



Press pack — April 2017

THE ENCYCLOPEDIA
OF
MIGRANTS

WRITING A PRIVATE HISTORY OF MIGRATIONS
BETWEEN THE BRITTANY FINISTÈRE AND GIBRALTAR

Fig. 4.

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PRESS RELEASE OF 27 JANUARY 2017

RELEASING THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF MIGRANTS

After three years spent meeting people, collecting stories, compiling research and making the final product, *The Encyclopedia of migrants* is nearly ready. The cities of Brest, Rennes, Nantes, Gijón, Porto, Lisbon, Cadiz and Gibraltar will officially be handed their copy by the project team as of 4 March 2017.

The Encyclopedia of migrants is an artistic project which has taken the form of an encyclopedia containing testimony from 400 migrant people. It was designed and initiated by director and interdisciplinary project creator, Paloma Fernández Sobrino. General project organisation was overseen by the L'âge de la Tortue association. (voir p. 79)

Everything started in 2007 when, having been invited by L'âge de la Tortue to take part in the Correspondances citoyennes project, artist Paloma Fernández Sobrino chose to tackle the theme of migration from a personal perspective. Following on from this initiative, the artist continued this work collecting letters by migrants recounting their stories in the Le Blosne area of Rennes, giving rise to two publications¹. Out of this work a dynamic was sparked in both the district and the wider city, knitting together a network of potential letter writers, until in 2014 Paloma suggested to the L'âge de la Tortue team that they develop the existing project and produce an emblematic object: an encyclopedia.

The Encyclopedia of migrants borrows the format of Diderot and Alembert's Encyclopédie – a monumental book in several leather-bound volumes – with the aim of passing on knowledge gained through life experience, with all the subjectivity that implies. 400 migrants became the source

of new knowledge founded in the personal side of life and individuality. This deviation from the Enlightenment-age Encyclopédie, a symbol of so-called legitimate knowledge, takes the daring stance of giving the floor to those affected by the subject more than any other: migrants themselves.

The witnesses express themselves in a personal letter addressed to a loved one they left behind, handwritten in their first language. Each letter comes with a translation into the project's four publication languages – French, Spanish, Portuguese and English – and a photographic portrait.

This project was formed using a personal, artistic and emotional approach. It impressed a small team of three, who then got involved to roll it out within a district, then nationally and finally on a European scale. More than 700 artists, third-sector activists, social scientists, art students, citizens and public decision-makers ultimately joined the adventure.

As a weighty object both literally – each of the three volumes weighs nearly 3kg – and in terms of the sheer number of life stories it contains, *The Encyclopedia of migrants* is beyond classification. Only eight copies have been made, and these imposing books have been given to partner cities so that they may take responsibility for caring for them, bringing them to life and passing on their contents.

The official handover ceremonies will take place in the eight European cities from 4 March (in Rennes) to 28 June 2017 (Gibraltar).

The Encyclopedia of migrants is also firmly rooted in contemporary culture: a digital version is accessible for free online, also as of 4th March, so that it can be enjoyed by as many members of the public as possible: www.encyclopedie-des-migrants.eu/digital.

¹Paloma Fernández-Sobrino, P. & Cousseau, B. (2008). (Partir...). Rennes, France : L'âge de la tortue.

Paloma Fernández-Sobrino, P., Eidenhammer, A., Sauvage, A. & Pallarès, M. S. (2011). Partir – esguards...miradas...regards. Rennes, France: L'âge de la tortue.

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THE OFFICIAL HANDOVER CEREMONIES IN THE 8 CITIES

Starting in 2015, the eight cities which have supported *The Encyclopedia of migrants* project all committed to acquiring a copy of the paper version, which was the only absolute condition for localities wanting taking part. Partners such as third-sector organisations, municipal authorities and institutions took responsibility on a local level for publically presenting the Encyclopedia and increasing awareness of it by developing a long-term dynamic in the form of exhibitions, readings, debates, associated projects and any other initiatives they may wish to implement or support. The official handover ceremonies are scheduled from 4 March 2017 (in Rennes) to 28 June 2017 (Gibraltar).

FRANCE

— RENNES —

Official handover ceremony: 4 March 2017 — 11.30am

Location: Le Triangle, cité de la danse, boulevard de Yougoslavie, 35000 Rennes

Reading marathon: from 4 March — 6pm to 5 March 2017 — 6pm

Location: Hôtel Pasteur, 2 place Pasteur, 35000 Rennes

The official handover ceremony has been organised for Saturday 4th March at 11.30am at the Le Triangle cultural centre. This public ceremony is open to anyone and everyone, and it will involve the project team (artists, migrants, third-sector activists, social scientists and so on) handing over a copy to Nathalie Appéré, Mayor of Rennes. This Encyclopedia will then move to the Les Champs Libres library, where it will be kept and made available to the public.

A marathon reading session will then take place at L'Hôtel Pasteur from Saturday 4 March (6pm) to Sunday 5 March 2017 (6pm). This performance aims to provide a comprehensive, continuous reading of all 400 stories by a group of 100 volunteer readers. L'Hôtel Pasteur will be open to the public for 24 hours and the event is free and open to all.

— BREST —

Official handover ceremony: 16th March 2017 — 6pm

Location: Médiathèque François-Mitterrand — Les Capucins — Ateliers des Capucins, 25 rue de Pontaniou, 29200 Brest

The official handover ceremony for *The Encyclopedia of migrants* will be preceded by a speech by François Cuillandre, Mayor of Brest, and Paloma Fernández Sobrino, the designer and director of *The Encyclopedia of migrants* project coordinated by L'âge de la Tortue. A schedule of cultural events is currently being organised at the Capucins site and throughout the city of Brest.

— NANTES —

Official handover ceremony: 6 April 2017

Location: Hôtel de ville, rue de la Commune, 44000 Nantes

The city of Nantes will receive its copy of *The Encyclopedia of migrants* in front of an audience that will include the project's authors and partners. The official handover ceremony will be followed by a reading of a selection of letters by the writers themselves. A celebration is organised for after the event.

SPAIN

— GIJÓN —

Official handover ceremony: 8 May 2017
Location: Town Hall, Plaza Mayor 1, 33201 Gijón

The three volumes of *The Encyclopedia of migrants* will be officially presented to the local authority and media in a ceremony followed by a reception for migrants who wrote their piece for the project and a public reading of selected letters. This public presentation will lead into a series of cultural events held as part of Gijón's European Week up until 12th May, including photography workshops with two of the project's own photographers, Laura Rodríguez and Lluc Queralt, at Barjola de Gijón museum on 9 and 10 May 2017. There will also be a handover ceremony for the Encyclopedia on 12 May 2017 at the Museum of the People of Asturias, which will be responsible for keeping it and passing on its contents.

— CÀDIZ —

Official handover ceremony: 20 March 2017
Location: Cádiz Town Hall, Plaza de San Juan de Dios S/N, 11005 Cadix

To mark the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, the Encyclopedia will be presented to citizens, social organisations and cultural and institutional bodies at a public event. Participants include the Mayor of Cadiz and representatives of the city's migrants who contributed their stories to the project, as well as the Asociación Pro Derechos Humanos de Andalucía (APDHA), which acted as local coordinator. The presentation will be followed by a reading of a selection of letters in the Encyclopedia and a tribute to the contribution made by the migrant community to the city of Cadiz. For its first year, the Encyclopedia will be kept at ECCO, before moving to its long-term home in the José Celestino Mutis municipal library.

PORTUGAL

— PORTO —

Official handover ceremony: 18 May 2017
Location: Almeida Garrett municipal library, R. de Entre-Quintas 268, 4050-344 Porto

The official handover ceremony will involve a public enunciation of suggestions made by students following on from debates based around the Encyclopedia about migration and improving intercultural management in schools (the context to which was the Human Library project). The event will take place with an audience that includes students, the Mayor of Porto and the city's officer for culture, as well as the team at the Associação Solidariedade Internacional (ASI).

— LISBON —

Official handover ceremony: 30 May 2017
Location: Lisbon Town Hall, Praça do Município, 1100-365 Lisbon

A roundtable and letter-reading session: at Renovar a Mouraria, Mouradia-Casa comunitaria da Mouraria, Beco do Rosendo n.º 8-10, 1100-460 Lisboa

The Encyclopedia will be handed over to the Mayor of Lisbon. There will be a roundtable debate and a presentation of what happened in Lisbon during the city's intercultural forum, as well as a letter-reading session at the Renovar a Mouraria association.

GIBRALTAR

Official handover ceremony: 28 June 2017
Location: Mario Finlayson National Art Gallery, City Hall, John Mackintosh Square, Gibraltar, GX11 1AA

The Encyclopedia will be officially presented in Gibraltar to an audience of local dignitaries, Gibraltarian project participants, the European team and members of the public. It will be handed

over to the Mayor of Gibraltar and members of the Gibraltarian Parliament. A reception will then take place. The Encyclopedia will be kept at the Mario Finlayson National Art Gallery in City Hall and it will be accessible to the public. The Encyclopedia's concluding seminar will take place after the presentation, with members of the eight cities' project teams and the L'âge de la Tortue association that coordinated the project.

THE PROJECT

The Encyclopedia of migrants is an artistic project which has taken the form of an encyclopedia containing testimony from 400 migrant people. It was designed and initiated by director and interdisciplinary project creator, Paloma Fernández Sobrino. General project organisation was overseen by the L'âge de la Tortue association.

THE ORIGINS OF THE PROJECT

In 2007, Paloma Fernández Sobrino was invited by L'âge de la Tortue to work as an artist on the Correspondances citoyennes¹ project, for which she chose to tackle the theme of migration from a personal perspective. To do this, she asked three migrants she had met in the Le Blosne district of Rennes to write a personal letter which would then be published as a folding postcard. Initially, the artist did all the work herself.

Following on from this initiative, the artist continued the project in the Le Blosne area, collecting letters by migrants recounting their stories. These stories gave rise to two works which were published in 2008 and 2011².

This initial collection work involved regular meetings with migrant people in Rennes, then in Tarragona in Spain. A dynamic was sparked in both the area and the wider city, knitting together a network of potential witnesses, until in 2014 Paloma suggested to the L'âge de la Tortue team that they develop the existing project and produce an emblematic object: an encyclopedia.

It was thus that one of The Encyclopedia of migrants' first major principles was set: appropriating a symbol of the Enlightenment and European culture to pass on a non-scientific type of knowledge which gives readers a glimpse of the intimate realities of contemporary migration.

Given the importance of migration to our European countries and L'âge de la Tortue's desire to

share common practice and knowledge with a network of partners, the association thought it necessary to make *The Encyclopedia of migrants* a cooperative European project. This came to fruition in 2015. L'âge de la Tortue took care of the overall leadership and general organisation of the project, and united participants from eight cities on the Atlantic seafront: Brest, Rennes, Nantes, Gijón, Porto, Lisbon, Cadiz and Gibraltar. All these locations shared a desire to get to know migration's particular history, as well as commitment from their respective elected officials.

The 400 migrant people who contributed their stories to the Encyclopedia came from very different backgrounds: some had left their country just months ago, others decades; some were exiled, others were living their European dream; some would not leave their adopted country for anything, while others struggled with being uprooted. The project involved asking questions about the personal experience of migration and distance. It is the diversity of the migrants and their life stories which makes the collection quite a treasure trove and a one-of-a-kind creation, allowing people to realise the complexity of this reality as though they were looking through the lens of a kaleidoscope.

This initiative originated from an artist who is herself an immigrant. It is both artistic and emotional in its approach, and it impressed a small team of three who then got involved to roll it out within a district, then nationally and finally on a European scale. More than 700 artists, third-sector activists, social scientists, art students, citizens and public decision-makers ultimately joined the adventure.

¹ The archives for this project are available to read at agedelatortue.org.

² Paloma Fernández-Sobrino, P. & Cousseau, B. (2008). *(Partir...)*. Rennes, France: L'âge de la tortue.
Paloma Fernández-Sobrino, P., Eidenhammer, A., Sauvage, A. & Pallarès, M. S. (2011). *Partir - esguards...miradas... regards*. Rennes, France: L'âge de la tortue.

AN ART PROJECT

The artistic spark behind The Encyclopedia of migrants was the idea to appropriate and create a twist on Diderot and Alembert's Encyclopédie. Its form – a monumental book with several leather-bound volumes – is used to pass on non-scientific knowledge which exposes life experience with all the subjectivity that entails. The project's founding principle is therefore to publish an encyclopedia using personal testimonies from migrant people – 400 individuals to be precise – who act as the source of a new knowledge built on the personal side of life and individuality. This deviation from the Enlightenment-age Encyclopédie, a symbol of Western scientific culture and holder of so-called legitimate knowledge, breaks free of the most common political and social representations of migration by giving the floor to the first people it affects. The aim of Diderot and Alembert's Encyclopédie was to leave behind the non-scientific thinking of the Middle Ages by representing a different world built on the latest scientific discoveries. As a project, it was as political as it was scientific. In 2017, publishing emotional content as an encyclopedia produced through shared, contribution-based work is an artistic and political act.

As a weighty object both literally (each of the three volumes weighs nearly 3kg) and in terms of the sheer number of life stories it contains, *The Encyclopedia of migrants* is an artwork in and of itself. It is beyond classification and difficult to use in practical terms as only eight copies have been made. These imposing books have been given to partner cities so that they may take responsibility for caring for them, bringing them to life and passing on their contents.

THE LETTERS: WHEN PRIVATE LIVES MEET A PUBLIC AUDIENCE

For the project, each migrant had to compose a personal letter to someone they know – such as a friend or family member – who they had left back home, so that this letter could be published in the Encyclopedia. The stories produced therefore balance the most personal of individual testimony with the demands of sharing experience, creating a unique genre of letters sent to a faraway loved one but also to a multitude of potential readers.

The migrants express themselves through a perso-

nal letter handwritten in their first language and addressed to someone back home. This sample of 74 languages stretches over 1780 pages of the encyclopedia. Each letter comes with a translation into the project's four publication languages, French, Spanish, Portuguese and English. The inarticulacies and beauty of language handwritten on the page, sometimes using an alphabet we do not know, puts us at the most touching and most visible level of intimate privacy, which is then made accessible through translation.

