciento de largo y un dos por ciento de ancho. La esencia del hombre con la guerra encoge un noventa y nueve por ciento.

12.

Es más fácil soportar el calor extremo que el frío extremo. Uno puede refugiarse en la sombra, refrescarse. Pero, ¿qué puede hacer ante un frío intenso si no tiene con qué calentarse? Mi experiencia personal: después del dolor, lo que peor soporta el cuerpo es el frío. El frío, en realidad, es una forma de dolor.

13.

Justo cuando el cuerpo empieza a acostumbrarse a eso que no podíamos ni imaginarnos que se acostumbraría: el frío, llegan abril y la primavera. Y consigo traen la necesidad de volver a acostumbrarse a algo nuevo.

14.

N., 25 años:

--Reflexioné largamente sobre mi cuerpo por primera vez en 1992. Al principio de la guerra. Dos trozos de metralla me alcanzaron en una pierna. Me llevaron a la sección de ortopedia del hospital. La ciudad entera estaba siendo bombardeada, a la sección llegaban cincuenta personas por hora. Los médicos trabajaban sin cesar. No podían atender a todos, así que se establecieron criterios. Si tenías más de treinta años, te cortaban la pierna o el brazo, porque no tenían tiempo de dedicarse a ti. Si eras más joven, intentaban hacer algo. Una anciana falleció en la cama junto la mía, rogándoles que la atendieran. Lo sentimos, le respondieron, esta muchacha tiene prioridad sobre usted porque es más joven. Hoy me da pena de la anciana, tuvo que morir para que yo quedara entera.

15.

E., 23 años, se quemó toda cuando la sorprendió la explosión del depósito de munición en el que se hallaba. La superficie del cuerpo estaba tan abrasada que ni siquiera se podía mirar. Una doctora le vomitó encima cuando vio lo que había quedado de la piel humana. La dieron el alta como un caso perdido. Entonces, ella sola se dedicó a darse ungüentos y a quitarse los pellejos. Hoy no tiene ni una cicatriz en el cuerpo, y esa resurrección milagrosa se la debe a un aceite de lirio de fabricación casera.

16.

La forma física, conseguida gracias a muchos años de entrenamiento, desaparece después de quince días de pasar hambre, miedo y sed. Cuando empezó la guerra, podía hacer 30 enviables flexiones (enviables para mi edad). Al cabo de diez días: 15. Despues de quince días: 5. De veinte: ni una.

17.

La gente carga todos los días con pesados bidones de agua. Una chica tiene auténtico pánico a que después de la guerra los brazos se le hayan alargado como los de un mono.

18.

No es la regla, pero suele suceder: en la guerra, los enfermos sanan, los sanos enferman. Conozco a un hombre que antes del conflicto tuvo dos operaciones de corazón y apenas podía dar un paso de lo débil que estaba. En cuanto empezaron los tiros, cogió el fusil y durante los cuatro años siguientes nadie podía alcanzarlo, tanta era la vitalidad que poseía.

19.

Después de la guerra, el número de enfermos y enfermedades aumenta precipitadamente. El miedo al denominado carcinoma galopante se apodera de la ciudad. En quince días se extiende y aniquila a la persona. Los expertos dicen: en la guerra prevalecía un tipo específico de tensión física y la enfermedad se mantenía en segundo plano. Ahora, cuando el organismo se ha relajado porque el peligro primario ha cesado, la enfermedad vuelve en busca de lo que es suyo.

Una mujer que moría de cáncer le dijo a su marido:

--Nosotros hemos olvidado, pero el cuerpo recuerda.

20.

Existen teorías que afirman que el proceso de curación dura tanto como ha durado la enfermedad. Como prueba se cita el embarazo. Sólo nueve meses después del parto, la mujer recupera su aspecto original. Únicamente para que se sepa: el sitio de Sarajevo duró 1390 días.

21.

La rosa de Jericó crece en las costas del mar Mediterráneo. Una vez marchita, tiene la irrepetible capacidad de revivir cuando la rocían con agua. Esa característica suya la veo por todas partes a mi alrededor. Al cabo de un año de paz desaparece la palidez, el andar encorvado, el agotamiento, la agonía. Se

desvanecen despacio, tan despacio que apenas se nota. Pero se desvanecen, lo que despierta en mí la falsa esperanza de que la vida es indestructible.

22.

Niños con el cabello blanco. En tiempos de paz no los había. Pero en la guerra todo acontece de repente y, por lo general, de la noche a la mañana. Un niño sobrevive a un bombardeo, o un combate de verdad, o lo obligan a ver cómo violan a su madre, o le ponen un cuchillo en la garganta. A la mañana siguiente, su pelo ha encanecido. Su pelo, espejo de su alma.

23.

Una anciana vive con mucha penuria: recorre kilómetros para acarrear agua, corta leña durante horas. Eso conserva su vitalidad. Más tarde, cuando vuelve la luz y ya no tiene que acarrear agua ni cortar leña, cuando se cuerpo se distiende, lo primero que la asalta es la debilidad, seguida de la enfermedad. En cuanto la electricidad y el agua se cortan de nuevo, en cuanto tiene que cargar otra vez agua y leña, recupera la vitalidad.

24.

Una sarajevita declara al periódico parisino "Le Monde" en marzo de 1993: "En Sarajevo nos bombardeaban sin parar, pero mal que bien se vivía. París es estupendo y, sin embargo, se me parte el corazón de pena. No sabía que el corazón podía partirse así".

25.

Una familia musulmana atrapada en Grbavica, un barrio de Sarajevo ocupado por los serbios. El miedo y la desgana reinan en su vivienda. La hija reprende al padre: "¿Por qué te abandonas de este modo? Aféitate. Ponte un traje. Que no degüellen a un desgraciado. Tú siempre has sido un señor para ellos".

26.

Marko Vešović apuntó: inmediatamente después de la caída de una granada, un taxista se acerca a los heridos, coge en brazos a una niña que yace en un

charco de sangre y la lleva hacia su coche. La pequeña gime: "Señor, se ha olvidado de mi brazo".

27.

Marko Vešović apuntó: un hombre herido en un bombardeo entra en un taxi. Bajo el brazo izquierdo sostiene el derecho arrancado. Le dice al taxista: "Me temo que te voy a manchar el coche, lo siento".

28. ***

PREPARADOS PARA LA DESGRACIA: un hombre puede vestir un traje remendado, eso no es una vergüenza. Lo que es una vergüenza es ir sucio. Y el colmo de la vergüenza es ir con las uñas sin arreglar. Los sarajevitas nunca han ido más limpios que en esta guerra, cuando menos agua había para lavarse. La higiene siempre ha sido importante aquí, pero ahora no es el resultado de la costumbre, ni de la distinción, sino de la precaución; incluso podría decirse que del temor: si te acierta una granada y tienen que amputarte un miembro, sería imperdonable que el cirujano te viera la ropa interior sucia o las uñas mugrientas. La guerra, la falta de agua, las difíciles condiciones, el bombardeo, nada es justificación suficiente. El hombre tiene que aguardar limpio su trayecto fatal, el que va hasta el hospital de Koševo. Así nos preparamos para lo que más nos asusta; aquí nadie teme la muerte, sino la invalidez.

29. ***

MARCA, CICATRIZ, ADVERTENCIA: tengo un amigo al que munición de dispersión, procedente de una base serbia en el monte Hrasno, le dio de pleno en las nalgas. Durante meses estuvo acostado boca abajo, hasta que la herida cicatrizó. Algo del miedo vivido se le quedó grabado para siempre. La gente camina por la calle Kranjčevićeva. Un francotirador dispara. Todos, siguiendo una orden tácita, meten el tronco, encogen el cuello entre los hombros y encorvados, semejantes a una letra **C**, como si eso fuera ayudarlos, corren hasta el primer refugio. Todos, salvo mi amigo. Cuando se oye el primer tiro, él

instintivamente, saca pecho y mete las posaderas, y sólo entonces, así doblado hacia adelante, parecido a la letra **D**, echa a correr. Y lo hará hasta el final de su vida. Siempre correrá doblado, llevando en su cuerpo la marca, la cicatriz en el alma y una advertencia eterna para todos los que se hallan en el punto de mira. No basta con proteger la cabeza con un periódico para que el francotirador no te vea. Le pagan por el resultado. Su fusil es infalible. Su dedo no tiembla jamás. No tienes casi ninguna posibilidad, salvo en el caso de que en vuestro duelo no interfieran fuerzas mayores.

30. ***

LIMPIEZA: muchas personas han fallecido mientras lavaban la ropa en el río Miljacka. Sorprendidas por un francotirador o un trozo de metralla. Aquí vive gente aseada que concede mucha atención a la limpieza. Uno al que no le gusta el orden porque en él ve la falta preocupante del individualismo pregunta: "**¿Qué es más importante estar limpio y muerto o vivo y sucio?**". Sin embargo, entre los vivos hay más limpios que sucios. Para ellos, la higiene representa un pacto secreto con la civilización. Por eso han insistido con tanto fanatismo en lavarse. Al río Miljacka se debe que los hombres y mujeres paseen por las calles aseados, con camisetas limpias sin planchar.

31. ***

LA DUCHA: Con cinco litros de agua se pueden hacer milagros. Es una cantidad suficiente para que una persona medianamente sucia vuelva estar resplandeciente. Una persona medianamente sucia es la que no se ha lavado entre siete y quince días. Ducharse, en tiempos de guerra, se ha convertido en una complicada operación con resultado incierto. Primero hay que acarrear la cantidad suficiente de agua. Luego hay que encontrar leña con la que calentar el agua. Después el champú. Así transcurre un día. Cuando oscurece, ducharse sin una vela es imposible, como imposible es comprarla, la vela sólo puede hacerse. Y por fin, quien sortea todos los obstáculos, puede ducharse.

Ducharse en la guerra obtuvo una nueva denominación: botellazo. Con cinco litros de agua se hace así: se ponen cinco botellas de Coca-Cola en el cuarto de baño. El usuario se mete en una bañera de bebé poco profunda. No puede desperdiciarse ni una gota, para eso sirve la bañera. Si el baño se realiza de manera racional, basta con dos botellas para mojar todo el cuerpo. La manera racional consiste en no levantar demasiado la botella de agua por encima de la cabeza. Eso es preciso para reducir al mínimo las salpicaduras. Sin embargo, con este método, la eficacia del humedecimiento es mucho menor, por lo que, mientras cae el agua, es necesario que el cuerpo rote sobre su propio eje y roten así todas sus partes salvo el brazo que sujetla la botella. Después sigue un rapidísimo enjabonamiento de la cabeza. La rapidez es imprescindible porque la temperatura en el cuarto de baño está cercana a cero grados. Con la espuma que se obtiene del champú hay que enjabonar también todo el cuerpo. Luego, con los otros tres litros se aclara. Ahora sí que hay que elevar la botella un poco más alto por encima de la cabeza para simular el efecto ducha y alcanzar la fuerza que necesita el agua para aclarar el champú. El agua sucia que se acumula en la pequeña bañera se volverá a usar aún dos veces. Después del baño, en ella se lavan los calcetines, y luego con el líquido (que ya no tiene ningún parecido con el agua) negro como el carbón se limpia la taza del váter.

32. ***

PUEBLOS CONSTITUYENTES: mi amigo tiene necesidad de clasificar las fisionomías con las que se encuentra. Las clasifica en virtud de su nacionalidad. Éste es serbio. Aquél es cien por cien musulmán. Ése de ahí tiene que ser croata. Incluso ha confeccionado una suerte de pseudoclasicación. Los serbios según este elaborado sistema tienen una mandíbula fuerte y cuadrada, cabeza grande y barba acerada. A los musulmanes los traiciona su conducta, unos modales de pobre que está disculpándose constantemente y que no gustan a nadie. A los croatas, la astucia les sale por los ojos.

Por supuesto que todo es una tontería, pero mi amigo no se da por vencido. Con gran pasión sigue clasificando fisonomías según el principio étnico.

Consecuencia de la guerra y de los sufrimientos padecidos, dice cuando debe justificarse. Incluso ha compuesto subcategorías raras: yugoslavos, indefinidos, y otros. Dice que las características físicas no son más que una orientación y que no son decisivas. Decisiva es la energía que cada hombre emite y que sólo un alma sutil, como la suya, puede descodificar étnicamente.

Con este amigo mío sólo hay un inconveniente: acierta infaliblemente la nacionalidad de un hombre al cabo de diez segundos.

33. ***

Y AHORA ALGO SOBRE EL SENTIDO DE LA VIDA: Uno de los mayores detalles es que te regalen una lata de *foie-gras*. Un poco más tarde compro por muy poco dinero dos panecillos. Como el *foie-gras* se puede repartir en dos raciones, eso significa que cenaré medio panecillo a secas; desayunaré un panecillo entero con media lata de *foie-gras*, y comeré la otra mitad del panecillo y la mitad de la lata. ¿Alguien en el mundo puede imaginarse lo que supone para un hombre tener aseguradas tres comidas por anticipado? Es un contacto directo con el futuro, un pacto secreto con tiempos mejores. La inmortalidad.

La guerra arrecia y temo que la comida se convierta en el único objeto de nuestros pensamientos, el único sentido de la vida y el único motivo existencial. Por fortuna, el proceso de reducción consciente de las necesidades habidas antes del conflicto ha finalizado con éxito. El organismo, de algún modo, logra sobrevivir con dos míseras raciones al día. Y si alguien consigue por casualidad comer tres veces, en el Sarajevo de principios de 1993, eso es una auténtica perversión, una bacanal, un banquete.

Sólo cuando pasa hambre durante cierto tiempo, el hombre comprende, lo comprende con todo su ser (los únicos conocimientos valiosos son los que

experimentamos en nuestra propia piel), cuan cierta era la sentencia de Leonardo de que no somos más que una máquina vulgar de producir excrementos. Los atascos en las grandes ciudades, los desfiles de moda, los anuncios luminosos, las guerras, los galanteos, las universidades, los coches, la acetona, la ayuda humanitaria, la ecología, los periódicos, las intervenciones militares, la religión, las bellas letras, Benetton, el plástico, las matanzas, la televisión, todo eso existe por las tres raciones y todo obtiene pleno sentido a la mañana siguiente durante el momento contemplativo en la taza del váter.

34. ***

DIÁLOGO EN EL EXTRANJERO O TE CONOZCO POR EL MODELO:

--Se nota que viene de Sarajevo.

--¿Por qué se nota que vengo de Sarajevo?

--Pues porque sus textos están llenos de sexo y sangre.

--Pero si yo ya no escribo sobre sexo.

--Es decir, que sólo queda la sangre.

NOTA: el símbolo ******* significa que el fragmento pertenece a mi libro *Sarajevo para principiantes*.

Traducido por:

Luisa Fernanda Garrido

Y Tihomir Pištelek

24.05.2004



Ozren Kebo. *Bòsnia: un tríptic*

Divendres 17, 11.30h. Observatori d'horitzons. Anglès, amb traducció simultània

THE BODY IN WAR

(Author: Ozren Kebo)

Selection of useful observations about the changes our bodies experience in times of war.

1.

Man behaves like a tortoise. When danger threatens, in other words, when there's shooting, he hides his head. The only trouble is that we, unlike tortoises, have no shell. So trying to hide our heads is not an act of salvation but a demonstration of fear and impotence.

2.

No one's afraid of dying. Everyone's afraid of being disabled. If they'd had a choice between disability and death, the majority of Sarajevans would have chosen death. Death is the end, whereas disability is suffering plus unhappiness. The end, by any standard, is the better solution.

3.

A man who's lost his left leg describes his pain. Long after the amputation, he still felt unbearable pains in the sole of his left foot. The years have gone by and yet often, when the weather's about to turn, the part of his body he lost so long ago still hurts him today.

4.

After years of starvation, our parents haven't the slightest difficulty putting on outfits from the 1960s. For the past twenty years these clothes have been much too small for them. They'd grown too stout. The ruthless siege of the city has achieved what no diet could do: it's reduced us to our natural proportions.

5.

The metamorphosis of female bodies. At the end of a six-month siege, women are more beautiful than ever before in their lives because they've lost their excess fat. After a year they've lost more weight than they should have. When two years of hunger have passed, they're indistinguishable from men because their curves have vanished without trace. And after three years they start putting weight on again, because our bodies have got used to this system of nutrition.

6.

Most prisoners get fat after leaving the concentration camp. It's a sort of psychological reaction to the extreme conditions they've endured. It's also a form of resistance. To the exaggerated thinness that was forcefully imposed by others they unconsciously oppose an equally exaggerated obesity which they choose for themselves. A former inmate of the Dretelj camp told me that the first month after he came out he woke up every night at one o' clock and ate non-stop until three. Then there were periods when, unaccountably, he couldn't bear to look at food or touch it. His body's in the grips of trauma, under its absolute control.

7.

The first thing they cut off was the electricity. At night we have no light. The body adapts fast and, within a few months, we're managing wonderfully well in the dark: we can recognize shadows, silhouettes, even faces. The trouble is, we can't recognize the same people in daylight.

8.

At last our ears are reverting to their natural state. There's no electricity, which means the main sources of aggression against the ear have gone: the radio, musical equipment and television. As a result, our hearing becomes more acute, more concentrated: I can hear a cock crow a mile away.

9.

The human body can adapt to a permanent state of hunger. It's known as "hunger management": the long gaps are bridged by meagre portions. You're never full, but never on the brink of starvation either; that way it's bearable.

10.

In winter it gets dark at four in the afternoon. Or more precisely at 4.25. By seven we're in bed. That's why we wake at around five in the morning. We have to wait two hours for dawn. And the body mustn't so much as poke its nose out from under the eiderdown. Outside it's icy cold.

11.

In the cold, man shrinks three percent in length and two per cent in width. In war the essence of man shrinks ninety-nine percent.

12.

Extreme heat is easier to bear than extreme cold. You can take refuge in the shade, cool yourself down. But how can you cope with intense cold if you have nothing to warm yourself up with? My personal experience is this: what the body finds it hardest to bear, after pain, is cold. Cold is, in fact, a form of pain.

13.

Just as the body is beginning to get used to what we never even remotely imagined it *would* get used to –cold–, April and spring arrive. Bringing with them the need to get used to something new again.

14.

N., aged 25:

--The first time I thought about my body at any length was in 1992. At the beginning of the war. I was hit in the leg by two pieces of shrapnel. They took me to the orthopaedic ward at the hospital. The entire city was being bombed, fifty people an hour were arriving in the ward. The doctors were working non-stop. They couldn't attend to everyone, so they laid down certain criteria. If you were over thirty, they cut off your leg or arm because they couldn't spend any more time on you. If you were younger, they tried to do something. An old woman in the bed next to mine died while begging them to look after her. We're sorry, they answered, this girl has priority over you because she's younger. Today I feel sorry about that old woman: she had to die so that I could remain whole.

15.

E., aged 23, was burnt all over when the munitions store where she was suddenly exploded. The surface of her body was so badly charred, you couldn't bear to look at her. A woman doctor vomited on top of her when she saw what was left of her skin. E. was discharged as a hopeless case. Then, of her own accord, she started applying ointments to herself and peeling off the pieces of skin. Today she hasn't even a scar and she owes this miraculous resurrection to home-made iris oil.

16.

Physical fitness achieved through many years of training disappears after a fortnight of hunger, fear and thirst. When the war broke out, I could do 30 enviable push-ups (enviable for my age, that is). After ten days I could do 15. After two weeks, 5. After twenty days, not one.

17.

Every day people have to carry heavy cans of water. One girl is absolutely panic-stricken lest her arms stretch like those of a monkey before the war is over.

18.

It's not the rule, but it often happens: in war the sick become healthy and the healthy fall ill. I know a man who'd had two heart operations before the war. He was so weak he could barely walk a step. As soon as the shooting started, he grabbed his rifle and for the next four years he had such vitality that nobody could keep up with him.

19.

After the war the number of sick people and diseases rises sharply. Fear of the so-called galloping carcinoma takes hold of the city. It spreads and destroys its victim in just two weeks. The experts say: in war a particular type of physical tension prevailed and illness was relegated to the background. Now the organism has relaxed because the primary danger has ceased. Disease returns to claim its own.

A woman who was dying of cancer said to her husband:

--We've forgotten, but the body remembers.

20.

According to certain theories, the cure takes as long as the disease. As proof of this, they quote pregnancy. Just nine months after childbirth, the woman recovers her original appearance. In case you don't know: the siege of Sarajevo lasted 1390 days.

21.

The rose of Jericho grows on the shores of the Mediterranean. After it has withered, it has the unique capacity of reviving when sprinkled with water. I can see this same characteristic all around me. After a year of peace, the pallor, the stooping gait, the exhaustion, the agony, disappear. They vanish slowly, so slowly you hardly notice. But they do vanish, and that arouses in me the false hope that life is indestructible.

22.

Children with white hair. In times of peace there were none. But in war everything happens suddenly, usually overnight. Children survive a bomb attack, or a real-life battle, or they make them look on while their mother is raped, or they hold a knife to their throats. Next morning their hair has gone white. Their hair, the mirror of their souls.

23.

An old woman lives in abject poverty: she walks miles to fetch water, she spends hours cutting firewood. This conserves her vitality. Later, when the electricity comes back and she no longer has to carry water or cut wood, when her body relaxes, first she's assailed by weakness, and then by disease. As soon as the electricity and water are cut off again, as soon as she has to carry water and wood again, her vitality returns.

24.

A woman from Sarajevo said to the Paris magazine "Le Monde" in March 1993: "In Sarajevo they were bombing us non-stop, but somehow we kept alive. Paris is wonderful and yet it breaks my heart. I didn't know the heart could be broken like that".

25.

A Muslim family is trapped in Grbavica, a district of Sarajevo occupied by the Serbs. Fear and exhaustion pervade their home. The daughter scolds the father: "Why do you let yourself go like this? Shave. Put a suit on. Don't let them murder some miserable wretch. You've always been a gentleman to them".

