

# Foreword

This magazine was launched in Italy in Italian in 1999 to gather testimonies, descriptions and observations of and reflections on the private-public times we live in, in whatever forms writing allows for: notes, poetry, stories, letters, essays, diary entries, and so on. Starting from the present issue, and favouring one of the forms we have always pursued, it now becomes a diary. Also in this new edition the magazine will be published in English, and its collaborators are and will, more and more, be people from different countries in the world. In other words, it is not going to be an 'Italian' magazine any more. Why? Simply because it is going to talk about ourselves, and for a long time now, and more and more often, when saying 'us' we have not been thinking of us Italians only.

Its contributors include individuals for whom writing is a daily, at times professional, activity, as well as those for whom it is only an occasional, infrequent pursuit. In a word, intellectuals and non-intellectuals. But always with a critical eye towards priorities, social and political order, and the thinking and sensibility that, generally speaking, guide the world today. The magazine will come out both on paper and on the Internet every four months, in February, June and October, and will contain diary pages written, respectively, between September and December, January and April, May and August. Whoever would like to

collaborate will be welcome, and will write, of course, what he or she prefers; but in selecting writings, we will prefer those reflections and life experiences that are not the most 'original', but the most incisive, revealing and free (the least contaminated, for instance, by the media blah-blah).

Why a diary? Because all together on these pages we want to be 'witness' to the times we are living in: to read and comment on them together, periodically offering readers the possibility of reliving a recent past, which they themselves have experienced, through a 'chorus' of diverse voices. Moreover, a diary is an exercise of attention. And it can also be a container for scattered thoughts, observations, and questions: those which never become 'fully expressed', and which, especially in our times when it is a matter of re-considering everything, may offer some precious help. Finally, a diary is the kind of 'personal' writing par excellence, and this magazine has always intended to be a magazine of single people who talk to and exchange ideas with single people.

In outline, what we have imagined is a written diary that originates from one's own 'historical-political Self' (the 'Self' that actively or passively confronts political, local or global events and issues) as well as from one's 'social Self' (the one that comes into prominence, for example, when taking a bus or train or going to the supermarket: the generic 'Self' among others), from one's 'role-determined Self' (the 'Self' related to one's own work and activity), and also from one's 'private Self' (the 'Self' among friends, in family life, with one's feelings, desires, etc).

Most of the texts you are about to read, therefore, are dated and bear an indication of the place where they were written. They reflect the urgency and sensation of great events, the sometimes more patient time of every day life, with its recurrences and its loyalties, and the apparently out-of-time character of one's own interior life time. Some events are discussed at length, others are left out, thus reflecting the sometimes casual, 'daily' choices of the authors. Not all the great events are 'covered', there are whole days or weeks of silence, and the contents vary. As it happens with a diary.

Though this is a 'public' diary: almost all the collaborators knew their pages would be published, and the others gave their consent to theirs being published. Moreover, some texts were excluded and others, upon our prompting, revised. And the diary is interspersed with brief essays and some literary prose, which are spread along the pages according to this or that criterion. Which? Which criteria have suggested exclusions and inclusions, revisions, and a distribution of the texts? Surely, the interest arisen by an issue, the quality of reflection and of the writing itself. Its incisiveness, its freedom, as said above. But even a special tone, the sound of a voice, the unexpected counterpoint or harmony between one text and the other. Because this magazine, as explained on the back cover, also aims to be a *sort of novel*.

A sort of novel in the sense that, in addition to saying something, it aims at *representing* something: representing that chorus, sometimes harmonious and sometimes discordant, yet still a chorus, that the feelings, thoughts and words circulating within this discontented world *are*.

Moreover, representing the simultaneity of different times: not only a public, or a private and interior time, but also a time of peace and a time of war, one of wealth and one of poverty, one of novelty and one of routines, in which the world revolves, all at the same time.

Such are the feelings we would like these pages to convey to the reader. As in a sort of novel. The same authors of the single texts are here also as the characters in a novel: each standing out thanks to a tone of the voice, to his or her particular character; each carrying a point of view, a special perspective. And such is, in such an interpretation, the role played by the various writing genres pursued here, from the essay to the account, from diary pages to literary prose: each of them is itself, of course, and says what it says, but it also represents a special manner and a special tone in the relationship with experience. You are therefore advised to read the pages that follow as you would read a novel, starting from the beginning and one after the other.

Special thanks go to all our collaborators - authors, translators and graphic designer - whose names are cited on the last pages; but in particular they go to Brigitte Ciaramella, who translated most of the written contributions with expertise, passion and patience. We hope we can still count on her collaboration in the following issues.

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**Cover** by Sebastiano Buonamico.

**The pictures:** on the front cover, an exchange of looks, words and gestures between an Israeli soldier and a Palestinian at the Q'landia checkpoint on 10<sup>th</sup> July 2004 (photo by a volunteer of Operazione Colomba); on the back cover: Q'landia, 1<sup>st</sup> November 2004, a section of the wall that Israel is building on the border (and beyond) with the Occupied Territories (photo by Fleming Dyrman, a Dutch pacifist volunteer). We thank all the authors for allowing us to publish them.

# Diary: September to December 2004

Here

notes from the present

*Sant'Antioco, Sardinia, Italy, September 1<sup>st</sup>* **Massimo Parizzi**

The newspaper headlines read: “In the slaughterhouse” (“il manifesto”), “Terror attack” (“La Nuova Sardegna”), “Day of terror” (“la Repubblica”). In Israel, two suicide bombings on buses: 16 dead; in Iraq, 12 Nepalese killed (kidnapped two weeks ago); in Moscow, suicide bombing on the underground: 10 dead.

Around the world, people think it's America's fault, or Israel's, or Russia's. Many pray. Some speak of history, geopolitics, culture, economics. Many say: human nature. Many more: barbarism. Many don't think about it, or at least that's how it seems. Many shake their heads, or say: “My God”. A few: peace.

*“...astonished/ is the Earth at the tidings...”*

This seems to be the Earth's vocation, being astonished. Or its destiny: to watch itself, powerless, and silence itself (in the era ‘of communication’).

It was decided there should be silence; for one day. At dawn, in Sant'Antioco, you could hear the seagulls' cries, a fishing boat's motor. In Milan the rumble of cars. Then, as the hours passed,

the squeaking of trolleys in the supermarkets. Breathing. Coughing. In Lewisburg, Pennsylvania, dogs barking, and in the big “Old America” antique store the rustling of old newspapers, the creaking of rocking chairs as customers touched them, moved them. In Baghdad, on the asphalt and in the dust, shoes were shuffling, boots were stomping. Then there was a ‘boom’, then dull thuds of bodies falling, and footsteps pounding, running. Sirens. In the afternoon, in the cafes, coffee cups clattered. In Tokyo buildings the lifts hummed. In his restaurant in the mountains, in Slovenia, Abram was sawing the beams for the roof of the new cowshed: a rhythmic droning. The radios, the televisions were mute, the newsagents closed: the day all words were silent. In Tetouan, Morocco, the muezzins were quiet. In the mosques you could hear the gentle friction of knees on the carpets. In Beersheba, in the Negev Desert in Israel, the handfuls of earth fell on the wooden coffins. One thud following another. It was strange not crying out.

*Calasetta, Sardinia, Italy, September 1<sup>st</sup>, 4pm* **Adriano Accattino**

What kind of diary may I keep which does not just tell about facts or things seen or heard of, but is one of observation, position, meditative writing typical of an enraptured person? I’ll keep a diary in which I’ll describe and think over the shadows offered by a little four-square-metre balcony, from which nothing can be seen, but which only sounds can reach: the perfect stage for reflection.

I’ll be lingering to look at something we don’t

look at, if not just absent-mindedly: the few monotonous shadows cast by Spanish tiles that alternatively stick out and by a clothes-horse. A diary of shadows separate from the objects that cast them, though much more extravagant and changeable than them: and for this reason interesting, because they're not servile, not predictable, not foregone. A shadow is extremely changeable and agile: it even seems to be more alive than a body which is often still in sleep or at rest.

The shadow before me now is that of the washing line which draws a line on the wall with an unexpected inclination. Its line accompanies that of the cornice just as a flute may accompany a piano. The cornice fills all the remaining portion of wall down to the floor with the indefinable colour of a shade, which would be perfunctory and inaccurate in an unacceptable way to call grey; the line instead is detached and draws a second stave. At one end of the line there's a noticeable knot, which I discover by straining my eyes: the knot draws a kind of spider on the wall, a mark that places itself on the stave but it is not a note. Then I vainly chase a big flying insect hoping to stop it in the shade, but in vain. That's how a healing half-hour made of nothing goes by.

*Potenza Picena, Italy, September 1<sup>st</sup>*

**Maria Granati**

Summer, for now at least, is fading gently and without crashes of thunder, storms and leaden skies. The colours are becoming soft, delicate and slightly opaque and blurred. Only the sunsets continue to glow, and in the morning the gilded band of the sea, with its twinkling and its mysterious ever-changing chiaroscuro streaks.

A poignant sadness is in the air and I read the news of the world and wonder what I am doing here, what all of us are doing who want to understand history, the world, mankind, what Bible, philosophy, poem, science, product of human knowledge can relate and explain truth, life, the meaning of things; I am re-reading Ecclesiastes and it seems more real than Isaiah, the prophets (who in any case imagine a future and a history ruled somehow by God, albeit at times incomprehensibly), the psalms and even Job, who in the end redeems himself and his life. All is vanity and there is no god who can help make events intelligible. "God is in Heaven and you are on Earth."

*Milan, Italy, undated*

**Marosia Castaldi**

At church, the priest read a passage from the Gospel. I remember only one sentence that he said in Latin, "In spem contra spem". I translated it, "Desperately hoping". The desperation is there, just add hope. The hope that things go better, that the children grow up happy, that what we are doing goes well. But if it's hope with an end, what's the use? What kind of hope is this, if at the end we only die?

*Helsinki, Finland, September 2<sup>nd</sup>*

**Hanna Snellman**

Yesterday my son, thirteen years old, gave me some worrying news. He told me that the local skinheads are enlisting new supporters in his school, thus diffusing an anti-immigrants and anti-gypsies propaganda among the kids, to whom they above all represent a certain kind

*Beslan, Ossetia. A group of 'Chechen' terrorists have seized a school and have taken hundreds of pupils, relatives and teachers hostage.*

of garb and hair-style - they have no idea of the ideology that lies behind their movement.

Last year the number of skinheads was already rising in Malmi, the district of Helsinki where we live. Our district has had an extremely rich history, as for its population, partly because after the Second World War gypsies from Viipuri settled here. During and after the war, in which Finland lost part of its territories, there were many evacuees, and an effort was made to allow those coming from the same towns to settle in the same areas. And that's how the gypsies from Viipuri came to Malmi, and have lived here ever since. Although at the beginning of the nineties Finland started opening up to immigrants, who are very numerous now, until the eighties the country had been known for its restrictive policy regarding immigration. Therefore, for a long time the only 'misfits' for Finnish people from the South were gypsies, who have been the target of prejudices that are still strong, as shown also by skinheads. They have come to Malmi precisely because it is known as a 'gypsy district'.

*Pula, Croatia, September 2<sup>nd</sup>*

**Drazan Gunjaca**

The war. In my country people are slowly starting to forget. It's been nine years after all. Nevertheless, it's weird how these war memories work. They are highly selective, following rules common people cannot understand. There, while some are trying everything to forget the last war, others still remember well the one before it, the Second World War. And so, in memory of it, the other day a group of people put up a monument

to the fascist war criminal Mile Budak. They remember everything about him, even that he was a writer in his spare time... They just forgot what he did during his working hours. He also wrote. Among other things, in the 1940s he wrote war decrees that sentenced to death thousands of Serbs, Jews and also Croatians who didn't fit into the vision of the holy sovereignty of those messiahs. The Government invoked the Constitution and the anti-fascist tradition and pulled down the monument. Early in the morning, while the initiators of its erection were still fast asleep. You should have seen their outrage when they realized later that morning that the monument was gone. Luckily, they didn't have their guns at hand... Never mind the fact that 17 streets in various towns in this country carry his name. Fine, these are only little plates with the name of the street. Who cares about such details any more? As long as there is no monument it's tolerable.

*Sant'Antioco, Sardinia, Italy, September 3<sup>rd</sup>* **Massimo Parizzi**

Last night, in the square of Calasetta now free from tourists some lads with a guitar were singing folk songs from Liguria: Calasetta's inhabitants have Ligurian origins. Black-haired, with T-shirts and tattoos. One skinny, another big and fat. Open mouths, earrings and piercing, cigarettes in their hands. S., over sixty, from Liguria, was listening and staring at them. "Ah", he then said "this atmosphere... reminds me of..." "What?" I asked him. "The community." Dreaming is easy, it can spring from anything.

*Camisano Vicentino, Italy, September 4<sup>th</sup>* **Mariela De Marchi**

I have just come out of a very demanding period, so some events have gone by without me being able to find a way to react.

It suddenly dawned on me at the dentist's. He gave me such strong anaesthesia that even my eye-lids were numb. As I was waiting for the filling, I remembered that dentists in Bolivia hardly ever give anaesthesia for such simple minor operations. What makes the difference is above all money, but I think what counts is also the fact that it is easier and faster to work on a patient who does not complain. Pain is anti-profitable.

As I was thinking about these things, my mind inevitably flew to Beslan. When I heard the news on the radio, I got goose pimples, I felt my heart tighten, I thought about my daughter. Later on I tried to think it over and ended up making the usual considerations. There are lots of children that die in the world and we don't want to see it, we don't want to suffer, we suffer when the news tells us so...

Grief has prostituted itself so much that it has become more and more difficult to really feel it. Sometimes I feel it is so useless to name it, theorize it, explain it. There, I've run out of words.

*The occupation of the school in Beslan ended yesterday, Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> September. Shooting and explosions were heard inside the building, and the Russian special forces intervened. "Hundreds of dead, and many of them are children" today's "la Repubblica" reads. A thirteen-year-old boy tells his story: "Some of us pupils said to the terrorists: let us live, we're just children"; one of them replied that "it would have been worse if we had grown up".*

*Calasetta, Sardinia, Italy, September 4<sup>th</sup>, 12.05pm* **Adriano Accattino**

This is the flapping shadow of the towel hanging on the line: a shifting shadow that modifies its patterns at once, changing from a diamond to a slightly thick line. Further complications are caused by the long flowering stems of the bougainvillea that produce a wavering confusion with their shapeless spots mixing with the patterns

of the towel. From the shadows it is impossible for me to follow the path towards what is casting them: I watch them without looking for any connection.

*Sant'Antioco, Sardinia, Italy, September 5<sup>th</sup>* **Marina Massenz**

I close the shutters of the windows, turn the key in the lock, and my eyes run towards the sea, beyond the veranda. The sea is singularly still, and a livid colour typical of a cloudy day. This is how Sardinia says goodbye to me, thus announcing Autumn. This makes my return home easier, though what am I going back to? Last night's ritual words: "Everything will be all right...". A crisp reply, though enough to let me glide forward in time, and get out of the tangle of uncertainty. I had asked him: "What sort of year will the next one be?". A new year always begins in September for me. You stop at the village, buy the newspapers and are dumbstruck: "Beslan...". The articles, the photographs. It seems to me as if everything has stopped. "It was a feast day, the first day of the new school term; there was a smell of homemade cakes in the air, and that of flowers for the teachers." Cakes, flowers, smiles.

Otar managed to escape and tells his story: he was the smallest of all; so, as soon as he saw the black men, he ran as fast as he could and hid in a hole, near the toilets. He shut his eyes: "Perhaps, if they didn't see me, I would be less afraid". He can't see, so he can't be seen. He shuts himself up, and inside him the world is alive, inhabited; dad is telling him a joke, he's speaking to mum. He thinks hard so as to not feel hungry or thirsty.

He can't see the bombs, the silent women in black (how many deaths have led to that black, to that silence? and how many other losses will their advancing in black lead to?).

He can't see the *teste di cuoio* [lit. 'leather-heads', the Italian term used for the military 'special forces'], a horrible brainless name. He can't see the children crying or those running away and shouting "we're just children!...", nor can he see how they're shot in the back "so that they will not grow up", exactly. The rescuers will find him three days later; unharmed, covered by heaps of roof beams and bits of wall. Another boy, in hospital, refuses to open his eyes, he doesn't want to see anymore; he was neither as fast as Otar, nor as strong as him: he hadn't shut his eyes in time.

Among all those terrible adults wearing violence as strength, no one is strong. And among all those who are by definition and as a matter of fact 'weak', namely children, the 'strong one' is Otar who manages to play hide and seek, and saves himself by saving his interior life. Being *somewhere else*, a strategy to survive even in extreme conditions and in horror. Those who really endure, what endurance really means. Even in the death camps there were *people who endured*. Claudio Magris tells us that, among several photographs he saw at Auschwitz, there was one of a man: "His face was disfigured from the blows he had received, his eyes were two bloody swollen lumps, his expression was one of patience, of humble though staunch endurance. He was wearing a patched-up jacket, and carefully sewn-on patches could be seen on his trousers, showing love for dignity and cleanliness. A form of self-respect and respect for

*In Danubio, Garzanti, Milano 1986, p. 153; see Danube, Collins Harvill, London 1989, trans. Patrick Creagh.*

for one's own dignity, maintained in the heart of hell and also turned to one's own trousers torn to shreds...". Being an enduring person, just like being somewhere else, in a well-kept, protected corner inside oneself, a core which is left untouched, and which enables one to sew patches on one's own trousers 'carefully'. Even during internment, in a state of extreme isolation, there was someone who watered the scrubby plants on the window-sill everyday; clinging to a memory of life and beauty, nourishing it, and quenching its thirst.

We are going back home; throughout the whole journey my eyes follow wonderful Sardinia, harsh and brown, its diving rocks looking hard at the sea. Images and landscape overlap intermittently in my mind: those faces, those children's eyes, that debris all appear to me... Two visions, one of horror and one of beauty, that keep overlapping here and everywhere. Is this life? The sky is still livid, the great mourning of the sky is hanging over me, and envelopes the whole day. We're returning; perhaps I would like to find a hole where to hide too, so as to not see and not be seen. So as to not be afraid, so as to not be ashamed, so as to not feel the grief. But I can't become 'small' again, I am not small, and I am not in extreme conditions: I can't hide inside myself. Therefore, I must see; I am condemned to see everything, and the only thing I can do, in this exhausting sense of impotence, is to build-up memory. To experience with eyes wide open this world going to pieces: this is our place as adults who are neither strong nor weak.

*Milan, Italy, undated*

**Marosia Castaldi**

My father was the only one in the house who bought plants. After a while, he would toss them out. I always thought that he was afraid of not being able to look after them. He preferred to let them die than see them wither away. When my daughters' father left, I thought he had done like my father had with the plants - he had wanted them but he was unable to take care of them every day of their life.

*Milan, Italy, September 5<sup>th</sup>*

**Germana Pisa**

Rocky was a happy little dog. Walking in the fields with his owner he had got to know a lot of things, and among these, also those bird snares that hunters hide in the grass. Maybe he took it as a game or he had probably learnt to deactivate them: a blow with his little paw and... click! He rendered harmless all the ones he found.

One day, something strange happened: he would neither eat nor drink and his owner Bettino and his wife and daughters were worried; Bettino thought that he might have tired him too much walking. At night the whole family was a bit worried about him.

The next morning Bettino took him out but, as soon as they were out, Rocky started hugging him, or better fawning on him, and licking his hands; then he went towards his owners' pizza restaurant and went round all the corners of it. Finally, he ran away and never came back.

A few days later, Bettino found him dead in a field, in a spot that Rocky particularly liked, where he most gladly used to stop and jump in the grass. He picked up the little body and took it to the vet asking for a post-mortem examination: he wanted

to understand what had killed him.

He had been poisoned.

I was told this story a few days ago by Luisa, Bettino's wife, in the pizza restaurant, a few hours before my holiday finished. We had started talking about hunters: the following day, in Valcamonica, hunting would officially start.

*Milan, Italy, September 5<sup>th</sup>*

E-mail from **Massimo Parrizzi** to **Marosia Castaldi**

Dear Marosia, the question that torments us lately is: what shall we do with the dead? They're dead and that's that? And "life goes on"? The least, least, least, would be a symbolic collective suicide. To lie down on the ground, at least for a minute, but all six billion of us... And that's not possible. We aren't alive enough. You wrote a book. A three-hundred-ninety-eight-page book on and about, I believe, this question. I would like to publish a page from it.

