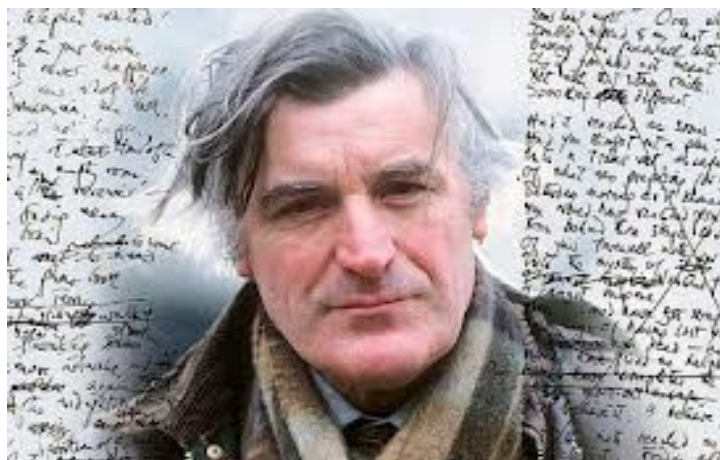


**Q U A R T E R L Y**  
**P R E S S R E V I E W**  
FOR ADVANCED EFL LEARNERS

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## The Strains of Migration

by Jason DeParle

When chipotle and kimchi abound in the suburbs and Univision co-hosts a presidential debate, it is easy to forget how sudden and extraordinary our ethnic makeover has been. Americans middle-aged or older were born into a country where immigrants seemed to have vanished. As recently as 1970, the immigrant share of the population was at its lowest level on record, and the foreign-born were mostly old and white. Now the immigrant share of the population is nearing Ellis Island-era highs, and the African, Asian, and Latin American newcomers are easily recognized as minorities. They hail from every corner of the developing world and settle in every corner of the United States, making new gateways out of places with no memory of huddled masses. Since 1970, the foreign-born population of greater Atlanta has risen more than 3,000 percent.

The most remarkable thing about this age of migration is its global reach. Movement to rich countries has tripled in the past half century. Canada, Australia, Sweden, and Ireland have proportionally more immigrants than the United States does, and Spain has nearly as

many. White Brits account for less than half of London's residents; Miss Israel is Ethiopian. But there is little agreement about the impact of migration or what policies should guide it. As Paul Collier, an Oxford economist, notes in his new book, Dubai got rich while bringing foreigners in, and Japan stays rich while keeping them out. The movement of goods and money is governed by global norms and institutions. The movement of people is not. The most intimate form of globalization is the least orderly and least understood.

Collier drew attention a few years back with *The Bottom Billion*, which called for rescuing the global poor by unconventional means (including military intervention) that he cast as evidence of his tough-mindedness. In *Exodus: How Migration Is Changing Our World*, Collier is even more eager to present himself as an enemy of orthodoxy. Like most economists, he thinks the benefits of migration have generally exceeded the costs; unlike many, he sees cause for worry should migration significantly rise. He's arguing against colleagues who say that letting more people from poor countries work in rich ones is the single best way to reduce global poverty. (If you want to help someone from Mali, they urge, let him mow your lawn.) Dismissing their approach as ethically "glib," Collier warns that rapid ethnic change can threaten fragile social bonds and weaken support for the welfare state – imperiling the "fruits of successful nationhood" that migrants seek.

It's the rare economist who calls an economic perspective a "woefully inadequate" guide to action and

then switches the subject to culture. In part, Collier's approach reflects the wariness that even many left-leaning Europeans feel after the past decade, which included the Amsterdam murder of Theo van Gogh, the London bus and subway bombings, and the Paris riots. But immigration alarms Americans, too (and always has). From progressives anxious about the marginalized poor to conservatives worried about Hispanic conquest and Sharia law, pessimistic voices can be heard across the political spectrum. Yet the more Collier dwells on what could go wrong, the more I found myself appreciating how much in the U.S. has gone right over the past four decades. If "two cheers for us" seems Pollyannaish for a precarious work still in progress, how about a cheer and a half?