26.

Marko Vešović wrote: just after a grenade had fallen, a taxi driver went over to the wounded, picked up a little girl who was lying in a pool of blood and started carrying her to his car. The little girl moaned: "You've forgotten my arm, sir".

27.

Marko Vešović wrote: a man who's been wounded in a bombing raid gets into a taxi. Under his left arm he's holding his right arm which has been torn off. He says to the taxi driver: "I'm afraid I'm going to stain your car, I'm sorry".

28. ***

READY FOR MISFORTUNE: A man can wear a suit that's been patched, that's nothing to be ashamed of. But being dirty is. And the most shameful thing of all is going about with dirty nails. The people of Sarajevo have never been cleaner than during this war, when there's never been less water to wash in. Hygiene has always been important here, but now it's not just the result of habit, or refinement: it's a precaution, you could even say it's the result of fear: if you're hit by a grenade and they have to amputate a limb, it would be unforgivable if the surgeon saw your dirty underwear or your grimy nails. The war, the shortage of water, the difficult conditions, the bombing: nothing is sufficient justification. Man must be clean as he waits to embark on the fatal trip that will take him to Koševo hospital. And so we get ready for the thing that frightens us most; here no one's afraid of dying, they're afraid of being disabled.

29. ***

MARK, SCAR, WARNING: A friend of mine was hit full in the buttocks by cluster munitions from a Serb base on Mount Hrasno. He lay on his front for months until the wound healed. Something of the fear he'd felt was engraved on him for ever. People walk along Kranjčevićeva street. A sniper fires. All of them, obeying some unspoken order, pull in their torsos, draw their necks down between their shoulders and run in a hunched position, like a letter C –as though that was going to help– towards the nearest shelter. All except my friend. As soon as he hears the first shot he instinctively thrusts his chest forward, draws in his posterior, and only then, arched like a letter D, does he start to run. And he'll do the same thing for the rest of his life. He'll always run in an arched position, for his body bears the mark, his soul bears the scar, and he himself is an eternal warning to anyone in the line of fire. Hiding your head in a newspaper won't prevent a sniper from seeing you. He's paid by the number of hits. His rifle never misses. His finger never trembles. You have hardly any chance at all, unless superior forces intervene in the duel.

30. ***

CLEANLINESS: Many people have died while washing their clothes in the river Miljacka. Caught off their guard by a sniper or a piece of shrapnel. Here there are tidy people who pay great attention to cleanliness. Somebody who dislikes order because he sees it as a worrying lack of individualism, asks: "**Which is more important: to be clean and dead or alive and dirty?**" Yet there are more clean people than dirty ones among the living. For them, hygiene is a secret agreement with civilization. Hence their fanatical determination to wash. The river Miljacka is responsible for the fact that men and women walk through the streets under siege wearing clean, unironed T-shirts.

31. ***

THE SHOWER: You can work miracles with five litres of water. That's enough to make a moderately dirty person as clean as a new pin again. A moderately dirty person is one who hasn't washed for between a week and a fortnight. Having a shower, in times of war, has become a complicated operation with an uncertain outcome. First you have to fetch enough water. Then you have to find wood to heat the water. Then shampoo. All this takes a day. When it gets dark, it's impossible to have a shower without a candle. But it's also impossible to buy one, so you have to make it. And finally, anyone who's overcome all the obstacles can have a shower.

During the war, a new name was invented for taking a shower: bottling. This is how you go about it, with five litres of water. You carry the five Coca-Cola bottles into the bathroom. The user gets into a shallow, baby's bath. Not a drop must be wasted, that's the purpose of the bath. If you bathe in a rational way, two bottles are enough to wet the entire body. The rational method consists in not holding the bottle of water too high above your head. This is to keep splashing down to a minimum. However, this method also makes the wetting much less effective, so while you pour the water, the body must rotate on its own axis and rotate all its parts as well, except the arm that's holding the bottle. Then the soap must be poured very quickly onto the head. Speed is vital because the temperature in the bathroom is close to zero. The lather from the shampoo must be used to soap down the whole body as well. Then the other three litres are used for rinsing. This time the bottle must be raised slightly higher above the head to simulate the effect of a shower so that the water flows with sufficient force to rinse off the shampoo. The dirty water that accumulates in the little bath will be re-used twice. After you've bathed, you wash socks in it, and then the liquid, which is as black as coal and no longer bears any resemblance to water, is used to clean the toilet bowl.

32. ***

CONSTITUENT PEOPLES: My friend feels the need to classify all the faces he meets. He classifies them by nationality. This one's a Serb. That one's a-hundred-per-cent Muslim. That one over there must be a Croatian. He's even invented a sort of pseudo-classification. The Serbs, according to this elaborate system, have strong, square jaws, large heads and steely beards. The Muslims give themselves away by their behaviour, their manners, which are those of a poor person who's always apologizing, manners which nobody likes. The Croatians have eyes that glint with cunning.

It's all rubbish, of course, but that doesn't discourage my friend. He goes on passionately classifying faces on the basis of ethnicity. When called upon to justify himself, he says it's the result of the war and the suffering he's endured. He's even invented some strange sub-categories: Yugoslavs, undefined, and others. He says physical characteristics are merely for guidance, not decisive. What is decisive is the energy each man gives off which only a subtle soul, like his, can decode along ethnic lines.

There's only one snag with this friend of mine: he invariably identifies a man's nationality within ten seconds.

33. ***

AND NOW SOMETHING ABOUT THE MEANING OF LIFE: One of the most thoughtful gifts they can give you is a tin of foie-gras. A short time later I buy two bread rolls for a very moderate sum. Since the foie-gras can be divided into two portions, this means my supper will be half a plain bread roll; for breakfast I'll have a whole bread roll with half the tin of foie-gras, and for lunch I'll have the other half-roll and the rest of the tin. Can anyone in the world imagine what it means to a man to be assured of three meals in advance? It amounts to direct contact with the future, a secret agreement with better times. Immortality.

The war's getting worse and I'm afraid that food will become our one topic of thought, the only meaning in our lives, our sole reason to exist. Fortunately the process of deliberately cutting down the needs we had prior to the conflict has been successfully completed. The body manages to survive somehow on two miserable rations a day. And if anybody, by some fluke, succeeds in eating three times in Sarajevo at the beginning of 1993, it's a veritable perversion, an orgy, a banquet.

It's only when man has suffered hunger for a while that he understands, with his entire being (the only valid knowledge is that we experience in our own flesh), the truth of Leonardo's statement that we are nothing but a vulgar machine for producing excrements. Traffic jams in big cities, fashion parades, neon signs, wars, flirtation, universities, cars, acetone, humanitarian aid, the environment, newspapers, military interventions, religion, literature, Benetton, plastic, massacres, television: all that exists thanks to the three rations and all of it acquires full meaning the next day during that short moment of contemplation over the toilet bowl.

34. ***

DIALOGUE IN FOREIGN LANDS OR I RECOGNIZE YOU FROM THE MODEL:

--You can tell you come from Sarajevo.

--How can you tell I come from Sarajevo?

--Well, because your writing is full of sex and blood.

--But I don't write about sex any more.

--In other words, only the blood is left.

NOTE: the symbol *** means that the passage comes from my book *Sarajevo for beginners*.

Translated by Discobole

Ozren Kebo. *Bòsnia: un tríptic*

Divendres 17, 11.30h. Observatori d'horizons. Anglès, amb traducció simultània

Tijelo u ratu

Zbirka korisnih zapažanja o mijenama kroz koje u ratnim vremenima prolazi naše tijelo.

1.

Čovjek se ponaša kao kornjača. Kad zaprijeti opasnost, tj. kad zapuca, on uvlači glavu u vrat. Jedini je problem što mi, za razliku od kornjače, nemamo oklopa. Tako da naše uvlačenje glave nije akt spasa, nego demonstracija straha i nemoći.

2.

Niko se ne boji smrti. Svi se boje invalidnosti. Između invalidnosti i smrti većina Sarajlija bi, kad bi već morali i kad bi mogli da biraju, odabrali smrt. Smrt je kraj, a invalidnost je patnja. Plus nesreća. Kraj je, po svim kriterijima, bolje rješenje.

3.

Jedan čovjek bez lijeve noge opisuje svoju bol. Dugo nakon amputacije imao je nesnosne bolove u stopalu lijeve noge. I danas, kad su prošle godine, često ga pred promjenu vremena zaboli taj dio tijela kojeg odavno nema.

4.

Poslije pola godine gladovanja, naši očevi bez ikakvih problem oblače odijela iz šezdesetih. Posljednjih dvadeset godina nisu ih mogli navući na sebe. Bili su predebeli. Opsada grada bez milosti je postigla ono što nijedna dijeta nije mogla – svela nas na naše prirodne proporcije.

5.

Metamorfoza ženskih tijela: poslije pola godine opsade one su ljestive nego ikad u životu, jer je sa njih spalo suvišno salo. Poslije godinu

dana već su mršavije više nego što treba. Poslije dvije godine gladovanja više se ne razlikuju od muškaraca, jer su njihove obline nestale bez traga. A poslije tri godine ponovo se počinju debljati, jer se naš organizam navikao na takav sistem ishrane.

6.

Kad izide iz logora, većina zatvorenika se udeblja. To je jedna vrsta psihičke reakcije na ekstremno stanje kroz koje su prošli. Isto tako i vrsta otpora. Prinudnoj ekstremnoj mršavosti, koju su im nametnuli drugi, oni sad podsvjesno suprotstavljuju ekstremnu ugojenost, koja je njihov izbor. Pričao mi je bivši logoraš iz Dretelja: prvih mjesec dana nakon izlaska iz logora, svake noći bi se budio u jedan i bez pauze jeo do tri. Onda naiđu neobjašnjivi periodi, u kojima ne može ni da pogleda ni da dotakne hranu. Njegov organizam u vlasti je traume, pod njenom poptunom kontrolom.

7.

Struju su nam odmah isključili. Naveče nemamo rasvjete. Organizam se brzo adaptira i već nakon nekoliko mjeseci mi se izvanredno snalazimo u mraku: raspoznajemo sjene, siluete, čak i likove. Problem je što na dnevnom svjetlu ne raspoznajemo iste te ljudi.

8.

Naše uši konačno su došle na svoje. Nema struje, što znači da nema najvećih agresora našeg sluha: radija, kasetofona i televizije. Kao posljedica, javlja se izoštreni sluh. Radi se o koncentraciji: u stanju sam da čujem kukurikanje pijetla udaljenog kilometar i po.

9.

Ljudski organizam može se adaptirati na glad kao na permanentno stanje. To se zove kontrolirano gladovanje: duge pauze presijecaš slabim obrocima. Nikad sit, ali i nikad toliko gladan da bi to postalo nesnosno.

10.

Zimi se smrkava u četiri sata poslije podne. Tačnije, u 16,25. Zaspimo najkasnije u sedam. Zato se i probudimo najkasnije u pet ujutro. Treba čekati dva sata da svane.

A

tijelo ne smije ni nosa da pomoli ispod jorgana. Tamo, izvan jorgana, vlada nepodnošljiva studen.

11.

Čovjek se na hladnoći skuplja tri odsto po dužini, dva odsto po širini.

Čovjek se u ratu skuplja 99 odsto po suštini.

12.

Ekstremnu toplotu lakše je podnijeti od ekstremne hladnoće. Čovjek se može skloniti u hlad, osvježiti. Ali šta da radi na ekstremnoj hladnoći kad se nema čime zagrijati?

Moje osobno iskustvo: poslije bola, tijelo najteže podnosi hladnoću. I hladnoća je u stvari oblik bola.

13.

Taman kad se tijelo počne navikavati na ono za što smo mislili da se nikad neće naviknuti, na hladnoću, dođu april i proljeće. I sa sobom donesu sasvim nove potrebe navikavanja.

14.

N., 25. godina:

- Prvi put sam intenzivno razmišljala o svom tijelu 1992. godine. Početak rata. Pogodila su me dva gelera u nogu. Odveli su me na ortopediju.

Granatiran je bio cijeli grad, na odjel je dolazilo po 50 ljudi svakog sata.

Doktori su radili bez prestanka. Nisu sve mogli stići, pa

su uspostavljeni kriteriji. Ako imaš više od trideset godina, režu ti

nogu ili ruku, jer nemaju vremena da se bave tobom. Ako si mlađi, pokušaće

nešto da urade. Jedna starica je umrla na krevetu do mog, moleći ih da

se posvete njoj. Žao nam je, odgovorili su joj, ova djevojka ima prednost

jer je mlađa. Danas mi je žao te starice – ona je morala umrijeti da bih ja ostala u

jednom komadu.

15.

E. 23. godine, potpuno je izgorjela kad se zatekla u skladištu municije koje je eksplodiralo. Površina tijela toliko je bila spržena da se u nju nije moglo gledati. Jedna doktorica je povratila po njoj kad je vidjela što

je ostalo od ljudske kože. Otpustili su je kao beznadežan slučaj. Onda je ona sama mazala svoju kožu i gulila je. Danas nema ni najmanjeg ožiljka na tijelu, a taj čudesni preporod zahvaljuje Ijljanovom ulju domaće prozvodnje.

16.

Tjelesna kondicija, izgrađivana dugogodišnjim treningom, iscuri poslije petnaest dana gladovanja, straha i žeđi. Kad je počeo rat mogao sam uraditi zavidnih 30 sklekova. (Zavidnih, za moje godine.) Poslije deset dana - 15. Poslije 15 dana - pet. Poslije dvadeset dana - ni jedan.

17.

Ljudi svakodnevno nose teške kanistere s vodom. Jedna djevojka istinski se plaši da će joj se poslije ovog rata, od tolike težine, ruke istegnuti kao u majmuna.

18.

Nije pravilo, ali se često dešavalo: bolesni ljudi u ratu ozdrave, zdravi obole. Znam jednog čovjeka koji je prije rata imao dvije srčane operacije i jedva se kretao, toliko je bio slab. Čim je zapucalo, uzeo je pušku i naredne četiri godine niko ga nije mogao stići, toliko je bio vitalan.

19.

Poslije rata, naglo raste broj oboljenja i oboljelih ljudi. Gradom vlada strah od takozvanog rapidnog karcinoma. Za petnaest dana se razbukta i potpuno uništi čovjeka. Stručnjaci kažu: u ratu je vladala specifična vrsta tjelesne napetosti i bolest je bila u drugom planu. Sad, kad se organizam opustio, jer su primarne opasnosti prestale, bolest dolazi po svoje.

Jedna žena, umirući od raka, rekla je svom mužu:

- Mi smo zaboravili, ali tijelo pamti.

20.

Postoje teorije koje tvrde da proces ozdravljenja traje onoliko koliko je trajala i bolest. Kao dokaz navodi se trudnoća. Tek devet mjeseci poslije poroda žena ponovo dobije svoj prvobitni izgled. Samo da se zna, opsada Sarajeva trajala je 1390 dana.

21.

Jerihonska ruža raste na istočnim obalama Sredozemnog mora. Već jednom uvehla, ima neponovljivu sposonost da, kad je poprskaju vodom, ponovo oživi. Tu njenu karakteristiku vidim svuda oko sebe. Nakon godinu dana mira polako nestaju bljedilo, pogrbljenost, iscrpljenost, ugaslost. Nestaju sporo, tako sporo da se to jedva vidi.

Ali nestaju, što u meni budi lažnu nadu da je život neuništiv.

22.

Sijeda djeca, toga u miru nije bilo. A u ratu se sve desi naglo i uglavnom preko noći. Dijete preživi granatiranje, ili pravu borbu, ili ga natjeraju da gleda dok mu siluju majku, ili mu stavlju nož pod grlo. Sljedećeg jutra, njegova kosa je sijeda. Njegova kosa, ogledalo njegove duše.

23.

Starica koja živi naporno: kilometrima nosi vodu, satima cijepa drva. To održava njenu vitalnost. Kasnije, kad dođe struja i ona više ne mora vući vodu, niti cijepati drva, kad se njeno tijelo opusti, prvo na nju navali slabost, a onda i bolest. Čim je ponovo nestalo struje i vode, čim je ponovo morala na vodu i u drva, stara vitalnost se vraća.

24.

Jedna Sarajka u pariškom "Le Mondeu", mart 1993: "U Sarajevu smo neprestano bili granatirani, ali se nekako živjelo. Ovdje u Parizu je divno, ali moje srce puca od tuge. Nisam znala da srce može tako pući".

25.

Muslimanska porodica koja se zatekla na Grbavici, sarajevskom naselju koje su okupirali Srbi. Strah i bezvoljnost vladaju njihovim stanom. Kći prigovara ocu: "Zašto si se tako opustio. Obrij se. Obuci odijelo. Nemoj da kolju jadu. Ti si za njih uvijek bio gospodin."

26.

Zabilježio Marko Vešović: neposredno nakon pada granate taksista prilazi među povrijeđene, grabi jednu djevojčicu koja leži u lokvi krvi i nosi je prema svom autu. Djevojčica plače: "Čiko, zaboravili ste moju ruku".

27.

Zabilježio Marko Vešović: čovjek koji je povrijeđen u granatiranju, ulazi u taksi. Pod lijevom rukom nosi otkinutu desnu ruku. Kaže taksisti: "Strah mi da ti ne nakapam".

28. ***

PRIPREMNI NA NESREĆU: Čovjek može hodati zakrpljen, to nije sramota. Sramota je hodati prljav. A sramota nad sramotama je hodati nepodrezanih noktiju. Nikad Sarajlije nisu bile čiste kao u ovom ratu, kad je bilo najmanje vode za umivanje. Ovdje je osobna higijena uvijek bila važna, ali to sad nije rezultat navike, niti otmjenosti, nego predostrožnosti. Čak bi se moglo reći i - straha: ako te pogodi granata i moraš ići na amputaciju, neoprostivo je da ti hirurg vidi prljav donji veš ili nepodrezane nokte. Rat, nedostatak vode, teški uslovi, granatiranje, ništa od toga nije dovoljno jako opravdanje. Svoju kobnu vožnju, onu do Bolnice Koševo, čovjek mora dočekati čist. Tako smo se pripremili za ono čega smo se najviše plašili; ovdje nikog nije strah smrti, nego invalidnosti.

29. ***

BILJEG, OŽILJAK, OPOMENA: Imam prijatelja kojeg je rasprskavajući metak sa srpskog uporišta na Hrasnom brdu pogodio u debelo meso. Mjesecima je morao

ležati na trbuhu, dok rana nije zarasla. Nešto od preživljenog straha zauvijek se usadilo u njega. Ljudi idu Kranjčevićevom. Zapuca snajper. Svi po nekoj neizgovorenoj, ali prisutnoj komandi savijaju trup, vrat uvuku u ramena i tako pogrblijeni, nalik na slovo

C, kao da će im to pomoći, trče do prvog zatkona. Svi, osim mog prijatelja. Kad opali prvi metak, on instinkтивno izvije tijelo prema naprijed, uvlačeći stražnjicu, pa tek onda, tako izvijen, nalik slovu **D**, krene bježati. Tako će mu biti do kraja života. Uvijek će trčati izvijen, noseći biljeg na tijelu, ožiljak na duši i vječnu opomenu svima koji se nađu na nišanu. Nije dovoljno zakloniti glavu novinom, pa da te snajperista ne vidi. Njega plaćaju po učinku. Njegova je puška nepogrešiva. Njegov prst nikad ne zadrhti. Gotovo da i nemaš šansi, osim ako se u vaš dvoboj ne umiješaju više sile.

30. ***

ČISTOĆA: Mnogi su poginuli Perući veš na Miljacki.

Zakačio ih snajper ili geler od granate. Ovdje žive uredni ljudi koji mnogo polažu na čistoću. Jedan koji ne voli urednost, jer u njoj vidi zabrinjavajući nedostatak individualnosti, pita: "**Šta je važnije - biti čist i mrtav, ili živ, a prljav?**" Ipak, među živima je mnogo više čistih, nego prljavih. Za njih je higijena predstavljala dosluh sa civilizacijom. Zato su tako fanatično insistirali na pranju. Miljacka je zaslužna što ljudi ulicama hodaju čisti: u opranim, a neispeglanim majicama.

31. ***

TUŠIRANJE: S pet litara vode mogu se napraviti čuda. To je količina dovoljna da srednje prljava osoba ponovo zablista. Srednje prljava osoba, to je neko ko se nije kupao između sedam i petnaest dana. Tuširanje se u ratu pretvorilo u složenu operaciju sa neizvjesnim ishodom. Prvo treba navući dovoljne količine vode. Onda treba naći drva na kojima će se ta voda ugrijati. Onda šampon. Tako prođe cijeli dan. Kad padne mrak, tuširanje je bez svjeće nemoguće. Svijeća se ne može kupiti, može se napraviti. I tako, ko preskoči sve prepreke, može pristupiti tuširanju.

Tuširanje je u ratu dobilo novi naziv - flaširanje. S pet litara vode to izgleda ovako: pet flaša od Coka-Cole stavi se u banju. Praktikant stane u plitku dječiju kadu. Ni kap vode ne smije propasti, zato služi kada. Ako se kupanje racionalno izvede, dovoljne su dvije flaše da se kompletno tijelo nakvasi. Racionalnost se postiže tako što se flaša s vodom ne diže visoko iznad glave. To je potrebno da bi prskanje bilo svedeno na minimum. Tako je i efikasnost kvašenja znatno umanjena pa je, dok voda ističe, potrebno da se tijelo zarotira oko sopstvene ose tako da se rotiraju svi njegovi dijelovi osim ruke koja drži flašu. I tako, nakon kvašenja slijedi munjevito šamponiranje glave. Munjevitost je potrebna jer je temperatura u kupaonici blizu nule. Od pjene koja se šamponiranjem dobije, treba brzo nasapunjati i ostatak tijela. A onda sa preostala tri litra sve to treba sprati. Sad flašu ipak treba malo više dići iznad

glave, kako bi se simulirao efekat tuša i postigla snaga koja je vodi potrebna da bi sprala šampon. Prljava voda koja se slije u onu kadicu ima još dva kruga upotrebe. Nakon kupanja, prvo se s njom peru čarape, a onda se sa tečnošću (sad to više uopšte ne liči na vodu), crnom kao ugalj, sapere klozetska šolja.