A photo portrait of each letter-writer was done by one of the 16 photographers in the partner cities. This portrait emerges out of an encounter and a dialogue between the sitter and photographer, who uses all his or her expertise and creativity to make an image that combines a resolutely documentarian approach with a certain level of staging that aims to show the migrants at their best.

In many cases, the letters represent the first time these words have been used, as they could not be said at the right time or to the right person, but also, sometimes, because they simply could not come out until now. The reader thus bears witness to a confession, declaration, admittance or another kind of private statement. He or she therefore becomes the repository for a fragile, human knowledge the limits of which are barely perceptible, emerging from sincere feeling and a human journey that has little to do with logic and reason. Each and every letter-writer is authentic but also set within a certain context due to the limitations which come with publication, in a composition whose sole aim is to showcase private writings in all their nobility, be they tender, thankful or bitter.

A CONTRIBUTION-BASED APPROACH

Another major aspect of the project was to design an approach which is based on contribution from start to finish. Just like Diderot and Alembert's Encyclopédie, The Encyclopedia of migrants is the product of shared work done via the development of a network of people from a variety of fields, including artists, third-sector activists, art students, citizens and public decision-makers. The network also included social scientists and European structures such as charities, local authorities, and institutions in France, Spain, Portugal and Gibralt-

tar. Since the very beginning of the project, this network encouraged contributions from all participants, not least the people most affected by migration: migrants themselves. The encyclopedia's subject is actually subject and author at the same time, rather than being held at an objective distance. All these individual points of view amass a considerable weight, making for fertile ground for reflections on cultural rights, something L'âge de la Tortue views with the utmost importance.

When the project was first designed, the principle of contribution-based collaboration was enshrined through the creation of a study group. The group met seven times in the Le Blossne district of Rennes between October 2014 and October 2016, and on each occasion more than 40 people from very different backgrounds attended. Meetings took place over an entire day at a time and were organised as a forum where all participants could play an equal part in the dialogue, with no sense of hierarchy. The objective was to look at fundamental questions linked to the project, such as the place to give to linguistic diversity, to potential selection criteria for letter writers and to categorising our contributors.

At ground level, 16 contact people formed a link with each migrant who might be willing to tell us their story. They built up trusting relationships with the writers, who they supported so that their letters (which they sometimes wrote or translated into the local language together) were as reflective as possible of the migrant's own words. Each letter is thus the product and fruition of a real encounter between two individuals and a relationship cemented over time through trust and respect around a shared project.

A European network of 16 social scientists was also formed so that they could make a written contribution to The Encyclopedia in the shape of 16 articles about precise issues linked to migration.

700 people got involved and made their mark on this project. Starting out as an art initiative dreamt up by a creative, *The Encyclopedia of migrants* is now the product of a collective will which supported the project and gave it a whole tapestry of personal, artistic and academic contributions, ultimately creating a project like no other.

A COOPERATIVE EUROPEAN PROJECT

The project was designed in the Le Blossne district of Rennes in 2014. Out of these local roots it developed on a European scale in 2015, finally coming to fruition in 2017 (from March to June) through a series of official handover ceremonies and events organised in the eight partner cities.

Conversations between partners around best practice are an integral part of the assets mobilised around the project, ***the shared desire being to actively participate in writing the European history of migration using local migration stories.***

The eight cities which actively participated in the project are all situated on Europe's Atlantic seafront, looking out onto the ocean at the interface of several worlds. They have a long migratory past made up of different histories enriched by many episodes which have shaped them, built them, rebuilt them or even marked the return of national colonies. Their inhabitants' memories are imbued with all the realities of migration. These are also cities where local participants from civil society (who often work with immigrant populations) have benefited from real support with the project from local elected officials.

THE RESOURCES AND CREATIONS

The Encyclopedia of migrants has been published in eight paper copies (in three volumes in a 29 x 45cm format, with artisanal binding, an all-leather cover and gold lettering) and as a digital version accessible for free on the project website as of March 2017. A website, documentary film, reference kit and handbook have also been produced to provide as many ways into the project as possible.

All this material has been published in the partner cities' four national languages: French, Spanish, Portuguese and English. All material produced aims to support work planned for the coming years in the eight cities via action designed to showcase the project, particularly in primary and secondary schools, colleges and universities.

As a work that is public and private at the same time, *The Encyclopedia of migrants* has the humble yet ambitious dream of becoming the starting point for many individual and collective examinations of a fundamental reality - migration - which perpetually reconfigures our contemporary societies.

THE RESOURCES AND CREATIONS

The Encyclopedia of migrants uses a variety of formats, the principal ones being the eight paper copies and the online edition. A website, documentary film, reference materials kit and this handbook all support the Encyclopedia, shedding light on how it was made and how the project has developed since publication. All the resources and materials we have produced are translated or subtitled in the Encyclopedia's four languages (French, Spanish, Portuguese and English).

THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF MIGRANTS PAPER VERSION

- A leather-bound, 1782-page artist's book split into three volumes and made in eight copies.
- Contains 400 life stories, each including a typed version of the individual's letter in the language of publication, a copy of the handwritten letter and a photo portrait by one of the project's 16 photographers. Also contains 16 texts written by social science researchers.
- A multilingual publication available in four versions (handwritten letters in 74 languages + one of the four publication languages)
- One copy is held by each of the eight partner cities.

THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF MIGRANTS ONLINE VERSION

www.encyclopedie-des-migrants.eu/digital

- Contains all the content from the paper version and allows users to search numerous themes in the Encyclopedia.
- Available free of charge online.

THE WEBSITE

www.encyclopedie-des-migrants.eu

- Passes on a general variety of information about the project, work process (in our various blogs in particular), the creations we have produced and what we are doing to promote them within the project's transnational network and beyond.

THE REFERENCE MATERIAL KIT

www.encyclopedie-des-migrants.eu/projet/pedagogie

- Details the project's series of applied methodologies for establishing partnerships with cities, reference works and organising the process of collecting stories, as well as summaries from study group meetings during the project, from initial methodology analysis to the evaluation stage.
- Available free of charge online.

THE DOCUMENTARY FILM


www.encyclopedie-des-migrants.eu/projet/film

- Traces back each and every stage involved in making the project, from the initial idea to final production via the creative and collective processes. It documents the nitty-gritty of how the project was made.
- The film was shot on the project's bases in France, Spain, Portugal and Gibraltar and its aim is educational. It is a way of recording the project for posterity.
- Available free of charge online.

THE HANDBOOK

www.encyclopedie-des-migrants.eu/projet/pedagogie

- Presents the creations produced by the project and acts as "how-to guide" for the Encyclopedia.
- The handbook has been designed largely with educational goals in mind. It is for everyone's use and educators' in particular, in the hope that they will present the project in its entirety, help to pass it on to a wider audience and uncover all the many ways it can be utilised.
- Available free of charge online.



400

PERSONAL STORIES

- 400 handwritten letters
- 400 photographic portraits
- 1600 translations

103
COUNTRIES
REPRESENTED

74
FIRST
LANGUAGES

4
PUBLICATION
LANGUAGES

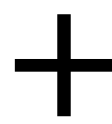
French
Spanish
Portuguese
English



8

PAPER

COPIES



1 DIGITAL
VERSION

(free access: www.encyclopedia-of-migrants.eu/digital)



1782
PAGES

3 TOMES

FORMAT IN FOLIO
(29 x 45 cm)

15 KILOGRAMS
APPROXIMATELY

HANDMADE
BINDING WITH
NATURAL LEATHER

FINE GOLD
LETTERING



700

PEOPLE INVOLVED

16

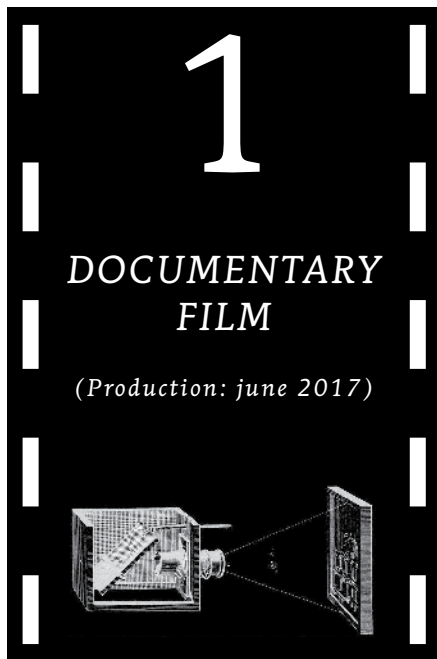
PHOTOGRAPHERS

54

partners
structures
and collectives

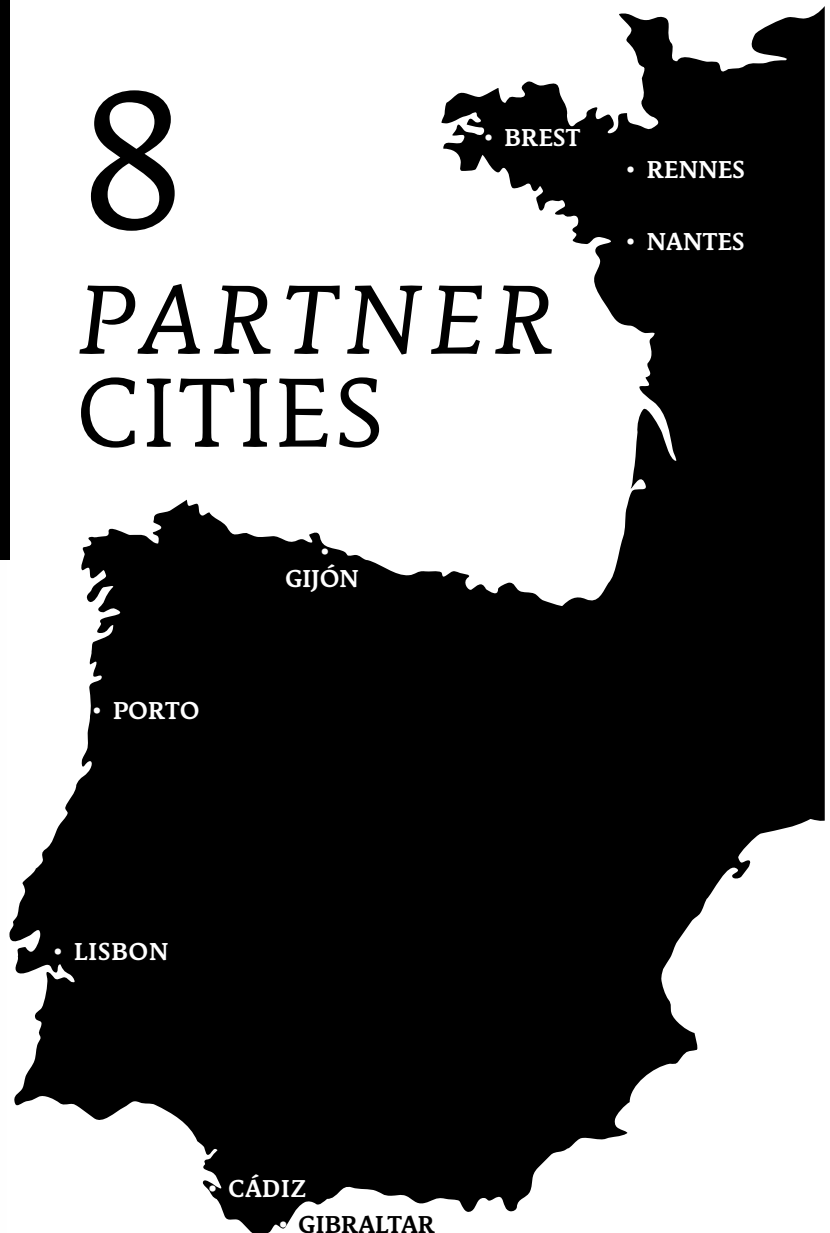
16

SOCIAL SCIENTISTS



8

PARTNER CITIES



3

YEARS
OF WORK

2014 → 2017



IMPORTANT DATES OF THE PROJECT

2014

(September)

The project is launched in Le Blosne, Rennes
(Creation of the Focus group)

2015

(July)

The project is launched across Europe

(November)

Multinational collection work starts

2016

(November)

The paper version goes to press

2017

(March to June)

Official handover of the paper version in the 8 cities

(March)

Launching of the digital version

(June)

Final seminar Gibraltar

(from July)

Diffusion of the project

ABOUT PALOMA FERNÁNDEZ SOBRINO

Paloma Fernández Sobrino is a director and creator of interdisciplinary projects. She was born in Spain and has lived in France since 2004.

She has been an associate artist at L'âge de la Tortue since 2007.

She took part in the Correspondances citoyennes (2007-2011) project and authored *Partir* (2008) and *Partir... esgards, miradas, regards* (2010), works which brought together two collections of personal letters written by migrant people living in France and Spain. She also created poetry collection project *On dit de moi que je ne suis pas étrangère* (2012).

In 2009, she wrote, directed and performed her play *Déroute*. This physical theatre piece toured, performing to an audience of one on each occasion, and used women's stories about the female condition as well as her interpretation of Khalil Gibran's poem *Défaite*. That same year, with Nicolas Combes she dreamt up and directed the cooperative European Correspondances Citoyennes en Europe project covering France, Spain and Romania.

In 2014 she graduated in performing arts and designed and directed her play *Déroute* (2). For this extension of her first play, Paloma was supported by opera singer Justine Curatolo and collaborated on the staging with Nathalie Élain. In 2015, she adapted Alberto Méndez's short story *Manuscrit trouvé dans l'oubli* from his work *Les Tournesols aveugles* for the stage. This was to be her second play, *Trouvé dans l'oubli*, and it was performed by Benoit Hattet, Nathalie Élain and flamenco singer Pere Martínez.

To continue her work on personal lives on a larger scale, Paloma designed *The Encyclopedia of migrants*, for which she now plays the role of artistic director.

ABOUT L'ÂGE DE LA TORTUE

L'âge de la Tortue is a team which designs and enacts visual and performance art projects. Founded to take a critical perspective on contemporary society and respect for cultural rights, L'âge de la Tortue questions our relationship with political and social representations to give us a different perspective on the world. Our work processes feed into our creations, taking the form of interdisciplinary sessions workshops led by artists over prolonged periods. These workshops mix different art forms, function as study groups, and welcome contributions from people living in the local area.