The global story, in Collier's telling, begins after World War II, when three "golden" decades of rapid growth brought fabulous wealth to rich countries and left other countries further behind. Wider wage gaps gave the poor more reason to move, and cheaper travel and communications sped the way. The big winners have been the migrants themselves, many of whom have been able to multiply their earnings five or 10 times. Collier sees a mixed impact on the countries they have left. Remittances have brought in billions of dollars, but in the smallest and poorest countries, he thinks the benefits have been outweighed by brain drain.

Countries that take in migrants have received modest economic rewards overall, he says, along with the joys of diversity – fresh thinking, chicken tikka masala. But

Collier cautions that diversity can also have "corrosive effects" on trust, cooperation, and the willingness to redistribute income. He highlights research by Harvard's Robert Putnam, of *Bowling Alone* fame, who has found that diversity reduces trust not only between ethnic groups but also within them. "Inhabitants of diverse communities tend to withdraw from collective life, to distrust their neighbors, regardless of the color of their skin, to withdraw even from close friends ... and to huddle unhappily in front of the television," Putnam has written. Arguing that migration left unchecked will continue to accelerate, Collier insists that rich countries must set limits or put their "critical achievements ... at risk."

My own travels across migration corridors suggest more benefits to the developing world than this account allows, although in truth there isn't enough research to know. Remittances (about \$400 billion a year) bring poor countries more than three times as much money as they receive in foreign aid, and brain drain has a competing narrative in "brain gain." Some migrants return with new skills, and the mere hope of working abroad can create a pool of educated workers larger than the pool of those who leave. The lure of overseas work attracts so many Filipinos to nursing school that the Philippines has a nursing glut. And while it's true, as Collier notes, that migration often leaves behind the most desperately poor, the next strata up are plenty poor and desperate, too.

There is no question that migration puts strains on destination countries. The norms that once suppressed gun violence in Britain are eroding, Collier writes, and the gun culture of Jamaican migrants may be part of the story. Culture clash closer to home is the subject of *Outcasts United*, a captivating account of a soccer team of young immigrants that I happened to be reading alongside *Exodus*. In the late 1990s, an unsuspecting Atlanta suburb exploded with refugees, including Bosnians, Burundians, and a Sudanese teenager who beheaded his nephew in his Georgia apartment. “Little in Clarkston looked familiar to the people who’d spent their lives there,” writes the author, Warren St. John. “Women walked down the street in hijabs and even in full burkas. Clarkston High School became home to students from more than fifty countries.” Longtime residents withdrew, even from each other. The mayor, a self-described defender of “Old Clarkston,” banned soccer from the city park, leaving the refugee-youth team – the Fugees – no place to play.

This is extreme. Most immigrants aren’t war refugees, and most destinations attract a less complicated jumble of ethnicities. Still, even the Clarkston story has bright spots. A dying grocery store found new life selling ethnic food, and a Baptist church reinvented itself as a multicultural congregation. Robert Putnam (whose study *St. John* also cites) himself is cautionary rather than alarmist. “In the medium to long run,” he has written, “successful immigrant societies create new

forms of social solidarity and dampen the negative effects of diversity.”

Whether the U.S. will do this again, as it has in the past, is an open question. On the positive side, many researchers have found that children of immigrants attain levels of education and employment rivaling those of children whose parents are native-born. Virtually all of them learn English. Unlike Australia, France, and Sweden – Sweden! – the U.S. hasn’t had big immigrant riots. Dixie has two Indian-American Republican governors, and a Kenyan American occupies the White House. Yes, there are nativist kooks, immigrant gangs, ugly ethnic conflicts – but that makes European envy all the more interesting. “Children growing up in America almost unavoidably assimilate American values,” Collier writes. “The same is far from true in Europe.”

The reasons go beyond America’s nation-of-immigrants heritage, although that’s important. Compared with Europe, the U.S. attracts more immigrants who share the dominant faith. (Imagine if Mexicans built mosques.) An economy that, until recently, had lots of entry-level jobs has made it easier for immigrants to find work. American schools generally provide students second chances, while Europeans are more likely to leave stragglers on vocational tracks. The U.S. also had Martin Luther King Jr. – the civil-rights movement, cresting just before the current mass migration started, bequeathed a robust apparatus for promoting opportunity. And American culture sells, in all its tawdriness and splendor. In Europe, the children of immigrants

sometimes cling to the Old Country more than their parents do: sons import brides. In the U.S., the bigger danger is assimilating too fast: children get fat eating french fries and watching TV.