32. ***

KONSTITUTIVNI NARODI: Moj prijatelj ima potrebu da razvrstava fizionomije koje sretne. Razvrstava ih po nacionalnoj osnovi. Ovaj je Srbin. Onaj je sto odsto Musliman. Onaj tamo mora da je Hrvat. Čak je napravio i neku vrstu pseudoklasifikacije. Srbi u tom razrađenom sistemu imaju jaku, četvrtastu vilicu, glavati su i čekinjaste brade. Muslimani se odaju ponašanjem, nekim jednim izvinjavajućim gardom kojeg niko ne voli. Hrvatima lukavstvo izbjija iz očiju.

Naravno da je sve to glupost, ali moj prijatelj ne odustaje. S velikom strašcu nastavlja razvrstavati fizionomije po etničkom principu.

Posljedica rata i pretrpljenih patnji, kaže kad mora da se pravda. Razradio je čak i raritetne podvrste - Jugoslove, neopredijeljene i ostale.

Kaže, fizičke karakteristike su samo orientiri, nisu presudne. Presudna je energija koju svaki čovjek isijava i koju kakva suptilna duša, kakav je on osobno, može etnički dekodirati.

S tim mojim prijateljem ima samo jedna nezgoda - on nepogrešivo pogađa nacionalnu pripadnost bilo kojeg čovjeka već nakon deset sekundi.

33. ***

A EVO SAD NEŠTO O SMISLU ŽIVOTA: Najveći gest pažnje, na poklon dobijam paštetu. Malo kasnije, po mizernoj cijeni kupujem dvije pogačice. Budući da se pašteta može razgoditi na dva obroka, to znači ovo: večeraču pola posne pogačice; doručak - cijela pogača sa pola paštete i ručak - pola pogače i pola paštete. Zna li iko na ovom svijetu šta znači kad čovjek ima obezbijeđena tri obroka unaprijed? To je direktni kontakt sa budućnošću, dosluh sa svijetlim vremenima. Besmrtnost.

Rat se tek zahuktava i bojim se da će hrana postati jedini predmet našeg razmišljanja, jedini smisao života i jedini egzistencijalni motiv. Srećom, proces svjesne redukcije predratnih potreba uspješno je završen. Organizam nekako preživi dan sa dva jadna obroka. A uspije li ko slučajno da jede triput, to je u Sarajevu početkom 1993. godine prava perverzija, saturnalija, gozba.

Tek kad malo duže gladuje, čovjek shvati, svim svojim bićem shvati (jedino su vrijedne spoznaje koje osjetimo na sopstvenoj koži) istinitost one Leonardove mudrosti da smo mi, zapravo, obične mašine za proizvodnju izmeta. Saobraćajne gužve u velikim gradovima, modne revije, svijetleće reklame, ratovi, udvaranja, univerziteti, automobili, aceton, humanitarna pomoć, ekologija, dnevne novine, vojna intervencija, religija, lijepa književnost, Benetton, plastika, masakri, televizija, sve to postoji radi tri obroka i sve to svoj puni smisao dobija tek sljedećeg jutra, za vrijeme kontemplacije na klozetskoj šolji.

34. ***

DIJALOG U TUĐINI ILI POZNAJEM TE PO MODELU:

- Vidi se da dolazite iz Sarajeva?
- Po čemu se vidi da dolazim iz Sarajeva?
- Pa, vaši tekstovi su puni seksa i krvi.
- Ali ja više ne pišem o seksu.
- Znači, ostala je samo krv.

NAPOMENA: znak *** znači da je odlomak preuzet iz (moje) knjige "Sarajevo za početnike."



Shamshad Khan. *Hard Cut*
Dissabte 18, 20.00h. Hall Proteu. Anglès

HARD CUT – shamshad khan (pages 1-9)

DURO CORTE

Oí batir un pesado latido sentí
caer la hoja
caer la nieve más fina
observé las nubes pasar
me pregunté
qué es el pasar

observé las nubes pasar me pregunté
qué es el pasar
observé inspirar me pregunté qué es respirar
observé espirar me pregunté qué es respirar

esas flores hay que tirarlas
están muertas.
de algún modo
sofía descuida
las pálidas venas de papel
de la berenjena
un ramo seco que había planeado guardar
por lo menos durante unas semanas
el limo en el florero
vivo como plantas de estanque

sobre el nivel del agua
empolvados tallos blancos
alfileres de sal
secretados a través de la piel

las enfermeras fueron discretas
cuando mi padre dejó de respirar
nos dieron tiempo para contemplar, completar los rezos

en casa de otra gente
es difícil guardar flores
ese día de más

sin hacer arcadas
las saco
lamen negras lenguas de légamo
mis dedos
tuerzo los tallos
los codos se rompen
donde se juntan lo húmedo y lo seco
mantengo abierta la tapa del cubo meto las cabezas primero
un brote verde
impide que la tapa se cierre
alas de polilla púrpura
caen suavemente hacia el linóleo

aferrarse se vuelve un habito para todos nosotros
retirar el gatillo
darle cuerda al reloj

todavía no todavía no
dar marcha atrás al tiempo
todavía no
aferrarse aferrarse a la respiración
observada
como una tetera
con
el quemador del gas en lo más bajo
bajo
bajo
bajo
todavía no
todavía no

mi hermano observaba
y observaba
fue a buscar a la enfermera
cuando el hervor se detuvo

la enfermera fue a buscar al doctor
cinco minutos después
el doctor registró el momento
de la muerte

2 semanas de espera
y espera junto a la cama
y varios de nosotros habíamos perdido la noción del tiempo

Ilegué al hospital sabiendo que algo había pasado

me hacen pasar
su hija menor
mi padre se ve

un poco diferente
un poco más tranquilo un poco
más calmado
que cuando roncaba
me quedo junto a la cama
recito las oraciones que le gustan

la científica en mí
saca su boli y comienza a revisar
trabaja hacia atrás desde el momento registrado

para marcar con precisión
el punto exacto
el cuerpo médico ha sido un poco descuidado

ella sopesa
gota a gota el calor que abandona
la coronilla del cráneo
controlada con pruebas que aseguran su exactitud
gota a gota
pasando del día a la noche
amaneciendo lentamente
mi padre no está muerto no murió
no estoy negándome
las palabras “está muerto” no son verdad
lo probaré.

ella extrapola la línea continua
para encontrar

el último respiro
tramo tras tramo
tiene dificultades para encontrar cuándo acabó
el último trillón de moléculas espiradas
continúan allí afuera
refulgiendo posibilidades.

mi científica divide los segundos para encontrar
dónde fue que su padre se escapó inadvertido y alguien introdujo el
reemplazo
no hay una diferencia significativa concluye
entre el antes y el después.

lo que queda de mí
ruega porque su alma se haya ido
tan suavemente como un cabello
extraído de la mantequilla

aferrada a quien creo que soy
flores frescas a los pies de mi padre

si él no es lo que creí que era
entonces yo no puedo ser lo que creo que soy
sufro un cambio a pesar de aferrarme

Oí batir un pesado latido sentí
caer la hoja
caer la nieve más fina
observé las nubes pasar
me pregunté
qué es el pasar

observé las nubes pasar me pregunté
qué es el pasar
observé inspirar me pregunté qué es respirar
observé espirar me pregunté qué es respirar

en la cocina
mis hermanas
rallan montañas de zanahorias
dedos de amanecer
láminas de naranja
en leche azucarada
mi madre prueba muestras
con su diente de sal
dice que aún no está
pone el fuego totalmente bajo
para cuando le llega a papá
la alquimia se ha hecho

debería cambiarme. traigo la misma ropa desde hace días

la ropa en el armario
me está esperando.
mientras tanto trae del revés la camiseta azul camuflaje
la etiqueta mostrando las instrucciones de lavado
vestirse
he intentado mirar la transformación en el espejo
me pierdo en el momento de sacarme
la camiseta por la cabeza
lo que sigue

las costuras van por dentro.

una célula única se derrumba
un pelo negro dispuesto a volverse gris
células muertas amontonándose en el cuero cabelludo
espolvoreo
espolvoreo de muerte blanca en los hombros
me la sacudo

no es de extrañar que no reconozca mi reflejo
en los paneles de cristal
de las paradas de autobús.
siempre en transición

casas abandonadas
hacen que vaya más despacio

amordazada fealdad
en ventanas tapiadas

dando la vuelta
busco la belleza

colchón vencido
rajada bolsa blanca de basura
narcisos caídos
el jardín se está volviendo un basurero

una irresistible
puerta trasera
entro
borracha de oscuridad

la casa dócil como alguien dormido
poeta y okupa
me pongo a pintarla
revocando con mis sueños
el desvaído papel tapiz.

el aire retiene hologramas enmarcados
discusiones de pesadilla
sin ninguna respuesta

imagen retinal impresa
seguimos viendo estrellas doloridas
ya que se han ido
bordeando el saber

no mires justo ahora
me estoy cambiando
no no sigue
mira mira de verdad con cuidado.

ya lo he hecho antes
mi padre ya lo ha hecho antes
el año pasado por estas fechas
no pensaron que pudiera

fue entonces la misma cosa esperar

que sucediera
sin querer que pasara
a veces no nos quitábamos el abrigo o no soltábamos el bolso
nos metimos tanto en eso que olvidamos lo que estábamos esperando
vimos que pasaba una y otra vez
observamos inspirar observamos
espirar.

regreso a la habitación
calefacción de hospital
y un silencio de alta dependencia
me seca la garganta
mi papá y la mitad de la familia están dentro
tratando de poner estrellas del tamaño de un pinchazo de alfiler
en esferas de 3 milímetros.
la presión del aire en la habitación no deja respirar
minúsculos pies manos del tamaño de los ojos
manchadas ventanas profetas vestidos de morado
corderos muertos colgando de sus vientres
una casa de barco peste a vaca
camellos orina de elefante preciosa como un néctar.
el sudor me agarra a la silla.

un camello viene hacia mí y comienza a decirme cómo ha arruinado su vida
ya no puede salir
sin que lo reconozcan
se pone histérico trato de calmarlo
abro una ventana
una fuerte lluvia de paja se cuela por un ángulo
cierto la ventana y aseguro el pestillo sin mojarme.
lo que me preocupa es poder respirar.

el camello está mirando la paja de manera sospechosa
su luz naranja llena la habitación
una diosa azul con una taza de hueso bebe café
me pregunta si quiero azúcar
le digo
que soy diabética
ya lo está removiendo
me pasa un tazón de turron sin zanahoria
sale y regresa como la reina victoria vestida de shalvaar kameeze

alguien abre la ventana
el camello se ha tranquilizado
mis ojos dejan pasar más luz de lo normal
estoy respirando mejor
repitiendo rezos que he escuchado

la primera vez que lo hice me dejé ir.
Así que lo volví a hacer.

hice la misma cosa más y mejor
después de eso me descubrí gritándome a mí misma
nunca vas a aprender y la siguiente vez estaba contestándome a gritos
si sólo me dejaras tranquila y la siguiente vez
y la siguiente vez y la siguiente vez
y la siguiente vez pensé:
¿es que algunas cosas no cambian
o sí lo hacen?

cada mínimo error avanzando hacia el mayor golpe de aprendizaje
cada pausa
un aferrarse a punto de soltarse

el camello veía la paja con desconfianza, la gota que derramaría el vaso.
Se parecía mucho a toda la paja que había llevado a cuestas
sin embargo había algo en el grano que lo hacía desconfiar de su brillo.

de acuerdo con un estudio reciente sobre los diez animales más explotados
9 de cada 10 son incapaces de distinguir el momento en que un peso se
vuelve
peligrosamente pesado.
Los hallazgos del informe tienen serias implicaciones para el bienestar animal
en el área de la seguridad en el trabajo.

un camello que participó en la investigación pero que no quiso dar su nombre
dijo:

“estaba bajo presión. tenía compromisos que cumplir. no recuerdo bien lo que
pasó. Y lo peor de todo es que, si vuelvo a ver esa paja de nuevo, no estoy
seguro de reconocerla”

perdón
estoy tratando de cambiarme

la transición suena como a
desvestirse deshacer desempacar huele como a desenterrar despejar
se siente como desencorvar desdoblar desconocer desenredar
desenrollar descomponer desatar desenvolver.

un instante
se impulsa a ser
en el trapecio que va del antes
al después

la sangre sube a la cabeza
el ímpetu es el momento
en el dividido segundo que toma dividir el segundo

ya ha pasado
está a punto de pasar y está pasando

todo al mismo tiempo
pasmoso

entreno la mirada en el mecerse de ida y vuelta
el lanzar y el vacío recibir

acumulando ímpetu
hasta que sobre las lentejuelas redondas y la piel

me descubro por la mañana
medio despierta
tambaleándome sin saber cómo caminar

antes del desayuno
cuando me hablaban

sin saber cómo hablar

antes de reconstruirme
antes de decidir
por costumbre
quien y cómo voy a ser
la ropa todavía en el armario.

ha habido otra muerte

le doy mis herramientas al embalsamador
en el carrito de metal
sábanas blancas cristales de alcanfor
crema
agua, algodón
pequeños rezos para llenar los oídos y otros orificios

chasquido de zapatos en un vestíbulo con calefacción
tantas cosas que hacer y tanta gente haciéndolo
incluso éste que lucha con muertos

desde que murió mi padre

veo que todos están muriendo
yendo en la misma dirección
como aquellos que dicen estar viviendo

rutas de salida y cruceros anotados
tiempo aproximado de llegada
unos pocos se van antes para huir del tráfico

oí batir un pesado latido sentí
caer la hoja
caer la nieve más fina

observé las nubes pasar
me pregunté
qué es el pasar

observé las nubes pasar me pregunté
qué es el pasar
observé inspirar me pregunté qué es respirar
observé espirar me pregunté qué es respirar

observé otras cosas moverse o pasar
esta primavera
veré los retoños antes de que aparezcan
conozco cuándo antes de que llegue
oigo el suave sonido del latido
siento caer la hoja
caer la más fina nieve
observo las nubes pasar sé lo que es el pasar

cada inspiración expresando la pregunta
cada espiración la respuesta

observo inspirar sé lo que es respirar
observo espirar sé lo que es respirar
esta primavera veré los retoños conozco cuándo
antes de que llegue esta primavera

.....
termina

Traducción de Pedro Serrano

Shamshad Khan. *Hard Cut*
Dissabte 18, 20.00h. Hall Proteu. Anglès

HARD CUT – shamshad khan (pages 1-9)

heard a heavy beat pound felt
the leaf fall
lighter snow fall
watched clouds drift
wondered
what drifting is

watched clouds drift wondered
what drifting is
watched breathing in wondered what breathing is
watched breathing out wondered what breathing is

those flowers need throwing out.
they're dead.
somehow
sophia overlooks
the aubergine
pale paper veins
a dried bouquet I'd planned to keep
at least a few more weeks
the sludge in the vase
alive as pond weed

above the water line
powdered white stalks
salt pins
secreted through the skin

the nurses were discrete
when my father stopped breathing
they left us time to contemplate, complete prayers

in other people's houses
it's hard to keep flowers
that extra day

without retching
I pull them out
black tongues of slime lick
my fingers

I bend back the stems
the elbows splinter
where dry and wet meet
hold open the swing lid push the heads in first
a green shoot
refuses to let the bin lid close
purple moth wings
slow dive to the lino

holding on becomes a habit to us all
pulling back a trigger
winding up the clock

not yet not yet
winding back the time
not yet
holding on holding on to breath
watched
like a pot
with
the gas ring turned down
down
down
down
not yet
not yet

my brother watched
and watched
he went to get the nurse
when the simmering stopped

the nurse went to get the doctor
five minutes later
the doctor recorded the time
of death

2 weeks of waiting
and waiting by the bedside
and some of us had missed the time

arrived at the hospital knowing something had passed

I'm ushered in
his youngest daughter
my father looks
a bit different
a bit stiller a bit
calmer
than when he was snoring

I stand by the bed
recite the prayers he likes

the scientist in me
pulls out her pen and begins to chart
works backwards from the recorded time

to mark with precision
the exact point
the medical staff have been a bit slack

she titrates
drop by drop the heat as it leaves
the top of his skull
measured with control samples to ensure accuracy
drop by drop
changing night to day
slow dawning
my father is not dead did not die
I am not in denial
the words “he is dead” are not true
I will prove it.

she extrapolates the continuous line
to find

the last breath
stretch and stretch
she has problems finding the end of it
the last trillion molecules breathed out
are still out there
glistening potential.

my scientist splits seconds to find
where her father slipped out and someone brought in the replacement
there is no significant difference she concludes
between the before and after.

the rest of me
prays his soul left
as easily as a hair
pulled from butter

holding on to who I think I am
fresh flowers at my father's feet
if he is not what I thought he was
then I can't be what I think I am
I get changed despite holding on

heard a heavy beat pound felt
the leaf fall
lighter snow fall
watched clouds drift
wondered
what drifting is

watched clouds drift wondered
what drifting is
watched breathing in wondered what breathing is
watched breathing out wondered what breathing is

in the kitchen
my sisters
grate carrot mountains
sunrise fingers
orange flecks
in sugared milk
mother tests samples
with her salt tooth
says it is not quite ready
she turns the heat right down
by the time it gets to my dad
the alchemy is done

I should change. I've been wearing these clothes for days

the clothes in the wardrobe
are waiting for me.
in between wearings the blue camouflage t-shirt inside out
the label showing washing instructions
getting dressed
I've tried watch the transformation in the mirror
lose myself at the point of change
t-shirt over my head
the next thing

the seams are on the inside.

single cell collapses

a black hair determined to turn grey
dead cells piling up on my scalp
powdered
powdered white death on my shoulders
I brush it off

not surprising I don't recognise my reflection
in glass panels
bus shelter screens.
always in transition

abandoned houses
slow me down

ugliness gagged
at boarded up windows

round the side
I search for beauty

slouched mattress
split white bin liner
horizontal daffodils
the garden is growing into a tip

an irresistible
back door
I step in
drunk with darkness

the house pliant as someone asleep
poet and squatter
I do the decorating
plastering my dreams over
fading wallpaper.

the air retains framed holograms of
nightmare disagreements
no answering back

impressed retinal image
grieving stars we're still seeing
after they're gone
bordering on knowing

don't look right now
I'm getting changed
no no go on
look. look really carefully.

I've done it before
my father's done it before
last year about this time
they didn't think he'd make it

it was the same thing then waiting
for it to happen
not wanting it to
sometimes we didn't take our coats off or put our bags down
we got so much into it we forgot what we were waiting for
we saw it happen again and again
watched . breathing. in. watched.
breathing. out.

I go back into the room
hospital heat
and high dependency silence
dries my throat
my dad and half my family are in there
trying to put stars the size of pin pricks on to
3 millimetre spheres.
the air pressure in the room making it difficult to breathe
minuscule feet hands the size of eyes
stained glass windows purple robed prophets
slaughtered lambs hanging from their bellies
a ship house stench of cows
camels elephant's urine precious as nectar.
sweat clams me to the chair.

a camel comes over to me and starts telling me how it's ruined his life
he can't go out anymore
without being recognised
he gets hysterical I try to calm him down
push open a window
a hard rain of straws pour in at an angle
I shut the window and fasten the latch without getting wet.
I'm preoccupied with trying to breathe.

the camel is looking at the straws suspiciously
their orange light fills the room
a blue goddess with a bone cup drinking coffee
asks me if I want sugar
I tell her
I'm diabetic
she's already stirring
hands me a bowl of halva with no carrots in it
she goes off and returns as queen victoria wearing shalvaar kameeze

someone opens the window
the camel has calmed down

my eyes let in more light than usual
I'm breathing more easily
repeating prayers I've heard

the first time I did it I let myself off.
then I did it again.
I did the same thing bigger and better
the time after that I found I was shouting at myself
don't you ever learn and the next time I was shouting back
if you'd just give me a break and the next time
and the next time and the next time
and the next time I thought -
is it that some things don't change
or that they do?

every little mistake building up to the biggest bit of learning
every pause
a holding on about to let go

the camel looked at the straw suspiciously
it looked in many ways like all the other straws he had ever carried
yet there was something that he didn't quite trust something in the grain the
glow of it.

according to a recent survey of the top ten most over worked animals
9 out of 10 are unable to distinguish the point when a load becomes
dangerously heavy.
the reports findings have serious implications for animal welfare in the area of
safety at work.
a camel who participated in the research but didn't want to be named
said:

"I was under pressure. I had deadlines to meet. I don't remember very much
about what happened. And the worst thing is - if I ever saw that straw again -
I'm not sure I'd recognise it"

excuse me
I'm trying to get changed

transition sounds like
undressing undoing unfolding smells like unearthing
unclouding feels like unbending unfurling unknowing unravelling unrolling
unsettling untying unwinding.

a moment
swings itself into being
trapezing from before
to after

blood rush to the head
the momentum is the moment
in the split second it takes to split the second
it has happened
is about to happen and is happening
all at once
breath taking

I train my eye on the swing and swing back
the throw and empty catch

building up momentum
till over the rung sequins and skin

catch myself in the morning
half awake
stagger forgotten how to walk

before breakfast
spoken to

forgotten how to talk

before I reconstruct myself
before I decide
out of habit
who and how I'm going to be
the clothes still in the wardrobe.

there's been another death

the embalmer I set my tools
on the metal trolley
white sheets camphor crystals
cream
water, cotton wool
small prayers to fill ears and other orifices

clatter of shoes in a heated hall
so many things to do and so many people doing them
including this one doing dead

since my father died

I see everyone is dying
going in the same direction
as those who say they're living

exit routes and junctions noted
approximate time of arrival

a few leave early to avoid the traffic

heard a heavy beat pound felt
the leaf fall
lighter snow fall
watched clouds drift
wondered
what drifting is

watched clouds drift wondered
what drifting is
watched breathing in wondered what breathing is
watched breathing out wondered what breathing is

watched other things move or drift
this spring
I'll see the buds before they come
know the time before it is
hear light beat sound
feel the leaf fall
lighter snow fall
watch clouds drift know what drifting is

every breathing in giving voice to the question
every breathing out the answer

watch breathing in know what breathing is
watch breathing out know what breathing is
this spring I'll see the buds know the time
before it is this spring

.....

ends



Predrag Matvejević. *Ricard III en les guerres de Jugoslàvia*
Dijous 16, 18.00h. Canal Alfa. Francès, amb traducció simultània

Predrag Matvejevitch

Richard III dans les guerres de la Yougoslavie

Familles, je vous hais, cette imprécation a si souvent été lancée au cours de notre siècle. Il y a parfois lieu de le faire. Nous avons tant de fois été contraints, depuis longtemps, à *laver en famille notre linge sale*. Il a été par ailleurs recommandé de *traiter sa nation comme une famille*. Cela faisait partie de l'éducation patriotique, peut-être aussi d'une morale.