# Children of the underground

by Marosia Castaldi

Here

notes from the present

That man who started building above the sulphur mine and took stones from the quarry tried to get us to come out. Every time he laid his hand on a stone the stone shouted and a child shouted here underground. A stone had smashed his hand. The ground everywhere trembled and shouted

From *Dava fine alla tremenda notte*, Feltrinelli, Milano 2004, pp. 88-89.

but that man thought he was the bee's knees. He wanted to put the rubble of the earth and our bones back together again. A woman followed him saying You are committing a blasphemy by building a theatre here in the house of God! And he said For now it isn't the house of anybody and he was laying stone over stone and digging with the pickaxe. The blows echoed inside our heads down in our guts broke our contracted shoulders. Why do you want to bring us up on earth, we asked. We don't have eyes to see any more. It has been years since we have been trapped since death devoured us. In our bones we still felt the pain of the pickaxe and of the stones and of our shoulders under the heavy loads... the loud cry of our buttocks split open by sweating pickmen when they too suffocated by darkness and solitude... the earth was just a big buried den... they went for us to remind themselves that they were still alive. Then they left and went to get drunk dressed in their best clothes. They described how many children they had done in just one day as if we were women, bitches, meat for the butcher... they too massacred alive, they too had once been children but survived... only a few manage to transform alabaster skin into leather skin able to brave wind and storm to patch holes and stitch wounds... all those above ground are survivors... all the others are dead... even rich children were close to death in a whiff of wind in a linen cot... it took them during the night from their linens from their starched little dresses and now they too are here with the children blinded by the sun in the quarries... we are the dead of the earth... a black wing marked us like that wind that passed through the houses in Egypt without making any distinction between rich and poor. Only those who didn't have the

blood-mark were saved... yet we had a blood-mark when they penetrated us lacerated us and our skin split open but it was impure blood it wasn't enough and now you want to make us come back up? You and your mason son and to do what? In this desolate land? The sulphur has burned the plants has devoured the cereals the barley the oats. Has turned vegetation into dry bushes. We can't eat the wheat any more and the water is all murky with sulphur and the acid corrodes the earth and the lungs. What are you bringing us up on this desolate land for?... yet perhaps we too want to come up... we want to see... we don't want to stay in the dark as if we had never been born. Take us up Visitor. Let us dance let us copulate let us take pleasure in the salt of a new earth... there... do you hear the voice coming from the sea? It's not tired of calling... it wants to wash our wounds it wants to wash away the black the grease the sweat the blood the sulphur... it wants to put together hands reduced to pulp open up gangrenous blind eyes... we are the damned... the never born of the earth... let us return

*Rome, Italy, September 6<sup>th</sup>*

**Lucianna Argentino**

The question that has dawned on me after all the horror of these days is not why has this happened, but what is it that still keeps us afloat, which 'good' makes human kind carry on. It seems to me, in fact, that all the evil that stains us will sink us into some horrible abyss without any chance of rising again. Where are we going? Or better, where are we being led - or are we leading ourselves? A few months ago, while reading *Tropic of Cancer* by Henry Miller, I found this

*"Some of us pupils said to the terrorists: let us live, we're just children"; one of them replied that "it would have been worse if we had grown up."*

sentence: “America is the very incarnation of doom. She will drag the whole world down to the bottomless pit”. Both amazing and shocking if you think the book was published in 1934. Every comment, however, is futile; and this can be seen through the streams of bombs of terrorist attacks following one another in Iraq, in the terrifying death exchange between Jews and Palestinians, in the war between Chechens and Russians, and between Ingushetians and Ossetians, to say nothing of the genocides in Africa and of the many other wars which infect our world, regarding which, however, no one can be considered or can feel unrelated and innocent...

In the afternoon I took my two children to the nearby park and the fact of seeing them run and play cheerfully gave some oxygen to my burdened soul. Then Arianna went up to a girl and as she showed her her little monkey she asked her “do you like it?”; the girl was silent and hid a little behind her grandmother who was holding her hand and answered in her place saying: “She’s got lots of animals at home too. Haven’t you got lots?”. At which, having attempted a smile, I took Arianna’s hand and left quite disheartened by us grown-ups and by our weaknesses, and by all those mental superfluities by now deep-rooted into imagination and inner freedom.

*Milan, Italy, undated*

**Marosia Castaldi**

Last night I wrote a long letter to my daughters. I didn’t even know what I had written. I didn’t want to re-read it. Finally, I read it again. I did not want the letter to hurt them. Their father left home long ago. They are suffering, like I am,

but now we are suffering less. I see things from a distance now. That is why I was able to write a letter to my daughters. Reading it again, I noticed an impassioned, but slightly sugary tone. What? I was the one who used to smash dishes, who used to shout. I was the one who once said: “Your father is a bastard”. And here I am writing this letter to tell my daughters that life is an immense beautiful prairie with horses running wild and free, and that no-one is truly at fault, and that, on the contrary, it is better we get rid of the word from our family speech. Am I really the one who wrote it? Yes, I am. I have never been a mother who covers up old wounds, who says: “He’s a good man ”, even if she hates him, but now I see things from a distance. And when you look back from a distance, you begin to die a little inside, but it’s a good death. It’s accepting that anything can die: love, a house, a desire. And yet, bonds are thrown off, thanks to these deaths. So, by dying, you begin to live again. You give yourself and others the freedom to go, even to die. It was during such total freedom, which lasts but a moment, that I wrote to my daughters. Maybe, by tomorrow, I’ll be speaking badly and swearing again, with words they never repeat. Perhaps it’s because freedom leaves a much stronger mark on young people. We adults are the ones that create bonds.

*Calasetta, Sardinia, Italy, September 7<sup>th</sup>, 11.30am* **Adriano Accattino**

The shadow of the protruding tiles which fell straight yesterday, is now falling sideways; its substance is as close as in fabric, and its apparent thickness is of a few centimetres. Is it true that

the brighter the light is, the deeper a shadow is, as inside a pit? Though its colour is not so much the blacker as the whiter light is; maybe it depends on the surface on which it is cast: it's grey on white, even if it's midday light. On green fabric, instead, it looks almost black.

Two sheets are hanging and the shadow on their white is light and clear and falls on the floor where it draws a long shape, which is not thicker than four fingers and which could be the shadow of a rifle. The nightdress casts a slanting shadow, as serious as a horsy muzzle. Also, the air brings life to the shadows and blows them here and there, opening and closing them like cards.

*Calasetta, Sardinia, Italy, September 8<sup>th</sup>, 3.40pm* **Adriano Accattino**

Now the beak-like shadow of the protruding tiles has turned round the other side and bends towards the East; but underneath, on the Havana brown wall, other tile tips have been drawn which form indentations that are still bent towards the East: I realize that they are the continuation of the overhanging shadows that sunset makes longer. In the meanwhile, the balcony has been shadowed by one single shadow, which you wouldn't even notice if it didn't break on the stone wall that closes the balcony. There will soon be no particular shadows, but everything will be in the shade, apparently the same thing, but in fact completely different.

*Milan, Italy, September 9<sup>th</sup>*

**Massimo Parizzi**

What happened in Beslan was front page news on “la Repubblica”, one of the major Italian newspapers, on 2<sup>nd</sup> September, then again on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>. Four days. It still appeared so on the 6<sup>th</sup>, though no longer ‘spread across the full page’, but one column less. On the 7<sup>th</sup> it appeared as the second article, and it was still so on the 8<sup>th</sup>, but two columns less. Today, it is reduced to a small ‘box’ that reads: “Yevtushenko’s poetry on the desks in Beslan”. On 8<sup>th</sup> September there was another headline-banner, that’s true: the kidnapping of Simona Torretta and Simona Pari, two volunteers for “Un ponte per...” [“A bridge for...”, a Non-Governmental Organization for solidarity].

On “la Repubblica” dated 5<sup>th</sup> September, and with reference to the pictures of the children killed in Beslan, one of the most important *maîtres à penser* in Italy today, Adriano Sofri, wrote: “In a few years’ time the world will be inhabited by women and men with this memory of their childhood”. And the founder of “la Repubblica”, Eugenio Scalfari, wrote, on the same day and on the same newspaper: “Who tells you that we will always have the image of those children before our eyes [...] is lying and he knows it”.

In the past issue of this review, we started from Susan Sontag’s words and discussed the concepts of memory and thought. “Perhaps we set too high a value upon memory and not high enough a value upon thought”, Mrs Sontag had written. Thus Franco Tagliafierro, one of our collaborators, replied annoyed: “To make such a distinction between memory and thought seems to me to be a piece of nonsense, especially if we

consider the fact that today memory, from which thought draws its *raison d'être*, has become a heap of media material which we treat as junk to get rid of periodically because there's not enough room in the attic. Instead, if we set a reasonably high value upon memory, some rather different thought may be found around". And I replied: "Memory is a drawer for the dead. And the dead place us before a dilemma. They are the defeated ones. Those who are irreparably defeated. Those who cannot be surpassed. And just because of that, just because the dead say 'nothing can be done any more', we must surpass them. They are a hindrance".

Newspapers do not make us think, nor do they guard memory. They are not made for that, but to let us know. However, they do something else, too. They give marks: it is of greatest, great, sufficient, little, very little, no importance. The symbols used are: front page banner, across the full page; one or two columns less; front page, but secondary news; ditto, one or two columns less; ditto, but a mention or a box; second page; third, fourth...; gone. The marks change in time: they are chronological marks. And they usually (exceptions are rare) change in one direction only: they are lowered. In this process, when tragic events are involved, they resemble some kind of 'work of mourning' process (i.e., do newspapers 'work out mourning'?). In the case of Beslan, full mourning lasted four days. Too short for private mourning. But Beslan was public mourning: political, anthropological, ethical. Working it out requires memory, thought, action. Newspapers are not suitable. We have to address politicians.

This evening, hundreds and hundreds of birds were flying over my house in Milan, over the building site opposite, over its cranes.

Is there one political party that clearly and strongly proposes life? For everybody? A party that confronts death with a proposal of life? Its preservation, its possibility, the fulfilling of its potentiality? A party that puts life at the centre of its memory, of its thought, of its action?

*Calasetta, Sardinia, Italy, September 9<sup>th</sup>, late morning* **Adriano Accattino**

Today the balcony is packed with washing hung out to dry: shadows appear only in a few fragments and with a few tips. A streak runs vertically on the hanging sheet, with some squiggles that refer to something I can't see. The contours are perfectly still: heat can be felt in this stillness.

Only some humming insect moves along the suspended surface of air, but the glass does not crack. Shadows remain flat, thirsty, indecipherable. The emptiness enclosed by their shapes strikes me; their absolutely impractical sense carries into the day a bit of nocturnal slackening. With their useless and nonsensical shapes they unravel obsessive human production and consumption; with their obliquity they free us from sharp right angles, from vertical falls; with their levity and mobility they render tolerable stillness and heaviness. Is shade poetry in a world of prose?

*Buenos Aires, Argentina, undated*

**Gladys Croxatto**

The morning slowly fades away in the succession of news items: known and unknown deaths. They are exact names that hint at uncertain places, maybe at the suspect that something is happening in the dark. I go out in the street, and tourists have flooded our quarter as on many other Sundays; a few tango notes - surely a dancer - lulls them on the street corner. How do they feel when they walk past the beggars who are asleep on the wet pavement, sheltered by the poultry shop in Paseo Colón? They - the beggars - do not worry about Sundays and do not offer these day-time visitors any hospitality. They are strangers here too, except to themselves. Thus, each one forgets about the other in order to set his own watch for this blind date.

“What is past?”, I can read on an abandoned photograph. I screw up my eyes to see the letters clearly, and the caption inexplicably goes on with a mysterious reply: “Is prologue”. Neither is the past a simple prologue, because it would be an omen, a prophecy that nullifies hope, nor can the present avoid the responsibility of re-writing the past to change the course of the future, of its own fate.

I walk towards a small market held by some Chinese who shyly speak a few broken Spanish words and shout - I wonder what - in their own language. A baby sitting on the stall attracts all the attention of its mother, a young Chinese in a slightly bad mood. Today the immigrants here are Chinese, Korean, Russian, not Italian as my grandparents were. Italians are now the tourists. If their economic growth goes on, tomorrow the tourists will be Chinese, and who will the immigrants be?

I carefully pick fruit, yoghurt, milk, cereals, bread. No one will have lunch with me. Why not invite the sleeping beggar? I do not dare, he smells.

The Chinese man returns my smile and holds my bag with his gloves on. I take it angrily - I can't explain why - as if to put questions and doubts behind me. I don't like faces that look closely at me, just as I don't like my own face when it's before me in the mirror. What bothers me is not being young. What bothers me are memories and giving up hope, though not *my* giving it up, I swear. I still manage to walk the streets defiantly, as when I thought everything was possible. What a paradox! We used to say that a soldier alive would have come in handy for another war. We did not think that surviving was a kind of infidelity, or even of indifference, and least of all that the world would have turned those longings into faded dreams.

Perhaps it would not have been wrong if I had looked after my own affairs; I would have lived on the other side of the city, in that road, which tourists and, least of all, I'm sure, beggars never get to.

# Migrations

by Hanna Snellman

Here

notes from the present

*Toronto, Canada, September 10<sup>th</sup>*

For three days now, here in Toronto, at the Nellie Langford Rowell Library for Women Studies of York University, I have been reading books about women's emigration, especially after the Second World War in Europe, when masses of emigrants moved from the South towards the

masses of emigrants moved from the South towards the North, and from the East towards the West of the continent, and many also overseas in every direction. In a moving book, *We Have Already Cried Many Tears*, Caroline Brettell describes Portuguese women who emigrated to Paris, a phenomenon which, she writes, was both new for the time (the late fifties) and dramatic, but was nourished by the same confluence of interests that had characterized previous stages of Portuguese emigration: the interests of industrialized countries in Northern Europe, which needed manpower for those jobs their citizens no longer wanted to do, and those of Southern Europe countries, which needed to export some of their excess population. That's how capitalist companies in France, Germany, Switzerland and Belgium started counting on a reserve army of foreign workers: they fulfilled the demand for manpower at a cheap price and the need for a boost in production, and made it possible to enhance profits without further increasing wages or modifying working conditions. Immigrants accepted lower wages, longer working-hours and irregular shifts, as well as dangerous jobs and living conditions which were below the minimum standards. In their turn, less industrially-developed countries such as Italy, Spain, Portugal, Greece, Turkey and Yugoslavia caught in this new migratory movement within European boundaries (especially if emigration was temporary or semi-temporary) a possibility of importing new wealth and obtaining some 'free' professional training for their own either semi- or not-qualified labour force. In the space of twenty years, Ms Brettell writes, about ten million workers faced the great journey northward

*Schenkman, Cambridge, Mass., 1982.*

to build the homes, clean the streets, houses and hotel rooms, and run the factories of North-West European countries.

Ms Brettell does not look into the distance as far as further north, as far as Sweden, which also started recruiting immigrants immediately after the Second World War: in 1946 it promoted a survey, made negotiations and drew up a treaty in order to census and recruit foreign workers in Italy, Hungary and Austria; and, two years later, manpower and demographic forecasting persuaded the politicians to pass a new act on immigration. Before that, the law was meant to restrict it, but now they were asking to facilitate it. A new law was passed in 1954, when an agreement concerning labour market in Scandinavia was signed, which, among other things, enabled circulation without a passport among the northern countries and abolished the need for residence permits or invitations. Another pact on social security, which guaranteed equal rights in the various hosting countries, was added to this agreement one year later. As soon as the new measures came into force, Swedish employers started mass recruiting: demand and offer corresponded, Sweden needed workers and the rural areas in Finland, Greece, Turkey and Yugoslavia had plenty of them, while they had no work to offer.

Going back to Ms Brettell, she writes that 1970 was the year with the greatest number of emigrants from Portugal, when over 100,000 Portuguese moved to France. It was the same year in which Finnish emigration towards Sweden reached a climax: 40,000 people, according to the figures. However, between 1945 and 1994 emigrants from Finland to Sweden were at least half

a million (that's the official figure), if not 800,000 (according to the expert Sven Alur Reinans), although only one part, about 250,000 settled for good.

In her book Ms Brettell tells three stories of Portuguese women who emigrated to France and, in this case too, their experiences are amazingly similar to those of Finnish women emigrating. Though, to tell the truth, research into female emigration all over the world shows that it had similar characteristics everywhere. Everywhere women have always gone to be housemaids. Frieda Esau Klippenstein recalls how in Winnipeg, Canada, between the twenties and the fifties, extremely young Mennonite girls were hired for such tasks: "Having house servants was regarded as being so important that people vied to hire whoever was willing to accept such a job, and they were mostly young immigrant women. In Winnipeg, one of the main destinations of numerous groups of emigrants, these girls were approached by their potential employers along the railway station platforms or inside the Immigrant Hall. That's how lots of Mennonite girls, some of which were only thirteen or fourteen years old, were parted from their families or travelling companions as soon as they got there. At the thought of not being able on their own to find their families or friends or to be found in the maze of a foreign city, their anguish was enormous. Completely at a loss, they found themselves in the houses of strangers, whom they were not even able to communicate with and who had great expectations regarding them".

How similar this experience was to the one of Finnish girls who emigrated from Lapland to Sweden in the sixties and the seventies! The only remarkable difference is that Laplanders used to

*In Telling tales. Essays in Western Women's History, edited by Catherine A. Cavanaugh and Randi R. Warne, Ubc Press, Vancouver 2000, p. 206.*

work mainly for Finnish families, often relatives; working-class families, it is worth noting, not rich ones. But although they understood the language in their new homes, they did not understand either the language or the way of life in their new country. Moreover, the more distant relation their employer was, the less they cared about their well-being. Ulla, to whom I spoke at length and whose diary I could read for a book on Finnish emigration in Göteborg, which was published a year ago, left her home at fifteen, as soon as she had completed her compulsory education, and, together with two girls from her hometown, travelled 4,500 kilometres from Finnish Lapland to a small town near Göteborg in order to reach some distant relatives who, since they worked in factories, needed a baby-sitter. That was back in the late sixties. The girls thought that in Sweden they could have lived together, but things were not so: Ulla was put on a ship and sent to be a baby-sitter with another family. She was far away from home, with nobody to talk to, and cried every night until she fell asleep, praying she could get back to Finland. In addition, the family did not give her enough to eat and she was always hungry.

In January 1969, after a few weeks in Sweden, she wrote in her diary: "Time flows exactly the same every day! Never a Saturday or a Sunday off. I feel so lonely! I have also written home. And to pass time I am writing down my old memories of our hut in the forest. It makes me feel better at once and makes me wish I were surrounded by nature. I will be sixteen tomorrow. I have been writing this diary for five years now. I've been through so much! First my childhood, then school, a few months loitering around at

*Hanna Snellman, Sallan suurin kylä. Göteborg, Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, Helsinki 2003.*

home, and now I am trying out my wings in the world's winds, without mummy supporting me. And without a friend (so far). If I ever (please God) go back home, I think I will never set foot in Sweden again. What a way to leave the country where I was born, torn away from home all of a sudden. My life has changed completely. From my dear, quiet village to the great, vast world. How can one all at once become a tough town girl, sure of herself and independent? And try to be grown-up too? It's not easy. It's difficult even for boys: it frightens me and makes me cry. And they cannot understand why I don't want to get to know the girls that come and see them. How could I? They have different interests and a different vision of life, I think. I just can't, or perhaps I don't want to. I'm a bit of a dreamer, and I'm also shy. They are lively and talk a lot, while I'm melancholy and don't speak much. I feel like the bleak Lappish countryside. I don't like having fun around and going to big meeting places where you have to speak to lots of people. I don't like parties, they make me nervy. You are expected to be so sophisticated. No, I'm more suitable for a hut in the forest, a place of marvellous peace where to be free with friends, to be as I like. There's no need to be sophisticated or tense all the time. Maybe it's just because I'm so rooted in the area where I was born that I can't make it here. But I think no one can help me".

These girls were doomed to work as housemaids until they were eighteen, and then look for a better-paid job in a factory. And in the meanwhile they reached independence: they no longer had to live in a family. Many however, like Ulla, went back to their hometowns in Finland: going back was the idea which they had left with and there-

fore it was not shameful.

A Canadian historian, Franca Iacovetta, whom I am meeting tomorrow here in Toronto, has written a lot about the history of women emigrants, including an essay that I have found very fascinating. Most immigrants to Ontario, immediately after the war, she writes, were white British and European citizens, which is not surprising, since before 1965 the doors of Canada were almost completely closed to coloured immigrants. In the fifties, the Government started planning the employment of Red Indian women as - and this is not surprising either - housemaids, but until 1965 they were a small minority. While white Europeans, especially British, Italian and German, arrived in their hundreds of thousands, so much so that Toronto became a multi-cultural city where former war enemies worked side by side. Also the people I talked to in Göteborg came into contact with Italians, Greek, Turks, Serbs and Croats in their workplace: they were all 'in the same boat' and in order to adapt to the new cultural environment they had to learn to accept different lifestyles. And they learnt to do so. But, unfortunately, they did not become so open-minded as to accept a different skin colour.