Immigrants to the U.S. do face barriers to their integration, but the problems differ from the Euro-accented ones that concern Collier. Nearly 30 percent of the foreign-born in America – about 11 million people – reside in the U.S. illegally, and the political system is gridlocked. Blocking so many people from legal employment, thwarting their education, and leaving their families in constant fear is a perfect way to produce the underclass that some critics of migration fear. (From Collier's perspective, the issue is straightforward: Borders leak. He sees no escape from the need to periodically offer paths to legal status.)

The other big problem for the new migrants is inequality. Income gaps are the widest they have been in nearly a century. Family structure is splintering along class lines, and school quality is increasingly unequal, too. Since a future with no diploma is dim, the children of unschooled immigrants have to make an especially large generational leap. Although the superior fluidity of American society used to be taken for granted, recent research has found that the U.S. lags behind many European countries on measurements of mobility. The dangers confronting the Fugees went well beyond the bigoted Georgia mayor to conflicts with a native underclass short on opportunity and long on gang violence. Rapid ethnic diversification can certainly strain a town.

But worse than bowling alone is the prospect of never being able to afford a trip to the bowling alley. With the climb to middle-class stability increasingly steep, that's an unhappy prospect immigrants and natives may share. ♦

## An unpublished letter by Ted Hughes

introduced by *Simon Armitage*

Ted Hughes was a prolific letter writer, perhaps from the last age of letter writing. A selection of his output, edited by Christopher Reid in 2007, runs to over six hundred pages, and my guess is that there is at least as much again which remains unpublished. Amongst other exchanges, I'm told there is an extensive and extraordinary correspondence with Seamus Heaney tucked away in the archives of Emory University, Georgia, which will hopefully see the light of day at some stage. I have about four or five letters from Ted plus a handful of cards and notes, and it's always a thrill to see the quick and enigmatic pen strokes again, and to remember the excitement of finding an envelope on the doormat with a Devon postmark and the tell-tale handwriting.

This two-page, four-sided, undated letter beginning 'Dear Peter' (Peter Keen, the photographer Hughes would later collaborate with in the book *River*) is unremarkable on the face of it, with no revelatory personal utterances, no far-reaching literary insights and no traces of the heightened poetic language which is a feature of so many of his letters. But look beyond

the surface and it tells us a great deal about Hughes the poet and Hughes the man. The first issue is to do with clarity. Right from the outset Hughes hopes the accompanying map is 'clear enough', and just in case it isn't provides an extended commentary and further detailed instructions. In fact there are three maps within the letter, one highlighting a section of the River Taw and two showing stretches of the Torridge (Map A for the Torridge in spate and Map B for when the river is 'wadeable'). We learn from these that Hughes owned or shared fishing rights along both these rivers, and in Hughes's absence Peter is being invited and initiated, as well as being told where to park, which residents to approach and who might be best avoided ('a fussy lady makes problems between X and Y. I never fish it – it's not very good anyway'). In my experience, it's indicative of Hughes's personality that he should go to such lengths to pass on the benefit of his experience and to try and ensure any recipient gets the greatest possible pleasure from it. Hughes's philosophical concerns were complex and tangled, but he avoided the tiresome obscurity which afflicted many other poets of his generation, and the hallmark of his best poems is a purposeful clarity, brought about through pinpoint verbal accuracy and precisely observed detail. It's the reason why the poems were admired by both critics and general readers, and why many of his adult poems made such a lasting impact when used in schools. We also get a glimpse here of Hughes the teacher. The tone of the letter reminds me a lot of his handbook *Poetry in*

*the Making*, assembled from radio broadcasts aimed at young writers but in my view required reading for aspiring and accomplished poets of any age and experience. At one point in the book, he suggests that without the right techniques for accessing ideas the imagination will languish like a fish in the pond of someone who doesn't know how to fish. In fact if the word 'fish' in this letter is substituted for the word 'poem', we have a rather interesting extended metaphor on the nature of poetic composition. Given the number of poems Hughes wrote in his life and the number of days he evidently spent fishing, there must presumably be some correlation between the two, and a picture emerges of Hughes reeling in as many poems from those Devon rivers as he did salmon or trout.