Nous savons bien ce que l'on risque à révéler des choses déplaisantes pour ses proches, en particulier ses compatriotes. J'ai été tenté de signer d'un pseudonyme une première version bien atténuée de cet écrit, parue dans différents journaux européens. Certains aveux portent malheur. D'autres inspirent de la honte. La critique ne rend personne heureux. L'appartenance s'exprime difficilement sous forme de négation.

Certains éléments de ce récit ont déjà été évoqués, en d'autres circonstances - j'y ai également fait allusion dans un essai intitulé «*Un drame*

shakespearien dans la tragédie yougoslave». Tant de choses restent à compléter. Je ne prétends rien expliquer. Je n'ai pas l'intention de justifier qui que ce soit. Il suffit de rappeler dans cet exorde que des détails, apparemment accidentels, peuvent prendre une tout autre proportion dès qu'ils sont insérés dans un ensemble : qu'ils peuvent *signifier* plus et autre chose lorsqu'ils se trouvent liés entre eux, et unis.

Les suicides, et les raisons pour lesquelles nous sommes capables d'attenter à nos jours, diffèrent d'un cas à l'autre. L'homme est poussé à cet acte ultime par la maladie ou le malheur, parfois par l'honneur ou même la vertu. Les plus forts se retrouvent aussi au bord du gouffre, prêts à s'y précipiter. J'ai moi-même connu plusieurs fois une telle tentation. Les plus résolus franchissent le pas et s'élancent parfois de l'autre côté, comme les plus désespérés. Qui d'entre nous n'a jamais vu devant lui l'abîme!? J'ai toujours admiré les capitaines qui sombraient avec leur navire. Et tant de ces navires ont été partout engloutis par les vagues.

La plus grande des tragédies n'est pas cette propension à mettre volontairement fin à notre existence éphémère : plus tragique est le fait que ceux qui souffrent d'une telle hérédité, ou l'ont acquise, entraînent d'autres avec eux, les poussent vers l'abîme ou, surtout, les incitent à s'y précipiter à leur place. Plus pernicieux encore est lorsque ceux, précisément, qui portent ces marques héréditaires,

deviennent des dirigeants politiques et meneurs de peuples. C'est ce qui nous est arrivé.

Pour plus de clarté, l'auteur se propose en l'occurrence de présenter ce matériau dramatique en quatre *actes* (au sens théâtral du terme). Dans la liste des comédiens figurent différents personnages connus : présidents et vice-présidents, hauts dignitaires aux rangs variés, leurs officiers et officiants. L'action se déroule dans un monde «ex» : l'ex-Yougoslavie. Les circonstances particulières sont évoquées par des didascalies au début et à la fin : un armistice tenant lieu de paix. Le metteur en scène coordonne à sa façon certains faits et événements, à la fois géopolitiques et généalogiques.

Premier acte

Le père de Slobodan Milosevic était un théologien orthodoxe. Il s'est donné la mort d'une balle de revolver bien avant que son fils ne devînt l'homme fort de la Serbie. La mère dudit Milosevic s'est pendue, ainsi qu'un de ses oncles. Lui-même était à cette époque activiste des jeunesse communistes. Son adolescence a dû être marquée par ces épreuves. Les traces n'en sont pourtant pas visibles sur le visage de l'homme adulte : froid,

implacable. Un comportement assuré et énergique lui a permis de s'imposer aux généraux de l'armée dite «populaire et yougoslave», de les inciter à braquer leurs canons sur les peuples de la Yougoslavie - en Croatie et en Bosnie, à Vukovar, à Sarajevo, à Srebrenica, au Kosovo.

Dans une lettre ouverte publiée à Belgrade en 1990, j'ai proposé à ce personnage, à la veille de la guerre, de démissionner, afin de ne pas être contraint lui-même de «recourir au suicide». Les présidents ne suivent pas les conseils des écrivains, surtout des dissidents. (J'ai ultérieurement ajouté dans un de mes livres que même un suicide ne suffirait plus, mais ceci est une autre histoire.)

Deuxième acte

Le père du président croate Franjo Tudjman s'est suicidé après avoir tué son épouse - la belle-mère dudit président - immédiatement après la Seconde Guerre mondiale. Tudjman était alors major ou colonel de l'armée yougoslave, résidant à Belgrade, inconditionnellement dévoué à Tito. Il fit courir le bruit, quelques temps après ce tragique événement, que des «croisés oustachis» avaient liquidé ses parents. Dans les années 90, déjà installé au pouvoir en Croatie, il tenta de présenter cette triste histoire de manière très différente : comme un assassinat perpétré par ses ex-camarades

communistes. Il cita même un témoin, ancien partisan d'origine croate. Celui-ci démentit formellement cette «invention pure et simple», en dépit des vexations dont il fut l'objet.

Il est peu crédible que la police titiste ait éliminé, sans raison aucune, un membre des plus importantes institutions anti-fascistes de la Libération, qui se trouvait être de surcroît le père d'un officier de haut rang, futur général de l'armée yougoslave. L'actuel président croate s'est permis de déclarer (en 1995), peut-être imprudemment, que dès 1942, déçu par ce même communisme qu'il acceptera de servir, avec beaucoup de zèle et à un niveau très élevé, plus d'un quart de siècle encore, il était prêt lui-même à se brûler la cervelle. Il alla même jusqu'à mimer à la télévision un geste suicidaire, pourtant inachevé, sans se rendre compte de l'inconvenance d'un pareil spectacle et du goût d'une partie de son public.

Dans une lettre ouverte écrite au moment de la destruction du «Vieux Pont» à Mostar, ma ville natale (à l'automne 1993), je lui ai proposé de démissionner : mais les présidents n'écoutent pas les hommes de lettres, même en Croatie.

Le dramaturge devra s'abstenir ici d'insister sur ce cas en raison de la maladie dont souffre ledit personnage - maladie de tout autre nature, qui pourrait apporter bien de l'imprévu au dénouement de la tragédie qui frappe notre pays. Au demeurant,

nous lui souhaitons une guérison complète, aussi bien physique que morale.

Troisième acte

Le Tribunal international de La Haye, créé par les Nations-Unies et chargé d'enquêter sur les crimes commis en Yougoslavie et au Rwanda, a demandé que lui soit livré le général Ratko Mladic, accusé de "génocide, crimes de guerre et crimes contre l'humanité". Ce chef de guerre, en apparence jovial et enthousiaste, entretenait des liens permanents avec le nouvel Etat-major à Belgrade, qui recevait ses "directives" de Slobodan Milosevic lui-même. (Ceci est un secret de polichinelle, seul procédé emprunté ici à la *commedia del arte*.) Nous ne savons pas si, en tant que commandant des unités de Pale (localité située au-dessus de Sarajevo et abritant l'état-major des Serbes de Bosnie), il recherchait en toute circonstance l'avis de son chef suprême ou agissait parfois de sa propre initiative : quand, par exemple, il ordonna de fusiller dieu sait combien d'hommes de confession musulmane qui, sans armes, fuyaient Srebrenica devant ses troupes. (Les statistiques bosniaques qui, ne sont pas non plus toujours fiables, parlent de 10.000 fusillés; après l'exhumation des cadavres, les observateurs étrangers, plus réservés, ont réduit ce chiffre à cinq ou six mille; les sources

officielles serbes, dans l'ensemble, ne font aucun commentaire ou ramènent tout ceci à un simple incident de guerre, un "règlement de comptes réciproque". Alors que certains cercles intellectuels et littéraires à Belgrade évitent même d'imaginer ce fait, encore moins d'en parler. Quoi qu'il en soit, la popularité du général Mladic parmi les «ultras» de sa nationalité n'en a aucunement souffert. Il est pour certains d'entre eux un héros, à l'image du légendaire Milos Obilic, qui aurait tué le sultan turc durant la bataille du Kosovo.

Dans les tragédies de Shakespeare - aussi bien que dans les tragédies antiques et la vie elle-même - il existe de nobles suicides. Celui d'Ophélie, par exemple. Confrontée aux atrocités et aux crimes commis par son propre père, la jeune Ana Mladic a mis elle-même fin à sa vie. Les nouvelles circulant au sein d'une opinion publique malformée font état de graves "crises nerveuses" et "dépressions" dont aurait souffert le célèbre chef de guerre, après la perte de sa fille. Il n'a pas pour autant franchi le bord du précipice.

La haine de Ratko Mladic envers les Croates, et plus particulièrement les Bosniaques d'origine musulmane, n'a sans doute pas été suscitée par les idées de certains 'intellectuels libéraux' de Serbie, qui accusent les "cosmopolites" belgradois d'être des "mercenaires" étrangers, des "traîtres" dans leurs propres rangs. Il a probablement été encore moins

incité par certains écrits, tels que le "Mémorandum" des académiciens serbes, hors de portée pour ce héros, eu égard à son éducation militaire et à son intelligence. Au cours de la seconde guerre mondiale, alors qu'il était peut-être encore au berceau, les oustachi ont égorgé son père.

Quant à son supérieur à la veille de cette guerre, le général Blagoje Adzic, qui a joué un rôle fatal dans l'Etat-major de la JNA (Armée yougoslave), se distinguant par une intolérance incontrôlable vis-à-vis des Croates et des Bosniaques (musulmans), il a perdu, de manière identique, de la main des oustachi catholiques ou musulmans, neuf membres de sa famille : tous égorgés, l'un après l'autre. C'est souvent la mémoire qui, sur scène, déclenche les événements : surtout sur une scène nationale, nationaliste.

Quatrième acte

Radovan Karadzic, ex-chef suprême de la République serbe de Bosnie (il vit désormais caché dans les montagnes de cette région), encensé par certains écrivains populistes de Belgrade, psychiatre qui souffre de la maladie dont il prétendait guérir ses patients, spécialiste chevronné de l'épuration ethnique et virtuose de l'instrument musical populaire nommé «*guzla*» (sorte de biniou national),

se voit lui aussi recherché par le Tribunal de La Haye pour «crimes contre l’humanité». On ignore généralement que son père fut accusé, bien avant cette nouvelle guerre, d’avoir violé une jeune fille mineure, à laquelle sa famille était unie par les liens du sang. Ce geste préfigurerait ainsi les sévices sexuels dont tant de femmes musulmanes et autres, ainsi qu’un certain nombre d’hommes, allaient être victimes.

Avant même le début de la guerre, Karadzic s’était montré un poète quelque peu singulier : il contemple la ville du haut de la montagne - lui-même est un montagnard : il annonce la destruction - et détruit; il se signe en public - et donne l’ordre de tirer sur les «enfants de Dieu». Certaines de ces scènes sont annoncées dans ses oeuvres avant même que les artilleurs de Pale n’entrent en action. Il s’agit, qui sait, d’une sorte de voyance ou peut-être d’anticipation. Dans une émission enregistrée par des reporters occidentaux «peu favorables à la Serbie», comme le disent ses compatriotes, Karadzic lui-même s’en vante devant l’écrivain russe Eduard Limonov, venu lui rendre visite à Pale, au siège de son état-major. Il lui montre comment manier une mitrailleuse pointée sur Sarajevo et, magnanime, la lui confie, l’encourageant. Edi (c'est ainsi qu'on l'appelait à Moscou) fait feu sur la ville assiégée. Il aurait, dit-on, atteint un Serbe! Pour ma part, je n'y crois pas, cela lui a sans doute été imputé par des Bosniaques en

colère. La télévision a, hélas, reproduit cette scène du "théâtre de la cruauté". Eduard Limonov, ancien "dissident", poète médiocre et nationaliste grandiose («tchernossotenz»), a relaté en Russie son exploit, rapporté par la presse de Belgrade. Il parcourt aujourd'hui les villes de l'Europe occidentale, et n'est aucunement inquiété par les fonctionnaires du Tribunal de La Haye, qui n'ont pas pris au sérieux ses talents de tireur d'élite.

Pour son oeuvre poétique, Karadzic s'est vu attribuer par la nouvelle Union des écrivains russes où fourmillent d'anciens staliniens, près des murailles du Kremlin, un prix portant le nom de Mikhaïl Cholokhov, prix Staline et prix Nobel à la fois. Ils ont aussi paré sa poitrine héroïque d'une ancienne décoration russe - la croix de Saint André. J'ignore qui prend ce genre de décisions dans une Russie dirigée par une créature telle que Jeltsin. A cette cérémonie, plus que théâtrale, assistaient aussi les membres de la famille de Karadzic. («*Familles*»!) Il y avait là des officiers en uniformes impériaux, avec épaulettes et décorations, et même des popes répandant leur bénédiction.

Sa foi n'a pas empêché Mr. Krajisnik, vice-président de Karadzic, qui fut aussi un important représentant des Serbes au gouvernement bosniaque, de demander au Pape, lors de sa visite pastorale à Sarajevo, de s'employer à protéger son maître des

poursuites engagées à son encontre par le Tribunal de La Haye. Ce haut fonctionnaire - qui en tant qu'orthodoxe connaît mal la hiérarchie catholique - semble croire que le Souverain Pontife a pour mission non seulement d'absoudre les péchés, mais aussi de réhabiliter les crimes. Mais ce sujet a peu à voir avec la mise en scène théâtrale.

Didascalies

Les lieux où se déroule l'action jouent souvent un rôle important dans la dramaturgie même. "La malédiction du lieu" est connue depuis les temps homériques. L'opération "Tempête" menée en Croatie, en Krajina, l'an du seigneur 1995, a chassé d'un seul coup plus d'une centaine de milliers de Serbes, qui vivaient là avec nous depuis des siècles, défendant l'Occident et la *Mitteleuropa* des invasions venant de l'Est. Parmi ceux qui furent ainsi déportés, il n'y avait pas que des extrémistes ou des partisans de la grande Serbie, mais aussi une population qui, dans ces régions, avait déjà été massacrée dans les charniers oustachi. Il s'agit là de citoyens de la République de Croatie, qui veulent maintenant regagner leurs foyers, même dévastés et incendiés.

Le protagoniste de cette glorieuse opération était Gojko Susak, que le Président de la Croatie avait proclamé son "meilleur ministre". (Parmi les

metteurs-en scène de cette "Tempête" il y aurait eu, entre autres, des commandants américains à la retraite, qui avaient appris leur métier derrière les coulisses du Vietnam, mais les écrivains n'ont pas accès aux documents qui nient ou confirment les actes de ce genre.) Susak ne cachait pas que son père était oustacha et ne considérait nullement les oustachi comme des criminels de guerre - c'est, selon lui, une vision erronée de certains milieux antifascistes à l'Ouest, qui ne se sont pas encore libérés de la sinistre "propagande communiste". Nous avons même eu l'occasion de voir le ministre en question dans une pose des plus théâtrale, levant le bras et saluant à la manière des *gauleiters* nazis (à Posusje, par exemple, où l'on chante à pleine voix les héros oustachi "*Jure et Boban*", ou encore, lors des tournois de Sinj, qui se déroulaient autrefois aussi bien devant le camarade Tito que devant le roi Alexandre Karadjordjevic).

Le père de Susak fut tué par les partisans. Le fils haïssait les communistes. Avant de devenir ministre de Tudjman, dont il avait financé en partie l'élection, il militait au Canada dans l'émigration anti-yougoslave et oustacha. Lors de la mort de Tito, il plaça un porc égorgé dans un cercueil portant l'inscription "Tito", qu'il déposa devant l'ambassade yougoslave à Toronto. Il se vantait de ce geste, rien moins que civilisé (c'est ainsi que certaines tribus arriérées d'Amazonie accompagnent parfois les

décédés peu aimés), ceci aide également à caractériser la personnalité et la culture du ministre, célébrée à l'envi après sa mort. Un «classique» de la littérature nationale contemporaine intitule sa nécrologie : «Bénis soient les yeux qui l'ont vu.»

Dans la géographie tragique de notre histoire, les bourgades bosniaques telles que Foca (aujourd'hui "Srbica" -Petite Serbie - ou quelque chose d'analogique), Srebrenica ou Gorazde, ne sont pas que des coulisses ordinaires. C'est là, qu'en 1942-1943, les tchetniks égorgèrent des milliers et des milliers de Slaves musulmans "d'origine serbe" (aux dires des historiens serbes) ou "d'ascendance croate" (selon les historiens croates), sur les bords mêmes de la Drina. Cette pittoresque rivière devenue, grâce au génie d'Ivo Andric, célèbre dans le monde entier, était rouge de sang. Elle charriaît "les troncs" musulmans vers la Save et le Danube. D'ailleurs, Madame Biljana Plavsic, l'un des dirigeants de la nouvelle République serbe a déclaré publiquement que les Musulmans bosniaques étaient simplement des "Serbes dégénérés" et qu'elle pouvait le prouver, étant docteur en biologie. L'ancien communiste devenu «voïvode» tchetnik, Vojislav Seselj, les considère comme des «déchets génétiques» de la serbité.

Quant aux plusieurs centaines de milliers d'Albanais impitoyablement chassés du Kosovo et dont on ignore combien ont été massacrés - de toutes

façons, ce ne sont que de simples «shiptars» (terme désignant tous les Albanais, devenu péjoratif dans certaines contrées yougoslaves).

* *

*

Comment ne pas finalement penser à Skakespeare, à Richard III, par exemple, au furieux comte de Gloucester, au pervers Buckingham ou au répugnant Edouard IV, à l'odieuse Marguerite qui finit par ressembler aux Erinyes? A l'histoire et à l'hystérie dont nous sommes témoins? A tant de crimes sans châtiment et de châtiments sans crimes?

Au moment même où je terminais la première version de ce scénario, j'eus la troublante nouvelle d'un autre double suicide. L'un des principaux "idéologues" de Karadzic durant la guerre en Bosnie, Nikola Koljevic, ancien professeur de littérature anglaise à l'Université de Sarajevo, s'est tué dans un hôtel de Pale, non loin de son propre bureau militaire, d'une balle dans la tête. On mentionna à cette occasion, dans son anamnèse génétique et géopolitique, le suicide de sa mère qui, lorsqu'il était encore enfant, s'était noyée dans le Vrbas, près de Banja Luka, à proximité de la très belle mosquée Ferhadija, que les tchetniks ont détruite de fond en

comble, dispersant même la pierre dont elle était construite.

Le professeur Koljevic était connu comme un éminent skakespeareologue.

Dark Ladies

By

Barbara Nadel

It has long been a belief of mine that crime fiction as a genre may be viewed as a body of modern fairy story works. Something bad (a crime) happens and someone heroic (Sherlock Holmes, Miss Marple, my own dear Çetin İkmen) comes along and puts it right – sometimes he or she even gets a little romance along the way too. But, just like the fairy stories of old, we know that the crime novel doesn't always necessarily reflect the truth. In 'real life' crimes are not always solved or even solvable and the 'good guys' frequently turn out to be just as bad, if not worse than the criminals they aim to catch. In the end, things are rarely, if ever, 'alright'.

Having said that, there is a crime tradition slightly to one side of the traditional crime novel that reflects a rather darker reality. This is noir fiction, that dark, fast-paced sub-genre made famous by American authors of the 1930's 40's and 50's like Raymond Chandler, James M. Cain and Mickey Spillane. Noir fiction is edgy, frequently paranoid and its 'heroes' are men who smoke too much, wise-crack by reflex and whose relationships with the various dames, broads and other women they come into contact with is ambiguous to say the least. Not everything is always alright in noir fiction and novels like Chandlers 'The Big Sleep' or Cain's 'Double Indemnity' can and do leave questions in the mind and uneasy feelings in the souls of their readers.

Traditionally, for want of a better word, noir fiction has always been the preserve of American male authors. And that a young country like America should produce a vibrant, more realistic

and hard hitting version of the crime novel is not at issue. What is also not at issue is the American origin of these novels which was in the, to us now, mildly salacious pulp fiction of the 1930's, 40's and 50's. Fiction, that as well as introducing the world to the darkness of noir also accustomed readers to imagine the cityscapes of New York, Los Angeles and Chicago. The question I want to address today is whether noir fiction can exist outside of the American metier and what role, if any, women writers and characters might play in its development. Is there indeed a European noir and, if as I believe, there is, what routes might it have taken into the 21st century.

I am not alone in my belief that the genesis of noir fiction can be partly traced back to the romantic/gothic movement of early 19th century Europe. Paul Duncan, an acknowledged authority on the subject and author of the book 'Noir Fiction' is also of this opinion. Although it is sometimes mooted that cowboys were the precursors of characters such as Mike Hammer, Duncan asserts that what he calls 'emotionally untouchable' heroes have an older, more European provenance. As well as the romantic/gothic movement, Duncan also cites European existentialism as being partly to 'blame' for this phenomenon. So if we are talking about the 19th century and we're talking about European authors of the deep, the dark and the gothic, who are we pointing the finger at?