L'âge de la Tortue is based in the Le Blosne district of Rennes and develops its projects on a micro-local scale in conjunction with other areas of Europe. L'âge de la Tortue is a charitable organisation founded in 2001 in Rennes.

The association's work is structured around large projects such as artists' residencies, European cultural projects and theatrical creations which are led over varying periods of time (Correspondances citoyennes from 2007 to 2009, Déroute in 2009, Correspondances citoyennes en Europe from 2010 to 2011, Expéditions from 2012 to 2014, *The Encyclopedia of migrants* from 2014 to 2017, and Résidence secondaire which started in 2016 and is running indefinitely). Historically, these projects have taken place in the Le Blosne district of Rennes, where the association has had its base since 2007. The team has gradually extended towards other areas: in Rennes, this has notably included the Maurepas district, but we have also worked in Brest and Nantes, Spain, Romania, Poland, Portugal and even Gibraltar.

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EXTRACTS: 10 TESTIMONIES

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ARACELI RUIZ TORIBIOS

Moscow, Russia
Gijón, Spain

Gijón, 3rd January 2016

Dear Cousins,

At last, I'm going to tell you a little about my life in which you seem so interested.

As you know, the Spanish Civil War broke out in 1936. It started when Franco, who was an army general in Morocco, revolted and brought his troops to Spain, putting an end to the Second Republic. The situation in Spain was awful, with the children suffering most. It was then that a lot of countries offered to save these children from the bombs being dropped by German planes, as Franco had entered into an alliance with Hitler and Mussolini. Several countries offered to take in Spanish children to live there provisionally, until the war ended. Our parents decided to send the youngest of us to Russia, and so we went: Angelines was 5, Conchita 11, I was 13 and Águeda as our tutor was 22. Our parents signed us up to go to Russia, which had said it would take in 300 Spanish children.

That was how on 23 September 1937 we left the port of Gijón for Leningrad, though we had been waiting a few weeks in empty schools to make it easier to gather everyone together.

The boat that came was a cargo ship. In the dead of night buses came to take us across Gijón to avoid another boat finding out and firing on us to prevent us from leaving Spain. We left on 23 September and went to the port of Santander where a Russian passenger ship was waiting for us. It was lovely and very comfortable. From there we went to England, where we were separated into two ships, given that on leaving Gijón there were 1,100 children, plus the teachers and the tutors that accompanied us.

We arrived in Leningrad on 3 October 1937. The people of Leningrad and the pioneers awaited our arrival at the port. While here we were bastard children, the sons and daughters of Republican losers, there we were welcomed

by banners that read: "Welcome to the children of the heroic Spanish nation."

Everything was ready for us in Leningrad, such as the children's homes where we would spend our childhood.

In 1940, given that some children either didn't want to, or couldn't, study at university, a decision was made to demolish the houses and restore them. One was built in Leningrad for those who wanted to learn a trade and another in Moscow for those who wanted to finish their university studies. However, in 1941 the Second World War was raging and Germany attacked the Soviet Union. That's when our tragedy began, or continued. We were evacuated to Odessa in Central Asia. I ended up in Uzbekistan where I spent the rest of the war. When the war ended on 8 May 1945 and we were reunited once again in Moscow, I started to study at the university and finished in 1957.

That was the year of the Cuban Revolution, which Russia helped by sending troops there. However, they also needed translators and that's where we Spanish came in. My husband and our six-year-old daughter went. I met Che Guevara there, and as we were in Cuba working with my sister Conchita he asked us about our parents, who was still living in Gijón and who we hadn't seen in 30 years. He suggested that we bring them to Cuba so that we could be reunited and that's what we did in the summer of 1964, in Havana. They acted as godparents to my second daughter. The first one was born in Moscow, the second in Havana.

Well, my dear cousins, I'll continue with my story when I see you.

Lot's of love,

Araceli

Gijón, 3 de enero de 2016

Queridas primas:

Por fin voy a contaros algo sobre mi vida, que tanto deseáis conocer.

En el año 1936 sabéis que comenzó la Guerra Civil en España. Cuando Franco era general del ejército y se sublevó en Marruecos trayendo las tropas a España y acabando con la 2ª República.

La situación en España era fatal y quienes más padecían eran los niños. Fue entonces cuando muchos países se ofrecieron a salvar a estos niños de las bombas que tiraban los aviones alemanes.

Porque Franco se unió a Hitler y a Mussolini. Entonces muchos países, voluntariamente, se prestaron a que los niños españoles fueran a vivir temporalmente, a estos países hasta que terminara la guerra.

Nuestros padres decidieron mandar a Rusia a las más pequeñas, y fuimos: Angelines, de 5 años, Conchita, con 11 años, yo con 13 y Agueda como educadora, con 22 años. Los padres nos alistaron para ir a Rusia, que solicitó a unos 300 niños españoles.

Y así fue, el 23 de septiembre de 1937, salimos del puerto de Gijón rumbo a Leningrado, aunque esperamos unas cuantas semanas reunidos ya en escuelas vacías para que fuera más fácil reunirnos a todas.

Llegó el barco que era un carguero, y los autobuses que nos recogieron, cruzaron Gijón a oscuras para que el barco no se enterase y nos disparara, para que no saliésemos de España.

Salimos la noche del 23 de septiembre y llegamos al puerto de Santander. Allí nos esperaba un barco ruso de pasajeros, era precioso y muy cómodo. Llegamos a Inglaterra y allí nos repartieron entre los dos barcos, pues éramos 1.100 niños los que salimos de Gijón, más luego los maestras y educadores que nos acompañaban.

Llegamos a Leningrado el 3 de octubre de 1937 y allí en el puerto nos esperaba el pueblo de Leningrado y los pioneros. Mientras que aquí éramos hijos bastardos, hijos de republicanos perdedores, allí en las pancartas decían "Bienvenidos a los hijos del heroico pueblo español".

En Leningrado tenían todo preparado, las casas de niños en las que viviríamos los años de nuestra infancia.

En el año 1940, algunos niños no querían ni podían seguir estudiando una carrera universitaria y decidieron deshacer las casas y reformarlas: Una en Leningrado para los que querían hacer un oficio, y en Moscú para los que deseaban terminar la universidad. Pero en el año 1941 estaba la Guerra Mundial alemana atacando a la Unión Soviética, y aquí empieza o sigue nuestra tragedia. Evacuamos de Odesa a Asia Central. Yo llegué hasta Uzbekistán y allí pasé toda la guerra. Cuando en el año 1945, el 8 de mayo, termina la guerra y de nuevo nos reúnen en Moscú, empecé a estudiar en la universidad y la terminé en 1957.

En ese año estaba la Revolución Cubana y Rusia ayudaba a esta revolución, mandando a Cuba militares, pero también necesitaban traductores, y allí nos llevaron a un grupo de niños españoles. Fuimos mi esposo y yo con una hija de 6 años.

Allí conocí al Che Guevara, y como estábamos en Cuba trabajando mi hermana Conchita y yo, nos preguntó por nuestros padres, que estaban en Gijón, y que hacía casi 30 años que no veíamos. Él nos propuso que los trajésemos a Cuba para encontrarnos, y así lo hicimos en el verano de 1964, en La Habana, y fueron los padrinos de mi segunda hija. La primera nació en Moscú y esta en La Habana.

Bueno mi hijo, seguiré mi historia cuando nos veamos.

Un abrazo

Araeli



CHANG LIU MELL

Zhangjiakou, China
Brest, France

PERSEVERANCE

Pa,

During the time I've been looking for a job and questioning my decisions in life, I sometimes dream that I could travel back in time and not do the thesis that took five years of my youth in the name of so-called research, done alone, unemployed. Because I didn't know any better, I made lots of mistakes from the start my thesis. I didn't open any doors for myself to use afterwards, nor did I create a network of researchers. You know, you aren't really a researcher if you're researching alone in a corner. I'm also reassessing my life because I've changed over time. My undergraduate degree, master's degree and doctorate were all part of a logical progression towards becoming a French teacher in a Chinese university. But having prepared all this ground, I've changed, I've discovered new possibilities, I've seen other things which matter to me more.

During the five years I spent on my thesis and eight years in France, although I spent too much time at university compared to many, from a purely unpragmatic point of view I consider myself lucky to have had the time to reflect on certain things instead of going straight into work after my degree, instead of adapting to society unquestioningly, and instead of willingly accepting the consumer culture enforced by the modern world. As a result, I enjoy buying and accumulating things less and less, I see everyday consumer items differently. I think I'm lucky to have Chinese roots which I can opt for instead: I have a growing interest in Chinese literature, painting and

calligraphy, and traditional Chinese medicine. For me, these are my Chinese roots, not modern life in China. Surely my time in France has made me want to (or need to?) explore and express my identity more, and my different experiences have separated me from modern life in China today, from my Chinese friends, as we have less and less in common. Working more, earning more, buying houses, "having a better life", buying a car, buying a better car, having a child, looking after the child, devoting yourself to work and developing your network, making yourself your own social ladder to climb, etc. All this is important to them, but means little to me. I think I've taken another path towards maturity, a process which leads to freedom. More than anything else, my time in France has given me a certain liberty of thought, and more strength to know what's important in my own life and to choose the way I live, without necessarily being hidebound by French or Chinese ways of living.

At the moment, I'm working towards getting a relatively stable job which pays the rent, so that I can learn more and more and pursue my passion for arts: I think this is what I'm going to devote my life to. So after all this rambling, all I want to say to you and mum is that, although I've doubted myself, your daughter has got a direction in life and there's no need to worry about me — my life in France is good.

Best wishes,

Your daughter

爸，在我现在找工作的迷茫期，我有时候会想时光倒流，不选择做这个博士论文，在孤独的所谓的研究中耗费我五年的青春之后却不能够有一个我的工作。而且由于一开始很多东西不懂，做错了选择，读完之后就没有继续在这方而前进的路，也没有形成一个学者的圈子，你要知道，单独一人搞学问的不是学者。其实我现在的迷茫也未自于我们一点一滴的改变，因为我学士、硕士、博士本来是要走向一个方向，就是回中国做法语老师，但是我这一系列的事情做完了以后，发现我自己变了，发现有新的可能，发现了对自己更有意义的东西……

从不太功

利的角度来看，博士五年和在法国生活的八年中，虽然上学的时间比大多数人多了太多，但是我很幸运有这段思考一些东西，而不是直接本科毕业后进入社会工作，适应而顺势接受社会大众的生活消费方式。我变得不喜欢买多余的东西，从不同角度看待我们日常消费的物品，因此有一些对别人来说重要的事情，一些条条框框我都不大在意。我还去学的是我选择地保留我的根，我开始对中国的文学、书画，中医增加兴趣，对于我来说这是我的中国根，而不是在中国的现状生活中。可能在法国的各种经历让我变得更想要自我，不同的经验让我和中国的联系没有那么多的现实，中国的朋友越来越少了，共同的话题也越来越少，很多中国朋友关注的多工作，多赚钱，买房子，有更好的生活，买车，再换更好的车，生孩子，养孩子，忙孩子工作和社交，提高社会地位等等是我不太感兴趣的。我想这也是一种成熟，向自由进一步的过程。我想在法国的经历给我最大的收获就是多一些思想上的自由，自己去思考什么是最重要的，开始有新的力量注自己的活法，而不会被所谓的中国或法国的生活方式所拘束。对现在的我来说，我希望有一份相对稳定工作做后勤保障，为了更好地学习新的东西，艺术方面有所创造，我觉得这是我这一辈子想发展和探索的。说了这么多，我是想说女儿知道自己想要什么，而且正在向自己想要的方向努力，希望你和妈不用为我担心，知道我在法国过得很好。

祝好 女儿



DOUCE DIBONDO

Brazzaville, Republic of the Congo
Nantes, France

Dad,

It's been more than a decade since I left your arms, my routines and everything I knew in life. I left your eyes, which shone with pride in me, and your hands, which consoled me and guided me. Even at the age of 12, I knew that going far away from you, from my Congo, meant starting a new life, nothing better or worse than that. This new life would get Céleste and me away from the chaos of a country in crisis. Time has passed here without warning. My memories of you have blurred, your voice has got lost among thousands of others. Sometimes I raged against all those children around me who didn't know how lucky they were to have the most precious of treasures, that pillar of strength — parents. To this day, I don't know how I managed to block out the loss, the memories and all their tricks, and time — all that time, which makes me wonder if you'll recognise me one day, if you'll see in me the daughter I've always been. For more than 10 years, I've not had a single photo of you which would have let me hold onto the image of your face. Your little almond eyes with their black iris, so sharp and so soft at the same time. And that honest, greedy smile which is so handsome and which I have never forgotten.

Over and over I have repeated to myself the advice you gave me the last time we saw one another, in that prison which looked like a holiday camp you were enjoying with old friends. And indeed, you said to me “don't be clannish with the people around you. Be as open as you can. You need to grow up fast, daughter of mine...” I've applied myself ever since. By studying sociology, I've discovered the opportunity to think and to broaden my love

for literature, arts and culture, my desire to travel and to meet unfamiliar people. Just like you, I've always loved finishing off a crossword. I'll take you on whenever you like, Dad, you the undisputed champion! I grew up by meeting people who would change my life forever, people who share my weaknesses and difficulties in France. This country is full of paradoxes: the winter and red tape are long and cold, but in summer, people are warm and happy whatever their path in life has been. People are lonely and sad but can inundate you with love in the space of one meeting. But I miss the streets and the noise of the Congo. People live outside and are never alone, always smiling and enjoying being alive. I even miss the things that used to annoy me, the constant delays, the indolence some people show and so on. Since I left, I think I've become more and more French, but I've never forgotten your name, my heritage, or the food and music from my Congo. I've got so many plans for when I go back one day. I want to thank the land where you saw me first come into the world, while taking up all the promises my new country is making me me.

I'm 22 now, and I know we'll see each other again soon. I know nothing will have really changed, although nothing will ever be the same. I can't wait to see you and to feel you again. Your laugh, your honesty, your lust for life, your analytical but never snobbish thinking. I want everything back which, in the end, has not been lost, only put on hold.

I want to feel complete at last. I want to live life in colour.