The other point which this letter illustrates is Hughes's depth of local knowledge, though it doesn't surprise me. During his upbringing in the Calder Valley in West Yorkshire Hughes became intimately familiar with the surrounding landscape of moors and cloughs, and the same thing appears to have happened with the fields, copses and watercourses of north Devon where he eventually made his home. For all his desire for privacy Hughes was never going to be confined within the walls of his house or the borders of his garden, though in this letter there's an element of stealth – an awareness not just of roads and villages but of byways, backwaters, farm-tracks and paths, a means of getting out and about under the radar. A more arcane form of knowledge comes in his description of the river itself,

an understanding of its rhythms and moods and the movements and behaviour of the fish populations within it. This extends as far as actually referring to one particular fish, a 'big trout – 1½ lb' and where to find it (over a fifteen foot wall, by Farmer Stokes's place), as if that trout were someone he knew personally, if not by name then at least by habit.

I'm embarrassingly ignorant on the subject of fishing, so I don't know what he means by 'nymphs' and 'a bit of real mayfly'. Embarrassed because my wife's grandfather was a well known fly-fisherman in the Tregaron area of Wales, and her father's ashes are scattered along the banks of the River Barle near Simonsbath on Exmoor, where he spent hundreds of hours doing ... whatever fishermen do. Embarrassed also because once, on a visit to his house, Ted took me on a short evening walk along the side of a river – possibly along one of the stretches mentioned in these letters – and talked about fishing, and I kept quiet, not knowing one end of a rod from the other, but happy just to be in his company and to listen to his voice. We stopped for a while near some sort of marker stone or commemorative plaque on the bank, then after a few quite moments he said, 'But it's dead now.' He was talking about the river itself, and the devastating effects of pollution on the fish stocks. I hadn't realized at the time how concerned Ted was with the environment, and how involved he was with campaigning across the county, writing to the government about what he saw as an impending natural disaster and even giving evidence

at a hearing about a proposed water treatment plant in Bideford. This letter, with its tone of optimism and boyish enthusiasm, would have pre-dated my visit to his deceased river by perhaps twenty years, and more than anything it makes me realize how much it must have pained Hughes to witness that demise.

On a more upbeat note, it's reassuring to see a spelling mistake ('style' for stile) and I love the maps. As a geography graduate, I once dreamed of joining the Ordnance Survey, but became disillusioned once I realized that it was essentially a maths-based activity involving compass bearings, theodolites and advanced trigonometry. Hughes's maps are old-school, the kind we find in the front of ancient books, drawn with a free hand and free mind. I like the kinks in the road, the candy-floss trees, the curve of the walls across the fields, the toy building blocks of Bondleigh Church, and of course the thick red lines along the banks of the river, where the fishing will be best if the fish 'feel like it', like a thermal image revealing a layer of information not available to the naked eye. It speaks of someone not just in touch with the landscape around him but *in tune* with it, feeling it deeply, and always trying to put that physical response into words.

\*\*\*\*\*

Dear Peter,

I hope this map is clear enough.

Leave North Tawton square on the BONDLEIGH ROAD. The first T junction is at Bondleigh Bridge. By then you are on my map. Turn right, (without crossing the river) + go up the hill 40 yards, take the first on the left, to CLAPPERDOWN FARM. 50 yards along that lane, the river comes beside the road, and right there, under the road, is the pool I've marked, in red, above the top limit of my fishing. But I always fish it. Farmer Stokes is a nice chap. He owns that pool and about 1½ miles above it. So if you want to fish on up through the bridge, go and see him. (I've marked his farm.) (I've also marked a red dot just below his farm house. There's a high wall there, you look over and 15 feet down to the river. Right under the wall there's usually a big trout – 1½ lb.

I've marked the pools + fishable runs in [red]. I've marked the fishing side – the wading etc side – in [blue]. It's best to go below the bottom of the fishing, and get across before you start – otherwise it's difficult to approach that very good bottom long run stealthily enough. Yesterday there was a tremendously heavy rise going on, to nymphs, between 12 and 4:30. I lost a 1 ½ lb-er in that pool above the top [end of page] limit. There was a bit of real mayfly – unusual. Technically, my bank is the right (looking downstream), but cross over wherever you need. The water covered by the 2



copses enclosed in [red circle], is not ours, and a fussy lady makes problems between X and Y. I never fish it – it's not very good anyway.