Female writers of 'traditional' noir, with the exception of Patricia Highsmith, are few and far between. Noir heroines – or rather broads and dames with minds of their own are however, legion. One very good example is the morally dubious Vivian Regan who, though strongly attracted to Chandler's Philip Marlowe, nevertheless can't help acting the tough, and bloody broad in his presence. "If I had a razor, I'd cut your throat – just to see what ran out of it.", she says just seconds after offering herself to our hero. Violence like this, without care for the object of one's sexual desires isn't new. In the English author Emily

Bronte's novel of wild, gothic passions, 'Wuthering Heights' (1847) the headstrong Catherine Earnshaw says to the object of her affection, Heathcliff, "I wish I could hold you... 'till we were both dead! I shouldn't care what you suffered. I care nothing for your sufferings." In other words, although attracted and in Catherine's case, violently in love with their men, neither of these women care too greatly about male gratification or even any notion that the man actually likes them in any way. Possession, be it sexual or romantic or both is all that matters even if, in the case of Catherine Earnshaw, such fixation on possession hastens her own death. But then noir heroines, broads, dames and cigarette girls do tend to go out of their way to get what they want – even if their female creators are usually somewhat more circumspect! These women, feminists of a type, are interesting – they can and do go to the very edges of what is acceptable in human society and we as readers and writers ever curious about the contents of the Heart of Darkness want to know more about them.

Hard-boiled, pulp, noir, horror – all of these genres, if indeed they are not one, the same and interchangeable, give the writer the opportunity to explore his or her own attitudes towards and feelings about the unacceptable. And maybe for women, especially in the past, this was even more necessary and cathartic than it is today. Emily Bronte was born in 1818 and died a mere thirty years later of that scourge of the Victorians, tuberculosis. During that short time Emily endured an unhappy, motherless childhood, watched her brother kill himself with alcohol and drugs and never, as far as we can tell, had any romantic attachments of her own. And yet the themes she explores in 'Wuthering Heights', the force of Catherine Earnshaw's will and passion, her fierce attraction to a solitary and violent man, not to mention the necrophiliac overtones present within the story point towards an author of mature sexual development. When the book was first published in 1847 a lot of people believed it had to have been written by her brother Branwell. No 'lady' it

was believed, especially one from such a circumscribed background could even begin to describe such dark passions as evinced by Catherine and Heathcliff. But then as we as readers and writers know, you don't always have to experience something in order to write about it. For Emily, Wuthering Heights was her vision of violent, sexual passion just as for Mary Shelley before her, Victor Frankenstein's 'creature' was a nightmarish and, to her, possible vision of the future of mankind. Man attempting to become God was something that troubled the early Victorian mind as men and women wrestled to come to terms with the huge and frightening realities of the Industrial Revolution combined with the demise of traditional religion. Mary, a mere 18 years old at the time, expressed these anxieties via the medium of a tale of horror and darkness where the ending is most certainly not a happy one. Having said that, Frankenstein is not in any sense noir in the way that Wuthering Heights may be conceived to be. There are no perfectly selfish, on the edge of self destructive women in the novel just as there are no men, like Heathcliff, that are hard for women to like but difficult for them to resist – like Sam Spade, like Philip Marlowe. But without that early tradition of women's gothic fiction – if romantic gothic – as demonstrated by Mary Shelley it is unlikely that Wuthering Heights would ever have seen the light of day. After all, even in 1847 books were highly unlikely to get published unless a market was seen to exist for them. Just as in the 1930's, 40's and 50's, 19th century people wondered just what their rapidly changing world was going to do to them next. Gothic, horror-romance, noir is nothing if not the literature of anxiety.

Of course mass emigration to the United States from Europe in the 19th and early 20th centuries ensured that at least some of these gothic/romantic themes and tendencies were exported. In concert with purely American icons like the 'lonesome cowboy' and the notion of the maverick, hardboiled/ pulp/ noir came into being in the first half of the 20th century. If, as writers like

Mickey Spillane would have us believe, tough talking dames abounded in the US at this time, it is strange to note that female writers of noir were thin on the ground. Patricia Highsmith is, of course, as I've said before, an exception. Her fiction 'The Talented Mr Ripley' and 'Strangers on a Train' explore amorality and the darkness that can exist within even a casually encountered man on a train against a backdrop of again, a changing and uncertain world. Maybe Highsmith's own experiences as both a lesbian and exile for much of her life from her native US and its policies, while at the same time espousing extreme political Republicanism helped to create what became her mesmeric world of the morally uncertain. A charming and often vulnerable woman, Highsmith could also be misanthropic, cantankerous and she was famously dominated by and devoted to her mother Mary who treated her with quite staggering cruelty for most of her life. Perhaps Tom Ripley is Highsmith's revenge upon a world that didn't really appreciate her talent or her sufferings until after her death.

Now, of course, we have a whole slew of female authors some American and some European, many of whose work may well be described, at least in part, as noir. Or rather aspects that could be described as noir are present within their work – sometimes in the most unlikely settings. Take these for instance...

SHOW SELECTION OF SLIDES OF İSTANBUL AND DESCRIBE EACH ONE IN TURN. ALSO SHORT EXPOSE ABOUT MY BOOKS. (Note: there are 10 slides. Some of the locations featured have appeared in my books and some have not). THIS SECTION OF THE PRESENTATION WILL BE SPONTANEOUS AND UNSCRIPTED.

İstanbul is a very long way from Los Angeles on all sorts of levels but it can harbour some very noir people and situations nonetheless. Let me give you some examples from my own Çetin İkmen crime series.

In my first book, 'Belshazzar's Daughter' I have a character called Natalia Gulcu. Natalia is the grand-daughter of a very strange Russian woman and the girlfriend of an extremely needy English teacher. Natalia is beautiful, cold, greedy and will do just about anything she needs to in order to attract admiration, material goods and sexual gratification. Her particular peccadillo is that she enjoys sex in the company of firearms. This is not, of course, to everyone's taste and so, when desperate, she is not above threatening her mates with a gun in order to encourage compliance. One poor young soldier she meets in Yildiz Park has a pistol put to his head while Natalia coos "If you don't get that thing of yours up and do it to me... I'm going to blow your head off." She really doesn't care what this experience may or may not be doing to him, just like she doesn't care about her boyfriend beyond his ability to buy her things. Raymond Chandler would have been charmed.

My fifth book, 'Harem', is I've always felt probably the most paranoid and noir of all of my books. It is, basically, an examination of a conspiracy and much of the action takes place in the cisterns and cellars that pock-mark the ground beneath Istanbul. Something really nasty is happening to young girls in the city and my police heroes have to contend with high level corruption as well as rape and murder. As the plot unfolds they come into contact with an informant – an extremely disreputable figure called 'Rat' whose desperate pleas for money from İkmen owe much to a thousand 'snitches', 'snouts' and 'grasses' we've read about and seen in films for many decades. Interestingly there are now several cable TV channels in Turkey that feature old 1950's Yesilcam (Turkish Hollywood) films where a vast array of slimy snitches, whiskey swilling broads and smoke dried gambling dens may be encountered on a daily basis.

As well as the snitch, 'Harem' also features that other noir classic, the wronged woman. Although smart the wronged

woman, like James Ellroy's Lynn Bracken in 'LA Confidential' is a dame who has had to do a few tough things in order to survive. Lynn Bracken has submitted to painful plastic surgery in order to make her living as a Veronica Lake look-alike hooker in 1950's LA. My character, a female police officer called Ayşe Farsakoğlu, is desperate to secure a husband. The wrong side of thirty and still smarting from a doomed affair with the love of her life, Mehmet Suleyman, Ayşe turns to İkmen's deputy, Sergeant Orhan Tepe for comfort. But Orhan is both married and manipulative and he tempts Ayşe into his bed with promises that he will divorce his wife. But he doesn't. Instead he simply uses Ayşe to indulge his sexual fantasies which become more and more violent as the book progresses. Ayşe, of course, eventually appeals for help to the 'heroic man' İkmen who then uses his power to protect her. Not that there is a happy ending for Ayşe in 'Harem', but then that just wouldn't be dark enough for this particular book which deals with the type of fears that afflict the world post 9/11. Fears that include questions about just who is running things and to what end – fears that not even a man like Çetin İkmen can answer or even speculate upon.

So, as we've seen, at the beginning of the 19th century people were concerned about what the Industrial Revolution was doing to their world and some writers and artists expressed this anxiety via the Romantic/Gothic movement. In the 1930's and 40's the world was at war and noir with its lonely heroes and dark, labyrinthine conspiracies was born. Now post-Cold War once again, we don't have a clue about what is going to happen next and so out come the detectives carrying with them a familiar array of noir style motifs. The same, because some familiarity is comforting but different too because 2004 is a different world to 1930 or even 1950. Now our heroes don't have to be policemen, clever aristocrats or even private detectives. Now it's up to each and every one of us to keep the peace, both inside and outside of our own heads. And so our heroes can now be anyone – debt collectors, doctors, undertakers, a man with Tourette's

Syndrome, housewives. Because we all need answers and, if we have the courage, we can all act detective in our own lives and in those of the people we care about. Although not exclusively so, modern noir, in my opinion is as much about the internal journeys the ‘detective’ makes into people’s minds as it is about the crime itself. It’s about toxic families, unacknowledged diseases, the misunderstandings of everyday life and the moment when a creative genius slips over into insanity.

Now, in the twenty first century we have a slew of authors who write of dark things. Many of them are European and many of them are women. Val McDermid, Mo Hayder, Minette Walters, Ruth Rendell or rather her alter ego, Barbara Vine. Rendell chose to give birth, for want of a better phrase to Vine in order to ‘write in a different way.’ What this different way turned out to be was a much darker but at the same time more intimate style. Vine writes in the first person, her book ‘A Dark Adapted Eye’ begins, “On the morning Vera died I woke up very early.” Snappy, shocking, worthy of the most hard-nosed noir tec. And yet the narrator is a woman, investigating into her own life and a past she doesn’t fully understand. In fact the past coming back, as it were, to haunt the present is one of Vine’s most horrific themes. After all the past is dead and gone and things that are dead and gone and therefore need to be exhumed do tend to smell.

As the heroic man, the broad, the snitch and all the other inhabitants of noir land put on new faces and develop fresh introspections, even the form in which these novels and movies appear is changing. Indeed some novels that include a crime are more about the people and places around the incident than about the offence itself. One example of this is the Turkish author Orhan Pamuk’s novel ‘The Black Book’ where the mystery of a woman’s disappearance ends with no obvious solution. The setting is Istanbul and the book is peopled with policemen, gangsters and all the usual suspects for a crime novel

as well as an embedded family saga and various oddities and eccentricities from his characters, and Pamuk's, past. Pamuk whose elegant style and intellectual and philosophical grasp has been likened to that of Calvino and Borges is completely candid about his view of the past and its effect upon people's lives. "If you try to repress memories, something always comes back," he says. "I'm what comes back."

In other words the writer has a duty. To expose the past, his own included if necessary, to approach that which is hidden and to reveal it to the light of day. Just as Emily Bronte did with Catherine Earnshaw's over-arching passion, just as all noir writers and their characters do when they grub around in the dirt of the city. Because in times of uncertainty we need to know what we're up against and we need also to have a few heroes out there to give us enough faith to carry on – even if said heroes don't always complete the job and answer all the questions.

Finally and in part in answer to why so many women are now involved in writing and creating this edgy fiction, I will leave the last word to my hero, Çetin İkmen. He's talking to Mehmet Suleyman about events surrounding his brother-in-law Talaat's admission to hospital and the responses of his wife and daughter to this. Zelfa is Mehmet's wife. Remember as you listen to these words that women are always present at the bloody beginning of life and frequently at its end too.

"You know these women are far tougher than we are, Mehmet," İkmen said. "I was in there, Talaat screaming, I was beside myself. But Fatma? She just held on to him, speaking softly into his ears while my daughter very calmly bathed his forehead. Doctors everywhere with monitors, plunging hypodermics into Talaat's arms. But then I don't have to tell you about tough women do I? You have Zelfa."

Thank you.

Copyright 2004 Barbara Nadel.

The right of Barbara Nadel to be identified as the Author of
the Work as been asserted by her in accordance with the
Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.



Margery Arent Safir i Michel Rio. *Imaginant l'univers: ciència i literatura*
 Divendres 17, 19.30h. Observatori d'horitzons. Francès, amb traducció simultània

Mr. Snow's Parenthesis

Before and Beyond the Two Cultures

In a dazzling lesson in taxonomy, Julio Cortázar, in the “Expendable Chapters” of his novel *Rayuela*, gives us the Uruguayan philosopher Ceferino Piriz, a kind of Linnaeus of the southern hemisphere. Organizing the world into genus and species of corporations and ministries, Ceferino offers up such groupings as the National Corporation of Commission Agents for Species Colored in Yellow containing all, “Generic species colored in yellow or simply yellow: animals with yellow fur, plants with yellow flowers, and minerals with a yellow look,” the administrative site for bananas, “yellow peoples,” yellow Volkswagons and blond hair. What Cortázar takes ad absurdum nonetheless reflects a reality: Classification may be arbitrary. Taxonomy can be a question of definition, choice, perspective and emphasis.

This brings me to C.P. Snow and his famous 1959 Rede lecture at Cambridge, “The Two Cultures,” for how one defines a culture, and therefore how many cultures there might be, is not so far from Ceferino Piriz’s concerns in *Rayuela*.

C.P. Snow was born in 1906 into a very class-ridden English system, and not of the proper class; his lecture dealt with the specifics of British education, one of the world’s most specialized. Snow’s authority for the lecture came from being both a scientist and a writer, yet as a scientist he was unproductive, and as a man of letters--while enormously popular--was never considered distinguished. But all of this long ago faded away under the brilliant

light of Snow's title. "The Two Cultures" identifies literary intellectuals and scientists as two separate and non-communicating categories that not even Ceferino Piriz would have been able to house under one Ministry. Snow's is the title that launched a thousand debates.

Had I been present at the launch I might have confronted Snow with another Argentinian, Jorge Luis Borges, who spoke not of two cultures but rather of three mythological systems: mathematics, physics, and lyrics (poetics). None is more 'real' than the others, Borges argued, for all are products of human intelligence, thus even so-called "objective experimentation" has one and the same consciousness as both an experiment's creator and the judge of its validity. I might have equally goaded Mr. Snow with tautology, noting that for two cultures he could well have stayed within just one of them, the sciences, for example, and oppose—as was done for so long—the life sciences (biology) and the physical sciences (physics), or the experimental and the theoretical sciences, or classical Newtonian physics and quantum physics. But not wishing to provoke Mr. Snow or be polemical—a good humor born of our limited time today—I will merely propose that his two cultures are *two* punctuation marks—parentheses, setting off *one* historical moment.

These few minutes will take me on a high-speed tour of the period immediately Before and After that moment, then to the present-day and novelist, Michel Rio, whose work exemplifies *Beyond The Two Cultures*--literature thinking science. As company I'll take along a 19th-century man who defies all category, having declared that poetry is born of mathematical calculation. For you see it was not always as C.P. Snow said.

Edgar Allan Poe was born in 1809. Then, we were all natural philosophers. The humanities and the natural world--the object of scientific inquiry--were on the same plane—"Heaven and earth on the same dirty sidewalk," as Ceferino's chronicler—and Poe's Spanish

translator—the same Cortazar would write of the hopscotch. Then things were still without names, and the word “scientist” was born well after Poe -- a neologism coined to designate a “maker of science” and patterned on the word for a maker of art, an *artist*. Mary Shelly could write her novel *Frankenstein* without knowing any science, and Poe could turn to the “Science and Literature” page of the Royal Philosophical Society journal. Sir Humphrey Davy’s lectures on chemical philosophy were highly paid, sold-out, major social events. *The Lancet*—the world’s most respected medical journal--reported, *as science*, studies on mesmerism and phrenology that are nearly indistinguishable from Poe’s own grotesque and arabesque use of the same *material* in fiction. "Da Vinci was both a prodigious scientist and an artistic genius!" affirms an artist in Rio’s novel *Dreaming Jungles*. "Da Vinci, like all his contemporaries, did not know very much," the scientist responds. "At the very least, his knowledge allowed a considerable dose of imagination."

Ay, there's the rub. It *is* easier to know when there is not a lot to know. Just under a century before Snow's lecture, Poe publishes *Eureka*, a poetic cosmology based on the most current scientific information of the day. Then, in 1848, one could still write a cosmology as a poet.

But at the mid point of the 19th century scientific knowledge multiplies exponentially, feeding on itself. There is suddenly a lot to know: evolutionary theory, electromagnetism, thermodynamics. Science is applied to technology and technology to industrialization. With *too much* to know, specialization sets in. Laboratories become “temples” reserved for the “initiated,” common language gives way to jargon, and like magic before it science becomes more “secretive.” Issues of authority and power arise, as once with the Church. By the end of

the 19th century no one speaks of natural philosophy. Poet and scientist no longer have equal access to knowledge of Nature.

Snow's claim of two cultures—literary and scientific, separate and mutually ignorant--is valid at this exact historical moment. But the moment is over before Snow ever talks about it. That is why I call “The Two Cultures” a parenthesis. Mr. Snow's parenthesis opens in the mid-19th century and closes, in my view, three decades *before* Snow gives his lecture. Snow is a student of Ernest Rutherford's when the early 20th century revolution in physics closes the parenthesis.

"Anyone who is not shocked by quantum physics has not understood it," warned Niels Bohr. We have ghost electrons and Schrödinger's live-dead cat, Everett's tree of multiple realities or parallel universes, complementarity, and, in 1927, Heisenberg's uncertainty principle, which in the place of absolute predictability allows us only probabilities. "God doesn't play dice," Einstein famously protested. But Einstein was wrong. This *is* a new world. "The common division of the world into subject and object, inner world and outer world, body and soul is no longer adequate," Heisenberg writes. Nor is science alone any longer adequate. The founders of this revolution in science will turn to philosophy. A year before Snow's lecture Heisenberg writes his *Physics and Philosophy*, Bohr follows suit, and Schrodinger publishes his quasi-mystical *My View of the World*.

The seduction is not unrequited. The humanists also begin to flirt with the other side of the cultural fence, lured by greener scientific models. At the very time that Snow is lecturing in England, structuralism is "sciencing" the humanities in France. Brecht has completed the final version of his *Life of Galileo*. History and philosophy of science, as a discipline, is pointing to the complete interdependence of cultural phenomena--even in the

"objective" sciences--and looks at the role of language in scientific theory. Serious scientific thinkers call attention to imagination in such fanciful titles as *La Mélodie Secrete* or *Late Night Thoughts on Listening to Mahler's Ninth Symphony*, while a class of speculator scientists makes leaps of faith, musing like poets in works such as *God and the New Physics*, *God and Science*, *God and the Astronomers*--making one wonder whether their readers are seeking science or God. Stephen Jay Gould, Hubert Reeves, Richard Dawkins, Stuart A. Kauffman, Steven Weinberg, Steven Pinker, Jean-Didier Vincent, Edward O. Wilson all make scientific publications best-sellers; and physicist Stephen Hawking becomes a media celebrity writing about theories of time. Language is at the root of this cultural phenomenon. Scientific theory expressed in non-scientific language makes scientific knowledge—once again, as in Poe's time—accessible through popularization. This is the high end. On the low end, we discover science not as best seller but as best for selling--Consumer products, from laundry detergents to cosmetics, sold with the "guarantee" of a science created in the laboratories of advertising agencies, or “genius hype,” the sale of a scientific superstar, an Einstein or Hawking.

My point is simple: Despite (or perhaps because of) the costs and sheer complexity of twentieth and early 21st-century scientific research, which places certain kinds of scientific knowledge beyond the reach not only of literary laymen but even of scientists working in other specialized domains, there is today a concurrent and opposite movement--the integration of the sciences with the general public. Today a generation of authors writes in a world where science is everywhere---a newly mythified science that is called upon to answer the questions once asked of ancient religions and foundational fictions. Today the "canon" once again embraces knowledge of the functioning of the physical universe, and with the return of

speculation to science, the object of inquiry into the unknown is not merely a *how to* in the applied sense, but a simple, and deeper, *how* and *what*, and for the most philosophical, *why*. “Stop pouring out the kind of specialized stupidity that says ‘After Proust, Kafka or Joyce, we can’t write the same way,’ Rio sternly advises literary critics, “and sooner say ‘After Copernicus, Newton, Darwin, Planck or Einstein....’.”

This is what the Beyond the Two Cultures looks like.

‘Welcome to the twentieth century, Mr. Wilmot,’ a clergyman announces in John Updike’s novel *In the Beauty of the Lilies*. “Amazing things are coming out of European physics. Time is the fourth dimension, it turns out,...light...comes in packets--.... called quanta....’ “We don’t any more merely investigate reality, ...We *make* it...” In Tlalpan, Mexico, portraits of Rutherford, Planck, Bohr, Pauli, Einstein, and Heisenberg stare out from a gallery of Nobel physicists in Carlos Fuentes’ novel *Cristóbal Nonato*—the heroes of Cristobal’s grandparent-scientists, the “Curies of Tlalpan. In Cambridge, England a narrator of Nicholas Mosley’s *Hopeful Monsters* studies physics with Paul Dirac, discusses the atom and atom splitting, while the novel’s structure is set by the notion of quantum mechanical nonlocality. In Ireland novelist John Banville writes *Kepler* and *Doctor Copernicus*; in Nicaragua Ernesto Cardenal his *Cántico cósmico*; cosmology, astrophysics, relativity, quantum mechanics, chaos theory, thermodynamics, biology—among other subjects—enter the poem. In the American mid-West Richard Powers composes the *The Gold Bug Variations*, where amidst Poe’s story and Bach’s music, four researchers in molecular biology twist about each other as if in a double helix formation, speaking of love and target enzymes, codon tables and the assignment of CAG to glutamine. Michael Frayn’s *Copenhagen*, then Jorge Volpi’s *En Busca de Klingsor* take up the uncertainty principle and

the wartime meeting between Bohr and Heisenberg, then head of the Nazi atomic bomb project. “The Science and Literature” page of Poe’s time finds its echo today in The Society of Literature and Science.