Your daughter Douce,
who loves you

Papa,

Déjà plus d'une décennie que j'ai quitté tes bras, mes habitudes et mes repères. Tes yeux qui me criaient leur fierté, tes mains qui me consolait et qui me guidaient. Du haut de mes douze ans, j'ai compris que partir loin de toi, loin de mon Congo était le départ d'une nouvelle vie : pas mieux, pas pire. Une vie qui nous permettait de m'éloigner Céleste et moi de la situation chaotique d'un pays en crise. Toi, le temps est passé sans crier gare. Les souvenirs de toi se sont floués, ta voix s'est muée en des milliers de voix parmi tant d'autres. Je me suis parfois révoltée, envie ces enfants autour de moi qui ne réalisaient pas la chance qu'ils avaient près d'aux, le plus beau des trésors. Le pillier que sont les parents. Jusqu'à ce jour, je ne sais pas comment j'ai fait pour tarir le manque, la mémoire et ses trahisons, le temps qui me fait toujours me demander si tu me reconnaitras un jour. Si tu virais en moi, la fille que j'ai toujours été. Pendant plus de dix ans, je n'ai pas eu une seule photo de toi pour m'accrocher aux traits de ton visage. Ces petits yeux en amande, l'iris noir nif et douce à la fois. Et ce sourire carnassier et franc, si beau ! Ça, ça ne m'a jamais quitté.

Je me suis répétée encore et encore les conseils que tu m'as donnés la dernière fois qu'on s'est vu, dans cette prison qui ressemblait plus à une colonie de vacances avec des amis de longue date. D'ailleurs... Tu m'as dit : « ne fais pas dans le clanique au niveau des gens qui t'entoureront. Sois aussi ouverte que possible. Grandis-toi ma fille, grandis-toi... ». Depuis, je me suis évertuée à m'appliquer. J'ai trouvé dans mes études de sociologie, la possibilité de réfléchir, d'approfondir mon amour pour la littérature, les arts et la culture. Mon envie de voyage, de rencontre de l'Autre. Je me suis toujours attachée à finir les grilles de mots fléchés comme toi. Toi, l'imbattable, je te dépasse quand tu veux mon petit papa ! Je me suis grandie, en rencontrant des personnes

qui ont changé ma vie à tout jamais. Des personnes qui ont mes failles, mes difficultés en France. Cette dernière est un pays plein de paradoxe : l'hiver et la bureaucratie administrative y sont lents et froids; l'été, les gens aux différentes vies et parcours y sont chaleureux et souriants. Les gens sont seuls et tristes et peuvent au détour d'une rencontre, t'inspirer d'amour. N'empêche, les rues et le bruit de la ville du Congo me manquent. Les gens vivant le dehors, toujours entourés, toujours cette joie de vivre, le sourire. Même les choses qui m'agaçaient me manquent : les retards incessants, le flegme de certains etc. J'ai aussi depuis, l'impression d'être de plus en plus française sans jamais oublier ton nom, mon héritage, les plats et la musique de mon Congo. J'ai des projets plein la tête pour un futur retour. Je veux remercier la terre où tu m'as vu naître, en prenant à ma terre d'accueil toutes les promesses qu'elle m'offre.

Du haut de mes 22 ans à présent, je sais qu'on se reverra très vite; que rien n'aura vraiment changé, sans jamais ne plus être pareil. J'ai tellement hâte de te retrouver et te sentir. Ton rire, ton franc-parler, ton bon vivant, ton esprit critique mais jamais hautain. Je veux rattraper ce qui au final n'est pas perdu, mais juste entre parenthèses.

Je veux enfin me sentir complète
Je veux reprendre des couleurs.

La fille Douce,
qui t'aime.



GIUSEPPE LAGOMARSINO

Buenos Aires, Argentina
Cádiz, Spain

Hi, Little Sister! How are things? Caught up in the electoral whirlpool in that chaos of a country? Once again faced with choosing between the bad and the worse? I won't go on about the subject, because we don't see eye to eye (will we ever?) about it.

It'll soon be 40 years in exile. Forty years away from my country, which is no longer my country. But don't go thinking that I feel Spain has taken its place. Because at this stage of the game I feel I don't belong anywhere. I laugh when anyone listening to the twists and turns of my life and all the places where I've lived, says to me: "You're a citizen of the world". True, it's a lovely expression. That of "citizen of the world" sounds good all right, but in reality I don't feel like I come from any place. Rather I feel like an outcast trying to live wherever I find myself.

Perhaps, as the poet (or was it Félix Grande?) said, "my homeland is the word and a woman's body". To mine I'd add my friends. The rest is all myth, custom, borders, anthems and flags. I drink mate (ulcer allowing), I like football, the tango — is that what it means to be an Argentinean? Ché was an Argentinean, Videla was an Argentinean. Borges, Maradona, a delinquent, Troilo, a Nobel Laureate, all Argentinean. In Sweden I was a foreigner, I'm also one in Spain and when I go to Argentina, I feel I'm a stranger there too.

But, in spite of it all, and still without knowing what it really means, I'm Argentinean. Without pride or shame. Like a birth mole, like a scar that the years gradually smooth over but which never fully goes away. I'm proud of some things I've done; for the women I've loved and loved me; for the friends who love you for the way you are (and even in spite of it); for the children that fly free; for the odd story that didn't deserve to end up in the wastepaper basket; for the stones I've thrown. Shame for having betrayed myself; for not having dared; for selfishness; for the kisses I never gave; for sometimes having said too much and others having said nothing when I should have shouted.

I won't be holding a party to celebrate these 40 years. Exile is a wound, yes. But a wound that I carry with pride; the price I paid for saying NO.

Well Susi, sorry for the cheap philosophy. This coffee chat, without table or coffee. But you are my anchor, my lifeline. Who could I share these things with if not you?

A big hug and my regards to all yours.

Love you,

Giuseppe

Hola hermanita, ¿cómo estás? ¿Metida en la vorágine electoral de ese quilombo de país? ¿Otra vez teniendo que elegir entre lo malo y lo peor? ¿Y no sigo con este tema porque no nos pondremos (¿nunca?) de acuerdo.

Estoy por cumplir 40 años de exilio. Cuarenta años fuera de mi país, que ya no es mi país. Y no te creas que siento que España lo sea. Porque a esta altura de mi vida siento que no soy de ninguna parte. Me río cuando alguien, escuchando los bandazos que di en mi vida, todos los lugares donde he vivido, me dice: "Tú eres ciudadano del mundo". Sí, la frase es muy bonita, suena bien eso de "ciudadano del mundo", pero yo en realidad no me siento ciudadano de ningún lugar, más bien me siento un paria que trata de vivir allí donde cae.

Tal vez, como dijo un poeta (¿Félix Grande?), "mi patria es la palabra y un cuerpo de mujer". A la mía le agregaría los amigos. Lo demás son mitos, costumbres, fronteras, himnos, banderas. Tomo mate (cuando la illness me deja), me gustan el fútbol y el tango, ¿es eso ser argentino? El Che era argentino, Videla era argentino. Borges, Maradona, un motochorro, Trótski, un premio Nobel, todos argen-

tiños. En Suecia era extranjero, en España lo soy y, cuando voy a Argentina, también me siento extranjero. Pero, a pesar de todo, y aún sin saber lo que significa eso, soy argentino. Sin orgullo ni vergüenza. Como un lunar de nacimiento, como una cicatriz que los años van borrando pero que nunca se quita. Orgullo siento por algunas cosas que hice, por las mujeres que amé y me amaron, por los amigos que te querían por ser como vos (y a pesar de ello), por los hijos que vuelan libres, por algún cuento que no mereció la papelería, por las piedras que he tirado. Vergüenza por traicionarme, por no atreverme, por el egoísmo, por los besos que no di, por que a veces hablé de más y otras callé cuando debí haber gritado.

No haré una fiesta para festejar estos 40 años. El exilio es una herida sí, pero una herida que llevo con orgullo, el precio que pagué por decir NO.

Bueno Susi, perdóname la filosofía barata, esta charca de café sin mesa ni café, pero vos sos un ancla, mi cable a tierra, y si a quién digo a vos puedo contarle estas cosas?

Un abrazo, saludos a los tuyos
Te quiero Giuseppe





HÉBA

CORNILLET EMAM

Cairo, Egypt
Rennes, France

My darling mother,

If only you knew how much I miss you... How many times I've dreamt of pressing myself against your chest, safe, breathing in your perfume like I did when I was little... Mum, I miss you! Like I miss the taste and smell of your bread, your Eastern spiced coffee, your Eid cakes to savour at teatime, which you always made last long into the afternoon with your stories and tales.

I miss the heat of Egypt, the warmth of the sun, but also the warmth of meeting up with family, friends and neighbours; the noise, I miss those sounds so much: children playing outside, street hawkers and even the incessant blare of car horns! I miss Egyptians' humour, their wild jokes... I regret not being able to go for walks through old Cairo or summer nights lost in cafes until the early hours...

I've been in France for eight years, I live in Brittany with my beloved husband and his adorable family. They've taken care of me since I first arrived, which has relieved my sense of perdition, without really making things easier for me: I knew Cairo like the back of my hand, all its districts, streets and alleyways, but here I was like a child who's lost her parents in the market! I felt devoid of any knowledge and confronted by everything I lacked: I didn't speak French, didn't know how I should behave, my qualifications and work experience counted for nothing. What's more, I didn't have a driving licence and couldn't apply for jobs! I was independent in my own country, a successful journalist, always surrounded by my friends and acquaintances and living a professional lifestyle dotted with conferences, festivals, celebrations and movement; here, I found myself to be a foreigner in a strange world without a single link to my past. I had to start a new life: learn French and become a student again as a 30-something year old...

However, I was proud to study at a French university, the University of Rennes — and in French, no less! But there is still an unbreakable barrier between me and this language... It's a challenge I sometimes struggle to overcome, despite my best efforts. I still find it strange and illogical, I find it very hard to understand and even harder to pronounce, it's a whole world away from my first language, both in its written and spoken forms. Despite my progress and the efforts I've made to master it, which have exhausted me intellectually, I still don't feel fully comfortable reading or writing in it, and that makes me ashamed: Mum, I can only imagine that your granddaughters, Isis and Elsa, see me like I saw you as a child: an "illiterate mother"! My dilemma holds me back, knocks my confidence, isolates me at times and is still the only obstacle as I try to completely integrate in France.

In this country, nature is tidy and charming, but I hate the winter! It's too long, and every year I feel like it will never end. I find the cold painful and the lack of sunlight depresses

me. At heart, the people here are very good, but sometimes they come across as cold, distant and insensitive. However, as an Egyptian I think they have a great impression of me: they are fascinated by our culture and country, rather than with negative preconceptions it seems. They work well, with a sense of efficiency, quality, precision and organisation, but they always do things in the same, repetitive way that for them makes up the rigid structures of the so called "system"! I sometimes find it boring, I get stuck in a rut, I miss chance happening and surprises, incongruities — the mess of the bazaar!

Mum, you're the most precious thing I have in life. I feel such nostalgia for you, my country and my culture but I regret only one thing: I regret being born a woman in that society! I've always regretted it, since I was a child... For you and all the other mothers, having a daughter means getting a burden, limitations and obligations. Is that why we punish girls by mutilating them in our country? And you Mum — did you want to punish me by deciding to have me cut? Or did you want to protect me? I don't want an answer from you, or for you to be sad. I know you just did what others had inflicted on you, as they had done to all the other mothers in your day.

Now I'm a mum, a mum of two girls, and I'm sad they're growing up far away from you, they refuse to speak Egyptian despite my perseverance, they don't see the point, given that they live so far away from my culture and origins... But I want to see them grow up to be free in mind and body, in a society which won't punish them for being women, will respect them and will protect them as such, whether or not they have kept their virginity!

I love you, Mum, but I won't come back. I'm like a tree that's been uprooted from its own soil and replanted in another, more fertile one. I'll always have deep roots over there, where you are, but they've spread out wide, interlinked with others' and bedded down deep into my second home country. I'm a tree which drinks from two lands. I am now that mixture.

I love you, Mum, from the bottom of my heart, and I don't hate you anymore. I've loved you more since I became a mother, it's only now that I understand that it can't have been easy for you. I love you and I forgive you, just as I hope that my daughters would be able to forgive me if one day I make a mistake that damages them, without me meaning to.

I love you and I'm sorry that you weren't able to live your own life, in freedom, to suit yourself, you've never known such pleasures, nor the joys of reading, writing and culture.

I love you, Mum, and I thank you for bringing me up while letting me be your antithesis.

Your loving and respectful daughter, Héba

فصوم هجوريي بحضارتنا وبلدنا. أذهب يعملونه بكفائة ونشاط وإخلاص وتنظيم والكثير يفعلونه دائماً التسمية بنفس المشكله فمن نفس الوقت في إظهار صدام للغاية وهو ما يطلقونه عليه "السيستر" أي الخطأ. لهذا أشعر كثيراً بالملل والروتين وأشتاق إلى الصنعة والمفاجأة والحمولة.

أمي يا أغلى الناس عندي ، رغم أنني إليك وإلى بلدي والذين لمسه أعود .. لمسه أعود للذين لا أحبه أبداً كوني ولدت أمراًة في بلدي وظلما تعلمت أنه أكونه ذكراً حتى أدركت منذ طفولتي أنه الذي في محبتنا هي عبء ثقيل ، عليتي وعلى كل أم . وأن ، لهذا السبب تعاقبني الذي كنتي بختانز ؟ وأنتي أمي ، كنتي تترد يدك عنقاني أم كالتن حين قررتي ختانني ؟ لدا ريد منك جواباً ولا أريدك أنه تجزفي ، فأنا لدا الوهش . أمرك أنك فعلت بي ما قد فعلت بك . لكن الذي أم مثلك ، أم لينتامة ولدا ريد أبناً ، لدا فعلت بها ما فعلت بين وبك . نعم أفرز كثيراً لأنهم يلزمونهم بعيداً عنك . وأنهم يترفضونهم تلك المصربة رغم أنها هي المستقر وأنهم بعيدون على البعد عنهم ثمافتي وأصلني ، لدا أنتي أريدك هو لدا يعيشونه أحرا الروح والبدن في مجتمع حر لدا يعاقبهم يوماً على كونهم أناث و محترموهم ويحميهم سواء كانوا بكارني أم لدا ! أحبك أمي ولكن لمسه أعود ، فأنا شجرة أقتلعت من ثمرها وزرعت في هوطرة آخر وتربية أصابع . فهو ما زالت لي جذور رغبة هناك هناك عندك وسبقه لأبي ، لدا أنه سرعان ما دبت ورسخت لي جذور هنا من جديد وكفرتت وتسايلت في هذه الأرضي . فأنا التي هذا المزيج أنا هذه الأجرة التي تغذت من الترتين .