*Remaking Their Lives: Women Immigrants, Survivors, and Refugees, in A Diversity of Women: Ontario 1945-1980, edited by Joy Parr, University of Toronto Press, Toronto-Buffalo 1995.*

*Buenos Aires, Argentina, undated*

**Gladys Croxatto**

I have painful feeling of uselessness, although my cat's eyes are greeting my first movements in bed. My heart is overweighed by faint memories or by the loss of a friend. It is that loathsome matter by which - as Montale said - death is paid for by living.

*"Some of us pupils said to the terrorists: let us live, we're just children"; one of them replied that "it would have been worse if we had grown up."*

In the lift I bump into a man who is used to promising love - or sex? - and his wife has just had their first baby boy. Why do I accept his words and behave as if I believed him? Maybe it is this brief warmth, a fleeting intimacy with someone after a long weekend of little betrayals.

A girl who looks after my mother in her old age and whom I consider almost as a friend - such is my relationship with her - claims that my visits are sporadic, although not one day goes by without me going there. The person who informs me of her words does it without any ill-will and without any interest. At any rate, she puts me on the alert. I have trusted the girl and have tried to protect her in my own way. Afternoon chats, and some advice. Yes, I have not gone as far as the suburbs to look for her house with non-plastered walls and surrounded by wire. She comforted me when, disturbed by the illness - not to say madness - that weighs on my mother, my sister and my niece, I cried. I remember her hand on my shoulder, her sweet voice that found the right words for my sadness.

The very bond that unites us, makes us both sisters and enemies. This also happens with the wife of the man in the lift who has called me, just now, to invite me to parties and feasts that might frighten her, and I have refused, in sympathy with her.

None of my actions will destroy the barrier nor will they cross the mortal limit; I will try, if anything, to plunge into scandal in order to be able to name it: masters and slaves; wives and husbands.

*Calasetta, Sardinia, Italy, September 10<sup>th</sup>, 12pm* **Adriano Accattino**

Clouds are the enemies of shadows which they bleed dry, outshine and dissolve, although they are the friends of the single shade, the one they spread everywhere. Instead, clouds are friends to the sun and to the shapes that lie between them and the sun and that they print in images as flat as contours.

A cloud that comes and then goes away, just as it extinguishes shadows, it also seems to spark them off: maybe it is not quite their enemy. It is difficult for shadows too to tell clearly friends from enemies; after all, it is not always an enemy the one that outshines you. The world of shadows is rather complex, too.

*Milan, Italy, September 12<sup>th</sup>*

**Giorgio Mascitelli**

“Is there one political party that proposes life?” Massimo Parizzi asked himself [see: September 9<sup>th</sup>]; or better, in the most complete enunciation of the question: “Is there a party that confronts death with a proposal of life?”. I would like to try and answer, because it seems to me that putting such a question in these terms in the present historical context, in which the concept of political party does not have a precisely positive meaning, may open up some interesting prospect.

Of course, the most obvious reply is that all parties propose life; even fascists, who have adopted the saying “I don’t give a damn of dying” and other gloomy second-rate military rhetoric expressions as their favourite slogans, propose life, because that reference to “dying” does not really consider death and the dead, but only certifies a type of praiseworthy life for those who think that

*The Bush government fails to extend the law that banned free selling of ‘assault-weapons’ in the United States.*

way. All parties propose life and that is why they do not confront death. Not only can death not be confronted, but life is largely an oblivion of death, and this is also true for political parties, which are somehow or other part of life. Actually death, or better, the dead enter politics only as an admonition, as a motive, as an object of revenge. And not only because politics addresses the living ones, but also because the dead are irrecoverable. In these terms, those who 'linger on the dead' are not militants or political activists, but usually survivors. People may look at them respectfully, gratefully or with irritation, but do not share their experience. The living ones do not like looking at the dead, and not necessarily because they are hypocritical or immoral, but because they understand that the irrecoverability of death cannot be considered in a radical and systematic way. On the other hand, the fact that politics removes the conditions that have led to the dead often is, from the point of view of the survivor, meagre consolation: Primo Levi wrote *The Truce*, not *Peace* or *The Rest*; it seems to me quite a clear sign. Many people were surprised that, in the first few years of its life, not only did the State of Israel not base its own political identity on the history of the extermination, but indeed ignored it to some extent. And yet, it would have been an impossible task for the rulers of Israel to base the identity of a state on the fact of 'lingering on the dead'. Obviously, this statement has little to do with current Israeli politics concerning the Palestinians: if Israel had been on an island inhabited by Israeli only, the problem of getting over the dead would have occurred all the same. In the modern world, where political parties ex-

ist, the most thorough, most realistic and most committed image to account for the course of events is that of Benjamin's *Angelus Novus*: it is an image inspired by a Paul Klee painting, in which an angel whose face is turned back, towards the past, can only see wreckage, while a terrible force from heaven drags him forward, towards the future; the angel would like to stop to "awaken the dead and make whole what has been smashed", but he can't, since he is driven away by a force that the German writer calls progress. This is also an image of oblivion and getting over (I believe the superiority and hence the success of such image partly originates from the tragic weight it lends to that oblivion). Perhaps, though, this trait is not typical of modernity only, but it is consistent with the whole dimension of political matters. At least this is what I am led to think when reading the things Giorgio Agamben has been writing ever since *Homo sacer*; in particular when he claims that "not mere natural life, but that life exposed to death (bare life or sacred life) is the primary political element". But the political element we are considering is an expression of the exceptionality of its own power towards life deprived of political features, placing death itself as a limit and a boundary. Hence, even the most archaic forms of power, which are nevertheless at the base of the most modern and totalitarian ones, pursue life only, perhaps even considered in its vulnerability, and do not go beyond that. On the contrary, a sacred origin of politics will definitely not place death as a discriminating factor, thus for example the Medieval Sacred Roman Empire vouched on earth for divine order and was part of an eternal arrangement, which got

*Giorgio Agamben, Homo sacer. Il potere sovrano e la nuda vita, Einaudi, Torino 1995, p. 98; Homo sacer: sovereign power and bare life, Stanford University Press, Stanford, Calif., 1998, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen.*

over death, precisely. But in the modern world, just as at the beginning, the sphere of politics has become laicized and according to it too there is hope only as long as there is life.

However, these reflections are nothing if compared to the initial question, which is brought forward by the current war and by the wreckage that the twentieth century has left us. Actually, it is no longer possible to consider conflicts in political terms, or better to consider their consequences in such terms, by accepting that getting over the dead as an implicit prerequisite of politics itself. I have the impression that such sensitivity appears in many of the comments in "Here", just as it has in general been circulating within the peace movement. Though as spread as it may be - and if it is developed consistently, it will be much less spread - this sensitivity clashes with the irrecoverability of the dead that I mentioned above. We may say "never again", but all the same we will not stop loving our living ones in the name of our dead. In fact, every kind of politics, or every action in general I should say, therefore, for example, even humanitarian initiatives, can naturally suggest getting over the conditions that have caused death and possibly suggest some compensation, but cannot go back. In conclusion, every kind of politics is a way of getting over the dead: of course there may be a hasty instrumental way of getting over and another which is pondered on, painful and conscious (which, of course, makes a huge difference), but it still is a way of getting over the dead. Politics, both the best sort and the worst, struggles entirely in this blind alley.

What we can do is not found new politics, but try and people politics with the awareness of

this contradiction. Unfortunately, such awareness brings great sadness, that is the contrary of an enthusiasm which would be desirable when undertaking common action. But that sadness may introduce an element of realism concerning the, at least biological, condition of man within the sphere of politics. Of course, a suggestion of this kind will certainly not affect the masses, but at least it may introduce civilizing elements into that realm of life which politics represents.

*Calasetta, Sardinia, Italy, September 12<sup>th</sup>, 10.45am* **Adriano Accattino**

Not a breath of air and shadows have become so firm that one could build over them: they are as still as if they had been painted. It is a pleasure to observe such stability here where everything seems to be transient.

Which world does the world of shadows clash with? With a world of lights? A world of certainties? But there's more true life in the shade, there's more peacefulness: you can rest in the shade, the shade protects, the shade removes every hectic activity.

*Calasetta, Sardinia, Italy, September 13<sup>th</sup>, 12pm* **Adriano Accattino**

Shadows overlap and penetrate each other in the slow air and create flower shapes never seen before. If a shadow is the projection of a real object, then it should be possible to single out an object which is unknown though not unreal, by moving back from its shadow to the object itself...

*Calasetta, Sardinia, Italy, September 14<sup>th</sup>, 10am* **Adriano Accattino**

The light today is bright and still. A shadow stretches along the floor into the room, gathered as a bunch of flowers, of gathered flowers.

The shadow of a butterfly casts a flying shadow on the shadow of a leaf.

Now the shadow of a fly is drawn on my leg, but I can feel nothing, not even the shadow of nothing.

Who said that shadows are flat? If you observe them from above and from a distance, they may seem to be flat, but as soon as you descend among them, you find yourself walking among trees or even skyscrapers.

*Calasetta, Sardinia, Italy, September 15<sup>th</sup>, 6.3pm* **Adriano Accattino**

Shadows are a sign of a greater and more extensive shade: they part from it and merge into it; they quiver when they are out of it and keep still when they're back inside it. They belong to that great shade that is the night's daytime sister, a younger sister.

The shade is a subdued night that night projects where daylight is brighter; and shadows are the extremely mobile offshoots of that big shade. Daylight is motionless and shadows dilute such stillness into a thousand shapes. Daylight would suffocate in its statuary stillness and the shade surrounds it with dancing fringes: daylight loses its head amid so many maids. Then, little by little, the shade thickens and swallows what is left of daylight, revealing itself more and more as what it really is, a thick and obscure night. But an exactly corresponding fate is waiting for it not far away and daylight will send faint heralds

right there where you would say that the black of night is invincible. Also night, in fact, is soothed by lights that spread around, also night is confuted and mitigated, but this is another matter.

*Calasetta, Sardinia, Italy, September 16<sup>th</sup>, 8.30am* **Adriano Accattino**

This morning they are placid and are drawing a kind of mast pointing upward. They are sharp but pale, almost shy. My mood is just as relaxed, and sounds are muffled too: all worries are fading and clouds are fraying.

Nobody manages to stay within their own shadow: it is lower than us or follows us from behind, so that we find ourselves not inside our shadow, but between the light projecting it and the shadow itself.

You're the shadow of yourself! Though, which is the light that has worked such wonder? Where is the source that is so powerful to have joined myself to my own shadow? If I am my own shadow and this sticks to me, where is that light placed? It must have got close to the subject I am, maybe even getting inside myself: that's the only way my shadow can stick to me. Or maybe it meant I have become a mere shadow?

*Calasetta, Sardinia, Italy, September 17<sup>th</sup>, gone 6pm* **Adriano Accattino**

It is a fleeting life that of a shadow: it depends on too many factors that it cannot determine. It is the result of a great concurrence: it is what appears to us, but immediately some air moves and the shadow changes or suddenly a cloud covers the sun and it disappears. I don't know if some-

thing so reliant on something else, on so many other things, exists. Maybe our fate as men, which is upset by every event, compromised by every move and dissolved at last by a banal though unsuspected combination.

It is 7pm and the sky is grey. There aren't any traces of shadows any more, as they have all joined the objects that were casting them and each object is holding its own shadow tight. Hence, those units are recomposed which daylight will separate again tomorrow. The world on the balcony seems to be more stable without its shadows, more still and less unsteady, but also infinitely less lively.

*Rome, Italy, September 23rd*

**Lucianna Argentino**

Today a middle-aged man was shouting, "that's outrageous! just outrageous!" from a colleague's checkout counter, because the price of a product on his receipt did not correspond to the price displayed, and as I watched him I couldn't help wondering whether he used just as much vehemence against the many other shameful situations which infect our world and regarding which we, western people, are by no means innocent.

*Buenos Aires, Argentina, undated*

**Gladys Croatto**

Newspaper reading.

The dampness of the morning brings me the news of a fire in a shop in Asunción and the dead, hundreds of dead people. The owner stopped the customers from running away by forcing the guards to block the doors, thus preventing any-

body from leaving without paying.

I'm looking at the photograph of the pregnant woman-soldier England with her mother and her lawyers; I refuse to understand. I'm trying to examine her eyes and find a reason for the irrationality that led her to torture and, at the same time, to give birth to a baby; an atrocious act, according to Borges. I'm thinking of that baby's soul when it is born and drinks the milk of such madness.

One minister has claimed that "the wild popular dance creates violence". Hence, according to this wretch, the poor should speak the language of the rich. And, following the inexorable logics of his words, the innocents would be the culprits.

*Potenza Picena, Italy, September 24<sup>th</sup>*

**Maria Granati**

Very few are, at the moment, those events and news items that can arouse optimism, or at least enthusiasm, hope, joy, what I call *breath of life*, which is dream, excitement, vital energy, when your heart opens up, your imagination runs wild and you feel like saying: how wonderful life is! And the shadows of transience, precariousness, grief and death remain, but mysteriously add fascination to beauty and joy, a bit like Autumn, which, though announcing the end, celebrates life's magnificence with explosions of colours... fields, trees, butterflies, flowers and fruit...; it's a whirl!

We are now in for our share of anguish, grief, anxiety, fear of more and more dramatic news items, the showing of images

such as those of the Russian school, or those of the desperate blindfolded hostages, over whom black men without a face impend, men who are ready to be atrociously pitiless towards helpless creatures; and we can't even hear their screams...

As regards myself, a lucky lady who is safe and far from Iraq, Africa and other places of grief and death for human beings, one who at the moment must only come to terms and live with an aching foot, I am almost ashamed of my sorrow and anguish, I feel sad, useless, helpless and possibly even guilty for listening to music, reading philosophy books, and looking at a wonderful valley.

Though it doesn't take long to get out of the 'basement', as I call the frame of mind I have just described; I need an event, even a small one, to let my well-known liveliness and energy come to the surface again: last night, at dinner time, a cousin of mine turned up unexpectedly with a big pan full of fish he had just fished (he's an amateur angler, but a well-known professional cook) and which he quickly made into fish soup. Excellent! We wolfed it down together, he and the two of us, drinking a worthy wine with it. Obviously, I was moved. On reflection, this is not really such a small thing, as it made me think of that chapter of Saverio's book called "Keeping the city together with bread".

But today I have read an article about Jeru-

*Saverio Caruso, L'ospite luminoso. Sulla compassione, Il Grande-vetro-Jaca Book, Santa Croce sull'Arno, 2002, pp. 93-98.*

salem by Andrea Pinchera in “Venerdì”, the supplement of “la Repubblica”: it is about a strange Israeli architect, Hayut Man, who has planned - this news is going round the world - to re-build the temple of Jerusalem, which, as everybody knows, was destroyed twice many centuries ago; but this third temple would be a virtual one, it should come down from the sky as a display of light, that is, quoting the architect: “The temple will be a hologram, an image projected by powerful lasers into a transparent cube hanging from an airship, and will be silhouetted... above the dome of the rock, on the esplanade of the mosques”.

Now, those who know what the dome of the rock is - also called wrongly the mosque of Omar - with its radiant golden dome, and what it means for Moslems, Christians and the Jew (the temple rose there, the saint of all saints dwelled there, the stone of Abraham is kept there, Mohammed flew to heaven from there), can perceive the extent and hazard of this project, the extraordinary imagination - someone said madness - of this person, who is an architect and a cybernetics expert, torn between theology and technology, between the Talmud and geometry, between the World Game and the cabbala.

His project, directed towards peace and cohabitation among different people, envisages, in addition to the construction of the ‘virtual’ temple, also a huge ‘computer

game' where to exchange "roles, experiences, prayers". The temple can descend from the sky, or otherwise rise from the "world of role-play, with millions people busy constructing it on the web". To those who object to it saying it is an absurd idea (but someone, such as the Head Rabbi of Rome, considers it as "stimulating") he replies with an abundance of theological and technological issues, which are in my opinion much less weird than it would seem at first sight.

Besides a real possibility to carry out such a proposal and besides its timeliness, what I find extremely interesting, and what stirred my fantasy, my emotions, and my imagination is in fact this completely new way of facing a situation that has been practically damned for centuries, millenniums, a tangle, or an insoluble, bloody, violent jumble, in a place that is overloaded with symbols, with opposing fundamentalisms, a sacred place for almost the whole world, although in conflicting ways. A way of facing it, by aiming precisely at the symbols, at the simulacra, those that technology today makes possible... by working precisely on what is symbolic, and, what's more, involving millions interacting people, with surely different religious beliefs. After all, the use of the web is unifying the whole world, so why should Muslim believers refuse to repeat the experience of their prophet's ascent to heaven, which Hayut Man promises them from his web site?

*Milan, Italy, undated*

**Marosia Castaldi**

There is a church opposite the front door of my house. A Romanian woman called Lydia is sitting down near the church. She's not dressed like a beggar and she is not asking for anything. Not far away is a Senegalese man who has three children back home. His name is Amar. He has a small box of lighters and necklaces, but he is not asking for anything either. It's the people passing by who stop and speak to them. Then they put some coins into their hands.

There is a portico nearby and under the portico there is a bank with plate-glass windows that end with a marble step. On many occasions, in the morning, I would see a man arrive and open a suitcase, lay sheet after sheet of paper on the ground and, close to him, more sheets of paper arranged in small folders. He would sit down, take a card and put it on the ground next to the sheets of paper. "I sell poems", it said. Further away is a chubby man stock-still and silent. He has a card hanging around his neck with the words, "Help. I'm hungry".

*Q'landia check point, Palestine, September 25th* **Cris**

Afternoon. On the day of the Yom Kippur, a Jewish celebration. Everybody is strung up. Now and then the soldiers shut the gates, so that long queues of tired and exhausted people are formed. I am in the queue with them to go to Jerusalem. Suddenly, a man starts shouting and four soldiers push him towards the passage. For

a moment I am afraid. I fear they may get nervy and, who knows... shoot? I instinctively turn round to save my face, not knowing from what.

# An unknown warrior's confession

by Drazan Gunjaca

Here

notes from the present

Damned dreams. When everybody leaves you alone, that is when, through your own will-power, you manage after all to convince yourself you're worth more than memories, these catch up with you, usually between 2 and 3am, and so, completely stunned and totally lost, as well as damp with sweat, you toss and turn in your bed, which is more like a Spanish boot in the days of the Inquisition than a place where to rest from reality. You struggle in the jungles of your past and try to get out into the promising daylight. Which does not rise, though. And so life rolls down those sharp-edged pointed cliffs without you knowing whether they belong to dream or reality. Or whether neither to one or the other, so you become one of those so-called borderline cases, who are neither in heaven nor on earth, forgotten and despised by everybody. Nobody wants you in their world. Neither saints nor sinners. While the borders between their two worlds, if they exist, keep shifting up and down, always in the opposite direction to the one in which you are looking for them. I wonder if they would let me cross the border in case I

found it.

Never before have men been more at war, nor has being a warrior ever been harder. These are strange times. When you leave, they say good-bye to you with flowers and tears, and then they welcome you back with oaths and curses. Those same people. Those who sent you to fight war. Though, what did they expect from us sent to the front? Sometimes I think wars have become a fancy, a passing fashion encouraged by would-be stylists with no sense of nuances in the model they create. A shapeless model, designed hastily, soon tires everybody, it goes out of fashion, and everybody looks away from us who were only models, and walked along the frightful catwalk until the war *prêt-à-porter* lasted. However, these wise and omnipotent masters with an fixed-term contract have missed out on something all the same. Once it has been created, the model has a life of his own, independently from the will of his designers, who, infallible as they are by definition, are playing the role of the drunken bull in a china shop.

Anti-war protests. Yesterday I got involved in one by chance. When you are an invalid, you can't get out of the way in time, not even in front of some pacifists, let alone in front of those others. Before the war I couldn't understand them, and now I can't stand them. Why? Because all of them together do not hate war as much as I do. Why didn't they come to the front and protest? And again, before the war, half of them were in favour of war, and now that it is out of fashion, they are against it. Let's give credit to exceptions. Lost in time and in space just like me. Each of us in his own way and for his own reasons.

When will people understand that wars cannot

be fashions? Why do I hate war so much? Because there is not a tiny bit of chivalry left in it. Because it is a war of everybody against everybody. Because my friend was killed by a granny he was trying to rescue from her house on fire. She couldn't stand on her feet because of her old age, but she could still hold a gun in her hands. Age does not count if you need to hold a gun in your hands. Nor do gender, religion or the colour of skin matter, nothing matters. Just two hands and a gun. In my torn dreams I am not haunted by that gun, but by those shaky old hands. She killed him through fear. She would have killed anybody who had shown up at the door of her house on fire in that exact moment. Fear has no boundaries. That's war. That's what the above-mentioned 'stylists' cannot understand. They have never seen that granny. With a gun in her hands. Neither have those who, at the time, waved goodbye to us when we left. It is very hard to understand until you see it. And when you see it it's too late. Better not to understand war. Not see it laughing at you in your face and showing you what, and how easily, it is capable of doing with each of us. And then that damned longer-than-eternity moment: should I avenge my friend or not? The moment that comes back to me every night.

