

Christmas '81

# Com palavras amo

Eugênio de Andrade

(with words I love)

If this sentence is true, I will have to make up for a long period of silence and to draw a long, long line of words... And yet I can say that I have wandered in the last years through a vast and unexplored universe of words! From the intimacy of the late-hours of reading to the exposure of mass demonstrations, how many shades and tones words have taken for me!... I wish I could search for them in the attics of my memory to recapture the luminous sentence read once and now incorporated in me or to translate the freshness of words heard in a whisper and immediately covered with the dust of a million other words.

Sometimes I feel that I am dissolving myself in words. I then run away into the silence. At other moments I feel utterly impotent to express what I have seen in my "explorations" - and I adjourn indefinitely the time for saying even the simplest things of life.

Now that Christ, the Word, is about to be spoken, what else can I do but to search in the midst of many experiences of my recent history the concerns and events that may interest you and to trace with them the path which is mine in this common journey of ours.



"... l'homme d'action tient rarement de journal : c'est presque toujours plus tard, du fond d'une période d'inactivité, qu'il se souvient, note, et le plus souvent s'étonne."

Marguerite Yourcenar  
Carnet de notes de "Mémoires d'Adrien"

Though I am not in a period of "inactivity" and I am not a "man of action" (but rather a woman of several actions!), I feel at a loss to tell you in a short way what I have been doing!

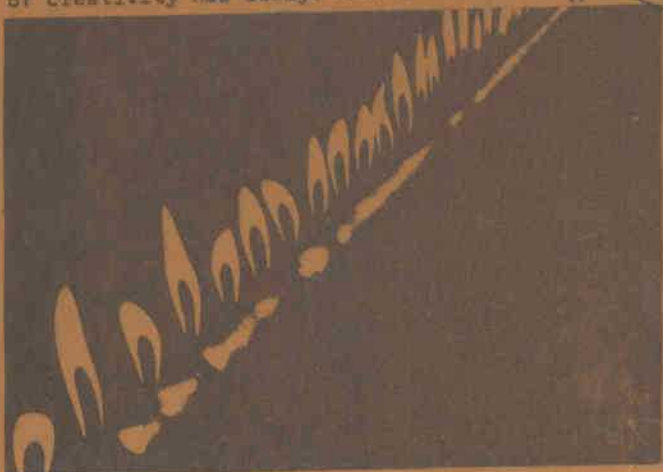


Every time a mass-media man approaches me, trying to know my "plans", it is 90% sure that he will ask if I want to be again Prime Minister or if I am "campaigning" towards any other office or even if I am a candidate to any of the UN posts... The rigid hierarchical, paternal way of organizing society leads inevitably most people to equate "political involvement" with holding "public office".

Of course, I remain what we call a "political personality" in this country. Officially, I function as advisor to the President, I have very good and rather regular contacts with the diplomatic Corps, I am involved in public events (ranging from the defense of the main points in the revision of the Constitution - to be done during 82 by the Parliament - to interviews at important moments nationally or internationally). This has two sides. The positive one is the possibility to make connections, to influence decisions, and to contribute in one way or another to the betterment of the Portuguese society. The negative one is the imprisonment in structures, institutions and ways of being and doing which are bureaucratic, prestige-seeking, time-consuming and, finally, irrelevant.

The very ambiguity I am pointing to would be difficult to cope with had I not another way of looking at things and of being socially and politically involved. I have been steadily committed to what I call "the revitalization of the social fabric". Since the beginning of this year Teresa and I have been involved in the attempt to constitute a platform of social groups. This is the first step in the process that began after the 25th April 74. But none of our political institutional forces was able to recapture their meaning and to translate it in political theory. Now, that the population is more and more skeptical about political parties, we see in such initiative a possibility to contribute to real democracy, aware of the needs of the people.