أحبك أمي من أعماق قلبي وأبداً لم أعد أكرهك ، أحبك أكثر من هذا أنه أصبحت أما وأعز من الذي فقط أنه لم يكن أبداً استطاع عليك ، أحبك وأما حولك الذي أرجوا أنه تساهماني أبتني لو أخطأت يوماً في حقهما بغير قصد . أحبك أمي وأنتي لأنك لم تعيشي الحياة التي تمنيتيها ولم تكوني يوماً حرة ولم تعرفي أبداً شعور اللذة وللمنعة القراءة والكتابة ...

أحبك أمي وأفكرك الذي رببتني على أنه أكونه نقيضك .
 التي على أحترامني وتقديرني وأنا التي يا أمي العزيرة
 أميتك المحبة ... هبة

أمي الحبيبة ،

لا تدري كم أشتاق إليك ولمن الأوجان أحلو أن أدفن رأسي في صدرك وأبقى
أنفاسي برائحتك كما كنت صغيرة لأشعر بالطمينية . أشتاق إليك أمي والى ظهر
ورائحة خبزك وقهوتك المحروجة . أشتاق إلى لحك العيد مع شادن العصاى ههنا
كما أياك وهو أيتك ...

أشتاق إلى الدفج والورس ولحة الأهل والأصحاب والجوارح أشتاق إلى الضوضاء وصوت
الصبية يلعبون من الخارات وأصوات الباعة المتجولين في الأسواق . أشتاق صحن إلى كلالونات
السيارات ! أشتاق إلى مريح وخفة ظل المصريين وثلاث شعور . أشتاق إلى التبول في
أحياء القاهرة القديمة في ليالي الصيف وجلسات المقاهى صحن الصباغ مع صورة أم كلثوم .

صار لي ٨ سنوات بفرنسا أميش في بروتانيا مع زوجي الحبيب وعائلته اللذيذة الذين أطلوني
بالحب والرعاية منذ لحظة قدومي . بما خفف عني صعوبة الاندماج بالفرنسية . ومع هذا لم يكن
أبدا سهلا علي هنا . فبعد أن كنت أحفظ المفردات ثم ظهر قلب سارما ، وحرارة ، وممرا ...
وجدت نفسي هنا كطفل صغير ضلع من أروبه في أحد الأسواق : لا أتكلم الفرنسية ولا أفهم
شيئا ألبتة ولا أعرف كيف أصرف . عمل قصابتي وخبراتي السابقة لم يترأى عتاف برأيها . إذا
ليس لي دبلوم ولا رخصة سواقة ولا عمل بالطبع ... فأنا مجرد غريبة في دنيا ليس لأرى صلة
بها ضيما ، جدا كنت متخفة ومستغلة من بلدي وبعدة يعمل كصحافية ومطالمة دائما بمعارف
وأصدقاء وحياتي مليحة باضفالاته وهرجاناته ودون وحرك ...

أضطررت أن أبدأ صلاتي هنا من جديد ، فتعلمت اللغة الفرنسية ورجعت مرة أخرى طالبة بعد
من الثلاثين . ولت فخورة بأنني أدرني في جامعة فرنسية ، جامعة عام " ولان بيني وبين
اللغة الفرنسية حاجز هنيئ . ونحن أحيانا أقوى من إرادتي ، فهذه اللغة غير طبيعية
وغير منطقية بالنسبة لي . أجيد صعوبة ذهنية في لفظها وفصحا ونحو الـ فزار الذي
صقته في اجادتي بعد مجيوري . أنهتني قلريا ونفسيا . لأنني ما زلت لدا أجيد تماما القراءة
والكتابة بل ما زلت عني بالخل وأحيانا بالعار . أمي كذا كقول أم تراق حفيدتك
رايزيس و التراما رأيتك أنا عندما كنت صغيرة " أم أمية " . أسأليني هذه توريقي
دائما وتووقني وتفقدني ثقتي بنفسى وتعرفني أحيانا ليرة وما زالت هي العصبية الوحيدة
لي صفا في فرنسا .

الطبيعة هنا نظيفة وساهرة ولان هارت أكثره السند فهو طويل طويل وصين يبدأ أسعر بأنه لم
ينتهي أبدا . البرد يملئ والعتبة والغيمة المستمرة تلمسني . أما الناي فهو حقيقنا طيبون
رغم ما يظهره أحيانا من قسوة وبرودة وحفظ ... أستقبل دائما بتوصيت مصرية .



JANINA VESIN

Warsaw, Poland
Rennes, France

Dear Mum,

When I arrived in Rennes in 1944, I would never have imagined that we had already seen each other for the last time. You never met your grandchildren, and I was never able to come back to Warsaw while you were alive as Poland was at the other side of the iron curtain at the time.

I can still picture so many scenes from the past and I remember the tiniest details. I remember your haberdasher's shop on Marszałkowska Street and our first flat on Niecała Street, right by Saski park. You'd all pointed the building out to me so many times.

I had a wonderful life with you all in Warsaw, but we weren't spared by the hand of fate!

I remember the incredible stroke of luck I had. One day I was with my grandmother and I managed to sneak away from her watchful eye. I fell out of a fourth floor window. I was barely two years old, and I escaped without the slightest scratch. A crowd of people gathered at the bottom of our building, and when you got back and heard what had happened, your hair turned grey in a matter of minutes. So I always knew you with grey hair. The Survivor, that's what people called me! You did a pilgrimage to Czestochowa to give your thanks for that miracle.

At the start of the Second World War, a shell fell on our house on Kapucyńska Street and our flat burned down.

When the Warsaw Uprising erupted, we had to leave our house on Daniłowiczowska Street to move into the basement of an old building. We had to abandon everything, we could only take two suitcases with us. I remember when you sewed gold roubles in the lining of our clothes in case of dire emergencies. The Uprising was a terrible thing, worse than the War. The bombing never let up and I saw many dead people. I also saw people scratching at the earth with their fingernails to gather what ragged human remains they could so they could give them a proper burial. One day, the insurgents were happy to find an abandoned German tank. They didn't know it was a trap. Lots of people were gathering round and I was running over too. The immense blast of an engine packed with explosives wiped dozens of people off the surface of the Earth. We can never forget this time. Thankfully, there are lots of books about it, I read and collect them all.

Combat broke out street by street, and the bitterest was in the old part of the city where we lived. I remember when the Germans came, shouting "Out!". They took all three of us, me, you and Dad. My brother was fighting for the Resistance. First they took us to a transition camp near Warsaw. Then we were taken on a two-day journey in a cattle truck to Gross-Rosen concentration camp.

We were separated out when we got there, men had to turn right, women left. I never got to say goodbye to Dad. I didn't know I'd never see him again. Later, my brother looked for him with the help of the International Red Cross, but it was in vain.

I was able to stay with you because I lied that I was 14. Despite all the years that have since passed, I can still picture that terrible moment when we were disinfected with toxic chemicals that ran down our heads and burned our skin. They forced us to undress completely, and it was the first time I'd seen you in such a humiliating situation.

We were made to work on a farm. We spent eight months there doing hard labour, but at least there was food. We got used to seeing dead bodies, it didn't bother us anymore and it was terrible.

I met François, a French prisoner, and we fell in love. A priest married us. Thank God that it was the Americans who liberated us and not the Russians. And it was then that we parted ways. You didn't come to France with us because you wanted to look for your husband and son.

We arrived in Rennes and everything went very well for us at first. My husband opened a business making musical instruments and made a good living. Françoise was born first, then Catherine.

My husband left me a few years later. My French still wasn't very good and I had to manage on my own. I was lucky enough to meet some kind people who helped me and gave me a job.

I went back to Poland for the first time in 1967. You were no longer there. I couldn't find a trace of the world I'd known there, as Warsaw had been almost entirely destroyed. The streets had changed and I recognised nothing save the old part of the city, which had been meticulously reconstructed.

I don't go to Poland anymore because there's no longer anyone there for me. In Rennes, my daughter found the Polonia association, and it makes me happy to meet my compatriots and go to the Polish library. Most of my French friends have died and I now speak Polish more often than I do French.

I've lived in my flat on Arthur Quentin Square for more than half a century. I really like this place. I'm at home here and I'd like to die here. I've had a wonderful life in France, and I'm proud of my children, my grandchildren and my great-grandchildren. I don't need anything more. I've been through hard times, but I've been lucky enough to have lived a life.

Your Jania

Moja kochana Mamunia.

Gdy przyjechałam tutaj do Rennes w 1944 roku, nie przypuszczałam, że jutro się nigdy nie zobaczymy! Ty mi mogłaś poznać swoich kumcerek, a ja mi mogłam wrócić za Twojego życia do Warszawy, bo Zola była wtedy za „Zelazną kurtyną”

Tyle obawoś mam przed wojną, wymyśliło doskonale pamiętam. Mam sklep z materiałami na Marnatko-wolskiej, mame pierwsze mieszkanie na ulicy Miatkiej, przy Ogrodzie Saskim. Ten budynek taki było później pokazywaliście mi.

Miałam takie piękne życie z Nani w Warszawie, choć los nas nie oszczędził! I też miszmonite nacięci.

Pewnego dnia, zostawiłaś mnie pod opieką babci, a ja umknęłam jej uwadze i wyjechałam z dnia, z 4 piętra. Margo zaledwie 2 lata, wyjechałam z tego też najpiękniejszego sadzawnicia. Tym razem był na dole, a Ty jako wróciłaś i dowiedzieliście się co się stało, wróciłaś w cięgi kłopoty i imię. I tutaj cię na zawsze zapamiętałam. „Ocalona” jak o mnie mówiono! I podziękowałam za ten czas, ponieważ przelotnie na pielgrzymkę do Cytrynowy.

Na początku wojny bomba pożarowa spadła na nasz dom na Kapucyńskiej i mame mieszkanie spłonęło.

Kiedy wybuchało Powstanie Warszawskie murielismy opuścić nasz dom na Danielowickiej i zamienić w piwnicy, w innej kamienicy. Treba było wymyślić zastawic, mogliśmy zabawić jedynie że robę tylko dwie walizki. Pamiętam jak kupione na „carno godzinie” zioła sible, wymyślałam do podnieśli ubrania, aby przeszyć te cięgi ciary.

Powstaniem to było coś strasznego, było gorne mi wojna, miłot mi moie sobie tego wyobrazić. Bombardowa-
mi od rana do wieczna, widziałam tyle rabitygli i
jako psanoleciauni wydraprawno nupkli ludzkie, aby je
pochować. Pewnego dnia Powstańcy zmienyli się, goly
znalazli opuszczonej przez Niemców ulicę. Nie wiedzieli, że to
pułapka. Zebrało się wiele ludzi i je też tam pobiegłam.
Potemmy wybuchi nupetunicznego erotykiem pojedku, zmiotti z powrochni
ziemi dierpikli orob. Nie można o tych czasach zapomnieć,
dobrze, że wiele kumcerek napisało o Powstaniu, wymyśliła je cy-
tam i kolekcjonuję.

Walki trwały o każdą ulicę, najbardziej racytacie były na
Starówce, gdzie mieszkaliśmy. Pamiętam, kiedy plynęli po nas
Niemcy i kumcerek „wyhodzicie”. Zabrali nas w Trójkę Ciębie
Tatura i mnie. Brat walczył wtedy w partyzantce.

Najpierw zawiezi nas do obozu przejściowego na
Warszawę. Stamtąd wymieszono nas do Niemca podjęciem,
zjechałismy w wagonie dla bydła przez dwa dni do obozu
koncentracyjnego w Gross-Rosen.

Na miejscu zostaliśmy rozdzieleni, mężczyźni musieli iść w prawo, a kobiety w lewo. Nie mogłam nawet pojechać z Tatariem, nie miałam wtedy, że go już nigdy nie zobaczę. Brat szukał go później przy Czerwonym Krzyżu, ale bez skutku.

Młodo mi się rozstał z Tobi, bo zdecydowałam, że mam 14 lat. Choć było lat już więcej, pamiętam tę okropną chwilę, gdy nas dezynfekowano kłopotliwie dezynfekacją, które spryskały po naszymi ubiorach i palcami dłoni. Karano nam rozbrać się do naga, po nam pierwszy mężczyzna był w takiej upokarzającej sytuacji.

Przydzielono nas do pracy w gospodarstwie rolnym. To było o wiele miększy ciężkiej karczki, ale pracowniczek mieliśmy co jeść. Widok kłopot mi robił na nas już żadnego znaczenia, przypomniał mi się do tego i to było okropne.

Tam poznałam François, francuskiego więźnia i zakochaliśmy się w sobie. Kłopotliwie udało nam się uciec. Duplei Bogu, uwolnili nas Amerykanie a nie Rosjanie. I wtedy moje drogi rozstały się. Nie pojechałam z nami do Francji, bo chciałam wrócić do Warszawy, odwiedzić swojego Micia i Sina.

A my pojechaliśmy do Rennes i było nam bardzo dobrze na początku. Miałam otworzyć własny zakład instrumentów dętych i bardzo dobrze zarabiał. Najpierw urodziła się Franca, a później Karla. Miałam odnieść po kilku latach. Nie miałam jeszcze dobrze mówić po francusku, ale miałam praca i radziła sobie sama. Na szczęście znalazłam bardzo dobrego ludź. który mi pomógł i zatrudnił mnie.

Po nam pierwszy mężczyzna do Polski w 1967 roku. Ciężko mi było. Nie znalazłam nic ze świata który znalazłam, bo Warszawa została całkowicie zniszczona. Ulica się posunęła, mój mój poznałam opócu Atarski, która została starannie odbudowana.

Nie jeździć już do Polski, bo mi mam tam niłogo. W Rennes, znalazłam znalazła stowarzyszenie "Colonia", ciemni, że mogę się spotkać z rodakami, że jest biblioteka z polskimi książkami. Odkąd zaczęłam mówić francuski przysięgam swante, ciężko mówić po polsku niż po francusku.

Od ponad pół wieku, mieszkam w moim aktualnym mieszkaniu na ulicy Arthur Quentin.