It is very early morning. At 6 there are no cafés open to have a coffee, except for one at a petrol station. There, leaning on the small counter, there are a couple of drunkards trying to drink their last glass, some young drug addicts shouting God-knows-what and a tired waitress watching the scene absentmindedly and with no interest. As soon as she sees me, she starts making a double coffee. A regular guest at this time. I can see the desire to go to sleep reflected in her eyes.

A new day has risen since yesterday. Already spent. Already gone. Couldn't care less: anything's better than night. Between 2 and 3am.

*Al Tuwani, Palestine, September 30th*

**Cris**

A tiny hamlet of 300 souls to the south of Hebron. All around it there's just desert and Israeli settlements. In the village there is the only school in the whole area, and all the Palestinian children from the nearby villages have to go there. Also the children from Tuba. Tuba is a place with no houses, people live in very ancient caves, because the Israeli army (who detain the whole of the administrative control over the region, the so-called 'C zone') have forbidden to build anything. Were it a house, a school, waterworks, a sewer, or an electricity post. In Tuba there are two families with goats. They have six children who walk ten kilometres to and back from school, along a dangerous track near the settlement's outpost (which is considered to be one of the most ideological and dangerous in the whole of the West Bank), where they have often been attacked with stones, frightened with dogs and other similar things. There would be another road, only 2 kilometres, but they are not allowed to use it: for military reasons, they say. In fact, the settlers are trying to make things difficult for people in order to force them to leave that land. For a month now we have been accompanying the children along the short road. Sometimes they block it and force us to take the long one, just below the chalets of the settlers, who take it as provocation. Yesterday two in our group, who are American, were attacked with sticks and chains. They are

*"Some of us pupils said to the terrorists: 'let us live, we're just children'; one of them replied that 'it would have been worse if we had grown up.'"*

both in hospital, one with a collapsed lung due to a very violent blow. I'm going to take the place of one of them, a woman. There's a great knot in my stomach as I walk down.

An evening in the village. We can't concentrate long on anything. Not very *non-violent* thoughts at the idea of an attack. I sleep very little and badly, and have bad dreams. As long as we are busy doing something we are quite well, but when we are not busy, our fear, tension and anxiousness all come out.

*Al Tuwani, Palestine, October 1st*

**Cris**

The children of Tuba. Their faces in the street. Their quick steps when we get near the settlement. The relief when we manage to get past it. The little songs. The biscuits we have brought and they eat as if they were gold.

*Milan, Italy, October 1<sup>st</sup>*

**Massimo Parizzi**

A stream, a sea, an ocean of words in the newspapers and, I guess, on television (I did not watch it), followed, in Italy, the release and return home (on September 28<sup>th</sup>) of 'Simona and Simona' or 'the two Simonas', as they are now called: Simona Pari and Simona Torretta, two volunteers of the NGO "A Bridge for", who had been kidnapped together with two of their Iraqi colleagues in Baghdad on September 7<sup>th</sup>. At first everybody loved them. Young, pretty, smiling: always in the newspapers. People even liked the fact that they were both called Simona. And they also liked the fact that in Baghdad they played ring-

a-ring-o'-roses with children... (they worked on school projects). Now that they are back, alive, annoyed comments are heard: right-wing as well as left-wing journalists and even readers are telling them off, reprimanding, lecturing, mocking. Love is over. Maybe, in order to keep deserving it, they should have died. Some, in fact, are asking them to remember that, although they are alive, other people kidnapped in Iraq are dead. And to always remember that they are survivors. Always! (Though, haven't we all survived something, at this point, some of us more easily than others?) In other words, they must pay with remorse. And in order to make it all even more stinging, some U.S. newspapers have added up the number of guns (aimed at killing U.S. soldiers who are posted, alive, to kill Iraqi terrorists, members of the resistance and passers-by) the kidnapers will be able to buy with the million dollars that ransomed them (but "we did not pay", the authorities claim). Others, Italian in this case, have added up the number of schools that could have been built in Iraq with that money, schools where the Barbaras, Marias, Giovannas could have worked... Not the Simonas. But what mostly annoyed people was what they said about their kidnapers: that they "respected" them (that is to say, they did not rape them), that they prayed all day long, that they kept asking if they needed anything, that upon releasing them, they gave them some biscuits for their journey. Is that true? No one is concerned. They are kidnapers, that is cutthroats. Is that true? No one is concerned. (Though if they thought, as it seems they did, that the two girls were spies of the enemy, shouldn't the kidnapping have been called a capture? And if they were wrong, because they

were not spies, isn't that a 'collateral damage'?) Then they were blamed for having said: no to terrorism, yes to Resistance; Italian forces away from Iraq; the Iraqi are suffering. And their being young (relatively young however: about thirty), their being fresh, innocent and enthusiastic has now become: don't meddle with things that are too big for you, don't say childish things, silly girls! Politics is a thing for grown-ups. Finally, nobody liked at all the fact that they thanked for their release the Italian Muslim Community (who had asked for it publicly), the Arab countries (ditto) and the Iraqi people (some members of which, the pupils' mothers and the pupils in the schools where they worked, had demonstrated in Baghdad to ask for their release). And that only too late (that is, a few hours later) they thanked the Italian government. Who, apparently, obtained their release also thanks to the work of its spies (as the two girls had been suspected of being by their kidnapers). In a word, ungrateful. But shouldn't the Italian government itself have apologised for having put them at risk? Anyhow, in a couple of days nobody will speak about them any more.

*Buenos Aires, Argentina, undated*

**Gladys Croxatto**

The newspapers say: a wave of crime is worrying politicians and frightening the people who live in the respectable quarters of the city. They are organizing demonstrations, they are praying, they are submitting petitions to the authorities. They are demanding death penalty, or at least that constitutional guarantees are cancelled. Surely it's their right, and they are acting in horrible

good faith, through innocent ignorance. However, they do not accept responsibility for the wounds of a society which, when least expected, came back with the consequences of the exchanging of values for a caricature, or even for the only God they acknowledge: money.

*Viareggio, Italy, October 5<sup>th</sup>*

**Letizia**

I am leaving for Palestine, where I am going to take part in the campaign for olive picking promoted by the International Solidarity Movement (ISM). According to the campaign, we will accompany the farmers to their olive groves, entry to which is obstructed by the Israeli army and by the settlers. Our privilege as 'internationals' offers us the advantage of being slightly more protected and so gives us the possibility, through our presence, of contributing to the reduction of violence which the Palestinian population is exposed to every day; moreover, being there as witnesses allows us to report the brutality of the occupation to public opinion. The ISM uses the method of non-violent direct action, and I believe this is very important, since it encourages the participation of people in forms of pacific resistance in order to oppose the Israeli occupation; a good alternative to the decision of blowing themselves up. This is the only effective and non-hypocritical way, I think, to condemn terrorism.

The situation in Palestine gets worse from day to day and every initiative gets riskier and riskier. I thought it over a lot before making my decision: I am not at all a heroin and I admit I am a bit afraid. But there's something urging me to go: knowing that there's something I can do,

*One month after the massacre in Beslan, the Russian General Prosecutor's Office has not yet established what the causes of the first explosion in the gym were. Also the exact number of victims is unknown, as well as the initial number of hostages, that of missing people and that of terrorists. Moreover, of the over 25 million dollars sent from all over the world, none have reached the families of victims and the survivors.*

that there's a card to play, and that it only depends on me whether I decide to move or stay where I am. I know it is very little, but I would regret it more if I stayed behind and just watched. If we don't even try to put a spoke in the wheel...

*Milan, Italy, October 5<sup>th</sup>*

**Massimo Parizzi**

Simona Pari and Simona Torretta have, at last, disappeared from the newspapers. Where Ayad Anwar Wali never appeared: he was an Italian-Iraqi entrepreneur kidnapped in Baghdad on 31<sup>st</sup> August and killed (he was accused of being a spy too) on 4<sup>th</sup> October. The newspapers are complaining that, in the newspapers, "not much was written" about him.

*Milan, Italy, October 7<sup>th</sup>*

**Germana Pisa**

I have seen the big building site spring up and grow from the balcony of my home: it is a huge area where black, white and yellow men move, some wearing a helmet, and some not, and from seven in the morning till five in the evening they all carry pipes and planks, push wheelbarrows, very few actually, go up and down small, average, big and huge cranes: there is one that is as high as a ten-floor building, yes, ten floors at least, and it dominates all the houses on either street that overlook the building site. Sometimes I am afraid that its load, up there, may crash over someone, or over a roof and cause a disaster. Then there are colourful scrapers and concrete mixers revolving incessantly. There will be a big hypermarket, but that's not sure, nothing is sure; there's

*Terrorist attacks in three Egyptian tourist resorts on the Red Sea packed with Israeli holiday-makers on the occasion of the Jewish festivity of Sukkoth. The most serious was at the Hilton Hotel in Taba. Over 50 dead people.*

some kind of conspiracy of silence and of diversion over what will really come out of the frenzied hands of all these busy men, and maybe they don't know what they're working on either. The owner of what will spring up is a very important person and a friend of the premier, and owns the most important chain of supermarkets. Before this, there were lots of one- or two-floor buildings, belonging to what they call industrial archaeology, somehow elegant low houses, Art Nouveau I would call them, where precision instruments were made, even precision instruments that served the war. It was the summer of two years ago, when the small Art Nouveau blocks of flats started dying and I was a witness. First, some men completely covered in protective clothing came to decontaminate the place by removing all asbestos, and that's how we found out we had cohabited with some kilos or quintals of asbestos. Then some monstrous tongs came, like the huge beak of a prehistoric animal, which started to literally sink their teeth into parts of roof cornice; I was somehow hypnotized and filmed everything. It was horrifying to see those jaws get near the concrete neck, sniff it for a few seconds and then bite into parts of the house which crumbled at once like biscuits. There was something epic about it. When the tongs did not manage to get the better of the concrete straightaway, they all shook for a few seconds with a great clang and then crashed down with all their might. At that point the neck of the house gave way and with it all the body below gradually collapsed to the ground in a huge cloud of dust. Before that, tens of derelicts of all races had found refuge inside the biggest block: they used to sneak in when evening came or at dead of night by climb-

ing over a low wall and then slipping under a loose iron net with just enough room to get through, and the passage became larger every night. But, besides those people, the block also gave shelter to all species of daytime and nocturnal birds and at dawn there always was an indescribable concert. In winter clandestine people were safe in there; no one had ever bothered them until about three years ago, when a group of lads belonging to a known political party and headed by a character whom I unfortunately have seen grow up, at night climbed onto the roof and started beating hard and shouting “get out, we’ll drive you out”; but that act of bravado was stigmatized by everyone, although this is a right-wing district.

*Jerusalem, October 8<sup>th</sup>*

**Letizia**

Although they made a bit of fuss, I managed to enter Israel: that was the first obstacle to overcome. For a while, I was left with the nasty feeling I had had when having to lie and pretend with the woman sitting next to me during the whole flight: I felt like a complete heel as I couldn’t communicate, or explain my point of view and listen to hers, in fact I had to carefully avoid any slightly more profound and personal topic in order to avoid being suspected or identified. We would really need to speak to these people. I felt like a clandestine person, one who is coming to your place to do what she should not. It is not like telling lies before an officer.

Now I am travelling to Beit Sahur, near Bethlehem, for the two days’ training required in order to take part in the ISM initiative: they will in-

form us regarding the situation, the non-violent direct action method, the possible risks, etc.

*Nablus, Palestine, October 11<sup>th</sup>*

**Letizia**

I am in Nablus, where I will stay for a week perhaps: here the ISM co-operates with sixteen villages on olive picking. We are about twenty activists; some of us are new to this, while some have been here for a long time, even for several months, and so they have more experience of the difficult situations in which we are operating. From Nablus the various groups of five to six people have to provide cover for those villages where olive picking is more dangerous (the campaign also takes place in other areas of the West Bank, such as Jenin, Tulkarem, etc). Risks exist mainly when the olive groves are near the Israeli settlements. For instance, today we were near the village of Salem, where the groves are separated from the village by a 'settlers road', that is a road that can only be used by the settlers: the most hazardous olive groves are those that can be seen from the road, since they can be picked on by both the soldiers and the settlers. In the former case one can and has to negotiate: the 'internationals' present try to convince the soldiers to let them carry on with the picking. Instead, when you are faced with the settlers, very aggressive religious fanatics who are convinced that that's their land and no one else has a right to be there, the only thing you can try to do is to withdraw quietly trying to take away the day's yield. Today there were no problems, but the group that was there yesterday had to deal with a settler-soldier: luckily it

*In Russia, the "Gazeta" has announced the electoral reform wanted by Putin for municipalities: mayors will no longer be elected by the people, but appointed by the president. In September Putin had already announced a change in the Constitution, according to which the presidents of regions and self-governing republics will no longer be elected by the people, but appointed by the president.*

ended happily. Hence, our function here is most of all that of protecting the Palestinian farmers so that they can carry out their work unharmed, even though helping them pick the olives, as we have done today, can help, as it speeds the process up. Today some Israeli activists came to help us, an important presence to help us speak to the settlers too.

*Nablus, Palestine, October 12<sup>th</sup>*

**Letizia**

Today we have had a very animated day and everything has gone wrong. We went to pick olives in the same place as yesterday's, in two groups. After a while, we saw some soldiers come, and some of us went towards them to prevent them from reaching another family who was picking olives across the road, in a theoretically non-forbidden area. There was a negotiation, but at the end of it four of us were arrested and we are still waiting for them to be released. The worst thing was that the soldiers reached that family, beat the father and arrested the son. Two of us ran down and tried to block the jeep with the young man under arrest, but they had to give up as other jeeps arrived and they couldn't get back to the olive grove. They could not see the three of us, so we stayed on and picked olives with other families in a less visible area. After lunch, however, we saw two more soldiers come and we negotiated in order to pick up everything and leave. We were in a non-authorized area, because olives cannot be picked at less than three hundred metres from the road. As we were leaving, escorted by the soldiers and with all the Palestinians, another angrier soldier ar-

rived, but everything seemed to be going well. Instead, when we got to the jeep, other soldiers stopped us, other jeeps turned up with eight soldiers and arrested three young Palestinians. We were not able to stop them: moreover, when you find yourself in front of armed soldiers, a mechanism of obedience to authority goes off. The difference between us and the Palestinians is that, if arrested, they have a good chance of getting beaten and kept in prison for a few days or even months, while the 'internationals' at the most risk being expelled from the country. Those who have been here longer and have had more experience of the various situations that may occur are able to judge them better and carry out more effective actions. Yesterday morning, for example, there was some trouble in the camp of Balata and two houses were occupied by soldiers; some 'internationals' intervened and started negotiating: unfortunately there were seven wounded people, but they were able to bring help to a young man and take him to an ambulance which was not allowed to reach him. In the end, the soldiers went away and left the houses. And to think that this could be a wonderful place.

*Nablus, Palestine, October 13<sup>th</sup>*

**Letizia**

Today things have gone definitely better. First of all, last night our four mates were released, with the prohibition for them to stay in Nablus, but the possibility of moving to the south part of the West Bank. This morning we learnt that luckily the Palestinians were released too. As our group has become a bit smaller and, above all, since many of us have no experience at all,

we have decided that for the time being, in order to avoid further risks, we'd better form a single group, and divide up our duties, so that, in case of need, each one knows exactly how to operate (besides myself, with a few language problems, four Japanese who hardly speak any English at all are going to be with us for a couple of days). Also today we went back to Salem, and we helped a family who has an olive grove right below the road, in a slightly less risky position in theory. We had been there for a few hours when a jeep stopped and two soldiers got out: the three people appointed to negotiations went to meet them, while the rest of us stayed with the Palestinians, in order to avoid any contact between them and the soldiers, and, possibly, prevent them from being arrested. They told us to leave the place in ten minutes as it was a military area, being it near the road, but the farmers wanted to dispose of at least another hour: moreover, Ramadan starts tomorrow. So we were trying to gain a bit of time, when other soldiers turned up, including a very aggressive one we had already seen yesterday; they tugged and threw to the ground many of us, but we managed to block them and stop them from reaching the Palestinians. They also kicked and scattered all the yield, and ordered us not to take any of it away. We managed to save part of it from their fury and we went back later to rescue another part (it was like playing cowboys and Indians had the situation not been tragic).

*Helsinki, Finland, October 13<sup>th</sup>*

**Hanna Snellman**

Last Friday I got some news from Eastern Fin-

Finland. School news, and sad ones. In the class of some friends of ours' son, who is eleven years old, there's a boy with problems who apparently bullies his classmates. And the parents of the other pupils have written a letter to the Headmaster asking him to take steps, so that their children can study. I don't like that at all. In my opinion it is the sign of a new form of Liberalism: looking after one's own life and that of one's own children, and just that.

*al Tuwani, Palestine, October 14<sup>th</sup>*

**Logan**

The Army have undertaken to protect the children [see: Cris from Al Tuwani, September 30<sup>th</sup>] for only fifteen days, but with a written document, which has never happened before. However, yesterday, when a father and his children were walking along the road, the usual masked men with dogs came out of the settlers' woods and frightened the children and their father to death. The 'guarding' Army did not lift a finger, and so that father has decided not to send his children to school for the time being.

The other day I got a lot of sun. Too much. Two hours without moving in the desert because the soldiers had blocked us on our way home. After having found an alternative solution, at last I got home and lay on the mattress on the floor, with a blinding headache and almost no strength left. I woke up around midday. It was time to go and pick up the children from school and escort them back home. In the morning the soldiers had blocked us the way, so we would have to take the longer road. On foot. With five children

aged between five and twelve. One and a half hour's walk under the sun, at 12.30 pm, the hottest time of the day. To recover my strength before getting to the school I bought some biscuits. When I got there the children were already waiting for us outside the school. I opened the packet of biscuits and forced their shyness by offering them some. As if it were gold. They looked at the biscuit in their hands with a mixture of happiness and embarrassment, and looked at me almost as if asking for permission to eat it. Then, with as bright a smile as the sun shining on this land, they ate happily.

*Milan, Italy, undated*

**Marosia Castaldi**

Driving on the ring road towards Baggio, I stopped at a traffic light. A fair-haired boy approached. I lowered the window. I slipped a few coins into his hand. As I started to go, I noticed that he didn't have another hand. "They cut it off", I thought, "that way people take pity and give him money".

In the metro in Milan, a young boy and a young girl entered the Cadorna station. The boy was playing the accordion. His sister was following him with a plastic cup for the coins. It was about ten in the evening and the children must have been between eight and ten years old. I thought about my daughters who, at ten o'clock, are asleep in their beds, like I once did.

*Buenos Aires, Argentina, October 16<sup>th</sup>*

**Christian Grecco**

I look at my watch. It's six o'clock in the morn-

ing. Outside the window I can hear the raging wind, the nervous rapping of its uneasiness. I look at my watch again. Again I realize I'm awake and the wind is no longer just moving air, but a smell of wet concrete, of coming rain. After a while, the rain has become water that covers everything, everything except the day to come. The afternoon's still far away, but not its magic. So I set out to wait for it. For a little longer than two weeks I've known that a march has been organized for today. I drink a few glasses of *mate* and think about the Saturdays. I'm thinking that in all my short life of popular gatherings, very few have taken place on a Saturday. I think that we already fight enough from Monday to Friday, from Friday to Sunday, from one life to another, to march on a Saturday too. I also think that our fight has not born the fruits we're looking for yet, that there's still a long way to go, that we still have a long way to go. I drink another glass of *mate* and think that this afternoon, this Saturday, I'll be there, marching and shouting with my comrades.

The gathering is at four o'clock in the afternoon. We're going to march from the Congreso de la Nación to Plaza de Mayo. That is, people are going to march from the swamp of vultures and corrupt deputies that the Honorable Congreso de la Nación is, up to the symbol of resistance and popular remembrance that Plaza de Mayo is. Because the instructions are clear: we're going to march up to the Plaza, not to the Government building, which is only a few metres away. Each demonstrator in this march knows that: he or she is not going to enter that Palace of repressive puppets, of masks that speak outside and spit inside. That's why today's last steps are go-

ing to rest on those that every Thursday, for their whole lives, the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo rest there. The steps of the people are going to stop there.

It's four o'clock in the afternoon, it's still Saturday and there are no clouds left in the sky. The morning has driven the rain away, as well as the restlessness of the wind. People are gathering in the centre of the city of Buenos Aires. All at once, the corners become crowded with people. Trains are transporting the popular quarters from all possible cardinal points. The underground carries flags, voices, smiles, people who are fighting.