[Map.]

It's tricky fishing, a lot of it pretty bushy, but if you've small rods and are used to it, it is good when the fish feel like it – can be really good this year. I've put a lot back, in only 3 visits.

If the water on the Torridge is up, as it just might be if the rain keeps on, then maybe you'd like to go there. I'm seeing the owner tomorrow, and I'll fix it. For that, you need to know whether the river is wadeable. If it is, you go to IDDISLEIGH + ask for Nethercott House. Go down past the house, about a mile, or less, till you see a sign NETHERCOTT FISHING PARKING. It's a little inlet where you park. Then you go up the lane beside the parking, through a gate, over the hill top, and see the river below you. Follow the lane down to a gate, go through that + down the field to a stile over the hedge between you + the river, and straight on to a fishing hut. The ford across is the pool tail thirty yards below the hut. All that field – which contains the hut – is our fishing, on that bank. Across the river, the fishing goes upstream about a 1/2 mile (limit marked) and down about 2/3 mile (limit marked). (On left bank looking downstream).

If the river is up, as it is at its best, you go to the Meeth, on the Hatherleigh – Torrington road. Opposite

the pub, a lane goes down past a bus depot and leads [end of page] to a farm - about 200 yards. Park at the farm. Go through the farmyard, and on down over the fields as you like. If you follow the lane + continue on in that line, on up over the hill beyond the lane end (follow the lane where it becomes a track up a fieldside) you come to the bottom of the fishing – stump pool, below a bit of a weir, 20 foot deep + the best pool for several miles either way, I'm told.

[Map.] ♦

## Who Raped Sylvia?



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ESSAY HAS BEEN REMOVED FROM THE  
MAGAZINE. ♦*









## Promised Land in Mato Grosso

by *Glenn Cheney*

I'm sitting in the back seat thinking, *Nuns can't drive*. Or maybe it's just nuns with a lot on their minds. Or maybe it's just Sister Leonora Brunetto, bearing on her sixty-four-year-old shoulders the weight of slavery, kleptocracy, landlessness, lawlessness, forest fires, hit squads, environmental devastation, and the ravages of capitalism. The year is 2013, and she's driving erratically down a ragged highway in the central Brazilian state of Mato Grosso. She speeds up, slows down, squints into the dark beyond the headlights, then remembers the rearview mirror, then remembers the accelerator.

Half the problem, I think, is Elizete Pinheiro, the woman sitting next to her. She's filling us in on the political misconduct in the nearby town of Terra Nova do Norte. Pinheiro works for the municipal government there, as coordinator of the environmental department, which means that she's knee-deep in a slurry of shady deals and embezzled funds. She hates it — and as she speaks, her voice soars with indignation. I'd have trouble driving, too.

But she stops short when Leonora taps the rearview mirror and says, "They're following us."

“Who?”

“*Pistoleiros*.”

No matter how fast she goes, they stay a few hundred yards behind us. They’ve been with us, Leonora says, since we filled the tank back in Alta Floresta, half an hour ago. We’re still an hour from the next town. Between here and there, the houses are few, the cars rare, the evening sky dark with the smoke of burning pastures. It’s a good place for a hit. There’s no cell phone signal, but that matters little, since there’s no one to call. Certainly not the police. The *pistoleiros* in the car behind us probably *are* police — off-duty for the moment but in cahoots with their on-duty colleagues.

Leonora brakes hard as we turn onto the bridge over the Rio Teles Pires. It’s an especially rough span of narrow, cratered concrete, a hundred yards long. The car behind us is suddenly on our bumper, its lights filling our car and flooding Leonora’s face. There’s no backing up, no turning off, no dodging. Only later does Leonora tell us of her fear that this was *it*, the moment she had been expecting for the past ten years, the moment she found out for sure what God does with the dead.

The *pistoleiros* stay on us as we rumble over the bridge, then fall back as Leonora picks up what little speed her car can muster. She veers southeast onto the highway toward Terra Nova and swerves around a truck piled with furniture and peasants. Just up the road is the little eatery where we had lunch earlier the same day, run by a family that loves her. The highway dips for

a stretch, then rises — and as the restaurant appears, Leonora cuts sharply to the left, scoots behind a tree, and snaps off the lights. Half a minute later, a car screams by. It’s a darkblue VW Golf.