Bardzo lubię to miejsce, tu jestem w sobie i tu chciałabym umrzeć.

Miałam dobre życie w Francji, dobre dzieci, wnuczki i prawnuki. Nie potrzebuję niczego więcej. Inne życie ciężkie momenty, ale miałam szczęście żyć.

Troja Maria

Janina Sałbecka



MANUEL RÍOS

Santiago, Chili
Rennes, France

Hola Flaco!

I've been meaning to write to you for a long time. My failure to do so is pure laziness. I must admit, old chap, that with age I have become rather lazy. Be that as it may, my mind is flooded with memories. My life, like everyone else's, consists of many things, and memories (good and bad) are an essential part of it. And that includes you, Flaco. You, and your dear wife, belong among my happy memories, memories that will stay with me for life, I'm sure of that. The problem is that I have never told what a large part you and your wife, the "Rucia", have played in my life, and in my survival. Without you, without the Rucia, I know I would not be here. Of course, there are other people who are part of my world, my circle of friends, childhood friends in some cases, like you. People I have met in the course of my life. And then there are those I have no right to forget, my lost comrades, and also those who have come through these endless struggles without too much damage.

Still, that all belongs to the past. We have come a long way since our childhood, lived out in the dusty street and lanes of "Población Venezuela", Pedro Donoso Street and the surrounding area. I observe all these past events through the rear-view mirror of life. And in the mirror, I see all the distance I have travelled. I see images, people, places. I see my schoolmates, those I knew at high school and university... Don't laugh! I know I never attended university, except when I went to the "Cordón cerrillos maipú" architecture faculty to take part in political meetings. You know even better than me how at that time young people in Chile were involved in the process of change initiated by Salvador Allende.

At the same time, I can see you playing football in the colours of "Deportivo Rungue". As you will remember, I played for "Deportivo San Felipe"; on the pitch, we were rivals, but still friends. Those football matches could go on for hours and hours. They did not end until nightfall, or when a neighbour, irritated by our offhand manner, confiscated our ball. We certainly behaved in a crazy way. I get the impression that, though we played football with real enthusiasm, it meant more to us than just that. For me, at least, it was also something serious. I think I played as if I were, or were set to become, a great professional. On the pitch, or rather in the street, I was obsessed with the idea of getting the ball, dribbling, evading tackles, doing one-twos... All I wanted was to shine. I remember that you, too, were very technical in your approach. You were always a subtle player, treating the ball with elegance, rather in the style of Chama-co Valdez. But football was not the only thing we cared about.

At that time in Chile, the social cauldron was boiling over. The "process", as you defined it, was making headway, despite its flagrant contradictions. But the threat of a coup was becoming more real. We were already active in the MIR. We were young, carefree, dreamers even, but without ever losing our sense of direction. We wanted to change the world... without realising that, years later, this struggle would be the cause of our exile, our being ostracised, and would force us to live in other countries.

Where the Paris attacks are concerned, I know that you, too, must be shocked by what has happened, especially since, in Chile, you have heard the news from the front... news about the dreadful attacks committed by these mad devotees of Allah... Here, I must tell you, emotions are still running very high, as is quite natural. The

only sour note in all this is that people are paralysed, feeling lost. This prevents them from analysing and understanding what is at stake, the reason for all this, why France is the target of the Salafists, these bloodthirsty terrorists. To listen to the media and the government representatives, you would think that all this had occurred somehow out of the blue, like the curse of Malinche. And yet, given the bellicose spirit of the ruling classes, it was quite clear that one day something like this might happen. And now, sadly, it has! I am tempted to think that France has not yet got out of its rut, its grand imperial idea, a colonial past that still makes people dream. Now it has let itself be trapped by its own demons. It is being devoured by horrible monsters which it has fed with its own hand, in Syria and elsewhere. Monsters it thought it had already tamed, that it thought it could exploit with impunity as strike force to bring down this or that regime. Then there is this latent contempt for the Muslim world, although they deny it. People are also saying that France is paying for its unlimited submission to the USA. The West, its friends and allies are united in a deathly embrace around the idea of world domination, determined to take up arms, to break the countries that form an obstacle on the road to conquest. De Gaulle was able to say no to the imperial demands of the United States. Nowadays, however, France prefers to lie down before the great empire. During its history, France has produced some excellent people, but this is the "age of the poodle".

Enough of that. Tell me, how is Cecilia, your lovely wife...? Sorry, I mean your partner, but it's true she's a beautiful woman. But without wanting to be a demagogue, I think she is above all a fine person. Give her a kiss from me, and the same for your four daughters. Each more adorable than the next, if truth be told. What is more, I don't know if you are a grandfather yet. I often remember your daughters, especially from the time of my clandestine stay at your place, in 1982. Not far from my parents' home, of course, which was not very reassuring. I was already being pursued by the CNI. I remember the circumstances very well. I had decided to go and see you and ask for help, in other words ask you to give me a place to stay for a few days, until I could find another hideaway. And you, you and Cecilia, agreed straight away, without the slightest hesitation. And that was amazing, because fear was doing its deadly work in Pinochet's Chile. Even if they wanted to give us a hand, people often refused for fear of reprisals. I ended up staying for a week. You even let me use the little Subaru. And she gave me a real helping hand, the young one... And then, years later, I learned that Charles Ramirez, known as Beño in the MIR, had also been received by you when he was on the run. Beño left too early one morning at the end of his stay with you, as he was due to take part in a major armed operation led by the MIR in the centre of Santiago. He was one of twenty-five fighters determined to strike a blow against Tyranny but, unfortunately, as they were making their escape, Beño was hit by a burst of gunfire and died on the spot. End of story. I apologise. I should not have brought this subject up. It was hard for the two of you, and for your girls, as they adored Charles. I, too, rated him very highly, loved him as only a man can love another man. Don't get me wrong: he wasn't gay, and neither am I. I admired Charles, just as I admire you, as I admire Cecilia, as I love my wife, my children and all those who fought against that pathetic rabble, that aristocracy of scum. Enough! My feelings are all stirred up, I'd better stop... So, from my distant place of exile, I say... ¡Hasta pronto!

HOY FLACO, HACE TIEMPO QUE QUERÍA ESCRIBIRTE, SI NO LO HICE FUE SIMPLEMENTE POR PEREZA. TIENES QUE SABER AMIGO MIO QUE CON LA EDAD ME HE PUESTO UN POCO HOLGAZAN. PERO QUE IMPORTA, MAS IMPORTANTE SERIA DECIRTE QUE EN ESTE MOMENTO LOS RECUERDOS ME DE BORAN. COMO TÚ, YO FREO QUE NUESTRAS VIDAS ESTAN HECHAS DE MUCHAS COSAS, OCHO DE LOS RECUERDOS CONSTITUYEN UNA PARTE ESENCIAL TÚ FUICO, TÚ ERES UNO, ASI COMO TU COMPANERIA, EL PROBLEMA ES QUE ECONOMICA TE LO DIJE, COMO TAMPOCO TE DIJE QUE LISTEDES DOS MUCHO HAN CONTADO EN MI VIDA, Y EN MI SOBREVIVENCIA TAMBIEN, SIN LA AYUDA DE LISTEDES PROBABLEMENTE YO NO ESTARIA AQUI, LO TENGO MUY CLARO. BUENO, TAMBIEN HAY OTRAS PERSONAS QUE HACEN PARTE DE MI VIDA, DE ESE PUNTO DE AMIGOS DE INFANCIA COMO TÚ, COMO DE AQUELLOS QUE NO TENGO EL DERECHO DE OLVIDAR, MIS CAMARADAS DE SA PARECIDOS, ASI COMO DE AQUELLOS QUE COMBATIERON A LA TIRANIA Y SOBREVIVIERON. ES CIERTO, TODO ESO YA PERTENECE AL PASADO. HOY DIA ESTAMOS LEJOS DE NUESTRA INFANCIA VIVIMOS EN ESAS POLVORIENTAS CALLES DE LA POBLACION VENEZUELA, DE LA CAJE PCORD OCHO SO, SUS ALREDEDORES. YO MIRO ESE PASADO A TRAVES DE ESTA ESPECIE DE RETROVISOR QUE TIENE LA VIDA, Y ALLI YO VEO CURITO, IMAGENES, PERSONAS, LUGARES, INTIMIDAD. VEO A MIS AMIGUITOS DE LA PRIMARIA, DEL LICEO, DE LA UNIVERSIDAD... NO! YO SE QUE TE VAS A REIR PUESTO QUE YO NUNCA FUI A LA UNIVERSIDAD, SI NO ERA A LA FAC DE ARQUITECTURA DEL "CORDON CERRILLOS NAIDA", A PARTICIPAR EN DEBATES POLITICOS, Y COMO TU LO SABES EN ESA EPOCA LA JUVENTUD CHILENA ESTABA IMPLICADA A FONDO EN EL "PROCESO" DE CAMBIOS QUE VIVIA CHILE. SIN SABER QUE AÑOS DESPUES ESTE COMPROMISO POR UN MUNDO MEJOR NOS ENVIARIA AL EXILIO, AL OSTRACISMO, A ERGAR EN OTRAS LATITUDES, LEJOS DE NUESTRA TIERRA. PERO TAMBIEN TE VEO JUGANDO FUTBOL, ACUERDATE, YO JUGABA EN EL DEPORTIVO "SAN FELIPE". ESAS PICHANGAS DURABAN HORAS Y SOLO SE TERMINABAN CUANDO UN VECINO IRRITADO POR NUESTRA OSENVOLTURA, NOS CONFISABA LA PELOTA SIMPLEMENTE. EN LA CANCHA, MAS BIEN EN LA CAJE, UNO ESTABA OSESIONADO POR HACERSE DE LA PELOTA, UNO QUERIA BRILLAR Y MOSTRAR TAMBIEN QUE UNO ERA MUY BUENO, UN CRAC. PINTAS, TUNELES, ENGANCHES, ES OERA PUNTALCERIA, ALBORZO. ME QUEREO QUE TU ERAS MUY TECNICO, JUGANDO SIEMPRE SIN FINERZA, CON ELEGANCIA, DICAMOS UN POCO A LA JOHN CRUYFF. PERO CLARO EL FUTBOL NO ERA TODO. EN ESA EPOCA LA MARMITA SOCIAL HERVIA EN CHILE. EL PROCESO, COMO DECIAMOS, A PESAR DE SUS FLAGRANTES CONTRADICCIONES ERA P'JOZANTE Y NADA PARECIA PARARLO. PERO EN EL HORIZONTE LA ATENAZA DE GOLPE DE ESTADO SE PERFILABA. AMBOS YA MILITABAMOS EN EL MIR. ERAMOS JOVENES, SOÑADORES, PERO NO PERDIAMOS LA BRUJULA, PENSAR QUE QUERIAMOS CAMBIAR EL MUNDO... PASANDO A OTRA COSA, ESTOY SEGURO QUE TU TAMBIEN DEBES ESTAR ASQUEADO POR LOS ATENTADOS DE PARIS, CLARO PORQUE EN CHILE TAMBIEN HAN LLEGADO LAS NUEVAS VENIDAS DEL "FRENTE"... HAGO OMSION A LOS ATENTADOS COMETIDOS POR LOS FANATICOS DE ALLAH. TIENES QUE SABER QUE AQUI LA EMOCION ES INMENSAS, PERO ES NATURAL, EL PROBLEMA ES QUE LA GENTE TIENE MIEDO Y ESTA PARALIZADA, PERDIDA. ES O LES IMPIDE DE ANALIZAR, DE COMPRENDER EL PORQUE DE LA COSA, EL PORQUE FRANCIA ES EL BLANCO DE ESTOS SALTAFISTAS, DE ESTOS TERRORISTAS SANCIONARIOS. TE CUENTO ES O PORQUE AL LEER LA PRENSA Y ESCUCNAR LAS DECLARACIONES OFICIALES TE DEJAN LA IMPRESION QUE ESTO CAYO DEL RIELO, ASI NO MAS, COMO UNA MALDIEION DE MALINCHE. SIN ENBARGO EL ESPIRITU GUERRERO DE LAS CASTAS DOMINANTES, OABAN A ENTENDER QUE UN DIA ESTO PODIA PASAR. Y PASO! OESCAROQUAMENTE. ADEMÁS TENGO LA SENSACION DE CREER QUE FRANCIA NO HA ABANDONADO SU GRAN IDEA IMPERIAL. DE ESE PASADO PASADO COLONIAL QUE LA JUELVE LOCA, ASI EN LA MISMA SE HIZO DEVORAR POR SUS PROPIOS DEMONIOS, Y ESTA SIEMPRE DEVASTADA