I haven't got to Plaza de los Dos Congresos yet, and I'm already bumping into the sellers of newspapers belonging to groups and political parties, into young people responsible for security, into unemployed people movements, into handouts that make you forget we're walking on concrete. I'm getting closer and the echoes of loudspeakers, of megaphones, of human voices, settle into my ears, into my eyes' pupils.

From high above, from the skies that this very people has created, personal posters, banners, and flags say it all: "Freedom for political prisoners".

The march has started. I've already met several comrades, and several friends. I've already bought newspapers, I've already discussed with some, I've already hugged many others. Feet can be heard: they advance and shake time in a Buenos Aires which is not very used to living on a Saturday. It is then that, while walking, I choose, among the many associations, among the many fighting people, my marching companions.

And it is because I like them, because I know them, because I can smile with them, that I stay with the UTP. And it is also because this Unión de Trabajadores Piqueteros, like everybody else today, is marching, gathering and walking.

And if these streets have filled with feet walking along them, it is because unfortunately good reasons are not lacking. Those who may doubt about the ferociousness of capitalist repression, should pass by and have a look. Here in Argentina there's a great number of people who have stood trial for political reasons. I put my memory into motion, and I find an incredible variety of such people. All the victims of persecution by this by no means fair justice have a common denominator: they exhibit the dignity of those who have not given in to living on their knees.

There are those *piqueteros* from Salta, Buenos Aires, Neuquén, Jujuy and from almost all the provinces in the country who have been collecting trials for having blocked streets, demanded food, work, life. There are also worker managers harassed by judges who have been seduced by trade-union bureaucrats and employers. In the countryside there are farmers who have got together to try and get back to the land despite the dictatorship of banks and local police officers. There are native people who have resisted the expulsion from their land against latifundists's bulldozers. There are also street vendors, prostitutes, transsexuals and other workers who are continuously hit by the harshness of social exclusion.

In other words, we are all here. And there's solidarity among us. So we're marching for them, with them. And we're marching with ourselves who, at the same time, haven't been able to es-

*The piqueteros are unemployed workers (but not only) who carry out picketing and motorway blocks as a form of fighting. They act in organized groups who also carry out productive, social and sanitary projects.*

cape the prison of capitalism. And so we're walking and breaking the air, shouting, handing down to time our voice, our chant: "Freedom, freedom for prisoners to fight again".

We keep on marching, and I soon realize something: the UTP is dancing. I can see my comrades, the young members of the UTP, starting to invent colours and shake the world's torpor. At that point, I stop walking. And I do so, because I want to smile, because I want to start learning again that one can march and fight cheerfully, with a smile near one's lips, near one's heart.

My eyes are there: staring at those legs flying in the air. At those arms meeting each other and in love. At those bodies that are dividing into two, into three, into thousands. The rhythms of the drums penetrate the gathering, they cause something magic and contagious to happen: the young ones in the UTP are marching and dancing.

Few blocks are left to get to the Plaza de Mayo. The sky of flags is protecting our shoulders. For the first time during the whole march I've felt the need to mop my sweat. That's when I realize something: the gathering has moved the sun away. Now it is the UTP band that is illuminating the marchers' feet.

*Nablus, Palestine, October 16<sup>th</sup>*

**Letizia**

Olive picking in Salem is practically over. The day before yesterday picking was not carried out in risky areas, and only those who really wanted stayed and helped the farmers. I stayed too, even if this is not the purpose of the campaign: I did not have much else to do and I like manual work, even though picking olives here is a bit more tir-

ing than in Italy, because it is very hot and the trees are covered in dust and thorns.

Besides yesterday was the first day of Ramadan, and there was nobody in the fields: non-believers as us are allowed to eat and drink, but for a sense of timing and respect, possibly without being seen, and by no means in the street. Islam has taken on very strongly both in Nablus and Balata, and you can see virtually no bareheaded woman around, while I cannot remember having noticed any such a thing twelve years ago. On public transport men and women sit separately and so on.

At a quarter past five in the afternoon, when fasting ends, everybody runs home and it's a great celebration: yesterday we were guests of the family that is hosting us and they had prepared all sorts of delicious dishes.

Today we picked olives only for half the day, in an area of Salem near the Israeli settlement: the farmers had permission and besides it's Saturday, so we could hope that the settlers, who are integralist Jews, did not move, but we were not sure. Everything went well though.

I almost forgot to write that the other evening we all went to the Turkish baths, first the men and then the women: a nice experience!

*Nablus, Palestine, October 17<sup>th</sup>*

**Letizia**

Today has been a resting day. We are waiting for those who did the training at the weekend to come and enlarge the size of the group; only tomorrow we are going olive picking in Beit Furik, another village near Nablus. I had therefore planned with Mohammed, one of our two Pales-

*The Italian Carabinieri stationed in Nassiriya, Iraq, have decided to use also images of the riots that erupted in 2001 in Genoa during the G8 to train Iraqi riot police.*

tinian co-ordinators, to go and visit the historical and archaeological sites of Nablus that have been destroyed during this Intifada by the Israeli army and take some photos. But in Palestine one cannot plan anything: when he came to pick me up in the house where I am hosted, there had been rumours that there were soldiers in town. The other members of our group came too and we went to see what was happening. We located the three jeeps that had stopped for a while at one of the entrances to Nablus, nobody knows whether to search a house or what, but they were moving towards the refugee camp of Balata. So we took a taxi and reached them. They stopped at the entrance to the camp, then they moved to go away. From various parts children were throwing stones and our mates were shouting to the soldiers to go away, because they were only children. A stone hit one of the armoured vehicles, which stopped along the road and from its back a firearm stuck out. Suddenly I heard a shot: a ten/twelve-year-old boy had moved towards the soldiers, but without throwing any stones, and had been shot in the stomach. An ambulance turned up at once and took him away, while the jeep was moving away. Afterwards we heard from the hospital that luckily the boy was not seriously injured: the bullet was one of those covered in rubber; which however can be lethal, depending on where they reach you.

Now we are waiting for our new mates to come from Jerusalem (it took us more than three hours, changing four or five vehicles and covering long stretches on foot or running when we got near the settlers roads: Nablus is blocked by a check point and one has to get round it and

make a detour to enter the town, trying to avoid being found out). Tomorrow we will sleep in Beit Furik because there is a check point there too and so it takes very long to get there from here.

*Camisano Vicentino, Italy, October 19<sup>th</sup>*

**Mariela De Marchi**

Today we went to buy shoes for our daughter who has just turned one. The shopkeeper asked his son to call his mother because there were other people too. The woman came at once, very vivacious and smiling. She started talking to the baby, then she took us to the shoe department saying “already one, time flies”, and got out all the little models. In the meanwhile, she was explaining to us how they were made. As we were making up our minds, she briefly told us about her latest holidays in Egypt, on the beach though, for her son, “it is mainly for them that we go on holiday, don’t we?”. The best thing is that she was talking to us, but she addressed our baby with that silly voice that grown-ups use when talking to other people’s babies, with a slight schizoid aftertaste. I don’t know what else she said, by that time her voice had become a rigmarole and it only stopped when we left the shop. It was like coming out of a disco. That place is always full of surprises for us. Last time we were there the man told us that the baby was really beautiful and that when she is twelve we will have to put a pill in her milk and coffee. At first we did not understand, or maybe we could not take what he was saying seriously. So he explained that nowadays kids are terrible, that one of his twelve-year-old

*Yesterday Russian president Vladimir Putin has expressed himself in favour of the victory of George W. Bush at the American elections in November.*

nephews “has already done it”. We attempted a smile on our puzzled faces and he concluded by saying that maybe it was a bit too early.

*Milan, Italy, undated*

**Marosia Castaldi**

Once, for Christmas, we were putting Baby Jesus in the crèche with my younger daughter. She was just about to happily lay it down when she looked at me strangely and said, “Mamma, how is that such a small baby, so really small, ends up on a cross when he grows up?”

On another occasion, she told me, “Home is you”. Yet another time, while I was smoking on the covered landing outside the door, she followed me and said with a merry expression, “You should quit smoking or you’ll get cancer”.

Many years have gone by, but I will never forget these words of a child. Who knows, perhaps I too once said incredible things. I don’t know now. I really don’t believe that adults speak the same language children do.

*Milan, Italy, October 20<sup>th</sup>*

**Andrea Arrighi**

I have been teaching for several years in a night high school. The purpose of this kind of school is to help workers who wish to obtain a high school degree and take the final state exam through a three years program of studies. People who take this kind of classes have an interest in social work. Most of them are already social workers in therapeutic facilities, or work privately as nurses who assist elderly persons from an Italian family. Many of the students are from non-European countries.

At the beginning of the semester, I met a Peru-

*Two twelve-year-old girls who refused to take off their Islamic veil in class were expelled from a middle school in Mulhouse, Alsace, yesterday. The law that bans the veil in schools has been in force since 2<sup>nd</sup> September.*

vian student whom I knew from the previous academic year. She told me that none of the Peruvian students had passed the final exam. She acted as if this was something expected, almost impossible to avoid.

I remembered that since February Peruvian students had stopped coming to classes. When I asked the reason, they answered that they had all received a letter from the Italian Ministry of public education, or from other governmental institutions, advising them that they did not have the right to take the final state exam, because there were no reciprocity agreements between the Italian government and the Peruvian government.

Many professors became involved and started collecting money to hire a lawyer to investigate the legitimacy of the ban from the state exam. The Peruvian students were very angry also with the school. They thought it was totally wrong that the government should have told them only in their final year that they could not legally take the final exam.

Peruvian students are generally very motivated and hardworking. At the beginning they are a bit shy, but later on they show a great desire to learn as much as possible about the different subjects and about Italian life in general.

After receiving the letter banning them from the state exam, they became diffident. At a one point, they asked some professor to accompany them to another high school, outside Milan, where it seemed possible to evade the ban. They claimed that it made a big difference if one went with an Italian professor, rather than as an unaccompanied 'Peruvian'. It turned out that this was indeed the case and that in certain schools there was no ban, although these schools were much

more expensive.

The majority of the Peruvian students, in anger and frustration, stopped coming. But at the beginning of May the ban was lifted. Apparently, the ban was just the result of a very strict interpretation by some local politician of a law for foreign students in Italy. Indeed, the problem arose only in Lombardy, and not in all the Italian regions.

In the end the Peruvian students came back to school and tried to study as much as possible, but time to have a serious preparation was running out. Some decided not to take the exam, others simply failed the exam, as told in the beginning.

*Milan, Italy, October 20<sup>th</sup>*

**Massimo Parizzi**

What makes you strong? Money, status and knowledge. Only one of them, two or all three. Money is the greatest strength. It provides necessities, surplus, and it protects. Status makes others bow. Knowledge allows you to hold your head high. You are weak because of lack of money, status and knowledge. All three of them, together. Strength and weakness, therefore, have different weights. They are not equal and opposite, specular. There is inequality. Weakness is heavier: it makes you sink. At the very least, strength keeps you afloat. To be strong you only need good luck. Mostly social, that is being born into a strong family, and geosocial, that is being born into a strong country. And to remain strong you only need average abilities. To be weak you only need bad luck: a weak family, a weak country. And to remain weak only average abilities.

There is equality here: “equal parts among unequal”. To turn from being strong into being weak a rare bad luck or rare ineptitudes are required. To turn from being weak into being strong a rare good luck (at a lottery) or rare abilities: physical strength and good health, marked intelligence, willpower, a capacity to renounce and sacrifice oneself. Or shrewdness, no scruples, bravery and indifference to danger (for a robbery).

# Power and weakness

by Franco Toscani

Here

notes from the present

In the history of mankind and of Western philosophical thought itself, power and weakness have generally been regarded merely as opposites. Every element of weakness, frailty, impotence has often been eliminated from what is powerful. Conversely, hardly ever have those elements of strength, power and energy, without which even speaking of life has no sense, been recognized in weakness.

We have learnt too little from Spinoza, who never confused power with violence, oppression, abuse of power, arrogance and domination. According to Spinoza, *power* is a positive term, which above all represents the need of all living beings to exist and assure self-preservation, to express their own abilities and energies and to liberate their whole potential.

At the beginning of Book V of his *Metaphysics*, Aristotle questions himself about, and insists on, the meaning of 'first principle' (*arché*). By 'first principle' he means, among other things, both the best starting-point to achieve the positive outcome of something, and the origin of a thing, that does not belong to the thing itself. We, too, may ask ourselves: what is the 'first principle' (*arché*) for us? Perhaps it means coming to terms with our roots. But where are our roots to be found (as well as those of our parents)? In which particular soil are they thrust - so deeply that we risk their escaping us at every turn?

In the world, we may attempt to reply. The root of man is not to be found in man himself, as young Marx still thought metaphysically (in the sense of humanistic metaphysics). Here, therefore, being-in-the-world (*in-der-Welt-sein*) is not indeed just a fortunate philosophical formula created by a thinker (Heidegger) or by a philosophical current.

We are rooted in that immense Whole ruled by the principle of interrelation among all beings, things and events. Not only does the concept of a boundless Whole lead us to fully accept human frailty and fallibility, but it also renders us disposed to humour, self-mockery, and irony. It is an unpretentious concept that reconciles us with our own essence.

From this point of view, there is a whole line of thought which began with Aristotle and reached the Renaissance, then continued with Bruno, Spinoza, the Enlightenment, Feuerbach and Nietzsche, which we may usefully think back to.

Each person's power has its own limits in the constitutive weakness and frailty that afflict and concern all living beings. However, our original

weakness should not be emphasized: on the contrary, we must insist on the fact that it contains in itself elements of strength and power that must be especially enhanced.

So far, violence, myth and the apologia of strength have played an extremely significant rôle in human history. It is now a question of re-discovering our weakness, together with a new, possible relationship between weakness and strength.

We will never go deeply enough into the constitutive frailty, precariousness and weakness of all human beings and living creatures; however, it is only by getting to the root of our existential condition - we are transient beings *par excellence*, in that we are more aware than all other beings of the inevitability of our death - that we will be able to re-discover the grounds for a healthy strength, neither ephemeral nor fallacious. It is not in fact - at least in my opinion - a question of giving the word 'strength' a univocally negative connotation, or of giving the word 'weakness' a univocally positive connotation.

For instance, strength and power/potentiality (*dynamis*) in Aristotle's philosophy have a positive meaning when referring to the capacity that individuals have of being themselves, of adhering to and achieving their own nature, of fulfilling their actuality (*entelecheia*).

Beyond all ill-fated dreams and cases of real omnipotence delirium, of which we have already widely experienced the catastrophic effects on the history of mankind, *power* in its most authentic and radical meaning, means the *power-to-be*, the range of finite possibilities we are offered within the space-time boundaries of the world. This truth of the finite, within which all powers are inscribed, is the only theory/practice of truth

we are interested in and want to associate with. From this point of view, we must re-discover and enhance that strength and power that do not involve disregard and destruction of one's own and other people's lives.

Therefore, the attempt to single out the concrete reasons for, and the substantial aspects of strength, weakness and the relationship between them seems to me to be very fruitful.

Of course, nowadays things are not taking a turn for the better. Terrorisms, fundamentalisms, tribal and ethnic conflicts, wars and 'preventive war' doctrines, neoliberalist ideologies concerning the *homo oeconomicus* and technological feticisms, efficientism and functionalism, all insist in various ways on the supremacy of muscular culture, on the ideology of supremacy and strength, on the exaggerated cult and cynical exercise of power, on competition, and even on the need for abuse of power. At such levels the myth of strength has always caused, is causing and will always cause damage and disasters.

The fact of denying, disguising, underrating the constitutive, mainly biological (but not only), weakness and frailty in living beings, always leads to disasters, and turns the world into "this little plot of ground that makes us so ferocious". The fact of re-discovering weakness and frailty, on the contrary, leads us to re-consider and enhance, for instance, the tenderness of bodies, and to appreciate the richness and *multiversum* of life in all its dimensions. Our real strength, not the ephemeral and fallacious sort, is always connected with the awareness of our own limits, with knowing when to stop. Therefore, it is not by ignoring limits and bounds, but by accepting and confronting them that we may be able to es-

tablish what true strength is.

The following apologue, which sounds rather oriental, can be found among the *sayings of the desert fathers*: “The cedars said to the reeds: How is it that you, though frail and weak, do not break during the storm, while our branches, though so big, are snapped and we are sometimes uprooted? The reeds replied: when the storm comes and the wind blows, we bend here and there, that’s why we are not broken, but you resist the wind and that’s why you are in danger”.

Those who, by putting forward all the *hybris* they are capable of, want to oppose the power of fate, can do nothing but give in, succumb. On the contrary, those who are aware of their own weakness and frailty, and do not underrate the dangers and risks of life, will be able to find a way towards, and the prerequisites for, their own authentic strength.

As everybody knows, in contemporary philosophy, in the wake of Nietzsche and Heidegger, we often talk about finiteness, frailty, weakness, and the like. Although we speak widely about them, yet I do not believe we really consider finiteness thoroughly. On the contrary, it is usually dealt with superficially, it is rarely thought of radically, and we very often find (or better, we think we find) excuses, consolations, ways out of it. We discuss finiteness, but we can hardly see its real meaning, its value, its weight, its abyss. It is a thought that conveys a sense of dizziness, and human beings generally prefer to keep away from such dread thoughts.

Yet, as Michel de Montaigne pointed out in his work *Of Experience* (Chapter XIII, Book III of his *Essais*), “sit we upon the highest throne of the World, yet sit we upon our owne taile”.

It is no accident that for many centuries now the

Detti editi ed inediti dei Padri del deserto, S. Chilà e L. Cremaschi eds., *Comunità di Bose, Qiqajon, Magnano, 2002.*

wisdom and knowledge of the 'obscure' Heraclitus have with great clarity warned us against the human *hybris*, both excess and arrogance, which is "more dangerous than fire".

In a Sermon about 2 *Cor* 12,9 (in which, among other things, Paul writes: "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me") belonging to his London period, back in the 30s, Dietrich Bonhoeffer claims, thus also recovering the logics of the *Sermon from the Mount*, that "strength is imperfection and weakness is perfection".

One who lives following the cult and myth of strength will never be able to understand such assertions. Life's perfection/completeness, the possibility of an *anthropos theleios* (the 'finished' or 'perfect' man) is given, in fact, only within weakness and originating from it. Here ethics has a double movement within itself, on the one hand as *eros*, an erotic drive towards what is perfect, high, the 'idea' and what is finished and complete, and on the other hand as *caritas*, a downwards drive towards inferiority and imperfection.

In Psalm 90 we can read: "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom". By acquiring an awareness of our limits and a sense of our bounds we may reach *wisdom of the heart* (infinitely greater than that of all those vulture-philosophers and alleged learned men in the world), *pietas*, sympathy for all living beings, *philia*, real opening towards others, authentic communication, total ability to accept others and live together.

From this point of view, today's humanity, which is still living according to the myth of strength - above all economical, technological, political and military, which are often tightly in-

tertwinced with one another - seems to be widely imperfect. The day when we learn to laugh soundly about the thoughtless and wicked use of our strength seems to be far away and unlikely to come.

It is common knowledge that the lion, the symbol of strength, the 'king of the forest', comes to a terrible end. In the best of circumstances, he dies of hunger when he is old, alone and with no strength left. However, the 'king of the forest' might even be eaten up by hyenas when he is still alive. Even the fate of man, the alleged lord and master of the world, is to be devoured by the earth.

After Sept. 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001, this is what, drawing inspiration from Eastern wisdom, Tiziano Terzani replied to Oriana Fallaci, who had written a long article - later adapted into the pamphlet *Rage and the Pride* - on the "Corriere della Sera", one of the major Italian newspapers: "Look at a blade of grass blowing in the wind and feel like it. You will get over your rage too".

That's what we ought to reply to all the angry people that are contaminating the world.

# Mirror

by Stefano Guglielmin

*Strong*

Strong once were fortresses of war, now only holes and shelter for snakes. And strong are the

Here

notes from the present

mountains that hid soldiers, messengers and poachers, their breath steady though steep. That sweet breath that this morning I meet on the paths of Pasubio: strong its respect for the dead.

Strong is the memory that wins the night, when all cows seem black; memory born to be reborn forgetting the useless, clinging on to the useful for us: keep in mind the Holocausts, the winters and mister Hyde, but also the light that nails the obvious and predictable. Strong that light that uncovers the naked king, and strong is this sun, although September is near end.

Strong is the friend that opens doors and sense, the desperate friend that asks to speak while he dies on TV. Strong is his call towards life, although every sequence stiffens his desire to watch and everywhere outside it rains. Strong is the meeting of bodies when close together they breathe and maybe, again, climb the mountain where shepherds once earned their bread.

