

My Love Of thee year 2000

A Novel of love and Philosophy

by Georges Réveillac

9-Truce of the Discoverers

I had already taken the plane once: I had offered myself that luxury to come back home more quickly from Algiers, at the time of my « liberation ». As for Jeanne, it was her first trip by air and she hung on to my arm, forcing her nails in my skin, to elude her fear. I feel the same type of fear in the car when I am not at the wheel and I don't trust the driver fully.

The plane was a DC 6, a plane with propellers which would soon end in a museum. We made a first stop at Bordeaux, and then darkness enveloped us. While we were flying, it appeared that, the Pyrenees, Spain, Morocco, the desert, were equally shrouded in the night, at first I was playing the role with pleasure, then with a growing irritation, my role of a magic protector. But I ended by giving up.

Since the « rumbling » of the engines, for which the hostess showed her gracious boredom, was obstinately regular, and since the air was bringing us a lot of attentions, without all those disrespectful shakings which other types of transport imposed upon us, the train, for example, since everything was so calm, I dosed off like a baby tired out by a tender lullaby. During that time, Jeanne struggled in an agony of fear.

But it was written that I would not have slept that night. In fact, the loud-speakers announced calmly: « You are asked to fasten your seat belts, because we are going to fly across a turbulent zone. » And the plane started to jolt on its air cushions, like a car hurtling down without brakes along the slope of a mountain. From the

windows, we could see, from time to time, a furious white flash tearing up the night. Also we happened to drop like an elevator suddenly falling down. After a long time, too long, that stopped: we were saved for that time, but a new fall did not take long to arrive. It is probable that after that, we gained altitude, because we never bumped against anything solid. The commander on board had done well to have us fastened, because my Jeanne, so impulsive, would have rushed to the door to leave that place. She still huddled herself to me in her distress, but the raging elements were the indications of my imposture: no, I was not the good genius she expected. I looked to see how our human brothers were behaving, the other passengers who I presume to be old experienced colonials.

The majority seemed to feel no fear; some were reading, others chatted quietly. I was then half assured enough in any case to take up my role of male protector.

Then the air and the skies became calm again. Jeanne gripped tenderly to me and we felt that love was enwrapping us. « Stupid happy ones. » you would say? Oh no! Her hot coat seemed too solid to be woven only with illusions.

Jeanne told me that we stopped at Bamako, when it was still night time, but I don't have any recollections of it. While the passengers and the freight were moving, we stayed in the plane. It is there, always in advance therefore, that my better feminine half had her first taste of Africa: it was hot, acrid and rich, well lined with a quantity of strong scents, loose, which were wrangling vigorously. Curious of the slightest new sensation, my Jeanne was all excited. But already the plane had taken off heavily on the runway that she gripped with all her nails to my arms.

Soon, it was daytime, clearly and rapidly, as it does in the tropics. Then, a portion of Africa came to our sight. It was bizarre and disappointing. We saw a reddish land filled with small green flashy bits which resembled vaguely the artichokes. The villages appeared like fragile toys placed anyhow on that desolate land. What I recognised later on as fields were like chicken spurs which must have scratched at random to look for grain. There were no men, since we could not see

them at that distance. I asked myself besides, if they existed and, in the affirmative, where on earth could they find anything to survive on! Here, and there, rare clear stains. Vaguely shining, resembling puddles of water. The most frequent, the red vineyard of the laterite was the dominant tonality and that which was vaguely green had to be vegetation, appeared like messy stuff. However no, we had not arrived on the moon.

We landed at the airport of Ouagadougou. The tyres bounced once on the asphalt before rolling very steadily like those of a car.

We were alive and in good health. Hurray!

At the exit from the plane, we entered into a bath of heat rather clammy: the first kiss of Africa; it was up to us to accept or to go back. The director of my school was there. He was, and for some more years, still a Frenchman. He welcomed us in the same way as the exiles would welcome their own fellow countryman who brings them like a whiff of fresh air, some food of which their nation had given them the taste and who, owing to the absence, creates a pressing desire which one calls « home sickness ». Like this, abroad, one sees the French behaving themselves in a bizarre manner: an ambassador looking for the company of a bricklayer, for example, or a well driller learning bridge or tennis to please his friend the lawyer.

The colleague director made us get into his official Deudeuch.

To start with, we crossed a great town populated exclusively by blacks: a novelty, but not truly a surprise.

The extreme poverty and the misery no longer, were not really the reasons for surprise: the press of the « Party » had announced it many times to us. It was, it stated, the consequence of « neo-colonialism ». Always the same story, in the background: a new episode of the « Struggle of the Classes », that is to say the implacable combat which leads the rich to rob the poor. That war was the gangrene of humanity and it stretched, overcoming time, I mean « History », and space, for the

whole Earth to know. She would only end with the disappearance of the exploiting class, that of the rich, thanks to the collectivization of private enterprise. So, the human being will become naturally good and the false paradise of the next world, promised by all the religious, mystifies and swindlers, will be replaced by the true paradise installed in our good old World thanks to the Communists.

Why does the natural selection make of us beings of faith?
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Mômmanh made man in a way that he requires very solid pillars to rest his ideology on. They are first of all forged by a reflection as deep as possible. Afterwards, soaked in the acid of the faith, supposed to be from now on indestructible, they become dogmas.

Even faith is a gift of Mômmanh, not intentional, because she never makes a plan, but an empiric choice, because she resounds what she herself proves.

The dogma of the « Struggle of the Classes » was supposed to explain nearly integrally the faults of human nature and the misfortunes of history.

I was quite ready to admit that explanation, but first I had to understand it and, for that, question the fact until the moment when I would be convinced of its justice. Like this my insatiable thirst to master everything by thought required it, the painful passion of which you know that it had its good side: very useful when I manage to control it, it became, alas, like all passions, too dangerous when she wrapped like a mad mare, leading me, clinging to her neck, deadly pale and speechless with fear.

It was not the first time that I tried to control the reliability of a dogma of the « Party ». Here you are that other example emerges from the marshes of my memory.

It was some years earlier, during the War of Algiers and, of course, the « Party » explained that it was necessary to see there, simply an episode of the « struggle of the Classes ». So I had the possibility to follow my studies and to remain in reprieve, in the shelter until that vile business was over: instead of that, and in spite of the fact that I fear fire shots as well as stabbings, I « interrupted » my reprieve and I enrolled as a volunteer for my military service in Algiers; I wished to see with my own eyes that sinister ruling class on the verge of accomplishing its black outlines, but I never managed to distinguish it clearly. A new crack had formed itself in the shell of my faith which was all new.

But it took much more in order for it to be torn apart completely. Besides, she had been scratched after the beginning, when I had refused to admit that « Religion is the opium of the people »: I could not consider the good man who was my parish priest like a drug pusher, neither those who had died for their faith as dealers or drug addicts.

That time still, I was going to dedicate long years to strive to understand how the neo-colonialists caused the misery of one third of the world so that they indulged in it. The longed for moment of that revelation was never to come. I had to continue to search until the day, when having reached the intuition of a better explanation of history, I felt definitely in heresy. In the meantime, my faith continued to crack little by little.

The director was a pleasant man and a willing gossip. He interrupted his flow of words after we assailed him with our questions: on hearing how we were anxious to discover our new land, he did his very best to satisfy us.

In the mounting heat and the harsh, merciless, light of the tropics, we crossed the capital. Even the Deudeuch, which should have been familiar, seemed strange here: stained with red mud, the seats coated with doubtful material agglutinated with a fatty substance, truly based on abundant perspiration, the rims dented, the tyres gashed with worrying scars, the doors, the panes and the different components of the body takes apart, as if they had been put down and then mounted in a hurry, without

any care. That means of transport seemed more terrifying to us than the plane but there was such anarchy in the circulation that it was impossible to drive fast: then, when we were within the limits of the capital which, decidedly I could not call city without degrading that word, I felt safe.