MORALMENTE POR ESOS MOTIVOS HORRIBLES, A LOS CUALES ELA MISMA HA NUTRIDO GENEROSAMENTE EN SIRIA Y EN OTROS PAISES. DE ESOS MOTIVOS QUE ELA PRECISA HABERLOS DOMADO YA, QUE ELA PRECISA PODER SERVIRSE IMPUNEMENTE, UTILIZÁNDOLOS COMO UNA FUERZA MILITAR PARA HACER CAER TAL O TAL RÉGIMEN. DESPUÉS ESE DESPRECIO LATENTE POR LOS VASALLOS DE LA 'BANLIEU' HAN HECHO EL RESTO. TAMBIÉN SE DICE QUE FRANCIA ESTÁ PAGANDO SU SUMISIÓN A LOS EEUU. TÚ PODRÁS VER QUE EL OCCIDENTE, SUS AMIGOS Y SUS ALIADOS ESTÁN UNIDOS EN UN PACTO DE MUERTE SOBRE UNA IDEA DE DOMINACIÓN DEL MUNDO Y DECIDIDOS A HACER HABLAR LAS ARMAS, HASTA HACER SALTAR LOS ESCULOS (PAISES) QUE CONSTITUYEN OBSTÁCULOS EN SUS CUNZAS DE CONQUISTA. CHARLES DE GAULLE EN SU TIEMPO SUPO PARAR EN SECO LAS INCCENTENCIAS IMPERIALES DE USA. HOY DÍA AL PONTRARIO, FRANCIA HA PREFERIDO VENDERSE AL MEJOR POSTOR, SOMETIÉNDOSE SIN DECORO A LA HEGEMONÍA DEL GRAN IMPERIO. LO TRISTE ES QUE ESTE MISMO PAÍS EN SU HISTORIA HA PRODUCIDO GRANDES PENSADORES, FUE UNA DE LA REVOLUCIÓN, Y ES TRISTE VERLA CONVERTIDO EN EL TERROR FALDERO A LOS ESTADOS UNIDOS. PERO BUENO, EL TEMA ES LARGO, AIME MEJOR COMO ESTÁ FELICIA, LA BELLA... NO! ESTOY BRONEANDO, QUIERO DECIR TU COMPAÑERA, ES VERDAD QUE ES UNA BUENA MUJER, PERO SIN QUERER SER DEMAGOGO, DIGASO QUE ES SOBETADO UNA LINDA PERSONA QUIERO QUE LA ABRASES MUY FUERTE, COMO TAMBIÉN A TUS HIJAS. TAMBIÉN ACUERDO SEGUIR DE TUS HIJAS, DESPUÉS DE MI FUATIVA ESTABA EN VUESTRA CASA EL AÑO 1982. ELAS ESTABAN AUN CHIGUITAS, USTEDES VIUIAN ALADO DEL CEMENTERIO ISRAELITA DE SANTIAGO, AL FONDO ME QUEROO, SE VEIA EL IMPRESIONANTE MONTE MANQUEHUE, Y FLAN QUEROO DE NORTE A SUR POR LA CABETA MONTAÑOSA DEL SAN PRISTOBAL, NO LEJOS DE LA CASA DE MIS PADRES, CUSA QUE ERA PELIGROSA POR ESTAR ESTA CASA VIGILADA POR LA ENI (POLICIA POLITICA). YO ME ACUERDO MUY BIEN DE LA SITUACIÓN. YO HABIA DECIDIDO IR A VER LOS EN LA IDEA DE PEDIRLES AYUDA, YO IBA CONTENTO, PERO PREOCUPADO, YO QUERIA QUE USTEDES ME ACOGIERAN UN PAR DE DIAS, JUSTO EL TIEMPO DE ENCONTRAR OTRO ESCONOITE. ME ACUERDO BIEN, USTEDES SIN QUERER ME DIZENDON ALTIRO QUE SI. Y FUEESO LO EXTRAORDINARIO, YA QUE EL MIEDO HACIA ESTRACOS ENTRE LOS CHILENOS. AL FINAL ME QUODE UNA SEMANA CON USTEDES, INCLUCO ME PRESTARON EL FUMANTE AUTO SUBARU Y QUE TANTO ME SIRUIO. DESPUÉS, PARA TERMINAR, SUPÉ QUE CHARLES RAMIREZ, CONOCIDO COMO "BEÑO" EN EL MIR, TAMBIÉN HABIA SIDO ACOGIDO POR USTEDES. BEÑO TAMBIÉN ERA UN PLAN DESTINO. AL FINAL DE SU ESTADIA, UNA MAÑANA DE JUNIO, PARTIO TEMPRANO DE TU CASA, IBA A PARTICIPAR EN UNA GRAN OPERACIÓN ARMADA DEL MIR EN PLENO SANTIAGO. 25 COMBATIENTES ERAN, DESGRACIADAMENTE AL CONCLUIR LA OPERACIÓN BEÑO FUE ALCANZADO POR UNA RÁFAGA EN ALENO CORAZÓN, Y ALLI CAYÓ PARA SIEMPRE MUERTO EN COMBATE. QUISIERA PEDIRLES DISCULPAS POR HABER EVOCADO ESTE TRISTE EPISODIO, YO SÉ QUE PARA USTEDES FUE DURO ESTE GOLPE, INCLUCO PARA VUESTRAS HIJAS, YA QUE ELAS TAMBIÉN ADORABAN AL BEÑO, COMO YO TAMBIÉN LO QUERIA, YO LO QUERIA COMO SOLO UN HOMBRE PUEDE QUERER A OTRO HOMBRE. NO! NO! NO SE EQUIVO QUEN, CHARLES NO ERA HOMO, YO TAMPUCO A PROPOSITO YO LO ADMIRABA, COMO YO LOS ADMIRO A TODOS USTEDES, LINDA FAMILIA, COMO YO AMO A MI MUJER, COMO AMO A MIS HIJOS Y A TODOS AQUELLOS QUE COMBATIERON A ESTA ESCORIA MILITAR, A ESTA ARISTOCRACIA DE MISERABLES, BUENO DESDE MI EXILIO LEJANO ME SIENTO UN TANTO ENOCIADO, LEJOS DE USTEDES LEJOS DE MI TIERRA PREFIERO DECIRLES HASTA PRONTO, HASTA SIEMPRE AMIGOS. MANUEL FRANCIA ABRIL 2016



PALOMA FERNÁNDEZ SOBRINO

Puertollano, Spain
Rennes, France

My dear grandmother Nicasia,

I love you and miss you.

You left and I wasn't able to say goodbye, your last words don't exist.

I can still smell the perfume that you wore in all my childhood memories, the childhood I lived in La Mancha, my earliest days in a place whose name no one remembers.

Now you're gone.

I'm writing this letter to apologise, because I didn't get to your funeral. I tried. When I found out that you'd gone, I dashed to Paris to catch a train, but the train which was to take me to your funeral in Aldea del Rey had broken down and I stayed in Paris at the Gare d'Austerlitz all night. I'll always remember that night, sleeping in a train that would never reach Spain; that was the night when my sadness started to creep up on me. I remember how cold Paris was, the snow and the name Austerlitz. I remember not moving, not being able to do anything about not moving. Not moving in a foreign station, surrounded by foreigners who didn't know you and couldn't comprehend my pain.

Now the name Austerlitz is part of my life — Austerlitz and your death. The distance between Austerlitz and your resting place.

I've had a lot of time to accept your absence. Is it really possible to get over the loss of someone who was so essential to your own existence? For me, you are, you were and you always will be a rock.

I know it was you who taught me the most important things, the things you can't see or say, and it's thanks to you that I can carry on.

I would love to have your strength.

I would have loved to have shown you the Eiffel Tower and Brittany.

I'm sure that you'd be proud of me because I'm doing what I love, even though I know you wouldn't understand my work, or contemporary art, or all the abstractions that crowd around my life.

I went to university here — you'd be happy about that. I was happy to study in a French university too.

I know that you'd be proud of me because I'm a good person.

You'd have been happy to meet my son, Otto. He's four years old now, he speaks perfect Spanish and French. His French accent would make you laugh so much.

Having a child in a country that isn't your own is very strange. For starters, he's French, not Spanish... He doesn't have my accent or speak like me... although he does have both nationalities. Sometimes he says to me "Mum, I don't want you to speak Spanish!" but then he calms down, and he knows that if he really wants something, he has to ask me for it in Spanish...

You have to really persist when it comes to language... I don't want him to lose his Spanish identity either, and that starts with language. In time, his cousin Martina and friend Teix will teach him Spanish.

Thanks to my son, I'm laying down roots in Rennes, the place where he was born and where we live.

I separated from his father two years ago, Otto was only two and a half... That was when I knew that I could never go back.

My son will tie me to Brittany forever, and now this is where I belong.

Living with a child without family around you in a country that isn't your own is very hard. It's certainly the hardest thing I've ever had to do in my life.

I'm scared, Nicasia.

You always told me not to be scared, but I am scared and I don't know how not to be scared in the midst of a storm in foreign lands.

How can you not be scared when the people you love unconditionally aren't there at your side?

I hope I will be able to live the life of my dreams, I hope this fear will go, and that long distances become shorter...

I will never forget my roots, and I'll always know exactly where I'm from so I never lose my way...

Thank you for teaching me how to love unconditionally.

Paloma

Mi querida abuela Nicosia,

Te quiero y te echo de menos.

Te fuiste y no pude despedirme, tus últimas palabras no existieron.

Aún tengo tu olor impregnado en cada recuerdo de mi infancia, mi infancia en la Mancha, mi pequeña infancia en un lugar cuyo nombre nadie recuerda. Ahora estás muerta.

Te escribo esta carta para disculparme, porque no llegué a tu funeral. Lo intenté. En cuanto supe que te fuiste corrí a París para coger un tren, pero aquel tren que debió llevarme a tu entierro en la Aldea del Rey tuvo un problema y se quedó en París toda la noche, en la estación de Austerlitz. Perroforé siempre esa noche durmiendo en un tren que nunca llegó a España, aquella noche marcó mi tristeza cesante. Recuerdo el frío en París, la nieve y el nombre de Austerlitz. Y me recuerdo a mi misma quieta, sin poder hacer nada para remediar tanta quietud. Quieta en una estación extranjera, que nunca te conocí y que no podía comprender mi dolor.

La palabra Austerlitz forma parte de mi vida. Austerlitz y el lugar donde desearas.

He tardado muchos años en hacer tu duelo.

¿Puede alguien superar realmente la pérdida de una persona fundamental para su propia existencia? Para mí eres, fuiste y serás siempre un pilar. Sé que me enseñaste lo esencial, lo invisible y lo indelible, y que gracias a ti resisto.

¿Qué tuviera tu fuerza.

¿Qué hubiera podido enseñarte la torre Eiffel y la Bretaña.

Sé que estarías orgullosa de mí porque hago lo que me gusta, aunque sé que no comprenderías mi trabajo, mi arte contemporáneo, ni todas esas abstracciones que rodean mi vida.

Aquí he estudiado en la universidad, eso te haría feliz. A mí también me ha hecho muy feliz estudiar en una universidad francesa.

Sé que estarías orgullosa de mí porque soy una buena persona.

Y sé que te hubiera hecho muy feliz conocer a Otto, mi hijo. Ahora tiene cuatro años, habla castellano y francés perfectamente pero te sería

Muchísimo soy el porque cuando habla catalán tiene acento francés.
 Tener un hijo en un país que no es el tuyo es muy extraño. Para empezar es francés, no español... no tiene mi acento, ni mi manera de hablar... aunque tenga dos nacionalidades. A veces me dice: -¡Mamá, no quiero que hables español!... pero luego se le pasa y cuando quiere algo de respeto, sabe que tiene que pedirlo en catalán...

Tengo que ser muy insistente con la lengua... no quiero que pierda su identidad ibérica, para empezar el catalán y con el tiempo, en propia persona y su abuelo Teix le enseñará catalán.

Gracias a mi hijo estoy haciendo raíces en Rennes, el lugar en el que nació y en el que vivimos.

Me acordé de su padre hace dos años, Otto solo tenía dos años y medio y en ese momento supe que mi viaje era ya eterno. Otto me une a la Bretaña para siempre.

Estar sola con un niño y sin familia, en un país que no es el tuyo es muy duro. Seguramente es una de las pruebas más difíciles que la vida me ha puesto en el camino.

Tengo miedo, Nicosia.

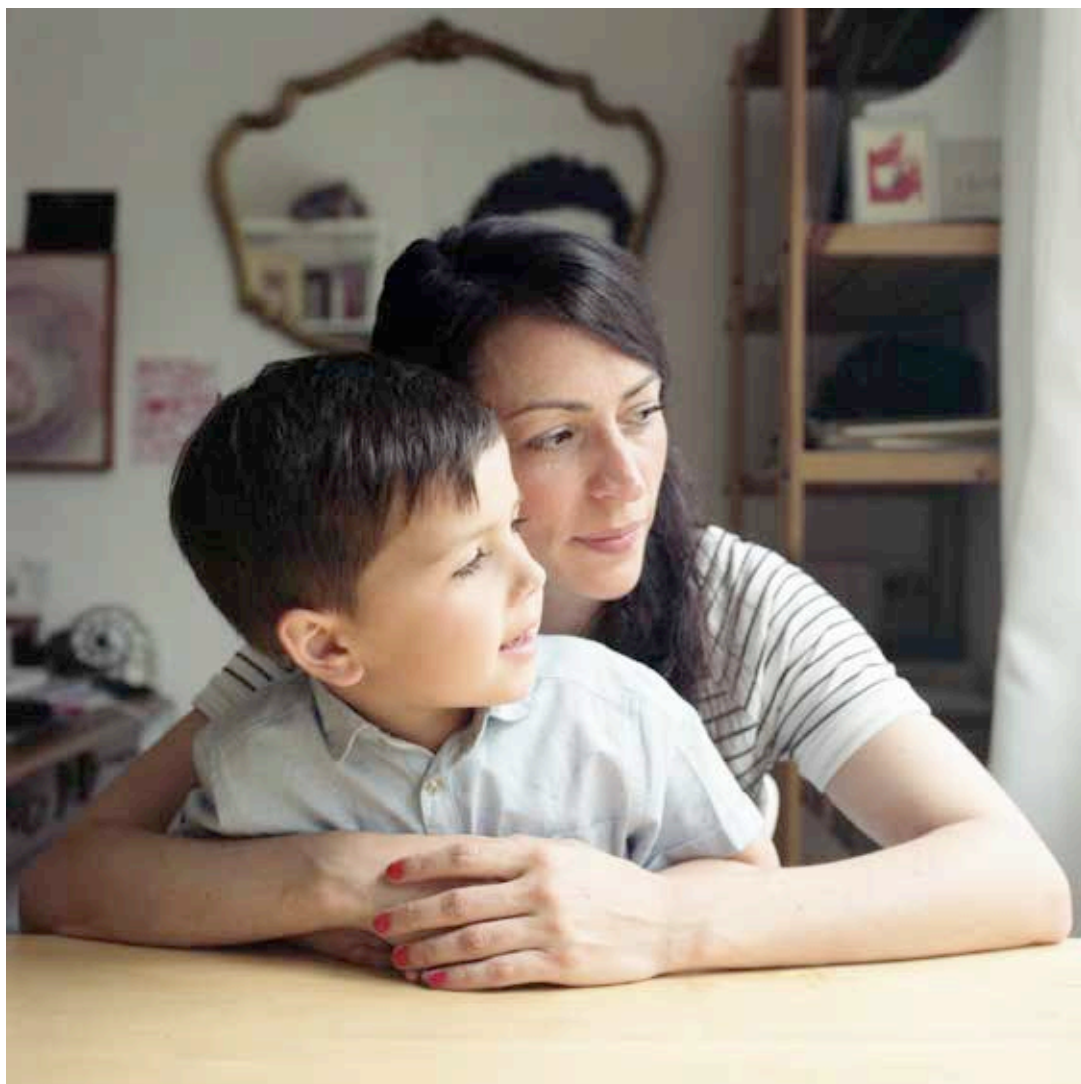
Sé que siempre me has dicho que no hay que tener miedo, pero yo tengo miedo y no sé cómo no tener miedo en plena tormenta, en paisajes extranjeros.