Strong is the bread that feeds rabbits and makes them hop with joy, bread that is memory of arms, earth and rain, bread that in wheat finds its power. Strong is the breastfeeding mother that strongly embraces her future, strong is the man that will bend and the tree that expands like nets or plinth, tree that grabs the sky and the earth, and steadily lives through centuries.

Strong is the Pilgrim Fathers' season, strong is poetry of grass and its rotten leaf. Strong are the blues that bleed the desire to stay in this squared America, of Ground Zeros and Protestant ethics that fire up vocation and always score a bullseye. Strong is the France that awards Moore and fears the end of their contracts. Strong is petrol when it warms up the soul, soul that must

be made like it otherwise this would make no sense.

And then there's the strong wind, the hurricane of human name that exhausts America and enchants TVs; while everywhere here is a fermentation of secret police and terrorists, that have extradition and trials with many strong things to say as if yelling were an action that could sweep away the order of competence, shutting the scapegoat's mouth that languishes on a cross, but with a stub as a tongue.

Strong is the West, ground gone downhill 'til this tropical Fall, where I receive strange messages of friends tired of standing this muggy October, that unbelievably can't bend the junctures of the gagged hostages we find among the reruns of spots on TV. Strong is the sickness for the things I read, for the empty sentences I find. Strong is the irony of the word that hurts and hides, leaving hunger on the streets and opening up dwelling homes.

Strong is the hard leather of boots, the password of gates, the smell of crematories of just a little time ago, and strong are Bosnia's ditches, lazily spied on by empty eyed satellites. Strong is who forgot this all and still builds sties for stow-aways, stealing the benches they sleep on and also lots of space for love.

Strong rhymes with wrong, sometimes, and doesn't know it.

### *Weak*

Weak are the forts on the frontline, now all holes and shelter for moles. And weak are the mountains that hardly hide bones of soldiers,

messengers and poachers that were unsteady running on steep, so fell. The same vertigo that creeps me tonight in the gorge, the same fear of dying.

Weak is the memory that's lost during the day, where it drowns trying to follow the whole of situations; memory that hooks on to every smallest thing and that preserves it: name of the hostage, trip, mistake or remorse, the useless for us: keeping badly in mind the Holocausts, the frost and the suffering angel in mister Hyde, but also the darkness that frees beauty and enchantment. Weak is the light that deforms power and weak is the dusk hour for the desire it brings me to leave.

Weak is the friend that closes forever, a hoping friend that refuses to speak and doing so lives from inertia. Weak is his vital whistle, the underground screeching, although good weather pokes the video in the eyes of the survivors and dizzies the strength of their appearance. Weak is the splitting of bodies when close together they fight, making unlove go down to where old divers once earned their bread.

Weak is the bread when it feels nothing but eyes; bread that brings you to forget where, how and who, fake bread that in artifice finds its law. Weak is the celibate father, that chooses the mirror as future, weak is the manager woman and the rootless tree, fragile as fashion or twig, woman and tree that couldn't care less of sky and earth, and so in a hurry unwind speedy seconds.

Weak is the current season, weak is Republican poetry and its rotten war. Weak is the little march beating in tankers' earmuffs, turning on their desire to kill, weak is stubborn America - of Ground Zeros and devastating aesthetics - that gets rid

of churches, houses and beauty, although always scoring a bullseye. Weak is the France that awards Moore, playing with the English fire; weak is petrol when it freezes bodies that are not made like it and, this way, explain winter.

And then there's the weak breeze, that TVs blow up just for the news, right here, in the western nest, that brings mess on the streets like last Genova, with trials and nightsticks, with nothing else to say, if not screamed, so that voice can make itself action that torments the order of thoughts, opening the scapegoat's mouth while languishing on a cross, but with no tongue.

Weak is the East, ground that becomes city and collapses, in this fall with no prospective, in which I send sincere messages of love to tired friends, with my hernia gagged in words, weak so not to hurt or hide, that now I frequent like streets or dwelling homes, with the same hunger, same horror.

Weak is the paper of migrant suitcases, the dialect, the smell of bread on the table, and weak are the shelters everywhere, visited to be acknowledged only by tourists, in peace. Weak is who forgot this all and still digs trenches to strengthen borders, who puts up sirens to stop from sleeping and leaves the love for the others.

Weak, sometimes, rhymes with strong and doesn't know it.

*Nablus, Palestine, October 20<sup>th</sup>*

**Letizia**

We have spent the last two days in Beit Furik, a village just outside Nablus. Part of the olive groves is in the shelter of a 'settlers road', a road which is for the settlers only, from which

*"Some of us pupils said to the terrorists: let us live, we're just children"; one of them replied that "it would have been worse if*

it is separated by a net: immediately above it there is the Israeli settlement. On the first day two jeeps were parked all the time outside the entry gate to the road, but everything went well. In the evening we learnt that the Israeli pacifists instead, who were helping the Palestinian farmers in a slightly higher area than ours, had had some problems with the settlers. Part of the group, including myself, stayed in the village to sleep. Nothing special, except for a casual meeting with some women who, in the evening, as we were walking along the road, called us and let us into a courtyard where about forty women of all ages were sitting, with some children, who welcomed us with lots of curiosity and warmth: they were there mourning an old woman who had died two days before. Although we could not communicate much, except with one who spoke a bit of English, they conveyed to us some lovely emotions.

On the following day everything went well too: for part of the day we worked together with the Israeli pacifists belonging to "Rabbis for Human Rights", who challenge the occupation above all from the point of view of the Torah and because of the decay it produces within society. One of them told me how difficult it is to explain to one's own children that they must not hate the Palestinians, that there is good and bad on both sides, and that most people are good (somewhat the same words Noah Salameh told us she used with his children, in Bethlehem, during the occupation with tanks). They are two societies that are shaken and terrified by the acts of terrorism they are exposed to, always under the pressure and fear of seeing their children being killed, wounded or, at best, arrested. There even was a positive note: a jeep

*we had grown up."*

stopped and called someone to talk. In this case the soldier was polite, he asked if we were having problems with the settlers and left wishing us a nice day's work.

Instead today, my last day picking olives, the situation has changed completely. We went to Deir Al Hattab, another village where we have been asked to intervene: although they had permission today, the farmers could not reach the olive groves near the settlement and the barracks right below. We accompanied them and the soldiers turned up at once: at first they cheerly said good morning to us in Arabic. But today the target were not so much the farmers as the 'internationals': actually they said that the farmers could stay but we had to leave as soon as possible (should one trust them?). Then, however, they saw Mohammed, one of our co-ordinators of the ISM, they asked him for his identity card, and when they found out he came from the refugee camp of Balata they confiscated him his card and wanted to take him away with them. At that point there was a real 'non-violent direct action' from our side. We stood between him and the soldiers, covering him with our bodies: the soldiers were furious and very violent, they started pulling us away even very brutally, they caught some of us by their necks or hair, they pulled noses and ears, and kept kicking us and hitting us with their guns. We tried all ways to calm them down, until, I don't know how, they gave Mohammed back his identity card and ordered us to leave, saying they would have come back to check, while the farmers could stay on. We got away with some scratches and a few bruises.

What struck me most was that they were all very young but extremely violent; we had al-

ready seen some of them in the previous days. And one of the difficulties we had was that we had to protect our Palestinian mate, or try to prevent them from brutalizing the others, without touching the soldiers though to avoid being charged with and arrested for obstruction of a public official. Later we were joined by some of the Israeli activists, who had collected some evidence to send to the press. In the evening they informed us that, astonishingly, in some newspapers news had appeared that the army had been attacked by international pacifists... They asked us to gather a bit of photos in order to re-establish the truth and hold the soldiers to their responsibilities, and that's what we are trying to do now. It is not by accident that the ones who were hit most savagely were those who were trying to protect their cameras and cine cameras: in particular Gregor, a Swedish young man; they almost strangled him to get his camera, until the strap broke, but after a scuffle we managed to snatch the camera out of their hands and throw it away. Tomorrow I am moving to Jerusalem, and on Friday I will try to go to Ramallah.

*Milan, Italy, undated*

**Marosia Castaldi**

My feet must be warm, otherwise I am unable to do anything. If I return home with frozen feet, I put my shoes on the heater. When they are warm, I put them back on my feet and I sit down to write. I prop them up on a stool I bought for next to nothing at a street market. It's in between two rows of drawers in the recess under the desk I bought for next to nothing at another street market. I "feel" my feet a lot. I also love painted feet: the feet of the figures of Piera della France-

*21<sup>st</sup> October. The WWF Living Planet Report 2004 is presented at the United Nations seat in Geneva. Man, it denounces, uses up on average 20% more resources than the Earth is able to reproduce.*

sca, for example, or those of Mantegna's Dead Christ, which repose in paintings hanging in the Brera Academy. Our past and our lives are both written in our feet. Our mind takes us in one direction but our feet go their own way. They go to the market. They enter schools and shops. They move, even if we are not aware of it. Feet have a life of their own. At times, I believe they are more important than the mind. Mine are normal, rather slender. My daughter has very large feet. I had a mother and now I have a daughter taller than I am and with very large and beautiful feet. The beauty of feet is incomparable. I've pins and needles in my feet now. They are tired. They want the weight of this sitting body of mine back. They want to walk.

*Jerusalem, October 22<sup>nd</sup>*

**Letizia**

Yesterday I came back to Jerusalem. Getting out of Nablus is much easier than entering it, because you can go through the check point and they do not make any fuss, while upon entering 'internationals' are often rejected, so one has to go the longest way round, partly walking and running, to avoid being caught near the 'settlers roads'. Even the transfers from one village to the other have been like that these days. Besides belief and determination, to come here you also need good physical training in order to be able to climb up and down the cliffs in the burning sun.

The other day, in Nablus, Qusai took us to visit the old town, and showed us the destruction caused by the Israeli army during the first invasion in March-April 2002: ancient houses, a famous soap factory (an activity which Nablus

*The Democratic candidate to the White House, John Kerry, has a photo taken of himself in a mimetic suit and with a double-barrelled gun in his hand while he is hunting wild geese in Ohio. Commentators say that this is in order to secure the votes of weapon fanatics, hunters and in general male voters.*

used to be famous for), and the Suq were all destroyed or damaged in order to crush resistance, which was very strong here, and seize the guerrillas. During one of those incursions a house was demolished by a bulldozer without allowing the inhabitants to evacuate it: result, eight dead.

Yesterday afternoon I went to see the 'Rabbis for Human Rights' in their headquarters, and asked them to tell me something about their activity, which consists in defending the human rights of the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories, of the Palestinians of 1948 (those who stayed in Israel and have Israeli citizenship, but are strongly discriminated), and of those marginalised brackets of Israeli society; all of it inspired and supported by the Israelite Law, the Torah.

I managed to see Dyala H. for a few minutes; I have been in touch with her since she came to see us in Viareggio two years ago: she seemed to me to be very discouraged and told me how everybody is very depressed for the present situation and how, due to this, and to desperation and lack of future prospects, the behaviour of kids has become more and more violent in the past few years. On the other hand, is easily perceived if one just looks at some sections of the wall that is being built along the road to Ramallah, in Al Ram, very close to Jerusalem, which is still nothing if compared to the wall already built around Qalqilya: it is almost completely surrounded and the whole population is shut inside an open-cast prison. To get an idea of the situation I went to Abu Dis, an outside quarter of Jerusalem which has been completely cut out by the nine-metre-high wall. It's sheer madness, I almost cried: for instance cars can no longer

reach the city, they go on along the wall and go back towards Jerusalem. In some points, where the wall has not been finished and it is about three metres high, people do their utmost to climb over it in order to go to school or to work. And when it is finished?

Today in Ramallah I met Khaled Q., a lawyer of 'Defence for Children International-Palestine', who takes care of the kids who are shut up in Israeli prisons. Also on this ground the situation, full of abuse and violations of human rights, in particular those of childhood, has got even worse: there are more minors in prison and they are sentenced more and more stiffly (one, who had been sentenced to twenty-five years imprisonment, was given a life sentence on appeal). Also the number of girls in prison has risen, and now there are fourteen. In most cases they are arrested and sentenced even without having really committed any offence, but just because suspected of one or for having claimed they wanted to commit one. But then again the judgment is made by a military court and not by a civil court.

Tomorrow I am leaving this promised (to whom?) land. Upon leaving, the feeling we have had all these days is even stronger: the 'internationals' such as myself can even share the life conditions of the Palestinian people for some time, but there is a profound difference between us and them: we can move freely and decide when to leave, they can't.

# Omnicracy

by Roberto Taioli

Here

notes from the present

Aldo Capitini, an unjustly forgotten thinker, who is nevertheless still extremely prolific as a guiding point of reference in the problematic investigation of today's ordeals and tragedies, speaks about *omnicracy*. Although he is very distant from us in time, he is close to our present, because the problem of 'the power of all' is still unresolved. The main ideologies of the 20<sup>th</sup> century measured themselves against it with unsatisfactory results, and some of them even distorted that term, thus achieving 'the power of the few', the power of economic and bureaucratic elites that sanctioned the dramatic separation between the masses and power. The whole of Aldo Capitini's philosophical and political thought originates from the warning that every construction must begin from the bottom, by gathering together the voices, consciences and yearnings of the multitudes. Like few others, Capitini was an author capable of listening to the deep feelings of men's lives, and who fought against all forms of power which is established and formally legitimated, but with no real ramification in the inter-subjective fabric of society. His was an attempt to disclose the violence that was introjected and somehow even regulated by institutions. A Christian "without a church", as he was fond of describing himself, he experienced religion as a continual transformation and conver-

sion of man and society, and was a strenuous and rigorous enemy of the deceptions and insidious revivals of the practice of the *instrumentum regni*. He was a theorist of peace and non-violence, of non-collaboration; the truth and ethical essence of his lesson remains intact. Every society, every community, every group must establish itself as a shared power, acting from the bottom, not directed by others. Otherwise, power is violence and injustice, even when it maintains the rules of democracy. Nowadays, the society/institutions question is coming up again in that version of so-called federalism which Italian society is moving towards. Today Capitini would see in the current formulation of federalism a revival and multiplication, in different forms, of that bureaucratic Moloch, which would only be 'closer to us'. Not a real transformation, but a re-balancing of weights and measures, with the deception of making us believe there has been a thorough change. In *Il potere di tutti* ("The Power of All") Capitini writes: "The plan to achieve a society that really belongs to us all is yet to be accomplished. There are still very few things that we all have freely, apart from life, air, sunshine, a natural body, a mind to think, and the will power to make decisions. There exists civil society, which is a very important historical creation, though still too imperfect. Within such society there is man's exploitation of other men, authoritarianism of man over man; some hands own huge riches, while others, in spite of working all day, cannot bring home (and what home, in some cases!) enough money; some have enormous power in commanding, in imposing their will upon others even by force, while many others have to beg and obey to simply save their

*On Sept. 13<sup>th</sup>, in Italy, the reform wanted by the right centre majority in Parliament to modify 45 Articles of the Constitution towards federalism has gone back to the Chamber of Deputies for another examination.*

*La Nuova Italia, Firenze 1969, pp. 151-152.*

lives. Yet, those who are exploited and oppressed are an immense majority, if compared to those who detain political and economical power. Few people make decisions concerning peace and war, the welfare and hardships of all. Yet, who controls the extremely powerful few? Only power lobbies; the multitude is not present". "Therefore, in order to change our whole society, it is necessary to change our methods, and let society start from 'the bottom' rather than from the top. We must start developing a form of control from the bottom, which will have to grow more and more." A huge problem that cannot however be eluded, and has to be faced by gradually experimenting new forms of and levels of participation. Of course, federalism as a mere shift of the axis of power that leaves its logics unchanged cannot be the answer to the claim for *omnicracy* put in by Capitini. Yet such a claim remains as a *regulating* concept (as in Kant), a *telos* to which to commit ourselves and for which we should live, though not idly waiting. Omnicracy requires a great participation effort, a great movement of ideas, forces and energies. Society cannot but grow from the bottom. As Enzo Paci reminds us in a note concerning Carlo Cattaneo, the *federative self* "is in the first person, just as direct-representation democracy is in the first person. This way, the whole of the one-multiplicity problem becomes the problem of the inter-subjective and dialectic constitution when the subjects place themselves in a servant-master relationship, and in all other relationships". Today, considering omnicracy again also means devising a new idea for governing the world that can be interpreted not only in the wake of globalization and of its logics of supremacy. We

Enzo Paci, *Federalismo, in Il senso delle parole, Bompiani, Milano 1987, p. 268.*

may have to consider *other* forms of more complete and harmonious power, so that in the end we will be forced to feel that this very word is alien and inadequate.

# Michael Moore: soul orthopaedics

by Andrea Inglese

Here

notes from the present

What definition could we give of Michael Moore's work? Situationist journalism? De-constructionist documentary? Truth-cinema? Or, more simply, counter information? Is *Fahrenheit 9/11* a recording of reality or one of the forms of its manifestation?

With *Roger and me* and *Bowling for Columbine*, Moore had already shown that the purpose of his work is not only to provide more articulate and richer information regarding a specific reality. This is just one part of it. Then there is the really *Brechtian* activity, which aims at breaking every familiarity with the materials our life of usual television viewers feeds itself on. Every piece of coded information is re-considered and re-interpreted starting from something that the information itself concealed or removed. By re-tracing the information process in the opposite direction, it is no longer the journalistic datum that casts light over reality, but is rather the complexity of reality that casts light on the scarcity of the journalistic datum, thus also denouncing its ideological origin. A falsification of

reality and the fact of distancing oneself from such falsification are an integral part of the image Moore builds around a real event.

It is therefore a question of form that Moore, with the awareness of an artist, poses himself. It is not the original content of information itself that can dissipate the confusion that lies in our minds of war observers. An investigation is necessary, though not sufficient. Some good investigation journalism would run the risk of becoming part of the general context just as a good performance stands next to a middling or poor performance. It is journalism itself that is being fought, not only because it is the domain of propaganda, but because it is the domain of abstraction and tautology. The harmfulness of a lot of press and TV information, in fact, lies in retrieving the same script in every latitude, by virtue of a powerful reduction to the script itself. Whatever the portion of reality, the tiny square of world may be on which the eye of the camera rests, the result is shaped by the ideological frame which precedes and rules its acquisition. Counter information that is limited to providing all the information that is usually censored or does not interest the great media does not get to the core of the problem. It is the *a priori* ideological categories, the dominant scripts, that constitute the basis of the problem, in that they are able to be applied to any isolated datum, by re-integrating it into their own system.

The popular refrains about the complexity of our world only remind us how economical it is, in terms of knowledge, to simplify the overwhelming number of data which we come into contact with. To examine the great contexts of economic and military actions supported or

promoted by our governments is an onerous task, which would be added to our more urgent one of carrying out our private strategies for welfare and success, unless we are simply forced to fight every day's misery. Hence, our intelligence is mainly devoted to proximity, by delegating the media to the task of understanding what is further away from us. By delegating journalists to devise a script regarding our macrocosm, and ourselves to a tireless surveillance over the microcosm, thus leaving the relationships between the two universes in a kind of mist. Once they have sunk into the public, the scripts of the media act as schemes for grouping and interpreting data. They represent mental automatisms that preserve us from thinking too much over things that are a bit too complex.

Now, as spectators, whether discerning or not, whether aware or not, none of us is really immune to ideological scripts. We absorb them like the air we breathe in. The politician as well as the journalist and the tobacconist offer them to us. And defending ourselves by means of counter scripts does not mean gaining a deeper understanding of reality. After all, what Moore offers us is a kind of *orthopaedics of the soul*, precious exercises of de-conditioning from the wide-spread ideological patterns, a form of cognitive therapy. What he is concerned about is the message (its completeness) as well as its reception (communicative efficiency). The result he obtains this way renders useless a great number of contemporary works of art, which strive to obtain the same results inside fashionable galleries or inside the most famous museums. If many artists still feel the genuine need to give the world back its depth, especially where it is conspicuous by

*On this subject a book by  
Dominique Baqué has been*

its absence, every day reduced to current affairs and entertainment, it is above all a certain kind of documentary that, in recent years, has proved capable of doing so. Surely Moore is not the only one to work in this direction.

published in France, *Pour un nouvel art politique. De l'art contemporain au documentaire*, Flammarion, Paris 2004.