My Jeanne and I, we are untirably curious of anything one can find on that land, and even beyond: that is one of the reasons for which we demand the right to live one thousand years. But it seems that that request, however modest, is senseless; so it is better if we leave it up to others, to those unknown of the future, the pleasure to discover other existential foods, on earth as well as over there in heaven. I wish that we can trust them! In all manners, we do not have the choice. So, may they know this?

No country is delivered entirely at first go.

Of all the aptitudes to be seen, to be heard, to be understood, to be tasted... of which Mômmanh has gifted man, we only developed one part: that which our cultural matrix of the Western France has worked. The rest, due to its rejection, has lost nearly all its vitality. However, some of the elements are still capable of being reborn, no matter how little they stimulate them, trying to adopt themselves to a new world, for example. But, to succeed in this metamorphosis it takes effort and time.

Think of a good wine, produced in a territory and of a culture: it is rare, isn't it so, that you can, after the first glass, taste all the other qualities; it often happens even, that the neophyte judges it badly and he prefers a sparkling « Coca Cola ». It is necessary that you have tasted it many times, preferably in the company of good friends, so that you become sensible to his multiple components, inventions of the living nature offered to whoever has not lost the taste of life. Ah well, the discovery of a country necessitates, at least, an even patient initiation and, surely, at the end of those efforts to open for you new flavours, after those long engagements, he is not sure that the nuptials will take place.

The country where you step for the first time does not only offer qualities to discover: it will be too beautiful and even, probably, annoying. It is necessary also to become conscious of its faults and learn to live with them. Among the Frenchmen of Africa, the ancestors, our initiators, experimented this by means of a parable.

A Frenchman who had just arrived made his first round. He discovers a fly in his glass: by reaction, he throws the good whisky and has his glass washed. A few months later, there are two flies which are fighting in his whisky: he satisfies himself by removing them before drinking. At the end of some years, he has become an elder. It is like this that one begins to understand: when there are no flies in his glass, he catches at least one to put it there.

Finally, there are always, in a discovery of a country, some linked novelties which allow themselves to be appreciated soon : the flavour of a fruit like the mango, for example, or the passionate violence of a landscape, the sweetness of the light, the beauty of women, the surrounding cheerfulness...and what else still ?

At first, that strange capital impressed us. And it was good!... But how do I make it clear to you to feel the effects?

Everything was new, as if we had changed planet. Poor, most often, spy latched, destitute, but new! The trees, the streets, the houses, the clothes, the people, and even the birds... But yes!

There you are! As regards that, we discovered, how a note of welcome humour, those hideous volatiles with a featherless neck, with their head covered with repulsive rolls of fat evoking bad meat, those big birds unseemingly like resonant farts in a worldly gathering, those poor vultures badly loved whose plumage seemed dirty, as if they had fallen in the waste. Besides, without any surprise, we learned that they are big consumers of rubbish, voluntary dustmen nicknamed vultures, those unlucky benefactors of humanity who have drawn out unlucky numbers in the great lottery of evolution. The chauffer-director informed us that the abattoirs of Ouagadougou were their general quarters.

A lot of women went about with their breasts showing, without provoking the slightest embarrassment, it seemed. Tied to their mother's back, some babies, even they black, nodded with their head in all directions, at the will of the maternal movements. There were old lorries that we had not seen elsewhere, except in the films about the 14-18 War, and which seemed to have survived a bombardment; they carried enormous and very high loads of wood, inclined to such a point that it seemed it was going to fall: at one moment I asked myself seriously if the laws of weight were, different, in this country.

The girls and the women carried boldly all sorts of things in equilibrium on their head: some paunchy jars, bundles of sticks, big basins full of lively colours, some small tables which they would have classified as made by some children and which served as stalls to the merchantmen and merchantwomen; loaded like this, they kept on straight, chest in front like the bow of a caravel, and they advanced while swaying their hips as much as necessary, but at the same time with a certain grace and a lot of ease.

It seemed that that daily exercise made them carry their head in a haughty manner. Still young, it was all that was left of their beauty: their conditions of life and their physical works were so hard that at the age of thirty they seemed more than sixty years of age.

The men, themselves did not carry anything on their head: their means of transport and locomotion was the bike, of which I learned later that they called it « iron horse », heavy and solid bike whose rack would have had to bear the weight of a blacksmith's anvil. They carried four things, sometimes packed in rags, or tied up by means of a rough creeper; it happened that their load had the appearance of a shaky grotesque scaffolding and made up of ill-assorted and very humble goods: clusters of fighting chicks, their heads bowed down, faggots, some armfuls of fair calabashes, - those curious recipients of all shapes which resembled the skin of a pumpkin hard as wood -, boxes of small goods, sacks of grains, boxes of vegetables, machetes or some other quite modest tool, narrow rollers of thick cotton cloth woven in the village by the owner of the bike...

The women, the bikes and the old lorries were not the only means of transport: there were also processions of little metal carts equipped with tyres, pulled by donkeys. Even if their assembly was done in that place, they represented well the industrial products of our western world, above all when one compared them to the local artisan crafts: some shapeless bows, some arrows in rough wood armed with a point of forged iron without symmetry, coarse potteries decorated with motifs which resembled designs made by children, white shapeless clothes called *boubous* and made of straight strips of country cotton sown ones to the others, small curved legged furniture which insulted the law of geometry and equilibrium, some sandals made of straps of old tyres cut by a knife, a derisory luxury of the citizens who did not want to walk barefoot in order not to be mistaken with the peasants who were still backwards...

All those items were made entirely by hand, without precise measurements and with techniques – I must say – primitive: how many times do we meet in everyday use, like the flat stone to crush the cereals, or still the rustic weaving job of the peasants, the same objects that one would see in museums about prehistory!

The use of the wheel – No! I do not exaggerate! – The use of the wheel, was therefore, very recent, and it limited itself to the imported items. After a century of colonisation, the Burkinabés had not yet decided to make some of them themselves: perhaps it seemed derisory to want to make by hand and with great difficulty what the industry made so easily?

Which is the basis of human existence in Burkina Faso?
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In that country where about ten different races lived having each its own language and culture, the civilizations had not developed maths, neither science. Therefore technology was equally so: prehistoric. But their thought, following different ways from ours had certainly discovered other food to calm the insatiable

hunger of existence which leads us all. Yes, what was then the contribution of those races to the patrimony of humanity?

At Burkina Faso like in any other country of the World, men carry on with their life with what nature proposes to them. Here like elsewhere, the gifts of Mômmanh are for many in the colours and in the tastes which the human existence will take up. Now, besides a very hot sun and a suitable lot of endemic tropical illnesses, nature has not offered big things to the Burkinabés, not many big consumable things, I mean.

When the peasants had earned enough to make a generous meal every day without meat they estimated that their business was not bad. Moreover, the country does not receive practically any profitable resource. No fuel, neither hydroelectricity, nor any other energy source at a bargain price. No diamonds, neither copper, not even iron, no ore if not a pinch of gold which serves only to make one dream: one has not seen, I don't know in which year, a sparked-off rumour which I believed without foundation, or a fleeting rush for gold, in the north of the country, like a bite in the hollow of a hungry shark.

What is animism? How did animism, polytheism, monotheism, and atheism link themselves?
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So, Mômmanh did not show herself generous towards the Burkinabés. But didn't she show herself equally stingy, or quite so, with regards to the Japanese?

Let us see the other group of the existential resources: the culture. She is just as

performing as the closest knowledge of the scientific rigour is understood. The culture of a nation is acquired thanks to the multiple exchanges between the races, associated with good conditions for the studies: the time and the material means. Ah well, those cultural ferments had been very smartly attributed to the dowry of black Africa.

The basic ideology is an endorsement. It is prehistoric: it is animism.

In fact, the ideology rests on the global explanation of the world which seems the most plausible. In the prehistoric age, the first men believed that all beings, and even everything, with the like of man, were governed by minds: they had just invented animism.

Later on, in the light of the new knowledge, some other men judged unlikely the existence of intellects. Then, what?... And they invented polytheism, like the Greeks.