¿Cómo no tener miedo cuando te faltan tus incondicionales?

Espero estar a la altura de mis sueños, espero que el miedo pase y que la alegría se haga caracota...

Nunca perderé mis orígenes y siempre tendré algo de donde venir para no perderme en el camino.

Gracias por enseñarme a querer sin condiciones.



VICTOR OBERTAN

Pointe-Noire, Guadeloupe
Rennes, France

29 March, Rennes

Dear Félix,

It's your cousin Victor here, or Tolor as you know me.

Today, you and your son have joined the new Council of Deputies. What are you planning to do for the youth of Pointe-Noire?

You have the means to make the government act. So today I'm wondering when you plan on getting our young people off the streets. I wonder when you'll create jobs.

When will you invest in civic life and charities? When will you complete the reforestation of the coastline and rehabilitation of Caraïbes beach and Acomat Falls, which I started?

In these days when rising sea levels are often discussed, as well as biodiversity, please, if you don't want to see Caraïbes beach disappear, keep doing the reforestation work I started back in the day but had to stop because you were so ill-advised.

You and Toto Lurel asked us to vote for Hollande in 2012. Four years later, look how he and his government are treating us, see how they've humiliated us, even with Taubira there at their side. She's also jumped off the Valls-Hollande bandwagon, and you wondered why... We'll see what you'll ask of the government which gets into power in 2017. In the meantime, this one has poisoned our land with the chemicals they brought in, supposedly to exterminate banana weevils. They destroyed

the entire phreatic zone, the sea and the rivers, and now fish caught off the Guadeloupian coast from Capesterre to Sainte-Rose is inedible. People know how dangerous these chlordecone products were, and it was debated whether to ban them in mainland France, but the system let them poison Guadeloupian land. When will farming improve in Guadeloupe? When will the Chamber of Agriculture ban the products that some farming groups like those belonging to Hayot and Despointes still keep using?

When will they finally leave our soil as it is, pure and product-free?

When will those polluters be brought to justice? When will the melons they grow and export be sold again in mainland France? When will they be given to children in French schools? Why do our exports never arrive in France at the right time, despite us belonging to the European market as the current government and parliament wanted, those bodies who supposedly work for us? When will a realistic agricultural grand plan be implemented in Guadeloupe? And when I say agriculture, I don't just mean market gardening, I mean crops of cane sugar, bananas, oranges and so on.

Please talk to the government about it and write back to me,

Best wishes,

Tolor

le 29 mars, à Rome,

Mon cher Félix,

c'est ton cousin Victor, ou bien Tolor comme tu me connais,
Aujourd'hui, toi et ton fils faites partie du nouveau conseil des députés: que penses-tu faire pour la jeunesse de pointe noire ?

Tu as les moyens de faire bouger ce gouvernement. Je me demande donc en ce jour quand est-ce que tu vas penser à retirer notre jeunesse de la rue. Je me demande quand est-ce que tu vas créer de l'emploi.

Quand est-ce que tu vas investir dans le social et les associations ? Quand est-ce que tu vas finir le reboisement de la côte et la réhabilitation de la plage des caraïbes et des chutes d'akoma que j'ai commencé ?

En cette période où l'on parle de remonté des eaux, mais aussi de biodiversité, s'il te plaît, si tu ne veux pas voir disparaître la place des caraïbes, continue le travail de reboisement que j'avais mis en place à l'époque mais que j'ai dû quitter car tu étais beaucoup trop mal entouré.

Avec Toto Lurel, tu nous à demandé de voter en 2012 pour M. Hollande. Quatre ans après, regarde comment lui et son gouvernement nous traitent, regarde comme ils nous ont humilié, même avec Mme Taubira à leur côté. Elle à d'ailleurs abandonné le wagon de valls et de hollandie et tu t'es demandé

pourquoi... Nous verrons en 2017 ce que tu demanderas au gouvernement qui arrivera au pouvoir. En attendant celui-ci a empoisonné nos terres avec les produits chimiques qu'ils avaient intégrés, avec le prétexte de détruire le charançon de la banane. Ils ont empoisonné toute la nappe phréatique, la mer et les rivières, et aujourd'hui, on ne peut plus manger de poissons de côtes en Guadeloupe, de Capesterre à Saint Rose. On savait la dangerosité de ces produits type chlordécone et on débattait de leur interdiction en France Métropolitaine mais le système les a laissés empoisonner la terre guadeloupéenne. Quand est-ce que l'agriculture ira mieux en Guadeloupe? Quand est-ce que la chambre d'agriculture interdira ces produits que certains groupes agricoles comme ceux de M. Hayot et de M. Despointes continuent d'utiliser?

Quand est-ce qu'ils laisseront enfin notre sol intact, pur et sans produits?

Quand est-ce qu'il y aura une condamnation par ces pollueurs là? Quand est-ce que le melonnier qu'ils plantent et dont ils sont exportateurs se retrouvera à nouveau en distribution en métropole? Quand est-ce qu'il sera distribué dans les écoles publiques françaises?

Pourquoi nos exportations n'arrivent jamais en France en temps voulu alors que l'on fait partie du marché européen qu'a voulu ce gouvernement et le parlement qui sont en place et qui soit disant travaillent pour nous?

Quand est-ce qu'un grand plan d'agriculture pour la Guadeloupe sera mené concrètement. Quand je parle d'agriculture, je ne parle pas seulement du maraîchage, je parle de l'agriculture cannière, bananière, des oranges, etc...

Je te demande d'en parler au gouvernement et de me répondre.

bien à toi

TOLOR



WEI ZHOU

Xining, China
Cádiz, Spain

Dear Parents,

In this letter I'd like to tell you something I've never dared tell you during my time in Spain.

You thought I was learning Spanish to improve my job opportunities, but the truth is that it's all down to a snippet of TV I caught 10 years ago, when I discovered an art form which moved my soul. It's called flamenco, it's a type of Spanish dance and I fell in love with its unique rhythm and passionate motions at first sight. Since then, my life has been guided by its magic.

While I was studying chemistry, I used to sacrifice my weekends to learning Spanish with the hope of one day making it to Spain. After a lot of effort, I managed to find work with Spanish after leaving University. With a stroke of luck, I was able to travel to Madrid in 2011 with a scholarship from the Instituto Cervantes, and I saw a live flamenco performance. I cried, as much from happiness at having realised the dream I'd been fighting for over the last seven years, as from feeling it so far from my life.

It was a bold decision, a year later, to leave my life in Beijing behind and come to Spain with the excuse of studying for a master's. My first year in Madrid was a time of cramming in the library and having second thoughts about what it was that I was really searching for. The second year, I went down to the south of Spain to live closer to flamenco. That Cádiz has this particular treasure in abundance is what made me stay. For my gaditano friends, it's so peculiar to see a Chinese person so in love with flamenco that they always introduce me to the flamenco artists they know.

Finally, I took my bravest step: learning to dance flamenco. My life was getting further and further away from

“normal”. I started the life of a dancer at 26 years. I dedicated a lot of hours to dance classes, and I made good progress, but life got in the way of improvement. Money, studying for my masters and problems with life and paperwork put me under pressure. It was a moment in which I felt utterly powerless, confronting so many problems at once, but also that I had a will strong enough to fight for the dream I'd been following for so long. In spite of having hectic weekdays and my friends telling me that I should get some rest, my flamenco classes help me to relax and also give me a huge sense of satisfaction. As of the end of 2015, I have two years experience learning this beautifully complex art.

This is the short story of my struggle against the tide in Spain. I'm sorry I haven't told you. I'm afraid of making you angry, because I'm not working towards having a stable life. I could have found a steady job, I could have lived closer to you and I wouldn't have made you worry about me, but I chose not to be stable and not to lose what keeps me motivated, and I'm so glad I've found something to which I can dedicate everything. I have a dream that brings me to tears; that one day you'll come to visit me in Spain, and I'll surprise you with a flamenco performance that will make you proud of me. One day I'll do it.

Living abroad is an adventure, and sometimes it's difficult. I'm sure though that I'm not the only one fighting for their dreams. There must be plenty of other foreigners all striving for their different goals. Don't worry about me — I get braver every day.

With love,

Your son, the dream chaser

亲爱的爸爸妈妈：

在这封信里我想告诉你们一件一直没有勇气说出来的事。

你们肯定以为我学西班牙语是为了找到一份更好的工作，其实另有原因。十年前不经意地在电视上瞅了一眼，我便发现了一门感动我心灵的艺术。它叫弗拉门戈，是西班牙的一个舞种。它独特的节奏和铿锵的舞步使我一见钟情。从那时起我人生的轨迹便由它指引。

大学学化学专业的时候我牺牲周末来学习西班牙语，幻想着有一天能踏上西班牙的国土。经过不懈努力我终于在大学毕业时找到了西班牙语相关的工作。幸运的是，2011年我获得了塞万提斯学院的奖学金到马德里旅行。终于，我亲眼看到了弗拉门戈表演。我不禁流出喜悦的泪，因为实现了七年以来的梦想；但也是伤心的泪，因为弗拉门戈在我生活中是那么可望而不可及。

一年后，我做了一个大胆的决定，放弃了北京生活到西班牙读硕士。在马德里的第一年我似乎有些迷失地每天在图书馆埋头苦学。但之后我又开始重新反思我到底要的是什么，于是第二年我南下踏上了寻找弗拉门戈之路。加的斯正是一个蕴含着这一丰富的文化宝藏的城市，也就成了我的落脚点。这里的朋友觉得一个中国人喜欢弗拉门戈很新奇，便总喜欢给我介绍从事弗拉门戈的艺术家们。

终于，我又大胆地迈了一步：开始学弗拉门戈舞蹈。我的生活便脱离了正轨，因为我从26岁才开始我的舞者生涯。我花了很多时间和精力，有了明显的进步。但是生活中的种种困难接踵而来阻碍我前进。经济、硕士课程、续签证等等的问题让我倍受压力。当时我觉得在这么多困难中有些无助，但又坚信自己会为多年来的梦想竭尽全力。虽然有些不可思议，但是我做到了兼顾硕士、舞蹈学习和工作。生活的节奏变得飞快，有人说我该抽时间休息，但其实我在弗拉门戈课上就能得到充分的满足和全身心的放松。到2015年底我就已经学了两年这门复杂又美妙的艺术了。

这就是我在西班牙的一段逆流之行。没有能坦诚地告诉你们很抱歉。我不想因为我在朝一个不稳定的生活方式发展而让你们不高兴。我本可以找一份固定的工作，生活在你们身边，不让你们为我担心。但我选择不让我的青春变得平淡和没有斗志。我为

自己找到了一份能倾注所有热情的事业而满足。一直以来我有个幻想，希望有一天能请你们来西班牙，然后我意外地现身于一场弗拉门戈表演中，给你们一个惊喜，让你们为我骄傲。真希望能梦想成真啊！

生活在国外犹如一场冒险，会有艰难的时候。但我肯定不是唯一一个为梦想在国外奋斗的人。肯定会有更多的外国人正克服着思乡之情，文化冲突和其它种种问题并为他们的目标而努力。请不要为我担心，我正一天天变得愈加坚强。

祝
身体健康，

追逐梦想的儿子



EXTRACTS: 16 PHOTO PORTRAITS

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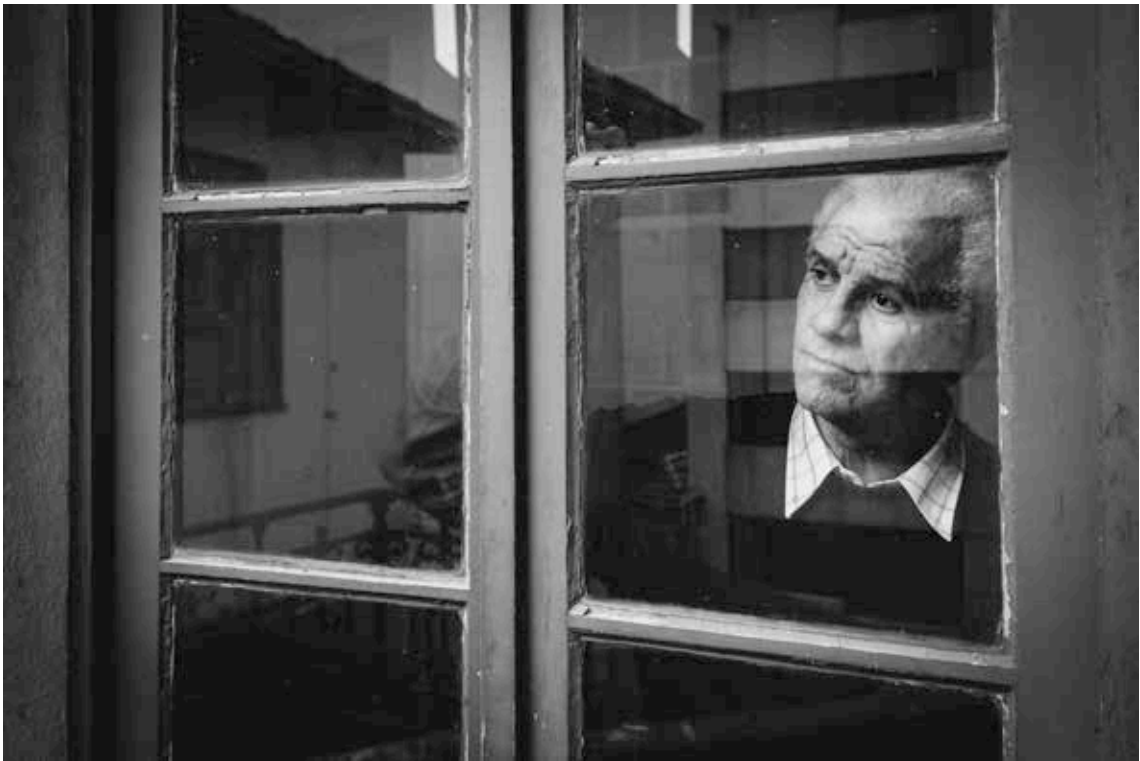
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