“That’s them,” she says.

Back in 2013, a lot of people wanted Sister Leonora dead. Many still do. But many more — maybe thousands — address her as *Mãe*: Mother. The latter group includes disenfranchised farmers in roadside camps, fugitive slaves who have hidden in her house, activists of all stripes, and women who have started small businesses under Leonora’s tutelage. This maternal role has given her at least some measure of protection. As cruel, greedy, and ignorant as certain people in Mato Grosso can be, they know what happens when you kill someone’s mother.

At an *acampamento* on a dirt road near Terra Nova, I asked a few men what would happen if someone killed Sister Leonora. It was dusk at the rickety little camp, which the inhabitants called Renascer. We sat on crates and logs and busted chairs behind the patchwork hut of a man named Nico. Under stars pinked with smoke, we passed around the *chimarrão*, a bulbous gourd of *erva mate* tea. Everybody sipped from the same steel straw and rolled thin cigarettes of black rope tobacco in rectangles of notebook paper. Little boys played on the ground, pushing pictures of trucks and honking at one another.

“Nothing would happen,” Nico said calmly. “The Sister is our hope. When she’s gone, so is our hope. No



one will do anything, just as they've never done anything before.”

Someone else disagreed, saying that the murder of Leonora would spark people into action. The *acampados* would finally turn violent.

Nico's prediction is consistent with the past. The history of the rural poor in Brazil is one of resignation. They suffer the abuse of rich squatters and the Polícia Militar as if blessed with an infinite capacity to absorb punishment. One reason for this, says a colleague of Leonora's, is that the courageous are the first to be murdered.

In some cases, the poor are not merely abused but enslaved. By law, slavery has been forbidden in Brazil since 1888. But the practice was far more pervasive here than in the United States — Brazil imported at least six times as many African slaves as North America — so the idea of using forced labor for personal enrichment is more entrenched in the culture. Illiterate workers are still regularly tricked into thinking they are indebted to their employers for food and the tools they use. Or they're forced to keep working at gunpoint. One man at Renascer had been a slave for twelve years. He slept on the bare ground and was fed only enough to stay alive. Once he escaped, he did nothing to report his captors, not wanting to risk his liberty or his life.

But even with the so-called blessings of freedom, the inhabitants of Renascer have been beaten, robbed, and arrested. Six have been murdered. When they tried to occupy some land the federal government had promised

them just up the road, one man had his spine broken. Others were whipped with fence wire. Meanwhile, bulldozers flattened the camp. Then local police loaded the remaining residents onto a truck and dumped them in Terra Nova.

It was only with the arrival of federal police that the *acampados* were allowed to establish Renascer on its present site. But these forces don't show up on a whim. They don't step into land disputes without some kind of federal injunction. And to get such an injunction, you need somebody like Sister Leonora on your side, willing to ride herd over the entire process.

For the moment, then, the people in Renascer are safe from expulsion. Yet they deeply resent having to live in shacks on a narrow strip of land across the road from an endless Eden of grass.

“We have nothing, and they have everything,” Nico tells me. *They* being the cattle, fat humpbacked Brahmas within fifty feet of his hut. They have 15,000 acres while the camp has about five. They have all the food they can eat while the camp lives on minimal nutrition. They get medical care, which the people don't. They are protected by the police; the inhabitants of the camp are assaulted by the police.

But the cattle are also vulnerable, overseen by no more than half a dozen ranchers. A small group of peasants could do a lot of damage. They could make the ranch impossible to operate. No one at this camp has suggested such action, but it must have occurred to them. There are, however, two obstacles in the way. One

would be the consequent bulldozers, broken backs, whippings, and gunfire. The other is a five-foot-one nun called *Mãe*. She says no. And that may be one reason why no one has killed her.

The principle of agrarian land redistribution was written into Brazil's new constitution in 1988. It allows the government to appropriate unproductive rural acreage, with compensation to the owner, and hand it off to small farmers. It also calls for the distribution of land that has always belonged to the state, even if that land is occupied by squatters. The program is overseen by the National Institute for Colonization and Agrarian Reform, or INCRA.