Every race having its own, the gods were millions and millions. Later on still, that immense crowd of divinities which contradicted and squabbled all over the world seemed too incoherent: one invented monotheism.

Then atheism came...

Those beliefs are our blind dog that explores the immensity of the real and gets out of it the best parts. He who served like this as guide to the Burkinabés was, there still, a living fossil, quite close to animism.

The animists believed that, everything like the man of flesh is inhabited by an immaterial soul: his intellect. The whole of nature has been created by some intellects, she is governed by some intellects, and she is inhabited by a multitude of intellects. In the lion's flesh there is the intellect of a lion, in the water of the river there is the intellect of the river, and so on and so forth. In order to obtain what one wants out of nature, it is necessary to call the power of the intellects.

I discovered that belief by chance, one day when all my students refused to cut the long grass on the ground which would have been their garden. They were however very motivated for that work. They had all improvised, with more or less luck, some excuses the sum of which was incredible: weddings, funerals, collective work, market, administrative summoning... There was also a false bandage.

« - What have I done to you, that you treat me like such an idiot? Why that insult?

And one of them dared to reveal the true reason of their attitude.

« - It is the god, Mister. He is in the grass. If one cuts it, he is going to be angry.

- Very angry, indeed! Let's go one step forward. There is going to be a great misfortune.

- You see, sir, the grass is green: the god is there, for sure!

- Mister, wait for some days only. When the grass is quite dry, the god has left.
Then one cuts the grass... calmly. »

Evidently, the scientific discoveries are hardly favourable to such beliefs: when one looks for the evil intellect which is responsible for an illness, the chances are reduced to discover the true guilty one, a germ, for example.

Having said that, and in spite of everything, when one follows a different way, and he is completely in the wrong, one must discover different things. Therefore, while following the roads traced by the animist's creed, the Burkinabés must have done some original discoveries. It is true, but I only manage to see the most evident. I think first of all about the virtuosity of their drummers and their dancers for whom their art seemed so easy and essential like respiration for me. I think also of their broad smile which is not of politeness like it is for the Asians, but simple good mood, and which reigns like the sun in the middle of their extreme poverty. I cannot discover the secret of that smile.

I think also, and I should have started from there, of the quality of the Burkinabian welcome. My Jeanne, our children and myself, we have been very happy in that country and when we were not, our hosts were not happy at all. And however, their way of living and their mental universe were so distant from ours that only the really strange extraterrestrial could be like that.

As regards that, I cannot resist the temptation to relate an anecdote to you.

During an excursion in the bush with my friends, we had to spend the night in a remote village where the children had never seen any whites yet. And they were numerous; those little blacks with big eyes open wide who pressed around our modest encampment. The most daring touched us. They observed everything: cars, camp beds, cool boxes, luggages, all our things and even the slightest of our gestures, the slightest of our actions. We were like animals in a zoo.

The evening was advancing, and we would have loved to sleep, but the children were always there and there was no sign which indicated their intention to respect our sleep and our privacy. We could not speak to them because none of them understood French. That evening there, we felt far, far, very far away from home.

It is then that the « Holy Spirit » descended on our friend Roger. In his beautiful Italian voice, he started to sing « I am going to see my Normandy again » and he started to teach that song to the children. Even they started to sing:

« I am going to see my Normandy again,

It is the country

Which gave me the day. »

After which, Roger mimed a sleepy man and, with gestures showed the children that they had to leave.

We spent a good night under the stars.

Let us come back to the works of the multiple cultures of that country: I was not capable of knowing if the other Burkinabe inventions are worthwhile or not. They pretend to have discovered a quantity of good recipes, in many domains, discoveries which our scornful attitude leads us to ignore completely. They could have some efficient local medicine; they know how to treat, in their own way, stress and some other complaints of the soul; they might even have some interesting techniques which they invented in the fields of agriculture and craftsmanship.

It is true that we were ill-prepared to discover the soul of black Africa.

We have seen that a culture is a living architecture and a complex outcome of a sum of apprenticeships. It is nearly as difficult to change culture as to change body to be born to another life. But that is not the only limitation in our aptitude to discover: we were oriented towards another aim: to bring « Civilization » to the poor blacks.

There exists a western ideology which wants to govern the world. One can summarise it to this: materialist science, democracy and human rights. At the times of

our youth, in all the cultures of the world, but above all in ours, the western intellectuals dug up what our ideology judged as good. The product of that harvest was called: « Civilisation ». And France, in her ex-colonies, sent « overseas development workers » in charge of spreading it.

We did not come to Burkina Faso to learn, but to teach « Civilisation ». That confinement in our ideology was a second obstacle in the discovery of the Burkinaby cultures.

As regards the animist thought, at the time of our arrival in black Africa, we considered it twice as scornful. To start with, we ignored its existence as a thought. Afterwards, the curious rites which the colonialists had reported in the media, the grotesque disguise, the diabolic dances, the practices of the so-called magic, the beliefs in the supernatural beings supposed to live or possess such an individual, all that colonial folklore appeared to us like a mixture of superstitions born out of ancestral ignorance. « Civilisation » recognised as good only the negro art, essentially the masks and the dancing: all the rest was to be discarded...

Besides, all the old fashioned things would not take long to vanish. You know why: we had just arrived, especially myself the teacher, twice as enlightened by the glorious secular French school as well as the infallible Marxist thought!... Ah but!... Some others and I, we were going to lead those people to the road of knowledge and prosperity. The whole of Black Africa was going to rise up, surprising the world by all its feats.

« -Well! By the way, remind me where we had stopped. Speak more loudly because I am hard of hearing. How ?... Ah yes! Sure, it is up to me not to mislead myself, otherwise how can I guide you, my poor friend? Ah well, so be it! Sorry?... Who will come to do these digressions in a love story? – Ah well, it seems I have already said it to you. So, so much the worse if I repeat !... »

How is the loving orgasm the firework of two successful existences?

Two people, generally of complementary sexes, do all they can to succeed in their love, each one on his side until the moment of their meeting, the moment when they feel the desire to melt away their two existences. If they manage to grant themselves to each other, Mômmanh rewards them and fills them with joy.

Yes, I have already said it, but it is so good!

Ah well, it is still like this, for my Jeanne and myself, in spite of our advanced age and all the stupid things that we have done. Every night, when our bodies find themselves flesh against flesh, we feel warmth which has nothing in common with that of a radiator. No, even now, above all now, I will not exchange my well beloved for a steaming toddy and a hot water bottle. Because that warmth, which we feel, is a current of pleasure which erases all our wounds, it is, I believe, the benevolent caress of Mômmanh, the applause of Mômmanh who encourages us like that to continue.

So, you see!... Since love is the triumph of existence, it is necessary that I relate to you our own. Without which, this novel will be a door on emptiness, like those kitsch postcards or two mannequins, doubtlessly naked in a shop, embracing in the middle of a heart of barley sugar, representing, it seems, the two lovers.

And all this does not tell me in which period of history we have arrived. Ah!
Here we are, I am here.

We had just arrived at Ouagadougou. Our love seemed solid and however the
game was far from won. But we ignored them.

In the meantime, we were surprised, intrigued, excited by all the novelties
which that strange capital was offering us. Its call was literally aspiring us.

The pleasures revealed by experience and the pleasures still to be discovered.

*For the little man who arrives at the light
of the world, the call for pleasures as well as
for life is still virgin of answers. So,
everything is new, everything is full of emotions:
the first time that a baby assists to the flight
of a bird, the surprise is so good that he bursts
out in laughter. Then our existential space is
decorated at the same time that it is building
itself up.*

*From now on, our look is attracted towards
that which we have already had the opportunity to
appreciate. Let us suppose that the first pear
which I have tasted has been delicious: now, each
time that the fruit appears in my surroundings, it
captures my attention. Therefore, the discoveries
become rarer and their emotional force diminishes.*

*However, if he has done even the slightest
bit of safeguarding to his soul a big door open to
novelties - And long live the currents of air!-,*

since the existential domain is so vast that we don't know the limits, life will bring us just the same and often some good surprises.