In this context, a lot of my activity goes in enewering requests of different groups, associations, cultural institutions. I have thus visited many different places in the country and established there new contacts. As I am in touch with some interesting research and cultural institutions abroad, the connections made are a contribution to cooperation beyond national frontiers. One of the most rewarding aspects of this kind of activity is the acquaintance made with artists, writers, intellectuals, as this type of creativity has always been a source of wonder to me!





"And it is not only the woman Anaïs who has to speak, but I who have to speak for many women. As I discover myself, I feel I am merely one of many; (...) The mute ones of the past, the inarticulate who took refuge behind wordless intuitions; and the women of today, all actions, all copies of men. And I, in between."

The diary of Anaïs Nin  
Vol one, pg 289

Maybe this is the best description I can find for my attempts in what concerns women. During these last two years I was "forced" to think, to speak, to write about women. I enjoyed it immensely! To be in a situation in which one has to speak about oneself and to try to seize what is happening in the wide space where women are becoming... This coming year a short article of mine about women in Portugal will appear in the book "Sisterhood is global". Because I had to be concise (not more than 5 pages!), some fundamentals of my thinking are there: the link between women's movements and the general movement for social change, the attempts to assert the individuality of women in a time when feminism is, in practice, miming the world of men. ("And I in between".) How to express the diversity of experiences...

Fundação Cuidar o Futuro

I have been involved in lectures, talks, interventions, seminars about women's situations and struggles. In 1980, I had the opportunity to speak to UN-related platforms, in 1981 I had public interventions on the related issues in Mexico, USA, France, Geneva, Yugoslavia... As I move from one audience to another, I gather experiences, comments, insights and steadily and firmly the intuitions become convictions, the acquaintances become friendly relationships.

Another experience of a totally different nature is taking place in my own country. A year ago I tried with a handful of women to see if there was "another" way to be involved in political action. By now, this attempt has become a true process of consciousness-raising at national level. After the meetings in 14 of the 18 districts of Portugal held during the first half of this year, a national meeting took place in June, followed during October and November by three large regional meetings.

The interesting feature about this is the combination of the most specific questions raised by women and the very concrete political commitment of each one. The accent flows from one aspect to the other and their interrelatedness become obvious for everyone. So much so that a few weeks ago when a political group decided to attack my political action the target it has chosen was the creation of a "women's network"!



Last but not least my interest in the women's movement and ideas has led me to privilege reading women's authors and their lives, mostly those who opened up new avenues in the turning of the century and in whom I recognize some of the features I found in the first Grail members. Some women writers who are our contemporaries are a continuous source of inspiration to me and are helping me a lot in shaping my own thought and in defining my line of action.

"... oui, cette action de grâce intérieure est comme l'unique preuve valable de l'existence, de la présence de Dieu; à travers l'existence, la présence du don qu'il t'a fait; comme si ce geste de sa main arrachait à celui qui nous est plus caché que personne son voile le plus épais, nous permettant ainsi de l'accueillir."

Lou Andréaz-Salomé  
Correspondance avec Rainer Maria Rilke  
1922, pg 410

Yes, it is this inner look at reality that changes the colour of my day-to-day experience! So many possibilities have been open to me that I cannot but thank God for His gifts. In the last years I have dedicated a lot of my study and practical involvement to the study of the individual growth and historical evolution - a source of renewed insights in the demands of what it means the Word made flesh in our midst, as one of us, in the shadows of our history...

This has been also a period of great puzzlement in front of the visible reality of the institutional church in Portugal - its submission to the rich and powerful, its loss of sense of mission, the incredible denial of its raison d'être. And, in the race or trest, I had the chance to feel the support and understanding of many Christian communities in Portugal and elsewhere.

But most of all I am grateful for the Grail in its unceasing adventure, for the words each one is for me, may it be in a time of speaking or in a time of silence. I have been the witness to the fact that wherever or whenever, words are said, painfully and tentatively but always with the truth of one's own heart, the word has never failed. Indeed, "the earth opens and the heavens pour the Just".

May the Word of God become flesh today in you, in all you undertake, in this world of ours in such need of Salvation!



Yours affectionately  
Luísa de Lourenço Pintasilgo