In my opinion, another documentary that deserves mentioning is *Le monde selon Bush*, produced in France in 2004. The director is an American, William Karel, with the collaboration of a French journalist, Eric Laurent, the author of a book on the Bush dynasty. It is once again about the war in Iraq: behind-the-scene stories, political and ideological premises, the role of propaganda, etc. But, in fact, both Karel and Moore talk about the United States, about the relationship between the rulers and those who are ruled, about the interests of the ones in relation to the interests of the others. The war in Iraq is nothing but the mirror of the strength relation between the will of a wealthy and powerful minority and a helpless majority. The facts shown by Karel essentially agree with those presented by Moore. But Karel has the merit of enlarging the investigation, by following more at length the tangle of interests of the Bush family and of the men who revolve around it, and he highlights aspects that are sometimes left out in *Fahrenheit 9/11*. His documentary is a canonical one: its protagonists are exclusively political analysts, CIA officers, historians, editors of important newspapers, politicians, company managers, government consultants, etc. It presents various points of view, though with the purpose of pointing out their contradictions and secretiveness. The montage hides no surprises, and besides close-ups of the people interviewed, one cannot see much else. There are obvious

strengths here if compared with Moore. Nevertheless, the latter, by working on the *form* of the documentary and by breaking some fixed schemes of that genre, obtains consequences both from the point of view of contents and, above all, from the point of view of their reception.

It is worth underlining this attention to *form* in a genre which usually shuns it. In particular, it is worth underlining it and remembering that Moore makes an openly *political* use of documentaries. What is interesting is this very play, this attempt to keep together more levels at the same time: the documentary genre, the breaking of formal models, and the political purpose that rules the whole operation. I have found a similar tension in Italy, in recent times, only in Marco Paolini's theatre productions (in particular, I am thinking about the performances regarding the Vajont and Ustica disasters). What is the reason for such an interest in form in a genre that draws its strength and validity from operating according to real data? *Fahrenheit 9/11*'s point of reference is the war promoted and carried out by the Bush government against Iraq. The mass of unrelated information that the media offer us brings to the conclusion that this war, as maybe every other war, is foolish: "It is an absurd war..." we end up saying sooner or later. Against this giving in to a *removal of sense*, Moore works towards a *restoration of sense*. More precisely, he is committed to show the hyper-determined character of the war. Not only is it not absurd, not only is it not devoid of reasons and causes, but such reasons and causes are numerous and layered, and involve the president of the United States as well as the unemployed worker from Flint, obviously according to different degrees

*In 1963 a landslide tumbled down on the dam over the Vajont torrent, in North-East Italy, causing a wave that knocked down several towns and killed over two thousand people.*  
*In the sky of Ustica, in 1980, an airliner was brought down in circumstances which have not been made clear yet (but probably during a military action carried out by NATO or USA airplanes). 81 passengers died.*

of responsibility.

Moore's interpretation is neither mono-casual nor dogmatic. The fact that Bush is unmasked as 'a dangerous idiot' is only one of the sides to the matter, although a very symptomatic one. How is it possible that such a feeble figure of president was able to drag his own country into a disastrous war in the Middle East? The oil multinational corporations, his father's contacts, his brother's favours and the manipulation power of an experienced clan of money-makers all together are not sufficient to answer this question. Moore does not insist, but in one sentence he holds the 'democrats' to their responsibilities: they have, 'incomprehensibly', let things go. Not only, the media, from the least to the most independent ones, have widely contributed to the spreading of lies. And, lastly, the poverty conditions of a not small bracket of the United States' population have made it possible for the war to become a source of income. In all this, the citizens' ignorance plays a very important role. But such ignorance is that of people who read newspapers and watch TV every day. It is a kind of ignorance that is saturated with incomplete or disorganized information. Another protagonist of the documentary is this world within the world that journalistic narration represents, with its figures of speech, its oxymora, its contradictory and psychologically noxious exhortations. By receiving, among other statements, also those of the extremely young soldiers, both the agreeable ones and the disgusted ones, of the mother who lost her son in the war, of the young proletarians from Flint, Moore reminds us that the *actors* in politics are not only to be found in the highest and privileged sections of society,

among those who sit in the ministries, in the army offices or in the weapon factories. Nor are they only the influential witnesses of such politics, i.e. university analysts or important journalists. But *everybody* is. All those who, since they have a right to vote, also have a right to understand what the rulers representing them will decide for their future. This seems easy, but in the United States, the richest and most powerful democracy in the Western world, it is not so. And maybe it is not easy either here, in our shrewd Europe.

*Cambridge, Massachusetts, November 1<sup>st</sup>*

**Svetlana Broz**

Without claiming to stand on any other side, at times I feel as Stefan Zweig must have probably felt, when, looking at the sick atmosphere of an intellectual Europe completely unaware of Hitler's insane potential, published *The World of Yesterday* [University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, Neb.-London 1964]. I am luckier than Zweig in many respects, and in particular for the fact that, unlike him, running away from Nazi Europe, I know where to go upon leaving these places. In 1943 in the USA, just when he was at the peak of his fame, after having been through bookshops with their shop windows full of his books, Zweig went back to his apartment and killed himself!

*"Some of us pupils said to the terrorists: let us live, we're just children"; one of them replied that "it would have been worse if we had grown up."*

No, I cannot say that the intellectuals I have met this last month spent moving around the United States are completely unaware of the dangers that the possible re-election of Bush represents. To be honest, I am not sure everything is thoroughly clear to me, either, since throughout history

*26<sup>th</sup> October. The Knesset, the Israeli Parliament, approves Sharon's plan for the withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and from a small part of the West Bank.*

such figures have proved that a normal brain does not have vivid enough imagination to predict everything. Yet, in the past four years, as I have followed, though irregularly and superficially, the politics and the public scene of this vast country, I seem to have been able to see, at least to some extent, what Americans are unable to perceive. In practical terms, I am thinking of the huge consequences of that evil which the intellectuals in this country, with very few exceptions, do not seem to perceive the significance of.

I have heard that one intelligent person has already left the country as a form of protest and dissent. George Soros has published an article in the "New York Times" in which he says that, if George W. Bush wins the elections, he will retire to a monastery. All those I have managed to hear have had a similar reaction, such as: "If he wins, it will be terrible. I am ashamed of being American". And that's what the expression of their fears and shame comes to. With the addition of Iraq, of course, as the focus of the greatest disgrace. Why then be surprised if in the past month I have had the impression of watching a movie shot backwards all the time?

In mid-November 2000, after a lecture at Harvard, as I was walking through Cambridge Common, a park in the centre of Cambridge, I saw white slips of paper that students had planted like little flags in the grass of the flowerbeds. It didn't take me long to understand their message: each slip of paper represented one vote among those that, in those days, had decided the outcome of the presidential elections. It was a clear sign of Harvard students' civil dissent when faced with results according to which George W. Bush had won, in a way which was strange,

at the very least.

Eleven days after September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001, thousands flags of various sizes were waiting for me at Logan Airport in Boston. Nothing different from the decorations found along the streets of the city and in the surroundings. I asked the students if the owner of the house where I had seen seven American flags, from a huge one to a tiny one, believed he was an American seven times over. They laughed and tried to explain to me that for them it was just some kind of homogenization after the tragedy. “Whom are you getting together against? There are three hundred million of you, against a single man, Osama bin Laden!” I asked, referring to the Yugoslav experience, where everything started on a superficial level just with flags. Each grabbed his own and tried to scratch the other one’s eyes out with it, until they realized there were much more sophisticated weapons to carry on scratching each other’s eyes out. They put aside the flags, took up weapons and the wars started in earnest. Beware of such scenes, there are many of them, always the same, in the course of history. That’s what I said.

One month after September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001, I lectured at a university in Boston on how to face crime, whether by means of vengeance, justice, or understanding. I tried to report the experience of the tragedies in the still recent war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where those who had had to endure and suffer most did not seek vengeance, but only and exclusively justice. In reply to a question that many people put to themselves in those days in the United States, “why has this happened to us, we who are the best country in the world, a country that only wants to do good

*29<sup>th</sup> October. The Italian Health Ministry allocates one million Euros to test foodstuffs from those countries, such as Kosovo and Bosnia, where depleted uranium weapons were used.*

to others?”, I suggested that students should try to get out of the narrow boundaries of their country and to attempt to look at it with other people’s eyes. A philosophy professor replied: “How can we get out of the USA and look at ourselves with other people’s eyes if our President has been outside the United States only once in his life, when he visited Mexico with his father then the President? How can we get out of the United States and try to look at ourselves with other people’s eyes if half our senators do not even have a passport?”.

On October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2001, in a town in the United States, I heard on the radio in a small café that the USA had started bombing Afghanistan. I told a professor of International Relations who was badly upset as he listened to the news that I thought this was the beginning of the Third World War. Of course, he was shocked and disappointed too, but I did not get the impression that he was taking my words seriously. Perhaps he thought they were only exaggerations made by a cardiologist who had just come from the fresh ‘Balkan wars’. Three months later the same professor wrote to me that he always started his lectures with the same sentence: “Three months ago I heard from a woman doctor, a cardiologist from Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina, that with the bombing of Afghanistan the Third World War was starting. At the time I thought she was exaggerating, instead today I believe she was right and I was wrong”.

On October 9<sup>th</sup>, 2001, after a lecture at a college in Pennsylvania, where a fragment written by a victim of Srebrenica who had survived the genocide had been read, a person in the audience, who couldn’t have been more than thirty-

*31<sup>st</sup> October. Today with the first ballot in the presidential elections in Ukraine the so-called ‘orange revolution’ has starts: a confrontation between the Government leader, Viktor Yanukovich, backed by Putin and with a large following in the North-East mining regions of the country, and Viktor Yushenko, leader of the opposition, backed by the United States and the European Union and by a crowd of over one million people that fill up the squares in Kiev. Campaigning has been marked by arrests, threats, bashings, newspapers closing down, searches, and by an attempt to poison Yushenko. Elections take place among vote riggings - millions false votes - and end up with the victory of Yanukovich in the ballot on 21<sup>st</sup> November. But the Supreme Court will invalidate the result and the ballot will*

five, stood up and said: "I survived Srebrenica. I walked for three months in the woods and the mountains to be able to reach Tuzla. From there I went to Germany. If I could ever have felt a happy man again in my life, this happened when I got the visa to enter the USA, the country of rights and civil freedom. I was fine here until two days ago, when I saw the horrified look on the face of a man who had asked for my name and heard my reply: Muhamed". Twice in six years, and on two different continents, first in Europe and then in America, the man speaking had only and solely been a victim of the name he bore. Hence I asked students and professors: "Tell me, what's the difference between our Bushes and your Miloševic today?"

*be repeated on 26<sup>th</sup> December, with the victory of Yushenko.*

On October 7<sup>th</sup> 2002, on the first anniversary of the beginning of the bombing in Afghanistan, I held a lecture at a university in Ohio. During the debate that followed, in reply to a student who had asked how it had been possible for the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina to start, since before then people of different ethnic groups had lived at peace and in harmony, I answered that the politicians who had planned the wars had made a wicked use of the media, thus turning them into extremely powerful weapons. And with them they had kept on threatening and bullying those belonging to the various national ethnic groups in order to accumulate a critical amount of fear with which to justify the wars they then sparked off. I concluded my reply with the question: "Tell me, what's the difference between our Bushes and your Miloševic today?". The History professor who acted as a moderator reacted at once: "You have thirty seconds to answer this question". Then, without allowing the students

even those scanty thirty seconds, he went on: “We can consider this question to be rhetorical. Now, everybody please thank Dr. Broz for her lecture...”. The over one hundred people, among students and professors, whom he hadn’t allowed to reply, joined him in his applause. When the applause faded away, I said: “We may allow the History professor to consider the question put here today to be rhetorical, since he knows that in fifty years’ time his colleagues will judge first his and then also your decisions and reactions, but I’m afraid that none of you present in this room has the moral right to consider this question rhetorical. You are responsible to the future, not only on behalf of your own country, but also in the name of the whole world. My question really was a plea for you to learn from other people’s mistakes and to not allow those same manipulations to happen again”. At dinner with the other professors after the lecture, the History professor was sitting opposite me. I couldn’t help saying to him: “Are you not ashamed of yourself?”. “Yes, you’re right, I’m ashamed of myself, but I was hungry and wanted to cut the debate short” was his answer. “Hundreds of thousands of people in my country had to suffer with hunger because of people like you” I replied, furious.

A few days later, before a lecture in another town in Ohio, the chairwoman of an NGO called me to explain that the day before their name had been used unfairly in a campaign of speeches by President Bush by spreading the false news that it was her organization who had invited him to the region and host his speech. Of course, she added quickly, her organization was against the war in Iraq, in favour of which Bush, instead,

was busy giving lots of agitated speeches all over the United States. When I suggested they should immediately call a press conference in which to explain both sides, that is, their aversion to the war as well as the manipulation with their name, she was dismayed and bewildered and asked me: "Do you have a job for me in Bosnia and Herzegovina?". "Yes," I replied at once "come to Sarajevo. There's more than 40% unemployed people there, but they are all free to tell the truth".

Only half an hour later, a journalist from a local radio station interrupted me during an interview while I was comparing the manipulation of the media and the masses carried out by Bush and by Milošević: "No, no, my dear lady, we cannot go that far!". "Excuse me, can you tell me where I am?" I asked, and added straightaway: "Not even in Bosnia and Herzegovina am I told such things!".

In October 2004, I was on the overpass of a highway in Connecticut, and I saw the banners of those families who were lucky enough to welcome their sons and daughters back from the war in Iraq. In New Haven I drove past a cemetery where they were burying a veteran. The coffin, surrounded by a lot of people, was wrapped in the American flag. I asked whether he was a veteran of the Second World War, of the Vietnam war, or of that in Iraq.

Just a few days later, at dawn, I was in Seattle and was travelling to the airport in a van with six men and a woman. They were all soldiers of the American Army going back to Iraq. I felt sick as I listened to their loud comments and their intention to get back to vote for Bush. That morning, it was just dawn (but it was as if it

weren't dawn at all), at the airport I saw a young man, barely twenty, wearing a camouflage combat suit for the desert, accompanied by a young woman carrying a sleeping baby. I couldn't wait to get to the boarding gate, where I bumped into the co-pilot wearing a tie with the colours of the American flag. I said in a loud voice "mashallah" and, when I saw the pilot wearing the same outfit, I let slip an "inshallah". "What else does one have to say to be arrested, just to avoid being flown by these two?" I asked the lady sitting next to me. No one arrested me. Either I hadn't spoken in a loud enough voice or, more likely, they do not recognize the expression; anyway, those two flew me all the way to Oakland in an unexceptional way.

In twenty-four hours it will already be clear enough which of the two Americas will have the better of the other: if the one that in November 2000 started civil resistance by planting white slips of paper in the flowerbeds of parks, the one that for four years has been trying hard to understand what has been going on, the one that is fighting so that the greatest number of 'passive observers' of life take part in the elections, precisely so that, suddenly awoken from an existential rather than a winter lethargy, they themselves will take the side of America against the killings and the deaths, or whether the one to which the death or killing of others seems to correspond to their own life, at least until those killings and deaths do not turn up at their front door.

America, tomorrow only God can help you, but if you accept the manipulation of words made by Bush, who says he is the representative of

God, I'm afraid that not even God will be  
enough for the rest of the world.

*Houston, Texas, undated*

**Laura Zanetti**

***Santa stop here***

Santa, the infant Jesus  
well, whatever your name is  
as long as  
it contains the vowels of love  
para este año, TE RUEGO  
parate in Houston  
stop  
in the ghetto with no history of Bexley Ave.  
a stone throw's away from the Traffic Food  
enter (even if not hungry)  
the Country Breacheas and watch  
the 10 100 1,000 bodies ravaged  
not by food  
but by the alienation that leads only  
to food  
and  
if you don't fear being infected by it  
(didn't you want to try yourself out as a man?)  
I suggest a little Glimbe, yes a slight glimmer  
a fried crescentina  
in the manner of New Orleans city  
it will be like being down  
in the brothels of Louisiana. You will find  
Billy again  
his vaginal voice  
and  
on exhausted fields, in tormented  
woods  
don't miss the Airport George Bush, the old one

signed Wind of Change  
there's always  
a small Mexican family mourning  
if you have endured  
above all if you have avoided  
the Baptist Church  
the Episcopal Church  
the Ecumenical Church  
the Anglican Church  
the Militant Church  
the Roman Catholic Church  
the Presbyterian Church  
the Established Church  
the Christian Science  
the George senior & junior Church  
if you have pursued man for real  
maybe  
and for the first time in my life, believe me  
I will try to call you  
love-god

*Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, November 2<sup>nd</sup>*

**Keren Batiyov**

I arrived late Sunday night to Dulles Airport near Washington DC after a very long, tiring flight. My daughter Shayne, who lives in Arlington, picked me and I stayed the night at her house, too tired to make the two hour trip home. I drove home yesterday morning, reveling in the smoldering blaze of autumn.

*Presidential elections in the USA: George W. Bush wins.*

So, I'm home now and I know that the real work is ahead of me, here in Harrisburg. I find it telling that while some of my fellow ISMers in Palestine were having nightmares about confrontations with Israeli soldiers, my nightmares were about confrontations with my local Jewish community.

Today I received two messages from Jennifer and Isabella about some of their experiences in Palestine. Jennifer wrote: "Two weeks ago I had time to experience the other side of the occupation. I went to a settlement rally, which was taking place as a result of Sharon's promise to pull out of Gaza. The theme of the rally was that Palestine is their land and should not be 'given' to the arabs. I saw a twelve-year-old girl holding a sign that read: 'We have love of the land, so we will win'. I was in awe. There is a brainwashing here that goes far beyond anything I can conceive. There have been many times when I couldn't even discuss the occupation because the person I was talking with wouldn't say anything but quotes from the bible. I have talked to people who have never even heard of Nablus, a city that is closed and suffers weekly attacks from the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). It seems in general people have no idea what they are doing in Palestine unless they are or have recently been part of IDF and then usually they fall into two categories: extremely crazy or against the occupation. There are so many levels of deceit and ignorance here. It reminds me of America in a lot of ways, but with a greater religious undertone that is pretty much impossible to reason with". Isabella, travelling homeward, had some unpleasant encounters. First, she writes, "I had a very uncomfortable conversation with an elderly lady from Los Angeles, who shared the Neshet back to Ben Gurion with me. I asked her where she was going. I could never have anticipated in my wildest dreams the reply. She was going to a military base, as a volunteer, 'to help alleviate the soldiers from their menial tasks, so they could concentrate on their important work'. I asked for more detail, and she went on to elaborate that 'it is a

very popular scheme in America, amongst people who feel passionate about Israel'. I had to look away, for fear of what I might say".

"Another test" Issy continues "presented itself to me at London Heathrow airport. There was no tube, and no night buses until 5.00 in the morning. I ended up talking to a lovely clearly gay Israeli, an elderly lady and a young woman from Seattle, and we all agreed to get a taxi together. We went to the taxi rank, and an Asian man came up and quoted the most absurd price of £30 each. Salvation came in the form of an Israeli cab firm that Ben, the Israeli guy found from his sister, who had worked for El Al. £50 it would cost us, all in. They then started talking about the 'situation', when I revealed I had been to Jerusalem. 'Golly' the gay guy said. 'I wouldn't dream of going there. It is so dangerous. I go and visit my Mum for a week and then I get out of there.' The taxi driver then said that his mother didn't watch the news anymore, and then: 'I don't know what they are still fighting about'."

*Camisano Vicentino, Italy, November 2<sup>nd</sup>*

**Mariela De Marchi**

My daughter woke up late today, at about half past nine. I changed her nappy, gave her breakfast, an apple and a bit of bread, and before she asked me to be breast-fed, I took her out for a while. After days on end of rain, at last the sun has come out. We went out to enjoy it before it went in again. We went out with the pushchair and threw the rubbish away. In the middle of the grass in a flowerbed I suddenly noticed some small white spots. I got closer incredulous yet hopeful. Yes, they really were mushrooms! I didn't expect to find

*The Dutch film director and writer Theo Van Gogh is murdered in a park in Amsterdam. One of his films, produced together with Ayaan Hirsi Ali, a deputy of African origins, denounces the oppression of women in the Muslim world. The murderer is a man from Morocco who is connected with a group of Islamic integralists.*

them there, between the ice-cream factory building and the turning factory. We live in a small industrial area. It is surrounded by maize fields, true enough, but it still is a forest of concrete and asphalt.

We cooked the field *champignons* for dinner. Garlic, parsley and white wine. They were delicious.

*Milan, Italy, undated*

**Marosia Castaldi**

Yesterday, I saw Chiara, who said to me, “I’m tired of being a mother, a worker and a housewife”. I thought, “So am I”. I am also tired of being a go-between, of cooking, darning, doing the shopping, the beds, writing, working, looking after the caprices, homework and life of my daughters. Am I not a daughter as well, even if my mother is dead?