Here you are, that reminds me of that evening of my youth when I used to do the hitch-hiking on the route to Caen. A beautiful car stopped and I was very happy. The inside was very comfortable, the engine powerful and silent, the driver also master of his driving like a bouncing antelope is of its body. The route wormed its way into the green countryside towards the altitude of one side. It is just at the summit that the triumphant music exploded in my eyes, in my head, in my whole being, and I heard something telling me, internally: « Thanks, my God. »

What was happening then? Oh, nothing extraordinary; besides, the driver of the car did not see anything. All commonplace, there was a magnificent spectacle in the sky, orchestrated by the setting sun, a spectacle which was only given, it seems, only to me.

After that sumptuous evening, a couple of decades passed during which I have had from time to time the luck of winning at the tombola of existence some beautiful revelations: a song, a promenade in Provence, an explanation of a mystery of life,... and I know that others will come to add themselves even if that extends my reprieve to the slightest extent. But none of my discoveries, also important, could give me the immense pleasure which was granted to me that evening there: I was so hungry! And I was fulfilled.

Ah well, my Jeanne and I, we cultivate that same care to safeguard in our soul a big door open on the world and all that which could be found beyond. We are therefore very curious of all that which could be in the universe and it is joyful, because what use will it be to keep the door open if we do not invite anyone to come in.

Is our link the strongest? How come? In any case, nosing around everywhere in the world, not only in the country, but in the books, the spectacles, in the people's

head, wherever we have the chance to discover something interesting: behold our common passion. And there is still that: the persons who right away seem the most unpleasant to us, they are those who believe they know everything, otherwise known, as those whose intellect is closed, blocked, we consider them public menace.

Here you are: it happens, and it is not rare happily enough, that the beauty of a woman tears me out from my speculations very often pointless. That beauty calls me, saying: « Refrain therefore from arriving at my level, stupid! Rather than wasting the time granted to you. » So, I look at it more attentively. If I see, as is frequently the case, that she has not got those big questioning eyes which always, without letting themselves go, will call the discoveries, so I have the feeling that that beauty is not alive, and she does not interest me anymore. If on the contrary, on sounding those big eyes, the look reflects a feminine's soul, I find an avid curiosity that she may be accompanied by that generous momentum which demands only to be filled with enthusiasm for all the beauties of the world, if I see a beautiful soul which will greet with a clear burst of laughter any motif of surprise, then I feel strongly attracted.

Therefore, my Jeanne and I, at any moment, we are anxious to receive a new flavour, an unknown melody, a previously unpublished architecture, a promising thought... For that joy of enriching existence, we are ready in the possible measure, to upset our routine.

And we only want those false ideas to make a screen between the reality and us, even if they are sacred. Because above all we look for a real world and, if possible, which lasts a long time. After our garden of discoveries, behold a second one which we cultivate together: that of knowledge.

When we have done the gardening well, Mômmanh offers love as a bonus.

All this to tell you, at the time of our arrival at Ouagadougou, since we were young conscious adults that they will never be at all mature, and that we share that beneficial gift of insatiable curiosity, our capability of amazement was still very strong. She was no longer as lively as a baby who tries to catch a pigeon: discovering

with surprise that the animal flies, he shouts his pleasure and applauds that exploit of the bird. No! in the Deudeuch which was travelling along the roads of that bizarre capital of a new world, we did not clap our hands while uttering cries of surprise and our colleague director did not have to worry about our behaviours.

We at first crossed the poor quarters: enclosure which down there they call « concessions », surrounded by earthen walls more or less destroyed by the rains; rectangular huts, equally earthen, with the undulated roof more or less rusty, resembling the roofs of our hangars and which, like the latter, evoked the crusts of the bad wounds on the face of the earth, round huts also, with thatched roofs, a little more worth; heaps of rubbish here, there; some big trees like lime trees, with abundant foliage of a very healthy green, touches of optimism about which they told us that they were mangoes which came from India and which produced delicious fruit; there were children everywhere some of whom were completely naked, the bodies sometimes covered in ash; raw-boned dogs, some chicks, some goats, some pigs, and even, it seemed to me, at the turning of some dusty road of red clay, a horse so thin that it seemed to be waiting for the end of the world, or still a strange animal called « zébu » and which resembled a cow, with big horns, with a ridiculous hump attached to his back, which hump jolted in such a grotesque manner like the breast of an old lady.

I was asking myself what could one do in those familiar enclosures called « concessions ».

Besides our healthy curiosity about which I have spoken, youth obliges, I was led by the desire to impress our acquaintances, which could not fail to be more and more numerous, at the time of our return to France. I imagined them, pampering at my approach: « Here you are. Have you seen who is there? It is Georges. But yes, one has surely spoken about him, Georges the African, he who knows Africa like his pocket. It is important to listen to what he relates: it is fascinating. He has seen everything, understood everything! With him you know everything about Africa and the black people. Unbeatable! And then, he does a sacred job, down there! Extraordinary!

With him, it is the whole continent which is going to change. Wait a couple of years... Oh! Leave some decades and you will see: Black Africa will impress us... There will be beautiful black women on the Champs-Élysées, statuesque bodies of course, but supple, sensual, mysterious... Do you see? And then, you will see African products everywhere: it will be like for the Japanese products, now. What's more as regards black dancing and music, there will be the fashion, the cinema, the painting, the science, the literature... It will be all new and formidable, you will see. There will be a new Einstein, all black. And when you want to go on a trip to the moon, you will embark perhaps on an African spacecraft...»

So?... Will you still say that my delirium was totally selfish?... I agree: I had a sacred layer all the same. However, after having cleaned myself as best as I could from the frenzy of that glory, I continued in spite of everything to hope that the dream of a prosperous and creative Africa would materialise itself.

Discover the secrets of Africa which were spread out to the big sun in the familiar enclosures called « concessions » ? It is not so easy to penetrate the intimacy of the black cultures, even if you are kindly invited. Bearing our way there, there were a good number of obstacles which we ignored, starting with the false ideas of which I have already spoken. Amongst our peoples, enormous differences in levels of life and culture constitute other barriers some of which are quite evident. Here are some samples.

In our western countries, we take great care of hygiene and different precautions which guarantee approximately our life until an advanced age, and we are keen not to die before we have received, a minimum, of our quota of years. Ah well, the extreme poverty of the Burkinabés does not allow them these demands and they live in the company of death. At least, it was like this for a quarter of a century and, keeping into account the extremely slow progress in Black Africa, I do not believe that that aspect of human condition has changed much.

They exposed themselves to all sorts of illnesses and, in the majority of cases, they did not have the means to pay for efficient cures. To start with, the

villagers, as well as certain citizens, drank unhealthy water. However the latter could not be more natural since, generally it came directly from a sort of pond which filled itself in the rainy season and which one called « small lake ». That water is inhabited by colonies of parasites of all sorts, they themselves being absolutely natural, and it was not treated neither boiled, nor filtered, nor rendered drinkable by any procedure. By drinking it, with a little luck, one could catch many infections some of which were mortal.

If that means failed, there were plenty of others like them to invite death to one's meal. Here is one of the most simple, reserved however to the inhabitants of the capital: tasting without precaution a tender lettuce which the gardener had regularly and with much care watered with water from an open sewer which our friends familiarly called it « Rio del Merdo ».

The climate seemed suitable for the rapid development of the viruses, germs, amoebas, worms and larvae of all sorts. A big number of microbes covet your body to cut beefsteaks and dig their caves there where their colonies will live. They attack by air, by land, by the way of water equally and they know very well how to use the flesh and other food full of parasites which got in the way like the Horse of Troy. Lovers of novelties, you have a lot of line ups of surprising exotic illnesses: the malaria which is well known, but also some amoebas, some bilharziasis, some filariasis, the worm of Guinea, the onchocercosis ... if an excess of novelties give you the vertigo, the generous Africa keeps equally at your disposition a good assortment of familiar illnesses: measles, meningitis, hepatitis, typhoid fever...