The Old World and the New. The list supersedes borders and national identity. All are writing from the 1980s to the present. Before them Italo Calvino and Thomas Pynchon are examples. And I have not even touched upon that separate category of scientists who—like C.P. Snow—also write literature but not always about science (Raymond Queneau, Primo Levi, Vladimir Nabakov, Roald Hoffmann and Germán Sierra, to name a few.) Nor have I dealt with science fiction or hypertext or the information age, which has altered the very notion of an educated man, no longer defined by the books in his library. The degree of scientific knowledge among the authors of fiction I *have* named and the use they make of it varies greatly. For some science is cultural dallying, ornamentation; for others, socio-biography, attentive less to the science than to the scientist; for still others the scientific knowledge runs deep but shows up more as metaphor than debate; a very few knowledgeably interrogate science and its human impact. Disparate, these authors cannot be reduced to their interest in “non-literary” disciplines. My sampling is only to suggest that Mr. Snow’s parenthesis, long closed, is today sealed shut.

From this hurried *tour du monde* a few observations come into focus. The first is that no one who has read Borges or Cortazar will be nearly as shocked by quantum physics as Bohr imagined; we know that Kafka creates his own precursors. Nor that among contemporary scientific concepts the uncertainty principle most inflames the literary imagination. The fit is easy: literature is a privileged site for ambiguity, and the indeterminacy of the text among the privileged theories of reader response. What *has*

changed are the figures of speech, which now often don a scientific name. What's in a name? Power and credibility in a modern society that has made of science, in Rio's words, "a veritable mythology of knowledge."

Rio is a *rara avis*. In his literary world analytical and philosophical debate is inseparable from poetry, *is* the work of literature. The line that begins with Poe leads to Rio, who became a writer because he read Poe.

"The writer's job is not to be a purveyor of scientific knowledge..., a middleman between the ...scientist and the literary public," explains historian of science James Ritter.

It is rather the impact of this knowledge on the protagonists of his story, the manner in which possession of this knowledge interacts with the inner life of us all,...; But nor is fiction a form of 'anti-science,' free to express all that science cannot because untrammelled by the demands of logic or reason. On the contrary, contradiction is as fatal to a novel as to a scientific theory.

One of Rio's recurring characters, Jerome Avalon—a writer with a highly suspicious resemblance to his creator--puts it this way: In literature there's both-- "order and disorder, as with all phenomena tied to entropy. There's the order of syntax and of knowledge, which are the stable particles, the protons of literature, and the disorder of free imagination, the residual photons of poetry.'

This brings me back to where I began--with Ceferino Piriz and taxonomy and C.P. Snow and the classification of cultures. "Any alteration in man's physical position in the universe must correspond to an alteration in his intellectual and affective position, thus of literary discourse, which is the sum of all these coordinates," Rio writes. In his novel *Faux Pas*, classification is left to a hired killer. Entering the 'safehouse' of his prey, while waiting for the man he will execute, the killer undertakes an examination of his victim's library. Physics, biology, history, literature--the organization is simple. "Each set," he observes,

“containing in principle that which follows,...For moving back up the chain, one can say that the imaginary is no more than one of the cultivated fields of consciousness, consciousness an accident of the animate, and the animate an episode of matter.” In a later essay, Rio takes on the classification in his own name, and with the same four sets--physics, biology, history, literature—he imagines his own personal library. In the place of Mr. Snow’s parenthesis, he finds this never-ending solution. I quote:

...any imaginary worthy of the name must comprise science and art, intellect and affect...logic and emotive drive. Literature can (or must) lay claim to a limitless field, in which the infinite has personal dreams, and the person thinks, even feels the infinite. And so I imagine the subset literature absorbing the set of physics...I imagine a library that bites its own tail.

Muchas gracias.

KOSMOPOLIS. Fiesta Internacional de la Literatura
Del 14 al 19 de septiembre de 2004
Barcelona – CCCB

CAFÉ EUROPA – LA HABANA

Café literario

Ramón Sánchez Lizarralde; *Caóticas capilaridades*

Desde el momento en que me hicieron la propuesta de participar en este debate acerca de los flujos culturales y literarios del centro a la periferia y viceversa, entre distintas periferias y distintos centros, ando dándole vueltas al fenómeno de la transmisión y extensión de los productos culturales de unas partes a otras del planeta y aunque, al principio, ante la sugerencia de los organizadores de acudir a la semejanza con los “vasos comunicantes”, creía haber encontrado alguna respuesta oponiéndome a tal imagen, luego, a medida que meditaba en la forma de abordar el asunto para esta tertulia, las preguntas se han ido sumando, encabalgándose unas sobre las otras, sin que alcance a encontrar apenas un par de respuestas satisfactorias.

Parece claro que la imagen de los vasos comunicantes no sirve. En primer lugar porque reducir la cultura o la literatura a la condición de un fluido que obedezca a las leyes mecánicas de la gravedad conduce necesariamente a un simplificación. No porque la literatura sea más importante que los fluidos para los seres humanos, sino porque parece estar constituida y comportarse de modo diferente en su movimiento. Por otro lado, si lo pensamos, lo atractivo en la metáfora de los vasos es la segunda parte del sintagma, el calificativo de comunicantes, que nos evoca un proceso de movimiento más o menos uniforme por debajo de la superficie que conduce a la igualación indefectible de los niveles en localizaciones diferentes del sistema. Todo muy tranquilizador. Pero aquí las objeciones se me antojan todavía más serias. La primera consiste en la constatación de que no existe ni puede existir tal igualación de los niveles.

Pero además, y aquí es donde me parece a mí que fracasa definitivamente, la metáfora presupone la existencia de un estructurada red de tubos, canales o cloacas horizontales, subterráneos o no, que deberían comunicar entre sí los otros tubos o cilindros verticales y emergentes donde se alcanzaría el feliz logro del intercambio. Y esa red no existe.

Ya entonces, cuando discutía con los directores del café a este propósito, se me ocurrió que las tentativas de respuesta debían aludir a procesos más complejos, con mayor cantidad de variables y factores, en realidad a algo parecido a un caos en el que pudiéramos rastrear algunas trayectorias, corrientes, fuerzas centrífugas y centrípetas... A fin de cuentas, la vida humana (el objeto de la literatura) es algo ciertamente complejo, y parece que variado, resistente a la clasificación.

Como consecuencia, me seduce a menudo la tentación de convertir mi intervención en un relato, una narración, por ejemplo, de mi propia vida, o de una parte de ella: un individuo español, temprano resistente al franquismo, viaja a Albania por solidaridad militante, donde vive durante unos años y trabaja para el régimen en asuntos de propaganda. La experiencia lo transforma a él en diversos aspectos pero, además, al regreso y desaparecido el sistema al que creyó ayudar, poco a poco lo aprendido le permite o le empuja a convertirse en un puente, en un instrumento de enlace entre dos territorios culturales que hasta entonces prácticamente se ignoraban (sobre todo de allá para acá). Aparte de la paradoja vital misma, creo que interesa en esta oportunidad el mecanismo de comunicación: la casualidad, el caos. Es verdad que el caso es singular pero cabría aducir aquí también el de Jusuf Brioni: encarcelado por el régimen de Enver Hoxha, se libró de la prisión por decisión del dictador para que tradujera al francés sus propios textos... y más tarde se convirtió en la voz francesa de Ismail Kadare para contribuir a su conocimiento y éxito en toda Europa occidental... Conozco casos, con diferentes grados de semejanza, que tratan de Rusia, Hungría, Serbia, Rumanía...

Se presenta para mí como una certeza el hecho de que los productos

de la mente humana poseen una marcada e intrínseca tendencia a difundirse, a expandirse, para acumularse después unos sobre otros, sustituirse, mezclarse o fertilizarse. Desde siempre. Y puede que esa sea una de las características esenciales y definitorias de las sociedades que constituimos (tal vez por eso, también, todo intento programado de impedirlo, desde dentro o desde fuera, por parte del Estado o sus gobernantes conduce tarde o temprano al debilitamiento de estos, incluso a su quiebra y su fracaso). En lo que al tema que nos interesa se refiere, eso significa que toda cultura, cada cultura, es ni más ni menos que la suma o la amalgama de los influjos culturales que la van constituyendo; que no existe cultura ni literatura alguna constituida *ex nihilo* en ningún país ni en ninguna lengua.

En la indagación nos ha surgido otro elemento que podemos identificar como constitutivo de la cultura y al tiempo como parte de su mecanismo de expansión y comunicación: la traducción. Toda cultura y toda literatura son, también, desde siempre, traducción.

Pero estamos hablando de literatura a comienzos del tercer milenio, después de la desaparición de los bloques y en el comienzo de algo que se ha dado en llamar globalización. Este término, en lo relativo a la literatura, sugiere (que no designa) algo así como una “intercomunicabilidad” universal, propensión a la uniformidad, ausencia de fronteras, tendencia a la supresión de las diferencias. El concepto se ha originado en el ámbito de la economía y las finanzas, y luego ha invadido, con su tremendo poder, otros territorios en los que ya no parece necesitar concreción ni definición, sencillamente impone, evoca despóticamente, con lo que acaba resultando a nuestros efectos más insidioso que las metáforas extraídas de la mecánica de los fluidos.

Aceptemos por obvia la existencia y desarrollo creciente de unos medios técnicos de reproducción y difusión de los productos de la mente humana que permiten su llegada a cualquier punto y persona del planeta que los posea en poco más de un instante. Por otra parte, esa globalización

económica y política nos ha tornado, por primera vez, conscientes a muchos millones de personas en la Tierra del alto grado de interdependencia de nuestros respectivos destinos. La literatura y la creación cultural están decisiva y definitivamente marcadas por ese hecho.

Ahora bien, eso no significa ni mucho menos, como bien sabemos, que nada se oponga al venturoso entendimiento general. Existen infinidad de factores que actúan, en diferentes sentidos, sobre el proceso: los mediadores culturales (editores, medios de comunicación, gobiernos); el diferente grado de extensión de la libertad (de creación y de expresión, lejos de constituir un bien generalizado en el planeta); la diferente estratificación de los influjos culturales que en ámbitos diferentes determina actitudes y predisposiciones asimismo diferentes...

Pero a mí me interesa destacar aquí un factor que, me parece, ejerce un influjo notable en el momento y espacios a los que queremos aludir. Me refiero a las específicas mentalidades. Para ir directamente al grano, porque ya estoy próximo a agotar mi tiempo: las dos mitades de Europa, la del Este y la del Oeste, sus poblaciones, han tenido experiencias radicalmente diferentes durante el último medio siglo. Los términos libertad, democracia, opresión poseen notables diferencias de matiz en un territorio y en otro; pero también innovación y tradición, clasicismo y modernidad. Los niveles de sufrimiento de los seres humanos de ambos lados han sido diversos a lo largo de ese periodo y lo son todavía, de igual modo que las fuerzas que lo han causado; y todavía más importante a nuestros efectos: la percepción de todo ello por parte de las ciudadanías todavía es más diversa. Eso alimenta recelos, incomprensiones, pervivencia de viejos mitos, rechazos y adhesiones diferentes en cada caso. Barreras para la comprensión y el intercambio, para que se acepte como propia y humana la vida que la literatura trata de re-crear.

Luego está la necesidad de olvido que parece afectarnos a todos en distintos momentos. Pero son cosas diferentes las que cada uno queremos olvidar (sin acabar de conseguirlo); cada cual experimenta sus propias

heridas como diferentes, o se lame las cicatrices como si fueran exclusivas e irrepetibles. Además, nos encontramos en fases distintas de olvido, incluso en el interior de cada uno de esos hipotéticos territorios.

Percibo que en la zona oriental de Europa se expande la percepción, en términos de reclamación incluso, de que la otra parte está obligada a hacer un esfuerzo de comprensión, de incorporación a su conciencia de las experiencias propias. Y viceversa, no son pocos los de por acá que piensan, o sienten, que los otros tienen todavía mucho que aprender y que “no tienen ni idea” de lo que nos ha costado alcanzar la feliz prosperidad que poseemos.

Por debajo de los procesos de integración económica y política continúa campando la vida, a veces a contracorriente de aquellos. Y me temo que, por el momento, no podemos ser demasiado optimistas. Aquí, en el fondo, todavía, da lo mismo lo que pase allí si no perjudica en exceso nuestro sosiego; y al revés, allí da lo mismo lo que pase aquí, si no desmiente demasiado brutalmente sus certezas y esperanzas.

Habremos de traducirnos mucho más, reunirnos mucho más, enviar delegaciones, turistas, trabajadores, escritores y cantantes de un lado para el otro (también ministros y funcionarios pero en eso prefiero no entrar). Hasta que alcancemos a nombrar con claridad, los unos en la presencia de los otros, las cosas que nos importan y nos perturban, muchas de las cuales tampoco yo he llegado a nombrar aquí aunque conozco algunas. Tal vez en ese cometido les esté reservado un papel especial a los extrañados, los desarraigados, los traductores, los exiliados. Porque tienen, como nadie, conocimiento de las dos orillas. Y más necesidad del recuerdo. Aunque también corren mayor riesgo que nadie de confundir su memoria con la realidad.

KOSMOPOLIS. International Festival of Literature
14 to 19 September 2004
Barcelona - CCCB

CAFÉ EUROPE – HAVANA

Literary Café

Ramón Sánchez Lizarralde; ***Chaotic Capillarities***

Translated by Debbie Smirthwaite

From the moment I received the proposal to participate in this debate about cultural and literary flows from the centre to the periphery and vice versa, between different peripheries and different centres, I have been mulling over the phenomenon of transmission and dissemination of cultural products from certain parts of the planet to other parts. Although, initially, in response to the organisers' suggestion to resort to the similarity with "communicating vessels", I thought I had found some kind of an answer by opposing that image. Later, as I carried on meditating over the way in which to tackle the issue for this meeting, the questions kept on coming, some riding on the backs of others, and I found myself unable to come up with even a couple of satisfactory answers.

It seems clear that this image of communicating vessels does not work. Firstly because reducing culture or literature to the condition of a fluid that obeys the mechanical laws of gravity leads necessarily to oversimplification. Not because literature is more important than fluids for human beings, but because it seems to be constituted and to behave in a different way in its movement. Moreover, if we think about it, the attractive part about the vessels metaphor is the first part of the syntagma, the description of communicating, which evokes a more or less uniform process of movement under the surface that leads to the unfailing equalisation of levels in different locations of the system. All very

reassuring. But here I have the feeling that the objections are even more serious. The first consists in the confirmation that such an equalisation of levels does not and cannot exist. But furthermore, and this is where I think it definitively fails, the metaphor presupposes the existence of a structured network of tubes, channels or horizontal drains, whether subterranean or not, that should connect with other emerging vertical tubes or cylinders and where the happy achievement of the exchange would be reached. And that network does not exist.

Already then, when I was discussing this issue with the café directors, I had realised that any attempts to answer had to allude to more complex processes, with a greater quantity of variables and factors; in reality to something similar to a chaos in which we could track some paths, currents, centrifugal and centripetal forces... At the end of the day, human life (the object of literature) is something that is certainly complex, and seemingly varied, and resistant to classification.

In consequence, I am often seduced by the temptation of converting my intervention into a tale, a narrative, for example, of my own life, or of a part of it: a Spanish individual, an early resister of the Franco regime, who travelled to Albania with a sense of militant solidarity, where he lived for some years and worked for the regime on propaganda issues. This experience transformed him in different aspects, but, also, upon his return, and with the system he believed that he had helped gone, little by little what he had learned allowed him or pushed him to become a bridge, an instrument for liaison between two cultural territories that until then had practically ignored each other (especially in the direction from there to here). Apart from the vital paradox itself, I think that in this opportunity what is interesting is the mechanism of communication: the chance, the chaos. It is true that the case is unique but it would be relevant to also mention here that of Jusuf Brioni: imprisoned by the regime of Enver Hoxha, he managed to evade prison owing to the dictator's decision that he should translate his own texts into French... and he later became the

French voice of Ismail Kadare, to contribute to his fame and success in all of Western Europe... I know of cases, with different degrees of similarity, which occurred in Russia, Hungary, Serbia, Romania, etc.

For me it is a certainty that products of the human mind possess a marked and intrinsic tendency to disseminate themselves, to expand, and then to accumulate on top of each other, to substitute each other, mix together or fertilise each other. They have always done so. And it may be that this is one of the essential and defining characteristics of the societies that we constitute (perhaps for that reason, too, all programmed attempts to prevent it happening, from inside or from outside, by the State or its governors, leads sooner or later to their weakening, and even to their breakdown and demise). As far as the issue that interests us is concerned, this means that all culture, each culture, is no more or less than the sum or amalgam of the cultural influxes that constitute it; there is no culture or literature in existence that was constituted *ex nihilo* in any country nor in any language.

In research, another element has emerged that we can identify as constitutive of culture and at the same time as part of its mechanism of expansion and communication: translation. All culture and all literature have also always been translation.

But we are talking about literature at the start of the third millennium, after the disappearance of the former blocs and at the start of something that has been dubbed globalisation. This term, in relation to literature, suggests (but does not denote) something like a kind of universal “inter-communicability”, an inclination towards uniformity, an absence of frontiers, a tendency towards the suppression of differences. The concept originated in the sphere of economics and finances, and has then invaded, with its tremendous power, other territories in which it no longer seems to need specification or definition, it simply imposes, despotically evokes, which means that for our purposes it turns out to be more insidious than the metaphors extracted from the mechanics of fluids.

Let us accept as obvious the existence and growing development of technical media for the reproduction and dissemination of the products of the human mind, allowing them to reach any point and any person on the planet that possesses such media in little more than an instant. Moreover, that economic and political globalisation has made many millions of us people on earth aware, for the first time, of the high degree of interdependence of our destinies. Literature and cultural creation are decisively and definitively marked by this fact.

However, as we well know, this does not mean that anything opposes the fortunate general understanding, far from it. An infinite number of factors exist that act, in different ways, on this process: cultural mediators (editors, media, governments); the different degrees of freedom (of creation and of expression, far from constituting a generalised right on this planet); the different stratification of cultural influences that in different spheres determine attitudes and predispositions that are also different...

But I am interested in highlighting here a factor that, I believe, exercises a notable influence on the moment and spaces to which we wish to allude. I refer to specific mentalities. To go straight to the point, because I am close to exhausting my time: the people of the two halves of Europe, the East and the West, have had radically different experiences over the last half century. The terms freedom, democracy and oppression are endowed with notably different nuances of meaning in the different territories; but so too are innovation and tradition, or classicism and modernity. The levels of suffering of human beings from both sides have been diverse over this period and they are still so, just like the forces that have caused that suffering; and even more importantly for our purposes: the perception of all this by citizens is even more diverse. This fuels misgivings, incomprehension, the survival of old myths, and different rejections and adhesions in each case. Barriers for comprehension and exchange, for the acceptance of the life that literature tries to re-create as

being our own and human.

Then there is the “need to forget” that seems to affect us all at different moments. But the things that each of us wants to forget (without entirely managing to do so) are different; everyone experiences their own wounds as different, or licks the scars as if they were exclusive and unrepeatable. Furthermore, we find ourselves in different phases of forgetting, even in the interior of each one of those hypothetical territories.

I perceive that in the Eastern area of Europe that perception is growing, even to the point of claiming, that the other part is obliged to make an effort of comprehension, of incorporation into its conscience of its experiences. And vice versa, there are more than just a few around here who think, or feel, that the others still have a lot to learn and that “they have not the faintest idea” regarding what it has cost us to reach the happy prosperity that we possess.

Underneath the processes of economic and political integration, life continues to meander, sometimes swimming against the tide of those processes. And I fear that, for the moment, we cannot be very optimistic. Here, deep down, whatever happens there is still not important as long as it does not jeopardise our peace of mind and vice versa: there, they are not too worried about what happens here, as long as it doesn’t undo their certainties and hopes too brutally.

We will need to translate each other much more, meet each other much more, send delegations, tourists, workers, writers and singers from one side to the other (as well as ministers and civil servants but I would prefer not to go into that). And do this until we manage to name with clarity, in the presence of each other, the things that concern us and disturb us, many of which I have not managed to mention here, although I am aware of some. Perhaps in this task, a special role is reserved for the expatriates, the uprooted, the translators and the exiled. Because they, like nobody else, possess knowledge of both shores. And a greater need to remember. Although they also run a greater risk than anyone of confusing

their memory with reality.

Ramón Sánchez Lizarralde

CAFÈ EUROPA – L'HAVANA

Cafè literari

Carles Torner; *Destruir Europa*

És un dia clement, ple de llum amistosa.
Un diumenge d'estiu
he vist els taüts verds: dos-cents vuitanta-dos
d'aquells vuit mil.
Part opaca de l'ombra,
imatge buida del que fou
Srebrenica, els ulls s'hi aferren, llisquen,
no veuen res.
Ja no veig res.
Agafo, amb els meus ulls, la pala.
Torno a les fosques.
I torno a tu pel crit que m'ho demana,
com si el camí i el crit
fossin un raig de llum recargolant-se en cerca
d'un alfabet futur. Com si el crit fossis tu,
veu, caminant-te:
ni un crit, i tot és crit.