*Nablus, Palestine, November 4<sup>th</sup>*

**Brett Cohen**

Last night five of us international observers volunteered to sit at Ascar refugee camp with the father of a sixteen year old boy who had conducted a suicide bomb attack in Tel Aviv. The boy, Amer, had asked his mother for two shekels towards a bus to Tel Aviv so that he could travel to find work. The first they knew of his intentions was when they heard about the attack on the daily news broadcast. Later the Israeli army informed them that their house was to be demolished as punishment. When we got to the house the family had already removed all the furniture and the father made it clear that when the army showed up he intended to leave. We sat with other members of the family talking and

*Three people, besides Amer, were killed and thirty other were wounded in the terrorist attack carried out on 1<sup>st</sup> November in Carmel outdoor market. The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine claimed responsibility for the attack.*

drinking tea (the owner spent the time sweeping inside and out; it was heartbreaking to see him take so much care over a home that was about to be blown to rubble), until two fifty this morning. Just as we were informed that if they (the army) did not show up in ten minutes then they would not show at all we heard the jeep at the end of the street. The soldiers were at the door shortly after ordering us to leave. The owner picked up his jacket and left so we followed. Outside in the street the soldiers attempted to take the father away to the van, we gathered around him in a huddle and refused to let them take him. The soldiers then informed us that if we did not let them take him there would be violence and asking us: "Why do you want violence? We are not violent". We insisted that we only let him go if we could come with him. Eventually the soldiers with limited time for their operation simply ordered us to stand against the wall in the alleyway twenty yards down from the house. They then grabbed a civilian (the dead man's uncle) and used him as a human shield forcing him before them as they entered the house and making him sit out on the doorstep as they carried out their work. This took about one hour. After they had laid the charges they went house to house to evacuate the neighbours. About thirty minutes later the army detonated the charges, informed the father that if he rebuilt his home they would demolish it again, got in the jeeps and left. The father who up till now had shown great forbearance and more courage than I felt broke down and wept, and who could blame him: he had lost a son and his family home, blown up by the same army of occupation that had two years earlier shot him in the leg leaving him needing the aid of a

crutch to walk. When we got back to the house it seemed as if every resident of Ascar was three to inspect the damage. The external structure was still standing but the inside was devastated; furthermore the blast had also wrecked the houses of his neighbours on either side. As I walked through the home in which a couple of hours earlier I had been drinking tea, I was surprised to suddenly find myself in the home of the adjoining neighbours at the back of the house, but probably not as surprised as this family desperately trying to get their possessions out of a living room now too dangerous to be used.

*Varese, Italy, November 10<sup>th</sup>*

**Paola Turrone**

It's called Razanne, it costs ten dollars, no eye-shadow, the same figure, but completely clothed. It's the new Barbie, the Muslim Barbie, and it's making it big in the United States. Trousers, a shot tunic and a matching veil conceal and render harmless a figure that is contented for by women in the whole of the Western world. There are three versions of Razanne, one with a dark complexion and dark hair, one with an olive complexion and black eyes, but also, in the name of its sponsor, one blond with a fair complexion: is that equality under a veil? The idea has come from Ammar Saadeh, a small immigrant entrepreneur who has learnt pretty well how things work in the country that welcomed him, has adapted to them and has hit the mark. His success is bewildering, Barbie is not a doll, it's a way of living, a way of looking at things. Through the Muslim Barbie the Western world manages to include in its measures, made of centimetres of body and

*On 6<sup>th</sup> November in Ivory Coast, during an attack of Laurent Gbagbo's government against Guillaume Soro's rebels, who control the North of the country, two airplanes shoot a French post. France reacts by destroying the country's aviation almost completely. What follows are days of fighting between Ivorian soldiers and civilians and French and European soldiers and civilians, fires, and plundering.*

definitions of a world, the visible aspect, that is the most direct, of the opposite culture. At the very same time when it condemns a way of dressing, it sterilizes it in order to turn it into an aesthetical icon and so easily handle it on the market. But there's more to it than that. Barbie is designed trying to copy, almost always successfully, the well-spread form of desire for success, from fitness maniacs to sexy rock icons, but no one has ever managed to render commercially effective a Barbie with more believable curves; one was launched within a social campaign of control over women's compulsive drifts, but then it disappeared. Hence we must conclude that it is easier to sell the image of a veiled woman, though keeping her minute figure (which contrasts sharply, among other things, with the beauty standards in that part of the world it represents) rather than a few extra centimetres/millimetres, and this is the soundest victory, the most powerful market, over the freedom for a woman, a Western woman, to perceive and show herself.

*Camisano Vicentino, Italy, November 14<sup>th</sup>*

**Mariela De Marchi**

It's stopped raining. Great, let's wrap the baby up well and go out then. We get to the sports hall and there are about a dozen cars in the parking. "A few people are there, though" Giovanni says. "Well..." I say. "Half the cars probably belong to the organizers" he jokes. "And the other half probably belong to the athletes who have just played football and are leaving" I reply. We're confident and discouraged at the same time. Nothing ever happens in this town of eight

*On November 11<sup>th</sup> Yasser Arafat died in Paris.*

thousand souls, and I wonder if this time someone is making a move.

We get in, and they give us a little numbered ticket. "It's for safety reasons, there's a limited number of seats" they say. We manage to get the nearest seats to the entrance without any effort, there's hardly anybody. People slowly start coming in. All of them quite well-dressed, generally in fashionable or not old clothes and rigorously new shoes. Apart from a few exceptions, of course.

One of the organizers says into a microphone: "Please, buy the book now because autographs will be signed at the end". I criticize the unfortunate choice of words aloud and suggest some less explicit instructions: "If you wish to buy the book you can do it now as there is no confusion, and later you can also have it signed by the author". The lady sitting next to me says that the book is *really* beautiful, and it isn't even expensive. I shortly explain to her that I was not questioning the quality of the book, but rather how the speaker had expressed himself. I keep quiet about the price issue and decide to relax and be less demanding.

Francesca, our daughter, dances in the aisle and people watch her with softened looks. She's the only child. I've seen only one other grown-up child, of about ten. That's all. And where have the other ones gone? Have the ogre or TV eaten them up? Why have they left them at home? There, we complain about the lack of community life, but we don't even try to build one. In the meanwhile, our adventure companions are writing short messages and taking photos with their mobiles.

The event is already one hour late, there are no

free seats left, somebody is sitting on the steps or is standing up waiting. At last, among the applause, the following arrive: Piercamillo Davigo, a magistrate of the former *Mani Pulite* pool; Marco Travaglio, a journalist and a writer, who is famous for his books and articles in which he discloses Berlusconi's evil deeds; Mario Caniglia, a collaborator of justice against Mafia; and Antonio Di Pietro, a former magistrate, the best-known in the *Mani Pulite* pool, now a Euro-MP.

The meeting-debate on the issue "Legality and Ethics" starts. The sometimes excited speeches are ones of condemnation, criticism, indignation, contempt, and mockery.

After the first ten minutes, I give my baby some milk. Then I manage to distract her a little, but the lady sitting next to me, the one who mentioned the book, does not look very happy with being so close to such an unpredictable baby. And above all with the not at all clean little hands lying on her pants without any prejudice. When at one point the little hurricane gets uncontrollable, we go out and stop among the people who have been standing.

The organizers had said that the meeting would have been *enlivened* by some wine and cheese tasting. Actually, we do find a few tables laden with *Asiago* cheese and various bottles. There are also some products from those lands that have been freed from the Mafia, olive oil and pasta.

In the meanwhile, the audience is listening to Davigo with interest and laughs at his jokes. But it is with Travaglio that delirium and ovations come, and a man even says "he's a genius, a real genius", laughing his head off. Instead, when Caniglia speaks about his experience with

*The expression Mani Pulite (Clean Hands) stands for all those judicial investigations into political corruption which started in 1992 and triggered a revolution in the Italian political system, leading in particular, in 1994, to the breaking-up of the Democrazia Cristiana (the Christian Democrats), the party that had been ruling the country non-stop since the end of the Second World War. Forza Italia, the political party originally founded by the present premier Silvio Berlusconi, has been carrying out a campaign aimed at discrediting the magistrature and, in particular, Mani Pulite investigations and the magistrates that directed them. This public meeting in Camisano Vicentino, therefore, has a clear anti-Berlusconi mark.*

the Mafia, people are so quiet that one can hear a pin drop. Such stories move us more if we listen to them from a real person's mouth. Finally, Di Pietro perforates several eardrums with his yelling voice, which is still not quite trained for speaking at this kind of event. Even though, to tell the truth, I don't know if there's much difference between this event and a football match. The audience seem to want an acknowledgment of their own identity, a sign that they belong to a group, rather than to seek information. The conference ends and the debate starts. By that time it's midnight, and we go home. Francesca's already asleep when we get home, we're starving and get some pasta ready. We were right to go, we tell one other: if we live here, we must know what's cooking. And we stay up until the wee small hours talking about it.

*Helsinki, Finland, November 15<sup>th</sup>*

**Hanna Snellman**

I am slowly recovering from my journey around North America. On Election Day I was in the United States and spent the evening with a family who are deeply rooted in Finland. When I left their house we did not know who would have won yet, whether Bush or Kerry. While we were watching television together it was clear that both the mother and the father did not want Bush to win: when we saw on the screen that one after the other most states were going to him, they almost broke into tears. Not so much because they are Democratic or anti-Republican, but because they are parents. They have three children close to eighteen and they feared a call-up for the war in Iraq.

Rome, Italy, December 11<sup>th</sup>

Lucianna Argentino

Christmas is coming up. Today, in front of the supermarket where I work, there was a young gipsy woman, one of those we are used to seeing with a baby breast-feeding (besides, a more suitable image for the Christmas period), with a little boy of about five dressed up as Santa Claus. I felt great tenderness looking at him begging people for some change with that funny rubber mask that hid his face but not his lively dark eyes, and the more I looked at him the more he reminded me of an elf or a dwarf, one of those you meet in fairy tales or in the woods of your imagination.

*On 17<sup>th</sup> November Putin has announced that Russia will soon command "nuclear rockets that other powers do not have and will not be able to have in the near future".*

Milan, Italy, December 23<sup>rd</sup>

Massimo Parizzi

We were talking about Narcissus the other evening at some friends' home. About the myth of Narcissus, who looked at his own image reflected in water, felt attracted to it and drowned. Why? Merleau-Ponty wrote: "Others are the constant coordinates in our life [...] since we recognize them the exorbitant power of *seeing us*" (he used italics).

*In Sens et non-sens, Galilard, Paris 1996; Sense and non-sense, Northwestern University Press, Evanston, Ill., 1964, trans. H.L. Dreyfus & P.A. Dreyfus.*

I do not know if we recognize it or not. They have it. And we don't. It is probably the only power over us which will never belong to us. Our mental and emotional identity belong to us (if it is so), but our visual and plastic identity lies in the hands of the others.

Narcissus wanted to snatch it from them, he wanted to do without them, and do it all by him-

self. A sin of *hybris*, of arrogance. And a threat to the bond existing among men. A threat to social ties. That's why he drowned.

Because it is that transitive vision (I can see others and not myself, others can see me and not themselves) that makes us and others thoroughly different and, at the same time, tied in an indissoluble way. Mutually dependent on one another, within identity itself.

I do not know if this has anything to do with all the talking that has been made for a long time about the relationship with 'the misfits' and about identity. But I believe so. Surely it has something to do with relationships among human beings.

*December 26<sup>th</sup>. A tsunami off the coast of the Northern point of the island of Sumatra caused huge waves which hit the coasts of Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, India, Sri Lanka, Burma, and the Maldives, and even reached Somalia and Kenya. Today, January 2<sup>nd</sup> 2005, the UN are reporting over 150,000 dead people. Our diary comes to a halt here. At the beginning it witnessed a human cruelty, Beslan, which many people said to be unprecedented, even though that was not true. Now it is witnessing a natural cruelty, which many people are saying to be unprecedented, even though this is not true. The pessimism of rationality says that the powerful of the world will not learn anything from this either. One of them, Secretary of State of the only great world power, Colin Powell, while speaking of the funds allocated by his country to help with disaster relief of the populations hit by the tsunami, said: "I hope*

*that the world will see that the United States is willing to reach out to the Muslim world in this time of need” (“la Repubblica”, December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2004). Which ‘normal’ person vaguely thought that the men and women swept away by the waves were Muslim, Buddhist or Christian?*

*We will discuss what happened in the next issue and will try, ourselves, to learn something.*



# Contributors and translators

Here

notes from the present

**Adriano Accattino**, an artist and a poet, has published several books. The latest one is the essay *La disfatta dell'opera*, Asefi, Milano 2001. At the moment he is busy directing two magazines, "La memoria di Adriano" and "Fondamenta Nuove". He lives in Ivrea, Italy.

pp. 8, 13, 22, 23,  
26, 36, 40, 41, 42

**Lucianna Argentino** was born in 1962 in Rome, where she lives. She has published several poetry collections; the latest is *Verso Penuel*, Edizioni dell'Oleandro, Roma-L'Aquila 2004. She works as a cashier in a supermarket.

pp. 20, 43, 120

**Andrea Arrighi** was born in 1966 in Milan, Italy, where he lives. He's a psychologist and a philosophy counselor, and teaches Philosophy, Psychology and Pedagogy in a high school. He also has an interest in rock music (and occasionally performs as a guitarist and a singer) and cinema. To contact him: [andrea.arrighi@tiscali.it](mailto:andrea.arrighi@tiscali.it).

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**Keren Batiyov** resides in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. She is a Jew of Conscience - a Jew who embraces the prophetic Jewish ethical tradition in opposition to Jewish oppression of others and the idolatry of nationalism - and a 'god-wrestler', one who wrestles with and/or challenges God (the term is traced to Genesis 32:23-

32, where Jacob wrestles with God and receives a new name, Israel, which means 'the one who has wrestled with God'). She is an activist for human rights and social justice, a poet and an avid Zydeco dancer. She spent two weeks in 2004 with International Solidarity Movement (ISM) near Nablus. She is co-chair of the Harrisburg Middle East Justice and Peace Group and a member of the South Central Pennsylvania Arab-Jewish Dialogue Group.

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**Svetlana Broz**, the granddaughter of Josip Broz Tito, was born in 1955 in Belgrade. In 1993, as a volunteer cardiologist in Bosnia-Herzegovina at war, she started collecting the memories of those people who, although belonging to 'enemy' ethnic groups, had helped one another; these memories were collected in *Dobri ljudi u vremenu zla*, published in several countries of Eastern Europe and, in 2004, by Other, New York, as *Good People in an Evil Time*. An essay of hers appears in *The Iraq War and its consequences: Thoughts of Nobel Peace laureates and eminent scholars*, edited by I. Abrams and W. Gungwu, World Scientific, Singapore-River Edge, N.J. She lives in Sarajevo, where she actively operates in various NGOs. Her web site address is <http://users.lsinter.net/svetlanabroz>.

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**Sebastiano Buonamico** lives in Sesto San Giovanni (Milan). A graphic designer and a photographer, his photographs have been on show in several exhibitions. He is the author of the covers of this magazine.

cover

**Marosia Castaldi**, a Neapolitan, lives in Milan, Italy. She has published several collections of short stories and novels. The latest are *Che*

*chiamiamo anima*, Feltrinelli, Milan 2002, and *Dava fine alla tremenda notte*, Feltrinelli, Milan 2004. The ‘undated’ pieces she sent us are also included in her blog on [www.feltrinelli.it](http://www.feltrinelli.it). Here, they were translated by Don Var Green, whom we tank.

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47, 64, 72, 89, 113

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**Maria Granati** was born in Potenza Picena (Macerata) and lives in Modena, Italy. For many years a political militant in the Italian Communist Party, she has been elected many times in provincial administrations and in the municipal administration of the town where she lives, as well as in Parliament, for three periods of legislature. She is now involved in cultural activities with associations that deal with adult education. His article dated September 1<sup>st</sup> was translated by Barbara McGilvray, whom we thank.

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**Christian Grecco** was born in Buenos Aires in 1976. He is a writer, History teacher, researcher and journalist. After having taken part in the *Asambleas Populares* that followed the uprising on 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> December 2001 - a moment of confluence, he writes, "of the fights of all those who had been dispossessed by financial capital (workers, unemployed people, pensioners, small savers), which brought about a crisis in the political system

and saw the rising of the unemployed and of popular assemblies as the new protagonists in the class struggle against the State and the capital” - he is now a popular ‘alphabetizer’ and a History teacher within the unemployed people movements. He has published three poetry books and two volumes of short stories.

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**Stefano Guglielmin** was born in 1961 in Schio, Italy, where he lives. He teaches Italian Literature in an Art High School. He has published a few poetry collections (the latest is *Come a beato confine*, Book Editore, Castel Maggiore 2003) and the essay *Scritti nomadi. Spaesamento ed erranza nella letteratura del Novecento*, Anterem, Verona 2001. His text was translated by Teodora Ott, whom we thank.

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**Drazan Gunjaca** was born in 1958 in Sinj, in Croatia. A former officer in the Yugoslav Military Navy, he is now a lawyer in Pula. He has published several novels, short stories, plays and collections of poetry against the war. Among them, the following are worth remembering: *Balkan Farewells*, Moondance Publishing, Upper Black Eddy, PA, 2003, and *Balkan roulette*, Spuyten Duyvil, New York, 2004.

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**Andrea Inglese** was born in 1967 in Turin, Italy, and lives in Paris. He has published a few poetry collections (the latest one is *Bilico*, D’If edizioni, Napoli 2004) and an essay on the theory of the novel: *L’eroe segreto. Il personaggio nella modernità dalla confessione al solipsismo*, Edizioni dell’Università di Cassino, 2003.

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**Letizia**, 48 years old, lives in Viareggio, Italy. She collaborates with a lot of associations for

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**Logan** (a pseudonym) is an Italian volunteer of “Operazione Colomba” (“Operation Dove”), non-violent peace corps in Israel-Palestinian Occupied Territories ([www.operazionecolomba.org](http://www.operazionecolomba.org)).

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**Barbara McGilvray** lives in Australia. For 35 years she has been translating from Italian into English and visiting Italy whenever possible. Here she has translated Massimo Parizzi’s and Maria Granati’s notes dated 1<sup>st</sup> September.

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**Giorgio Mascitelli** was born in 1966 in Milan, Italy, where he lives. He is a teacher. Apart from short stories and writings that appeared in magazines, he has published the novels *Nel silenzio delle merci*, Edis, Orzinuovi (Brescia) 1996, and *L’arte della capriola*, Piero Manni, Lecce 1999.

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**Marina Massenz** was born in 1955 in Milan, Italy, where she lives. She’s a therapist of psychomotricity, and is the author of several essays on this subject. She has also published the poetry collection *Nomadi, viandanti, filanti*, Amadeus, Cittadella (Padova) 1995.

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**Teodora Ott** was born in Nürnberg, Germany, from an American father and an Italian mother and grew up speaking both languages. She has

lived in the United States where she attended American schools. She is now living in Italy and is a Senior in an Italian Art School. Here, she translated the work of Stefano Guglielmin.

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**Massimo Parizzi** was born in 1950 in Milan, Italy, where he lives. He's a translator. His writings have appeared on some newspapers and in some magazines. He founded this magazine and is its editor. His article dated September 1<sup>st</sup> was translated by Barbara McGilvray, whom we thank.

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53, 56, 74, 120

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**Hanna Snellman** was born in Sodankylä, Finnish Lapland, in 1961. She lives in Helsinki. An ethnologist, she has been teaching at the university of Helsinki since 1987. She has written a book on methods for recording time used by the Khanty people and another on emigrants from Finnish Lapland to Sweden. In addition to publishing several scientific articles in international journals, she also was the editor of a book on the history of Nordic forests and Lapland.

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**Roberto Taioli** was born in 1949 in Milan, Italy, where he lives. He teaches Philosophy at two Universities. In addition to several philosophical essays, he has published some poetry collections (the latest is *Acque a Cortot*, Ulivo, Balerna 2003).

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**Franco Toscani**, an essayist and a teacher, was born in 1955 in Piacenza, Italy, where he lives.

His writings have been published on several newspapers and magazines. He is the co-author of *Vita e verità. Interpretazione del pensiero di Enzo Paci*, edited by S. Zecchi, Bompiani, Milano 1991; and, together with S. Piazza, he has published *Cultura europea e diritti umani*, Cleup, Padova 2003. He has also published a collection of poetry, *La benedizione del semplice*, Blu di Prussia, Piacenza 2003.

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**Paola Turroni** was born in 1971. She attended the DAMS (Degree course in Arts, Music and Performing Arts) at the University of Bologna and studied theatre and cinema in Milan. She collaborates with several literature and cinema magazines. She has published a volume of short stories, *Due mani di colore*, Medusa, Milano 2003 (together with the poet and painter Sabrina Foschini) and the poetry collections *Animale*, Fara Editore, Santarcangelo di Romagna 2000, and *Il vincolo del volo*, Raffaelli Editore, Rimini 2003.

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47, 64, 72, 89, 113

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