Here is an insight of ordinary conditions of hygiene in the countryside, which no one calls the bush, down there. Know that in the city, where nearly all the citizens have come recently from the bush, health is not protected in a better way.

Ah well! In the house of the Burkinabé peasants, the table service was very simple. On the dusty floor one sometimes put a woven straw mat, but that wasn't an imperative rule. All the family sat around, on the ground, and the only plate was placed in the centre. Each dipped into it with his hands until everything was eaten. As

regards the water, I have already spoken about it. Not only was it the standard drink, but it served also to wash the food, the pots, the calabash and all the other kitchen utensils. Taken for granted that all the invited had washed their hands, which did not take place, that same natural water bore their imprint.

You have understood: to accept to take part in a meal in one of those mysterious « concessions », to accept would be only a mouthful of water or of that millet beer which they call « dolo », it was as if you were going to receive the kiss of a plague victim.

Once I found no means which did not seem offensive to negotiate a refusal and I found myself sitting in a dusty place in the company of a peasant family. In the centre of the group in a big calabash, there was the plate of the day, which was supposed to be a delight: some « peas »!... Like everybody else, without even washing my hands, I pick-axed in the common calabash something which resembled chick peas; when I crunched them under my teeth something screeched which I took for sand grains contained in the earth which remained attached to the famous peas. That interpretation is a little credible but I could not check it. To make the things slide along as far as my stomach panicking, I could drink from another common calabash, some brimful glasses of the good dolo, evoking vaguely certain ciders of my childhood, but nonetheless very, very dubious. In fact, I am not at all authorised to describe the taste of those foods because fear prevents me from paying attention.

As soon as decorum allowed me, I moved away in the ochre dust and I took refuge in the hut which they had given me. I remained there till I found a remedy for the panic which had invaded me. That experience was free: no colony of parasites had installed itself in my body. Afterwards I always knew how to find the means to refuse that type of invitation and it was, I hope, without upsetting anyone.

How can the cultures understand each other without destroying each other?
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Wasn't there already, an insurmountable barrier between the peoples and us? Ah well, no! In fact, the majority of the obstacles which I evoked, if not all, could be got over. But practically every time, you must put patience and tenacity into it.

In the general way, I think that we ourselves have erected those barriers laboriously during the struggle to live indefinitely. And the moment has come to lower them, those damned barriers, now that the human existence can express itself on a mondial scale. Men have to be capable to compare their respective ways of existence and to get a profit out from them, in the way in which the women can present themselves mutually and comment about their outfits, enriching like this their arsenal of seducers, without however flying in their feathers.

The ideologies are difficult to present and to discuss. To start with, the interlocutors must admit that they are not keeping back forcibly the truth, but that they are obeying their beliefs. Facing those who believe in intellects teachers of the universe, even we, the westerners, we must recognise that we believe in another explanation: matter barred of all the intellect would have generated the life which would have given birth to our mortal soul.

Admit, the times of discussion, that our beliefs are beliefs and not first truths.

If men manage like this to lower their ideological guard, the time to throw a curious look above the hatred of the neighbour, they will arrive less frequently to slit the throat of their fellow mate for a simple opinion offence.

Nonetheless, whichever the culture which has formed them might be, the majority of people would be happy to put into practice the beliefs of their ideology. They aren't capable either to justify them or to discuss them. There is the role of the theologians, or the ideologists, or the members of the committee of ethics of our sweet France. They are those people there, the big priests, who must organise themselves to compare and attempt to match their ideologies.

It is still more difficult to appreciate mutually the rules of life which lean on forgotten beliefs. You know that it is necessary to make the history of it, that, which quite often, necessitates the contribution of specialists. The historians will come to enlighten the debates.

But I ignored then all that...

Yes, I remember: I have abandoned you all; here is a good moment in the full tropical heat and without the slightest refreshment, in the middle of Ouagadougou, the unknown capital of an unknown country, in the Deudeuch of the colleague director whom we still call « Monsieur ». Rest assured that the trip is proceeding normally and we shall arrive at the planned hour.

There was an atmosphere which was pleasant to us: at times nonchalant attitudes, subtle and gracious, vigorous also. Smiling faces and even laughing, quite often: laughter and smiles under the rags. Easy and communicative laughter, grand convivial laughter of simple good humour, laughter without embarrassment and naughtiness which invade space and boost your morale.

In Paris, everybody is in a hurry. Could it be some mysterious illness which ravages the town of « modern » countries? In any case, the illness is very contagious: I, who like a lizard in the sun, would simply stroll on the quays of the Seine, I am carried away to rush to a goal which I ignore. At Ouagadougou, the only ones to push were the « Toubabous », that is to say the Whites. The Blacks, themselves, took their time as if they had been installed in eternity.

I have just used two terms which were taboos: that which in spite of everything would have used them to call « cat » a cat could have risked being accused of racism. That is the weight of the affective charge accumulated on those simple words throughout the centuries. One therefore had to say: the Africans, the Europeans.

We passed by a wide avenue bordered with curious trees, at times twisted and knotted, powerful and fragile : the « caïcédrats », we can say, a local variety of mahogany, with hard wood without much value. It was the avenue of the ministers and the great ambassadors, at the bottom of which there stood the presidential palace. It was the avenue of the international dignity and black Mercédès. The colleague director informed us that they called that avenue « the Champs-Élysées ». I do not know any longer if that was its real name or rather if one nicknamed it like this out of derision. On the central strip there grew a type of grass, strange like all the plants here. It must be the real grass all the same, since some donkeys on liberty grazed daringly. There at least, there were no pigs or poultry, to the contrary of the popular quarters of the city.

We drove therefore along the most solemn and the richest avenue of the country. However, it is here, paradoxically, that in my being the concept of « poverty

of one third of the world » took consistency, which, up till then, had only been a thought hollowed out, the wrapping of which I was going to discover at Burkina Faso. Some modern buildings of modest dimensions, the asphalt of the double avenue quite rectilinear, but not surpassing the kilometre, the electric street lamps, some trees, some ornamental plants, the whole combination rather out of tune more or less budding, more or less badly kept: there that poor luxury stopped. The earthen pavements were muddy, because it had rained; there were puddles of water along the streets; a number of constructions awaited, for a long time doubtlessly, urgent maintenance jobs; thin savage plants stubbornly lived in that difficult surrounding which the rags contributed to disfigure. It was nearly all the luxury which the Burkinabé people could offer to men supposed to represent them, to the leaders of the state, so that they could officiate in sumptuous surroundings, worthy to be shown to the look of the nations.

Was it necessary for them to be poor !...

It is true that, in addition, they hardly had the sense of state, but I discovered that later on.

At the end and on the lower side of the « Champs-Élysées », we entered into the modern commercial quarters, constructed around the Big Market. By « modern commerce », I mean that of imported products, an incredible diversity of goods and of services which that nearly prehistoric economy couldn't supply. Every time that the colleague director gave us a piece of information, we came out with some « Oh! » and some « Ah! »: we were much more surprised, when we heard that a good part of the merchants were Lebanese and the others were French.

« - What are the Lebanese doing here? And why not the Burkinabés?

- One question at a time, please. The Lebanese are good merchants; they do business in all the French-speaking Africa. Second question: the Blacks practice above all business on a small scale, rarely import-export. With them, it is necessary to haggle over everything. You will see: at the beginning, it is amusing, but one

does not always have two days to do his shopping.

- Is that so? »

The Big Market was an immense hangar covered with iron sheets which were not yet rusty, planted in the middle of an asphalted space. It was already too small to contain that crowd of small merchants who were overflowing on all sides and invaded the entire place, stopping right at the beginning of the streets. In that place, where all sorts of meetings took place, there was a confused pilava of shouting, of laughter and of smells often strong, but not necessarily appetizing.

I learned later on, that that market the hub of activity was also a reserve of extras for a spectacle belonging to the local culture: when it required a popular and warm welcome to an eminent personality, the authorities sent some beaters to the Grand Market; their mission consisted in persuading the people to go spontaneously and in a crowd along the way of the official cortege to discover and acclaim the idol of the day.