Torno a les fosques, Bashkim,
perquè m'has demanat que explori
quina geografia oculta
recorre els versos que ara escric.
Aixeco doncs la pala,
em poso el casc d'espeleòleg,
encenc la lot dels salms
i al primer revolt dessota terra
t'hi trobo a tu, que llegeixes:
un esvoranc al mapa, només l'omplen
el titubeig i la compassió
intuïda als teus ulls. Què hi ha,
enllà? Faig quatre passos més avall,
al fons d'aquesta poesia
de la pressa: mapar com un cartògraf,
gosar poder enllestar el poema
que et demana un amic per a bastir un dialeg
amb escriptors d'arreu i trobar-te cara a cara
les mares que s'abracen
als taüts verds entorn dels quals
de Vukovar a Srebrenica
totes les veus són mudes
tota la veu

crema en poema
la filiació
pendent.

Què vol dir què vull dir què vols dir
quan travessem quan travesseu quan travessen la plaça
del mercat i Cracòvia
sorgeix nua en obrir de bat a bat
la finestra, la pàgina:
era un dia clement, ple de llum amistosa.
A la terrassa del cafè, un alemany,
damunt dels seus genolls, tenia un llibre.
Vaig arribar a llegir-ne el títol:
"Mística per a debutants".

Però llegeixes Zagajewski
sense saber un borall de polonès
tradueixes traduccions
com qui ribota amb la mirada els angles
de cases on viu gent, on criden als seus fills
que s'aixequin del llit
que no s'aixequin mai de taula abans d'haver acabat
que els llibres són sagrats
que se'ls mengin s'hi banyin s'hi acotxin
mentre els nens busquen ulls com pidolaires
—uns ulls!—
perquè els consolin
vas esmussant les cases
a cops de traduir uns versos traduïts
mentre l'origen se t'allunya
i em dius que tant se val, catalans, tant se val:
traduïm a la llengua d'un país sense forma
on ens esborren cada dia els vells contorns
encongits foradats estrafets sense fre
com podem traduir-los diluir-nos sobreviure?

demanó uns altres ulls amb mans de pidolaires
—uns ulls per veure-hi!

Sense forma, ho entens?
De matí quan t'aixeques
no saps si encara avui tindràs
peus per calçar-te i al mirall la llengua
quequejant pastosa incerta tanmateix
sorgida del país
que és i no és
tanmateix tanmateix tanmateix
una veu sense veu va entonant lletanies
repeteix traduïdes paraules:

vaig arribar a llegir-ne el títol:

"Mística per a debutants".

*Vaig comprendre tot d'una que aquelles orenetes
que amb xiscles estridents anaven patrullant
pels carrerons de Montepulciano,
i el xiuxueig de les converses d'intimidats turistes
de l'Europa de l'Est, que ara en diuen Central,
i tants bernats pescaires palplantats —ahir, abans d'ahir—
als arrossars, com monges petitones,
i el sistemàtic, lent crepuscle
esborrant els contorns de cases medievals
i els turons d'oliveres
abandonats al vent i la calitja,
i el cap d'una "Princesa desconeguda"
que havia vist al Louvre, i admirat*

*i el cap també de la meva princesa
la coneix, jo la crit
i ella no es vol girar
i ella em crida al seu torn
mentre es regira al llit
ara faràs mapa'm,*

Sara farà

*riure els tres àngels
ara diràs té, cec, ets àrid,*

ara

*ve Rut s'ha tret la samarreta
i du un piercing al pit
amb una falç daurada
que en penja i dringa
i la desconeguda
m'ha citat amb tres rostres
i el tercer té per nom la meva impaciència
l'amor és un saquet de lletres
passa la nit entre els teus pits
i es buida tot t'honora i és
infinita o no res la paciència*

traduir Zagajewski el poema
desitjant esperant implorant que el poema
sigui allò que pot ser traduït
no la resta el que clama fora del teu abast
i fa néixer estrangers escupits a la platja
sense papers sota la llum daurada
sense paper ni tinta ni alfabet
només el plor que aprèn a ser una veu
el plor que infantarà l'absent
que fa néixer una mare
bellesa vida meva benvinguda
benvinguda bellesa

nadó que ja tens forma
de cop i volta
i tens nom
nom de dona,
Desconeguda, Sara, Rut,
ets la veu d'un llinatge
n'ha nascut una mare
sense papers amb nom la forma
esmunyedissa ploradora espeternegra
rebel incrèdula claror
arrel llinatge absent
on creixem ens arbrem entronquem ens malpoden
a les branques s'ajoquen
consonants i vocals
pregàries cançons de bressol l'art
només l'art trenca el cercle
*i el xiixueig de les converses d'intimidats turistes
de l'Europa de l'Est, que ara en diuen Central,*
i tants bernats pescaires palplantats —ahir, abans d'ahir—
als arrossars, com monges,
i el sistemàtic, lent crepuscle
esborrant els contorns de cases medievals
i els turons d'oliveres
abandonats al vent i la calitja,
i el cap d'una "Princesa desconeguda"
que havia vist i admirat al Louvre,
i els vitralls d'esglésies com ales de papallones
clapejades de pol·len,
i el petit rossinyol que assajava la seva recitació
a freqüència de l'autopista,
i els viatges, qualsevol viatge,
qualsevol viatge vol dir també els viatges
que no has fet, que mai més no faràs
només l'art trenca el cercle
que vol recloure la destrucció dels musulmans
al crim de Srebrenica
fent-te triar el silenci pietós o bé l'obscena
banalització quan tots naixem
estrangers escupits a la platja sense papers

sense res per escriure el teu nom
Europa és el govern holandès dimitint
és el gran Mazoviecki dimitint
són milers d'escriptors jugant a ser neutrals
mentre Dobrica Cosic escriu els fonaments
de la neteja ètnica,
és la dimissió l'anar esborrant el propi nom

i caure de genolls a la platja
d'aquest poema, Bashkim,

que no pot dir sencer el fracàs
en traduir a temps una paraula, fracassar
en saber quan és l'hora

en l'hora necessària quan cal cavar amb els ulls
i parir la pròpia mare
arrabassada

En una llibreria de Cracòvia
vaig llegir un títol: "Mística per a principiants."
Vaig comprendre tot d'una que la imatge
dels taüts verds amb mares abraçades, al diari,
i la invitació d'en Bashkim
que duu la geografia tatuada als seus ulls
i el meu país que no té forma
i el poema de Zagajewski
que no puc traduir
i el present permanent de Srebrenica
i aquell congrés del PEN prop del final del segle
que va ser l'escenari on poder dir el fracàs
per no perdre l'alè, la paraula,
i la petita falç damunt del camp d'estrelles
i el riure de tres àngels
i el vell saquet de lletres
que duus de nits entre els teus pits
i desnéixer, destraduir
Europa fins a l'origen
per tornar a sorgir amb elles,
per donar a llum la pròpia mare
i jo la crit
i ella no es vol girar
i els viatges, qualsevol viatge,
no eren res més que mística per a debutants,
el curs elemental, preludi
de l'examen que ha estat
ajornat.

CAFÉ EUROPA – LA HABANA

Café literario

Carles Torner; *Destraducir Europa*

Traducción de Jairo Acevedo

Es un día clemente, lleno de luz amistosa.
Un domingo de verano
he visto los ataúdes verdes: doscientos ochenta y dos
de aquellos ocho mil.
Parte opaca de la sombra,
imagen vacía de lo que fue
Srebrenica, los ojos se aferran, resbalan
no ven nada.
Ya no veo nada.
Cojo, con mis ojos, la pala.
vuelvo a las oscuras.
Y regreso a ti por el grito que me requiere
como si el camino y el grito
fuesen un rayo de luz enroscándose en busca
de un alfabeto futuro. Como si el grito fuese tú,
voz, encaminándote:
ni un grito, y todo es grito.

Vuelvo a las oscuras, Bashkim,
porque me has pedido que explore
la geometría oculta
que recorre los versos que ahora escribo.
Levanto entonces la pala
me pongo el casco de espeleólogo,
enciendo el lote de los salmos
y en la primera curva bajo tierra
te encuentro a ti, que lees:
un hueco en el mapa, sólo lo llenan
el titubeo y la compasión
intuida en tus ojos. ¿Qué hay,
más allá? Doy cuatro pasos hacia abajo,
al fondo de esta poesía
de la prisa: mapear como un cartógrafo,
osar poder acabar el poema
que te pide un amigo para bastir un diálogo
con escritores de doquier y encontrarse cara a cara

las madres que se abrazan
a los ataúdes verdes alrededor de los cuales
de Vukovar a Srebrenica
todas las voces son mudas
toda la voz
arde en poema
la filiación
pendiente.

Qué quiere decir qué quiero decir qué quieras decir
cuando atravesamos cuando atravesáis cuando atraviesan la plaza
del mercado y Cracovia
surge desnuda al abrir de par en par
la ventana, la página:
era un día clemente, lleno de luz amistosa.
En la terraza del café, un alemán,
sobre sus rodillas, tenía un libro.
Alcancé a leer el título:
«*Mística para debutantes*».

Pero lees a Zagajewski
sin saber ni atisbo de polaco
traduces traducciones
como quien arrellana con la mirada los ángulos
de casas donde vive gente, donde gritan a sus hijos
que se levanten de la cama
que no se levanten nunca de la mesa antes de acabar
que los libros son sagrados
que se los coman se bañen se arropen con ellos
mientras los niños buscan ojos como mendigos
—¡unos ojos!—
para que los consuelen
vas arromando las casas
a golpes de traducir unos versos traducidos
mientras el origen se te aleja
y me dices que da igual, catalanes, da igual:
traducimos a la lengua de un país sin forma
donde nos borran cada día los viejos contornos
encogidos agujereados contrahechos sin freno
¿cómo podemos traducirlos diluirnos sobrevivir?

pido otros ojos con manos de mendigos
—¡unos ojos para ver!

Sin forma, ¿lo entiendes?
De mañana cuando te levantas
no sabes si aún hoy tendrás
pies para calzarte y al espejo la lengua
tartamudeando pastosa incierta sin embargo

surgida del país
que es y no es
sin embargo sin embargo sin embargo
una voz sin voz va entonando letanías
repite traducidas palabras:

*Alcancé a leer el título:
«Mística para debutantes».
Comprendí de una vez que aquellas golondrinas
que con chillidos estridentes iban patrullando
por las callejuelas de Montepulciano,
y el susurro de las conversas de intimidados turistas
de Europa del Este, que ahora llaman Central,
y tantas garzas reales erguidas —ayer, antes de ayer—
en los arrozales, como pequeñas monjas,
y el sistemático, lento crepúsculo
borrando los contornos de las casas medievales
y los cerros de olivos
abandonados al viento y el bochorno
y la cabeza de una «Princesa desconocida»
que había visto en el Louvre, y admirado*

la cabeza también de mi princesa
la conozco, yo la llamo
y ella no quiere volverse

y ella me llama a su lado
mientras se agita en la cama
ahora me mapearás

Sara hará
reír a los tres ángeles
ahora dirás ten, ciego, eres árido,
ahora

viene Rut se ha quitado la camiseta
y lleva un piercing en el pecho
con una hoz dorada
que le cuelga y tintinea
y la desconocida
me ha citado con tres rostros
y el tercero tiene por nombre mi impaciencia
el amor es un saquito de letras
pasa la noche entre tus pechos
y se vacía todo te honra y es
infinita o nada de la paciencia

traducir Zagajewski el poema
deseando esperando implorando que el poema
sea aquello que pueda ser traducido
no el resto lo que clama fuera de tu alcance

y hace nacer extranjeros escupidos en la playa
sin papeles bajo la luz dorada
sin papel ni tinta ni alfabeto
sólo el llanto que aprende a ser una voz
el llanto que engendrará el ausente
que hace nacer una madre
belleza vida mía bienvenida
bienvenida belleza
bebé que ya tienes forma
inesperadamente
y tienes nombre
nombre de mujer,
Desconocida, Sara, Rut,
eres la voz de un linaje
ha nacido una madre
sin papeles con nombre la forma
escurridiza llorosa pataletera
rebelde incrédula claridad
raíz linaje ausente
donde crecemos arborecemos entroncamos nos mal podan
en las ramas se recogen
consonantes y vocales
plegarias canciones de cuna el arte
sólo el arte rompe el círculo
*y el susurro de las conversas de intimidados turistas
de Europa del Este, que ahora llaman Central,*
*y tantas garzas reales erguidas —ayer, antes de ayer—
en los arrozales, como pequeñas monjas,*
y el sistemático, lento crepúsculo
borrando los contornos de las casas medievales
y los cerros de olivos
abandonados al viento y el bochorno
y la cabeza de una «Princesa desconocida»
que había visto y admirado en el Louvre,
y los vitrales de iglesias como alas de mariposa
salpicadas de polen
y el pequeño ruiseñor que ensayaba su recitado
al lado de la autopista
y los viajes, cualquier viaje,
cualquier viaje quiere decir también los viajes
que no has hecho, que nunca jamás no harás
sólo el arte rompe el círculo
que quiere recluir la destrucción de los musulmanes
en el crimen de Srebrenica
haciéndote escoger el silencio piadoso o bien la obscena
banalidad cuando todos nacemos
extranjeros escupidos en la playa sin papeles
sin nada para escribir tu nombre

Europa es el gobierno holandés dimitiendo
es el gran Mazoviecki dimitiendo
son miles de escritores jugando a ser neutrales
mientras Dobrica Cosic escribe los fundamentos
de la limpieza étnica.
es la dimisión el ir borrando el propio nombre

y caer de rodillas en la playa
de este poema, Bashkim,
que no puede decir entero el fracaso
en traducir a tiempo una palabra, fracasar
en saber cuándo es la hora
en la hora necesaria cuando es preciso cavar con los ojos
y parir la propia madre
arrebatada

En una librería de Cracovia
leí un título: «Mística para debutantes».
Comprendí de una vez que la imagen
de los ataúdes verdes con madres abrazadas, en el diario,
y la invitación de Bashkim
que lleva la geografía tatuada en los ojos
y mi país que no tiene forma
y el poema de Zagajewski
que no puedo traducir
y el presente permanente de Srebrenica
y aquel congreso del PEN cerca de final de siglo
que fue el escenario donde poder decir el fracaso
para no perder el aliento, la palabra,
y la pequeña hoz sobre el campo de estrellas
y la risa de tres ángeles
y el viejo saquito de letras
que llevas de noche entre tus pechos
y desnacer, destraducir
Europa hasta el origen
para volver a surgir con ellas
para dar a luz la propia madre
y yo la llamo
y ella no quiere volverse
y los viajes, cualquier viaje,
no eran más que mística para debutantes,
el curso elemental, preludio
del examen que ha sido
postergado

CAFÉ EUROPE – HAVANA

Literary Café

Carles Torner; *Detranslating Europe*

Translated by Pauline Ernest

Detranslating Europe

The day is mild, the light is generous.
One summer Sunday
I saw the green coffins: two hundred and eighty two
of those eight thousand.
Dark part of the shadows, empty image of what had been
Srebrenica, your eyes are held, glaze over
see nothing.
Now I see nothing.
With my eyes, I pick up the spade.
I return in darkness
And return to you in response to your cry,
as if the route and your cry
were a flash of lightening twisting back in search
of a future alphabet. As if the cry were you,
voice, travelling on:
not a single cry, and all are cries.

I return in darkness, Bashkim,
because you've asked me to explore
what hidden geography
runs through the lines I'm now writing.
So I pick up the spade,
put on my speleologist's helmet,
switch on the torchlight of the psalms
and at the first bend, underground,
I come across you, reading:
a hole in the map only to be filled by
the hesitation and compassion

suggested by your eyes. What is there
further on? I move a bit deeper,
to the roots of this
hurried poetry: mapping things out like
a cartographer,
daring myself to be capable of preparing a poem
requested by a friend, to form part of a dialogue
with writers worldwide and come face to face
with the mothers embracing
the green coffins around which
from Vukovar to Srebrenica
all the voices are speechless
my whole voice
burns in poems
the pending
filiation.

What does it mean what do I mean what do you mean
when we cross when you cross when they cross
the market square and Kraków
emerges stripped bare
when you open wide
the window, the page:
The day was mild, the light was generous.
The German on the cafe terrace
held a small book on his lap.
I caught sight of the title:
'Mysticism for Beginners'.

But you read Zagajewski
without knowing a word of Polish
you translate translations
as if, by looking, you can flatten the angles
of houses where people live, shouting at their children
to get out of bed
to stay at the table till they finish their food
to see that books are sacred
and to devour, bathe and seek refuge in them
while the children, like beggars, search for eyes
- eyes -!
In order to comfort them
you soften the houses
with your translations of translated lines
while their origin escapes you
and you tell me it doesn't matter, Catalans, it doesn't matter:
we translate into the language of a country with no shape
where, day after day, our old outlines are erased
shrunken, perforated, uncontrollably deformed
how can we translate them, dilute ourselves, survive?

my beggar's hands request different eyes
- eyes to see with!

No shape, do you understand?
In the morning you wake up
not knowing whether you'll still have feet
for your shoes and in the mirror your tongue
stumbles, stammers, uncertain, nonetheless
emerging from a country
which is and isn't
nonetheless, nonetheless, nonetheless
a voice with no voice chants litanies
repeats translated words:

I caught sight of the title:

'Mysticism for Beginners'

*Suddenly I understood that the swallows
patrolling the streets of Montepulciano
with their shrill whistles
and the hushed talk of the timid travellers
from Eastern, so-called Central Europe
and the white herons standing – yesterday? the day before? –
like nuns in fields of rice,
and the dusk, slow and systematic,
erasing the outlines of medieval houses
and olive trees on little hills,
abandoned to the wind and heat,
and the head of the Unknown Princess
that I saw and admired in the Louvre*

Ruth comes she's removed her vest
and has a piercing in her breast
a golden sickle
hanging and jangling
and the unknown woman
has arranged to meet me with three faces
and the third is called my impatience
love is a little bag of letters
which spends the night between your breasts
and empties everything, honours you and is
infinite and not patience at all

translating Zagajewski's poem
wanting, hoping, longing for the poem
to be something that can be translated
not leftovers protesting out of reach

giving birth to foreigners spat onto the beach
in the golden light with no papers
with no paper or ink or alphabet
just the weeping learning to be a voice
the weeping that will bring forth the missing
that gives birth to a mother
greetings beautiful life
welcome beautiful one!
newly-born and already formed
suddenly
and you have a name
a woman's name.
Unknown, Sara, Ruth
you're the voice of a lineage
from which a mother has been born
without papers but with a name, her shape
slippery, weeping, explosive
rebellious, naive brightness
root, lineage, missing
wherever we grow we become trees, trunks, badly pruned
consonants, vowels
huddled on the branches
prayers, lullabies, art
only art breaks the circle
*And the hushed talk of the timid travellers
from Eastern, so-called Central Europe
and the white herons standing – yesterday? the day before? –
like nuns in fields of rice,
and the dusk, slow and systematic,
erasing the outlines of medieval houses
and olive trees on little hills,
abandoned to the wind and heat,
and the head of the Unknown Princess
that I saw and admired in the Louvre
and stained-glass windows like butterfly wings
sprinkled with pollen,
and the little nightingale practicing
its speech beside the highway, and any journey, any kind of trip,
any trip also means the trips
you haven't made, that you'll never make again
only art breaks the circle*

which tries to conceal the criminal destruction of Muslims
at Srebrenica
making you choose either pious silence or obscene
banality when we are all born as
foreigners spat onto a beach, with no papers

with nothing you can write your name with
Europe is the Dutch government resigning
it's the great Mazoviecki resigning
it's millions of writers playing at being neutral
while Dobrica Cosic writes the foundations
of ethnic cleansing
it's resignation, erasing ones own name

and falling to ones knees on the beach
of this poem, Bashkim,
which is unable to admit its total failure
to translate one word, in time, failing
to know when it's time

at the required time when we have to dig with spades
and give birth to our own mother
uprooted

In a bookshop in Kraków
I read a title: "Mysticism for Beginners".
I suddenly understood that the image
of the green coffins with the embracing mothers, in the newspaper,
and the invitation from Bashkim
who wears his geography tattooed on his eyes
and my country, which has no shape
and Zagajewski's poem
which I can't translate
and the permanent present which is Srebrenica
and that PEN congress at the end of the century
which was the place where we admitted failure
so as not to waste our breath, our words
and the small sickle above the field of stars
and the laughter of the three angels
and the small ancient bag of letters
worn between your breasts each night

and de-giving birth to, de-translating
Europe back to its origins
in order to rise up again with them,
to give birth to ones own mother
and me calling her
and she not wanting to turn round
*and any journey, any kind of trip,
are only mysticism for beginners,
the elementary course, prelude
to a test that's been
postponed.*

Dušan Veličković. *Homes mortals, crims immortals*
Divendres 17, 17.00h. Observatori d'horitzons. Anglès, amb traducció simultània

Dusan Velickovic

MORTAL MEN, IMMORTAL CRIMES

My Life in Serbia

Stress

Stress is a word frequently heard in Belgrade. Everybody has his or her own stress. Somebody lost his immunity because of stress and because of this he caught a cold. Somebody aborted a baby. Somebody just died all of a sudden. All because of stress. Pensioners are stressed out and children too. One of the parameters for measuring the collective stress is the huge quantity of sedatives sold in this country.

It is not known when, exactly, this stress became pandemic. Maybe it was 1991 or 1992. The brief war in Slovenia, the demolition of Vukovar, the bombardment of Dubrovnik, the siege of Sarajevo, the wars in Croatia and Bosnia, the waves of refugees flooding in, the hunt for reservists and military conscripts. Or maybe it was the hyper-inflation and the sanctions. There are many social and political reasons for stress and there are very few answers about the causes of individual destinies. The announcement that bombardment will happen — just the announcement itself — creates a new movement in the history of stress in Belgrade. Today is a day of acute pre-stress condition.