Here still, in the heart of the city, poverty was evident: holes in the asphalt, papers and waste spread around, a little dust scattered or mud according to the weather, corrugated iron, a lot of badly kept buildings. One distinguished well an architectural project for that central square, but its realisation had been also botched up as well as unfinished. In that poor country with uncertain tomorrows, the foreign merchants wished to build only the precarious, so that they could withdraw easily if their business was threatened. At last, a third cause explained the destitution of the scenery: like numerous peoples whose way of living is still close to the prehistory, and they don't have yet the sense of the state, the Burkinabés did not have any longer the worry to look after the public framework of life.

How is the evolution of the material framework of human existence done: of the clan towards the world-state. Why is it that the Burkinabés don't even have the sense of state?
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Yes, as we have seen, the human existential type, favours the overdeveloped ego, that which leads us to choose a social family, alias « a homeland », quite close to us. Along the course of the historic evolution, we have known the clan, the tribe, the state-nation, the multinational state, and we are probably on the way towards the state-world.

Ah well the Burkinabese state, ex-colony which gathers many tens of ethnic groups, was far from being a homeland in the heart of its inhabitants: they belonged to their clan and to their small nation. They were of such a clan, in such a village; there were some Mossis, or some Gourmantchés, some Bobos, some Dioulas, some Peuhls, some Dogons, some Lobis... They were not Burkinabés, or truly so few. They did not have therefore practically any duties towards what was not their homeland: the Burkina Faso, the country which did not exist yet.

A single example: the Burkinabé civil servant uses to the profit of his family and of his clan whatever he can take away from the state. Is he dishonest? No, because he will never rob his family or his ethnic group. His conscience is at peace: he is an honest man. He is an ordinary civil servant. As far as the people are concerned, they do not condemn him: they would rather be in his place.

Imagine now his similar in an old state-nation which at the same time is a homeland, like

France. That civil servant embezzles also the public state revenues, but not to the profit of his ethnic group: he has a bad conscience, his people curse him, finally, he is not an ordinary civil servant he is an exception.

That behaviour as regards to the state, we find it amongst all the peoples who quite often still live in clans or who have been installed in modern states which are not their homeland: artificial states cut out by surveyors, like slices of meat in the flesh of a living animal.

But there, still, it was impossible to understand all that. Nourished by the ideas we received, we were, I remind you, convinced that their country recently freed was entering an era of striking progress towards which we were going to participate.

At that time, the capital hardly had more than one hundred thousand inhabitants, whereas there would be more than seven hundred thousand about whom I asked myself what they lived on. In order that the countryside can nourish so many citizens, it is necessary that the peasants make real progress and the international aid as well. Therefore, the city was not extensive. After having crossed the centre, then a little zone of residences for the rich, we covered two or three kilometres in the suburbs, the same as those previously described, with their « concessions » covered with the same culture and breeding according to the taste of the new citizens still attached to the peasant way of living; one must say that that agriculture in the city helps to survive when the work in the city is lacking, which is frequent.

Must one renounce to the hope of a paradise on earth?

I have hurried to start my work to help them to install their paradise on earth. Am I an idiot? I still believe in it, the nearly naïve paradise

of my youth has been replaced by a perpetual building site of continuous creation which, I hope, will please Mômmanh.

On our exit from the city, we were nearly dazzled by that space long in the shape, and having approximately the same surface as twenty football grounds and which, like a gigantic mirror, reflected the blinding light of the sun. It was an artificial lake which the colleague director called « dam », on of those which carried water to the capital. Some fishermen in a boat were throwing their cast net and their gestures were beautiful like those that we could see elsewhere in the world : I want to speak of the net which, when thrown carefully, opens like the corolla of a flower before closing itself in the water, keeping the fish prisoners in its netting.

There were also some fishermen with their fishing line, fish vendors, washer women and girls who came to draw out water, and also some passers by on foot, by bike, by cart.... who paddled gaily in the water of the apron.

I was going to forget the clusters of children clinging, some to a trunk of a tree half immersed, some to a piece of land, some to a small boat. They were mostly boys, nearly naked, not to say totally, and whose white teeth, still far from being carious, wrote down a big happy smile which lit up the young bodies to the sombre skin shining sweetly to the sun.

« - The « Bigas » are paying for a slice. I quite believe that it is they who are right, said our conductor director.

- Excuse me?...

- Oh ! Excuse me. Here we call the children « Bigas ». It must be the Moorish term, the language of the Mossis, and the majority of the people in this country.

_ There are therefore plenty of languages.

- Oh, rest assured. Everybody understands at least a little French. Yes, there are a good sixty languages or local dialects. I was therefore saying that the Bigas, or the kids if you prefer, are everywhere the same: they are mad about water.

- One can bathe here. In such a heat, that does good.

- Yes, but if you are keen on your life, do not do as those bigas. In the water of the dams, or that of the small lake which is even worse, one catches all sorts of filthy things, even serious.
- And those children, they don't catch anything.
- Less than us: they are at home; their organism has built up its defences. Then, from time to time one dies of it: it is like this.
- Ah well!... »

It had rained on the eve and the overflow of the dam was flowing over the route towards a small dirty valley situated below. That type of dump which served at the same time as the ford of the users of that street, the director called it « dam ». The Deudeuch started boldly. The water reached nearly the lower part of the door. Hardly had I the time to fear that it did not reach the engine, leaving us stranded in the middle of the apron: we were already on the other side and we continued our way.

« - Amusing, isn't it? There is no danger. One arrives just the same, (But rest assured that is quite rare. », it happens that after an exceptional rain, the crossing is impossible: so, one spends the night at Ouaga.

- Are there many of those aprons?
- Some of them, but I love to see a hundred times more of them. The dams like this one here, are the life and the future of the country. Without the dam, the rain coming from the sea goes quickly back after having done a lot of damage and very little good. Thanks to the supports for the water that, we can keep it for a longer time, the time that she makes it possible for everybody to eat from it. But you come just at the right time: you don't want to understand everything the first day ?...
- No, surely..
- You will see: one gets on well here. The people are very kind. »

We have already learned, but without truly realising in our minds, that that country had two seasons: the season of the rains and the dry season. The names for us so familiar, of spring, summer, autumn, winter, names which we believe universal

and in that resentment of many geography lessons, oh well, those words however well civilized had no meaning here. Man can try hard to invent an Orient of dreams and a fantastic interglacial universe, what a lot of trouble he can come across only to come out of this hole !...

Therefore, in the season of the rains, the water arrives from the sky, most often during violent storms which can uproot trees a hundred years old, big as the oaks, storms which one calls « tornadoes ». The heavy rainfall of enormous drops tumble down from the sky like a cascade: often, in less than an hour, the rain falls as much as it does in an ordinary month in Brittany. The streets and parts of the roads also, are transformed in torrents; temporarily, the aprons become impassable. The thirsty plants do not benefit from it as much as they want from those galloping downpours which, as soon as they arrive, tear along the roads, towards the sea, carrying with it all that its strength permits it to drag: pieces of good land, essentially.

After the season of the rains, during a period which lasts at least six months for that region of Ouagadougou, it is the dry season. Attention: thirst with extremely rare exceptions, not a drop falls and you can sleep under the stars. The grass of the savannah dries up quickly and the slightest spark is enough to set it on fire. Towards half of the season the harmattan blows which, endlessly, at the same time as the dust which rises in the blue sky, transports the meningitis and some other illnesses.

For the Burkinabés, the beautiful weather would have consisted in a sweet rain like we had at home, at night preferably, which would have refreshed the charred land, washed the sky and purified the atmosphere... Moreover, during that sick season, when the radio said: « Beautiful clear weather and sunny all over the territory. », one asked if the journalist was joking or if he recited by heart a formula learned during a course in France.

At our arrival, it was the month of August, the heart of the season of rains and farming. The tornado of the previous evening had left puddles of water in the holes of the street, and sharpened their colours.

Here, I must introduce to you the laterite. In a tropical climate, the joint action of the rain and the sun provoke the formation, in the soil, of a layer of red infertile land: it is the laterite. The extended drought hardens it until it forms an impenetrable crust for the roots, practically sterile. When the savage rain of the tornadoes has carried away the thin layer of the good vegetable earth, there only remains that red shell, like the laughter of a dragon. That is what happens when the cultivations and farming are badly conducted: great stretches of laterique desert are formed.

Ah well, even the laterite serves for something: one uses it to cover the streets. Some big holes are formed principally when the rain has rendered them fragile. During the dry season, the cars and the lorries move their trail of red dust, comparable to the trail of a comet.

Another phenomenon assaults the vehicles, their passengers and their freight: it is the plate of corrugated steel. In the scorching sun, the lateritique lining is dilated and forms thick transversal streaks so well that the way seems a strip of reddish corrugated iron. This phenomenon is mitigated during the season of the rains, but persists nevertheless.

« - On the corrugated iron, our conductor announced, that it was necessary to drive either slowly, or at a minimum of 80. Between the two, the car falls in pieces and you will find yourself sitting on the road.»

While proceeding in this alarming manner, Deudeuch took up its momentum to cling to the speed of survival. We had to travel about fifteen kilometres before reaching Kardougou, the village where our school was built. We had just left the city to enter the territory of the peasants, and so, we were not in the countryside.

« - Here, the peasants do not live in the countryside: they live in «undergrowth».

- Is that so ?...

- Ah yes ! It is like that here. You arrive in another world. In France all the land is cultivated; in the Upper-Volta, it is most often in its wild state. The peasants

practice what is called the itinerant culture of the slash and burn technique. In other words, they clear by means of the fire, the corner of the undergrowth where they are going to make their field; they cultivate it for some years, without manure, until nothing suitable grows, because the land is exhausted; so they ask the chief of the land of the village for the permission to clear another corner of the undergrowth. And then, you must know, that here the land cannot be privately owned: it belongs to the village. It is because the land where the family constructs its huts is called a concession and not a property. Strange ! Strange !... other places, other customs. You know, I sometimes have the impression of having fallen on another planet. »

On that route, the undergrowth » had a particular character owing to the influence of the nearest city: nearly all the lands were cultivated. Under the striking blue of the sky, the two colours dominated the landscape: the red of the route and some plaques of the bare laterite, the greenery of the cultivations.

In the middle of all the plants that were strange to me, I recognised a familiar cultivation just the same: mais. There was also a plant which seemed similar and whose stem was taller still; in fact the director told us, that what I was seeing there was not always the same cereal but two similar species: sorghum or big millet, and another species called « little millet ». However, since their grains had approximately the same flavours and above all the same function, that of basic food, the Africans had combined these two species in one single category: it was the millet, the nourishing cereal in tropical Africa. It made up nearly entirely the only daily meal of the Burkinabés peasants. Moreover, I was surprised when the director informed me that the average produce was inferior to 300 kilos/ha., twenty times less than that of blessed France!...

In spite of the unbelievable deprivations, on seeing the green stretch of the cultivations, I kept on the impression of certain opulence. I did not know yet that in the dry season, the same landscape did not evoke any longer the prosperity, but rather the three fourths missing fur of a sick and hungry beast. In any case, on that day, I was keen on keeping my false impression, consequence of the illusions which I had

with me and of which the greater part would not take long to dissolve because of the brutal reality.

For a mondial economy is a state-world necessary?

And now? Now that my hair is white and that I have come back to my old self completely, I believe again that that country can become a splendid garden. Now, men should not take long to take that revolutionary decision: cease behaving like fools. I know: you have heard that a thousand times and it is always the announcing sign of a woolly utopia. Allow me just the same to introduce what Mômmanh has inspired me.

See the entire humanity like a colony of living beings particularly intelligent and performing. The planet earth is their domain. They have the possibility of developing there the way and of producing there enough riches so that human existence commits itself resolutely on the ways of cosmos, towards the two infinities of time and space. Instead of that, what does one see?... Some idiots who strike each other and kill each other.

« - What are we to do? ... - It is up to you to find it. It is up to you and all the others. I will give you a lead just the same. »

The liberal economy, in the developing countries, produces enormous riches which are increasing. One knows how to regulate that system from the internal side of a state, in a way to avoid the serious crisis. Like this, our French government imposes to the economy actors the respect of a plethora of rules which guarantee the quality of the products, the salaries, the stability of the currency, the conditions of work, the protection of the unemployed... For example, it is nearly impossible in France to cultivate poppy or to sell arms to anyone just like one sells butter.

But market has become worldwide whereas at such a level, one still does not manage to direct it.

The forbidden ways to earn money in a country, are practised in another, the cultivation of coca, poppies, cannabis, trafficking of arms, of organs, of children, of perverse sex,... tax evasion, plundering of natural resources, degradation of the biosphere, child exploitation, exploitation of salaries, slavery, mafia practices, strangulation of the human future... Must one continue the list which will cover doubtlessly the whole volume?

Like this, when a state wants to regulate the economy in a way so that it gives work and riches to all and it serves for the better development of the existence, it finds often other countries to reduce to nothing its efforts only by

rendering to an unfair competition. And moreover, because of that worldwide competition, all the countries live under the permanent threat of recession and unemployment, a threat which will end up by materialising itself.

The worldwide market is a gigantic enterprise capable of satisfying the needs of the whole humanity. The direction of that precious ensemble is trusted to nearly two hundred states of which each takes care first of all of its own interests. Man, the only conscious being of the planet, he to whom Mômmanh has entrusted her destiny, is he mad? When is he going to decide to give the world market an only direction, with means of action at least also efficient like those of a modern state?

And shall we see man, his intelligence at last freed, managing better his planet, like a good farmer?

Humanity possesses the natural resources, the scientific knowledge, the know-how, the machines to produce what gives comfort and freedom to all men. Perhaps he must watch over irrespective of the risks of overpopulation.

Since the Earth is a village, when will it have its mayor?
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So? « When will it be? »

The theory of the « Struggle for Existence » permits one to approach that problem under a wider angle. The territory and the men with whom we can act to realise our existence, I call it existential field of action, that is to say accessible to our will. At daybreak of humanity, that field was limited to the clan and to the territory which he can cover to find his subsistence. After the discovery of America, it stretched to the whole world but it was still possible, for a good number of peoples, to withdraw within their frontiers like Japan and China did. And in all ways, nearly all the activities of the existence develop within the states.

Now, the part of the existence affected by globalisation is bigger without being able to reverse the tendency. « The earth is a village ». Well, but then, where is its municipal council? Who is its mayor?

Our existential field of action is the earth. When shall we have a planetarian government to rule the planetarian existence for the better?

All the wounds which ravage the world's economy, a state which will live in anarchy will know how to get to the bottom of it. If a world authority disposes, to the planetarian scale, the same powers as that state, even it can render healthy the economy of our existential space of action: it would rule the world market.

At a great speed on the corrugated steel sheets - 80 km/h. for our brave Deudeuch -, in resentment of trepidations and clouds of red dust which were accompanying us like a witch's train, we had the impression of sliding on the route. We had to learn later on, at our expense, how much that impression was right: some nervous handling of the steering wheel was enough to lose control of the vehicle which went across the road and in a frolic anywhere as far as a tree wrongly placed puts an end to its vague desires of independence. That sort of slip on the road lasted a good ten kilometres and our driver decreased the speed to engage himself slowly on a new apron trickling with water. We had arrived at the dam which nourishes the village of Kardougou. All of a sudden, we turned to the right to take a laterite road, bordered with greenery: we were on the school territory.

The colleague director was taking us directly to our house.