One physician recommends, ‘Press the palm of your hand on the top of your head and try to move the skin of your scalp hither and thither. If the scalp moves easily, it means that you are still resisting stress well. But if the skin is tight and unmoving, then you are in a serious health condition.’

I like this advice. In it, there is no feigned amazement at the hugely unfair fate which picks on us alone and no blabbing about work as therapy to alleviate stress. It’s a simple thing: place a hand on your head and you will realise that in a tyranny, it is much more difficult to think than to act, because ‘you are never more active than when you are doing nothing and you are never less alone than when you are by yourself.’

Bombs In My Yard

First I heard the airplanes. Then I heard a long rocket whizzing.

The explosion was deafening. I was lying in bed, watching TV. I got up before I heard the next whizzing, opened the windows and put the blinds down. Such are the rules for these events.

The second explosion was much stronger. The whole building — a solid three-story building — trembled as if it would collapse at any second.

I continued watching a film on TV.

The bombs fell only a few hundred meters away from our house, at the corner of Vardarska and Maxim Gorky Streets. A 20 year old girl was killed. She was buried in her wedding dress two days later.

It was the 36th night of bombardment in Belgrade. It was not 1984. We were not waging war against Oceania and Eurasia. We had simply gotten used to it.

Any dramatic event, of course, immediately becomes a story and telling that story makes the event more and more unreal and absurd. The next day, I told everyone that bombs had crashed into the inner courtyard of our house. I notice that, like other Belgrade ‘narrators’, I am putting a peculiar undertone into the telling, as if I had something to do with making something so dramatic happen to me.

Later, I meet Milorad Belancic who lives in the same area. Bombs really *did* fall right into the courtyard of his house. He also knows something more, a fact that I did not know. Those bombs did not go off. Had they done so, none of us would be there now. We proceed to develop, jointly, a theory of ‘shortened’ determinism, linking our lives with the finger of the pilot who pressed the button. We conclude that our lives are worth less than that button in the cockpit of that jet airplane.

My godfather has a story of his own. He had come home very late. His wife began saying that things could not go on like this anymore. He replied, ‘Let’s not discuss that now.’

‘Oh yes,’ she said. ‘I want to talk about this right *now*.’

At the same moment that she uttered her energetic *now*, three bombs slammed into the Chinese Embassy, right across the street from their apartment. They flung themselves on the floor and did not continue the conversation.

But like my story, their story also had a rival, the tale told by their next-door neighbour. When we heard those three explosions, he ran out into the street to see if his new car, which was parked in front of the Chinese Embassy, was damaged. Seeing that it was not destroyed, this man thought coolly and rapidly. He decided to drive his car to a safer location . . . the parking lot in front of the hotel *Yugoslavia*. He arrived just in time to see bombs hit that hotel too.

So, in the end, my story is reducing to nothing. As, probably, all other stories will be too. Only existential dread remains and apathy too, because of our life in Belgrade this spring.

The Library

I decide to sort out my library. It is something that I have been putting off for years. Living in small apartments, moving in and out of them, that is the reason why most of my books are in boxes, in cellars, or at relatives’ and friends’ places. For ages, I have been obsessed with the idea of collecting all my books in a single place so I can make their dust fly, classify them and then remind myself of long-forgotten titles. I seriously held the opinion that my life would be much nicer and better the instant that I could see all of my books, any time that I wanted to see them.

That moment had finally come. Bombardment is an ideal opportunity to put one's library in order. When the sirens of approaching danger sound, it is one of the rare jobs to which one can attend.

It is Sunday evening. The sky is overcast and Belgrade will surely not be targeted. Only distant explosions are heard. Is it Batajnica airport or the petrol refinery at Pancevo?

I begin opening the boxes full of books. Previous experience tells me that I must not be sentimental. I must stick to a strict method. I will discard all the books that I do not really need. I will give them to someone as a gift, or simply throw them away. I will keep only those of exceptional value.

But which of my books possess exceptional value? Are they the recognised masterpieces, or the little-known books that I love for inexplicable reasons? Are they the books that I have read many times? The books that have influenced me? The books that I have written about? Maybe I should save the books that aroused polemics, since they were politically controversial and given special attention for that reason? Perhaps I ought to keep all the autographed copies?

Do I really need the books I was influenced by? Do I need Marcuse, Sartre, Habermas, Bloch, Freud? I decide to keep all the books by Hannah Arendt and Max Frisch. On top of this small pile, I place Kant's *Perpetual Peace*, Tolstoy's anarchist papers and Paul Johnson's *Intellectuals*. In the end, I also include a collection of Ginsberg's poems with the dedication 'After lunch on Belgrade Skadarlia in the shade, discussing the Theater of Politics & Dictatorship of the MIND'.

I return all the other books to the box again. Wait a minute! I forgot I.B. Singer. I will keep his collected works in Serbian together with my translation of *Lost in America*.

The following day, I order a lorry to move the books to the Old Fair. I will leave them in the *atelier* of an artist who lives in Croatia. A friend of mine who was asked by the artist to look after the place tells me, 'He rarely comes here. Your books won't be in the way. You can keep them here as long as you like.'

We have to cross the bridge twice. The *atelier* itself, in fact, is almost under the bridge. The lorry driver says that NATO planes dropped leaflets over Belgrade the previous day, with a warning that the bridges were on the target list. The driver says that it is written on the leaflets that they will target the bridges between 2 and 6 P.M. in the afternoon. It's 5.30 P.M. now.

'I don't believe they wrote precisely this,' I reply.

'I saw it with my own eyes, I swear I did.'

I continue. 'Perhaps you didn't see well. I can't believe that they will aim at the bridges in daytime. There would be lots of victims and casualties.'

We cross the bridge twice. I have a feeling that by putting aside my books in this safe house, I am disturbing the usual order of the Balkans. Here neither the houses nor the libraries last. Their destinies are often both tragic and comic.

I remember such an episode from my childhood, when Lenin suddenly appeared in our house. It was in the early 1950s, around the time that my father joined the Communist Party. Thirty-seven books in thick leather binding with a relief face in a circle entered our house. Even in darkness, one could recognise the bald head with its forthright chin by merely touching the books. But Lenin was not for reading. His collected works were there to be seen and they were displayed prominently in our sitting room.

My father, in fact, read Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky and, most often, Turgenev. My mother used to say, 'He is a Russophile.' Several years later, when my father was fired from the Party, my mother remarked to him that 'you were fired from the Party because you could not keep silent, but you never say anything at home. You just read the paper and whistle.'

Since my father did not keep silent, there was a danger that he would be imprisoned. Fortunately, this did not happen. He merely lost his job. We had to move to another apartment. One day mother peeled the skin off the Lenin books and sold it. We lit the furnace with Lenin's Collected Works for two days.

My father was imprisoned many years later, but that is quite another story.

No sooner had ten days passed than that friend of mine phoned me again. She was very excited. Something rather unpleasant had happened. The *atelier* had been taken away from the painter and new residents had already moved in. Everything in the place, including my books, had been moved to an unknown place. The local authorities did this quickly and efficiently, in accordance with the law. There had also been an official decision made concerning the confiscation of the *atelier* and the decision to throw out my books. Every single one of the titles was listed.

The artist had no right to lodge a complaint against this action. After all, he was now enjoying himself in the sunshine of the Krk island in his new country of Croatia, while we are enduring a war. Actions must be taken quickly and efficiently.

I have no reason to lodge a complaint either. I can only catch my breath. My books have finally experienced what is right and customary in these parts.

Waiting

Life has become waiting, with no special plan and without knowing for what, exactly, we are waiting.

These days people usually say, 'It can't be that all this will last forever.'

There is, in that statement, one real particle of hope. It is as if they are trying to say, 'There cannot be anything worse than the things that are happening to us now, nor can this continue eternally. Therefore, one day, perhaps, things will get better.'

Oh, but what about a civil war? There have been grim predictions of that sort. Supposedly, everything points to the probability that, after the bombardment ends, a civil war will break out in Serbia. Is that what we are awaiting? Perhaps there is no end to our waiting? No, no, say the optimists, there will not be a civil war. Serbs have had enough of war.

Thus, it seems that we do not know for what we are waiting. We are simply waiting to see what is going to happen. Can we influence events? Our volition, our knowledge, our human rights, have they any effect on what is going to happen? We will know, it seems to me, only if we live long enough to be here when whatever is going to happen happens. It is possible that this is the only meaning of our waiting: staying alive as long as there is anything for which you might be waiting.

Sun Is Our Enemy

Two solar eclipses took place recently, less than a year apart from each other, in two different parts of the world. The first, in August 1999, was visible in parts of Europe, including Serbia. The second was on 21st June 2001, in parts of Africa, best visible from Zimbabwe. The Zimbabweans, black and white and all others, and also many tourists in cities and in villages alike, met this event in a carnival-like spirit. Few missed the opportunity to observe the moment when the Moon came fully in front of the Sun, eclipsing it totally.

Belgrade was deserted, at eclipse time. There was hardly anyone in the streets. People closed themselves into the houses and put the blinds down. Where neither were available, as was the case in one hospital, covers were stripped from the patients' beds and hung on the windows. In this same hospitals, the doctors decided not to come to work on that perilous day. Belgrade looked like one of those prehistoric communities where each eclipse was interpreted as the end of the world, or as a sure omen of pestilence, war or flood.

How was it possible for Serbs at the very end of the 20th century to start acting suddenly like cavemen? The answer is simple but incredible. This Serbian eclipse fear was the result of a brief and not very intrusive propaganda campaign in the media. Several days before this astronomical event, the State television started telling the citizens of the possible danger. Nothing new. A familiar fact: looking with your naked eye into the Sun, even a partly or completely occluded Sun, may damage your eyesight. But the State, concerned for the well-being of its citizens, extended the message: children should be specially protected, they might forget the warning. Grown-ups, in fact, might forget too. So it is best to stay at home. But, there are the windows, too! So it would be prudent to put the blinds down, on that crucial day. This media campaign had a "medical" character, and in this it differed from the many campaigns of political propaganda, in the earlier months and years. At the last possible moment, the independent media joined in. As if they simply had no other choice, puzzled by the sudden humane face of the regime. So, on that beautiful August day, with presidential and parliamentary election scheduled for only a few weeks away, Belgrade suddenly plopped back into a distant past of mankind.

What were the motives for a campaign like this? Several interpretations are possible. It may have been a deliberate pre-election diverting of attention from insoluble political and economic problems. It could have been a final trial-run for the final creation of a closed, totally controlled society. A test, confirming the regime's ability to play with any half-truth in any manner and to manipulate its subjects at will. Besides, the regime of Slobodan Milosevic, after ten years of power, was well on the way to proclaiming cretinism for the supreme human quality.

And yet, the explanation that sounds the most plausible to me is, that no request was issued by anyone for this campaign about the Sun as the enemy. I think this had nothing to do with the regime and its media manipulations. Simply, the Serbia of Slobodan Milosevic had at that moment attained a mental condition in which no news item could be presented normally. Stupidity of the regime's propaganda reached a level of spontaneous development. Thus I believe that the story of that day of darkening Sun is paradigmatic mainly for the question of the reception of a wide variety of products of the media propagandistic machine. And the question of reception seems to me the key to any contemplation of the role of the media in the Balkans and of their part in spreading the violence.

Stupid Wall

The invisible, but large and sturdy Belgrade Wall was brought down on the 5th October 2000, at 3.35 in the afternoon. Ours was not the Czech-style Velvet Revolution, nor was it the Romanian bloodshed. It was a very common and very brief Serbian mutiny. The wall that surrounded us began to collapse inexorably at the moment when, out of the million-people-strong mass assembled in the streets, one man, the first, stepped into the Parliament building, and when, somehow, at the same time, the commander of the Red Berets, a special military-police unit, smashed his mobile radio on the ground and refused to carry out the orders that he'd been given. I picture an interesting scene: the receiver on the asphalt still shouts and commands as the dangerous "Frankiyevtsi", so much feared in the horrendous Balkan wars, drive off in their American-made Hammer jeeps, at high speed, destination unknown.

Unlike the Berlin Wall, the Belgrade Wall was not made of bricks and concrete, nor were cold-war ideologies built into it. Our wall was built of lies, repression and nepotism. Our wall was a dumb one: the Stupid Wall.

The Stupid Wall began to be seriously undermined exactly one and a half years ago. It was not chipped by the bombs that fell on Yugoslavia. Rather, the sweet ambrosia of the war and martial law began to damage it. This "state-of-war" was a true opiate for the authorities. Everybody was obedient; no one dared to point at the truth and call it truth. The truth was punishable, and with a draconian punishment if necessary. In fact, all that the authorities needed to do was to call someone a traitor. Simultaneously, in the ambrosia of war, the truth inevitably surrendered to other priorities. For instance: isn't it absurd that now, when my entire country is in danger, that I should contemplate the possibility that this absurd war was also, to some slight degree, the private war of one man? Under this immediate threat, how can I ask myself whether a war against the entire world could and should have been avoided?

The logic that such priorities created occasionally manifested itself in incredibly extreme ways. One young friend of mine, who served in an anti-aircraft unit during the war, told me the following story: "Planes arrive, we shoot at them for a little while and dash for cover. Then the captain jumps for joy and shouts: 'We knocked one down!' Everybody starts rejoicing. But everybody can plainly see that we haven't knocked down or hit anything. I rejoiced also. It was perilous not to."

Authorities who have as their only aim remaining eternally in power gladly embrace such truths, bolstered by war legislation and the logic of its priorities. This is why the opium continued to function effectively even after the end of the war. Defeat became victory, poverty became prosperity, isolation became an achievement admired by the whole world, lies became an ideology capable of rescuing the planet and wrecking the new world order.

Truth, even in moments when the world is genuinely changing for the better, has never been the most decisive political value. The forces of power and interest, without which there is no political life, introduce lies into the march of inescapable political facts. Complete truth is inefficient and has no chance even in the most democratic societies. However, when lies become all-embracing and reach the level of cretinism, truth becomes a decisive political factor. Then, each one of us, however lying, dishonest and selfish he or she may individually be, starts telling only the truth. That's what happened in Belgrade, Serbia, on the 5th of October 2000, at 3:35 in the afternoon.

In one lecture Borges says that our ego is the least important thing for us, and that no difference can be made between him feeling himself to be Borges and me feeling myself to be A, B or C, because an ego, a self, is common to us all, it is present in all living creatures. For this reason, says Borges, immortality is necessary, not personal immortality but the sort that resides in the memory of others and in the works we leave behind, even if they, our works, are forgotten. I have, for instance, forgotten Christ, but if by some chance I feel that I love my enemy, there is in me, that very moment, Christ's immortality. This can be more simply stated: here, now, I am remembering these thoughts of Borges, and so I am at this point in time exactly the one in whom Borges's immortality is being created. However, I am remembering Borges because I wish to say something about the crimes that happened amongst us recently. Does that imply that the culprits and their acts also become immortal in me as well as in everybody else who thinks about them? May I, therefore, say "the immortal Borges" and equally "the immortal Jack the Ripper", or "the immortal Greta Garbo", or "the immortal ex-president Slobodan Milošević"?

Recently one of the top members of the former nomenclature in Yugoslavia has compared the Hague Tribunal with a Nazi death camp, and the Hague Sheveningen prison with the gas chambers for the elimination of the Serbian people. This is, of course, an extravagant (to say the very least) opinion of a person whose personal interests are threatened and who was always inclined to strange comparisons anyway. But, although excessively strong, the words are carefully chosen. They fit precisely into the several-year-long official strategy of nationalistic manipulation that created the framework for any sort of violence. And the strategy was founded on one perverted theory of immortality, and on the suggestion of permanent imperiledness of the nation. I do not think the officials of the former regime had read Aristotle, but I do think that Aristotle's distinction between mortality and immortality may serve as a model better than Borges' for an understanding of the policy that we are talking about.

For Aristotle men are "the mortals, the only mortal things in existence, because unlike animals they do not exist only as members of a species whose immortal life is guaranteed through procreation. The mortality of men lies in the fact that individual life, with recognizable life-story from birth to death, rises out of biological life. This individual life is distinguished from all other things by the rectilinear course of its movement, which, so to speak, cuts through the circular movement of biological life. This is mortality: to move along a rectilinear line in a universe where everything, if it moves at all, moves in a cyclical order."

The dictator had intended, for his people, the sort of immortality that Aristotle sees in belonging to a species whose immortal life is guaranteed through procreation. Which, paradoxically, left only him and his political gangsters as mortals. Only they had their own recognizable life-story, their power, their money, and their crimes. All the rest of us were supposed to be immortal and exist only as members of the ethnos, the people -- someone a frightened observer, someone else as an unsuccessful member of opposition, someone as an accomplice. To many, this sort of immortality was more than enough. Perhaps this is why it all lasted so long. Today, also, many like this sort of immortality, although it is not called nationalistic euphoria anymore, but moderate nationalism. Perhaps that is why even today nothing can be resolved properly.

But, as Borges would say, let us return to ourselves. How shall we become immortal, we who committed no crimes and have no intention of committing any in the future? Do we have to go along with moderate nationalism even though we have no inclination toward it? Well, this is where Borges helps. Here I am, for instance, watching a painting by Picasso. Man and woman, their faces disfigured, their funny and uncertain existence revealed in distorted forms. Immortal Picasso? No, no. I recognize myself, in the painting, and the woman also looks familiar. That is our immortality.

Bullets My Friend Expected

The Godfather of Serbian political Mafia is in The Hague. His cell is small and his activities are very limited. Nevertheless, the job has been done: Serbian Prime Minister Zoran Djindjic is dead. Zoran, my friend, one of the most brilliant men I have ever known and a symbol of the new, democratic Serbia, was felled by two sniper bullets in front of his office in the center of Belgrade on March 12, 2004.

A month or so ago, I met with Zoran in his office. We talked about many things, including the political and intellectual arc of his career and the biography of him I intended to write. It was my first meeting with him since he became prime minister in 2001, and I said, "Well, your office isn't much, but you have a beautiful view."

It was a ground floor office, with a huge window looking out at the public park.

"You don't say," he quipped. "Very convenient for everyone who would like to kill me."

If you visited Zoran's office now - and looked through that same window - you would see the building from which the deadly bullets were fired.

But irony and cynicism - and quick-witted comments - were part of his style. That was how we became friends. It was in the early 1970s, when we were students of philosophy together at Belgrade University. We both were so-called critical Marxists, passionate opponents of the official, dogmatic ideology of that time. A professor of ethics organized a special class for the two of us alone to take. The idea behind that course was to simulate a rigid Moscow show trial-an important and courageous undertaking in a country where the gulag and Stalinist terror were prohibited topics for discussion. Zoran was supposed to defend the "accused," against charges that he had led an anti-communist conspiracy against the state, and I had to play the role of prosecutor. He was good guy, and I was bad guy. He was so good at his role-and so serious-that he began to attack me as if I really was the representative of a totalitarian regime. Soon we became the best of friends.

Zoran was 50 when he died. He was younger than I, but I always consulted him as if he was the more experienced of us. One day in the late 1970s, I was summoned to the secret police headquarters for a so-called "informative conversation"-which was, in those days, a euphemism for "possible arrest." Later on, I was rather upset - and immediately I called my friend. Zoran calmed me down, adopting the tone of a man experienced with such things. Then he told me about one of his own conversations with the secret police. Some years earlier, he had helped found a dissident organization of students in Ljubljana, Slovenia. They printed leaflets, a sort of proclamation of their intent. He took some of those leaflets to

Belgrade to distribute among his colleagues.

The police regarded this action as an attempt to establish a political party, which was, at that time, a mortal sin. That night, plainclothes policemen swarmed to the door of his apartment. His mother, a strict and authoritative woman, opened the door. The agents told her that they had a warrant to search the place. She looked at them and told them, "All right. But you must take off your shoes first. I cleaned the apartment yesterday and I do not allow anyone to walk in with dirty shoes." The puzzled agents left their shoes in the anteroom. They searched, but they did not find the leaflets.

Now my friend is dead. Who killed my friend? Who gave the orders? Many have been indicted in the meantime, but I keep thinking about the man in the small cell at The Hague. I am sure that this is part of his legacy.

And what will happen in Serbia now? I have always thought that Serbia is a place of great opportunities that, unfortunately, never happen. I hope that I am not, once again, proven right.

Visiting the Hague

They give me ticket number 53608. I go through all the security checks and enter the public gallery of the war crimes tribunal in the Hague courtroom. Seated to my left are a few journalists. Through the glass wall I see the former president in front of me. The *amici curiae* are seated with their backs turned to me and protected witness called "B42" is concealed behind blinds. The witness cannot be seen, only heard through voice distortion. Yes, you feel somewhat odd in this small, impeccably organized space where, if you leave your headset off, you have the sensation of being in a puppet theater or part of some sort of "matrix" of trickery. And when you do don the headset and start listening to what is being said, you suddenly find yourself in a house of horrors where everyone is somehow absurdly dispassionate and polite, as if this is the purpose of justice.

The trial adjourns for the day, the former president gathers up his papers, turns to the public gallery, our eyes lock and for a minute we stare at each other. And then what happens? Instead of thinking about what that gaze on the other side of the glass symbolizes, I suddenly begin pondering utterly trivial things. As if none of this has anything to do with me, as if everything I am seeing is nothing but a bad dream. Faulkner has that famous sentence about how the past is never dead, it is never the real past. I feel that this does not apply to me right now.

Absorbed in such thoughts, I walk out of the courtroom, leave the past behind me within the walls of the Tribunal and long to see something beautiful. I go to the Mauritshuis, climb up to the second floor and meet the gaze of Vermeer's *Girl With A Pearl Earring*. I could spend all day talking about the light that illuminates her face and her eyes, about how her earring is caught in the golden ray of light that falls across the portrait, but that is all really beside the point. The point is that one day two people happen to fix you with their gaze. You give it some thought and then realize that two gazes from the past lie at opposite ends of everything there is in this world. And you understand that you can be an optimist because that other, radiant look lasts forever.