« - This is what the administration calls « villa » and we familiarly call a « small house ». It is yours. »

It was a modest « F3 », nearly new, flanked by a terrace in cement sheltered under the porch roof with corrugated transparent plastic, an addition which we had to call « véranda », to speak the same language as the autochthonous. Our small house had the electricity, two air conditioners without which the moments of great heat would have been borne with difficulty, and the running water; in brief, in that country of extreme poverty, the function of that lodging had the effect of a residence of great luxury which one would be happy to call « villa », since its small size forbid it from reaching the level of a castle. But, we had to discover the different aspects of our lodging later.

For the time being, we felt a delicious tickle of happiness at the sight of our house. A vigorous creeper with big leaves sheltered the veranda; its numerous branches resembling ropes intertwining themselves into a sort of net which enclosed the transparent porch. That plant down there, was the creeper of Madagascar, our director told us. Was it truly the time for blooming? Were its flowers really like this: big and gracious, fleshy, crammed with vigour, sensual which encouraged the caress

of the look, to the colours now striking, playing boldly their devilish serenade, presently discrete, inviting timidly to discover in their peaceful contemplation their delicate intimacy? No, they are only like this in my memory. What does it matter, that a beautiful stranger of the tropics symbolises the new delights which our accommodation invited to discover, in that hot country populated by Blacks.

Yes, our lodging pleased us right away. Behind, closed by a hedge of acacia, was a big plot of land of which I was going to make our garden. If there were, amongst the small grass, some bougainvilleas, some pride of China, red jasmine, ornamental manioc, a banana tree... There still, our horizon opened itself on the promises of unknown pleasure.

That F3 planted in the laterite of a village of the African savannah, was an element of our daily life transplanted in that strange universe. At first, he played the same role as the colleague director and his Deudeuch: avoiding us preventing us from being too much out of our own element, deprived brutally of our existential foods tested without having the time to experiment others.

Afterwards, little by little, we discovered that we should not have adapted ourselves there, neither even survive, without some elements of our western comfort: in the first place, hospital and all its doctors, then an air conditioner, the refrigerator, electricity... which seemed to us as important as acquaintances of the French or the Western ones, be they Americans.

But I cannot all the same relate everything to you. Allow yourself the voyage, if you can. With only as much imagination, of hope, of faith, in the man which we shall have then, you cannot be deceived. And you will not be the only hare-brained Westerner immersed in a black population, because hundreds of NGOs lead some actions down here.

The time of the meal did not delay itself; for that first meal in that distant « down there », we were invited to the table of Mr. Lajoie, at the time, director, compatriot, colleague, and already nearly a friend.

« - It is quite a completely ordinary meal, he warned us. This evening, you will be better received, in the presence of all the colleagues and friends of Kardougou. Work starts again at three in the afternoon which, after eating, gives us a more sufficient time for a good little siesta, a refreshing shower, and even for some inside activities, while, outside, the sunlight shoots down its rays on whatever moves. Of course, you will take up your work only tomorrow. »

On the inside of the « lodging » just a little bit bigger than ours, well closed to prevent the heat from coming in, Madame Lajoie was waiting for us in the shade deliciously fresh, in the company of their two children, two boys nearly adolescents. We took place in the corner of the lounge. The malicious eye, sure of its little effect, Madame Lajoie rang a little bronze bell. A big Black arrived soon: immaculate white shirt, each of his cheeks marked with two or three parallel scars, signs which showed the adults of his race; he displayed a good will, which seemed even more naïve because it was accompanied by a big smile.

« - Madam?

- Grégoire, bring us the aperitif. Do as usual. And don't forget the goody-goodies», said Madame Lajoie who, in turning towards us, continued.

« Admit that that amazes you, huh? Ah well no, we are not colonialists, and however we all have some native servants here, sometimes two or even three, they even do all the housework, which gives us a lot of spare time; they earn ten times more at our house than they do cultivating their fields and they can buy a moped. The servants are happy, the masters are happy, everybody is happy. So, is there a problem?... I know a good boy who has already worked with some Europeans. I will send him to you after tomorrow, Madame Réveillac: he will be your first native servant. And I will explain to you how to deal with them: because if you are too gentle, they take you for an idiot; so not only don't they bother anymore, but they empty your house and they make fun of you.

During the meal, nobody had the need to rise up for the service.

After one of us let his wish be guessed as « I could still do with a piece of lamb leg and some flageolets », the lady of the house, very attentive, rang the bell, and the wish was granted.

The perspective of employing a native servant embarrassed me. We, the comrades who came to help the Blacks to break the last chains of colonialism, we who wanted the natural equality of men to express itself concretely in all the world, we all the same, slaves of our selfishness, were not going to betray the best element in communism !...

But, living without a servant, meant depriving a young villager from a better way of life for him, his wife and children; it was taking away the happiness of possessing a moped. In the situation of that time, perhaps the walk towards freedom of the Blacks passed through the employment of the servant. I found that I had reasoned out things well and I informed the entire table. As usual Jeanne had concluded well ahead of me. Why look for noon at two in the afternoon? She wanted a boy like everybody even so because her pregnancy became evident.

At the end of the meal, while the boy was serving the coffees, Monsieur Lajoie said: « It is pleasant all the same not to have neither the table to clear nor the crockery to wash. The children take a bad habit here. They believe that it is normal to be served like lords and, on the return to France; they suffer in returning to ordinary citizens. While waiting, let us benefit from our temporary privileges and we shall have a little nap. Here, everybody takes a siesta. It is doubtlessly the great heat which creates this need. So, put into it as much as you can as from today. Be careful, one must not sleep for too long, not more than half an hour; otherwise, after awakening, you will have headaches and your mind will be confused. There you are: have a good siesta, my friends. »

It is like this that we discovered the pleasure of the tropical siesta in a well-closed bedroom where, thanks to the air conditioner, the temperature was sufficiently fresh so that one could rest serenely. The siesta gives you again the energy during which, outside, the sun perseveres in vain on desert spaces. When you awake, you are

in good shape for the second stage of the day which contains a lot of time for free activities.

When evening came, all the « Europeans » of Kardougou met at Rémi, a colleague, and his wife Laure. In fact all those people were French like us. While waiting to be able to realise the universal fraternity, we, the comrades discoverers and liberators of the whole humanity, were quite happy to find ourselves among Frenchmen. We let ourselves be guided with instinct like some newly-born in that rather strange besides foreign world. Those new companions, seemed perfectly similar to us, like members of the family, they knew what was good for us. We were all dumbfounded, happy to discover to which point, in the land of exile, a portion of France can have the same taste like a glass of water for a thirsty person.

The evening started with a game of bowling and an informal meal, like all the rest. The atmosphere was nearly familiar. Although it was for us a discovery, we were suddenly seduced with that game in open air accessible to all. Boy or girl, from 7 to 97 years. I did not know anything better to favour the friendship of the neighbourhood.

The game of bowling was followed by an aperitif with a great variety of good things, some goody-goodies or throat delights, kebabs, fries, cheeses and some fruits: it was what our hosts called dinner aperitif ». The evening ended gaily.

Nested like this in our little French bubble, we went to sleep without fear of the black, so deep in the heart of Black Africa. We were hasty to be on the following day, and not only to see the new colours of daybreak: we were impatient to start for our good new existence, myself in my class with my black African students, Jeanne with the management of our house and the initiation of our native servant.

The African episode started well. Who could warn us that our love was going to ruin itself till it became a daily punishment, and even! A tragic disaster. Would you believe it? I said a punishment. It is still a part of my Christian education: that

religion doesn't explain that such mishaps of man can't be willed by God who is all goodness, they are necessarily punishments earned by our big sins.

We were not at all guilty.

Some strength that we were incapable of understanding, and much less to control, swept us away, like in the era of the Hundred Years War, the unhappy inhabitants of the kingdom of France were struck from all sides by the three inexplicable scourges of the war, of the plague and of famine. Our love had been a marvellous gift and we had arrived to a point to consider it like the air which we breathed, evident and indispensable. But it was little by little transforming itself into a nightmare.

To those who, amongst you, have entered in that history and sympathise with his heroes, I say in a brotherly way « Hang on: it is going to spin very strongly. »