Because of its remote location in Brazil's interior, Mato Grosso remained thinly settled well into the twentieth century — even today, it has among the lowest population densities of any Brazilian state. The first Europeans trickled in during the early eighteenth century to exploit the region's gold, but the state remained populated largely by indigenous tribes until the 1970s, when the federal government began promoting settlement. Desperate to survive and eager to get rich, immigrants from all over Brazil burned off the forest and fenced in enormous tracts of land, which now support several million head of cattle, as well as extensive cotton, soy, and rice fields.

But unless the land has been specifically sold to these ranchers and farmers, it still belongs to the state. Many a millionaire, claiming tens of thousands of acres, is legally a squatter. Some have managed to get the land

registered as their own, and fake deeds flutter around Mato Grosso like so many buzzards riding the convection currents. With such flimsy documentation, huge properties have been bought, sold, subdivided, even inherited. And those who cleared the rainforest or think they bought a legitimate piece of land will not easily give it up.

INCRA, meanwhile, moves very slowly. It lacks personnel and political will. It is saddled with a horrendous bureaucracy, and the deeds and documents it handles are complex and often compromised. Judges and politicians, who may be big-time squatters themselves, have little incentive to make the law work. Land transfers that could have been completed in sixty days are still languishing after a decade.

On one occasion, I accompany Leonora to the INCRA office in Colíder. Her goal is to nudge along a transfer that's been bottlenecked there for years. She's greeted warmly by the skeleton staff, which is gradually being crowded out by filing cabinets.

The manager sounds sincere in his desire to get the issue wrapped up and done with. Yet it takes him half an hour to explain all the reasons he can't. They've cut his budget, nothing's computerized, squatters are appealing cases, other people are claiming the land, other agencies are sitting on documents, the courts have to make decisions. What he doesn't say is that nobody with power, money, or land wants anything to change.

Afterward, on the sidewalk outside the office, we talk with Valdir, an activist under Leonora's wing who lives

in an *acampamento* outside Nova Canãa do Norte. His cell phone rings. The person on the other end, his number blocked, calls Valdir a shameless dog and tells him that this is the day he will die. He adds a crude comment about Leonora before hanging up.

In the car on the way back to Terra Nova, Leonora tells me that “they” tap her phone, as well as the phones of everyone she calls. By this she means the ranchers, the Polícia Militar, and, she suspects, the Brazilian Intelligence Agency. Once, they bungled the wiretap and she could hear what was going on at the other end. She thinks it was the police station, because the sounds of somebody being beaten in the background were clearly audible. They keep tabs on her. Outside the INCRA office, they know she was talking with Valdir. They know where she’s going now, and they know who’s in the car with her. They make these threats, she says, because they know they’re losing.

If INCRA is so adept at dragging its feet, how do the *acampamentos* keep multiplying? First, somebody does some research at a local hall of records and identifies a piece of land that has always belonged to the state. As long as this land is not preserved as forest, citizens are entitled to a piece of it.

Next, a bunch of these claimants band together, usually under the auspices of either the Landless Workers’ Movement (MST) or the Pastoral Land Commission (CPT), with which Leonora works. Then, without warning, the *acampados* set up shop near or adjacent to the property they are claiming. Since the

land alongside highways is always owned by the state, that’s where they tend to establish their beachheads — a few dozen or a couple hundred people on a gravelly swath, with the asphalt on one side and a barbed-wire fence on the other. The idea is that eventually the absentee squatters will be ejected from the state-owned pastureland and the *acampados* will settle there.

Often, though, they remain on the shoulder of the highway, in ramshackle hovels that swelter and leak. They draw their water from wells, bathe from buckets, cook in clay ovens over wood fires. They light their shacks with homemade kerosene lamps, just twists of cotton stuck in cans, the little flames sending up oily black squiggles of smoke. The men go off to look for field work. The women keep their homes clean, their pots and pans astonishingly shiny. A school bus picks up the children every morning and brings them home a little wiser.

Each *acampamento* elects leaders and makes decisions collectively, in the manner of a New England town meeting. In CPT camps, drug use, prostitution, and drunkenness are strictly prohibited, and the camp can vote to expel transgressors.

Some people give up. Some persist for years. From time to time, in an explosion of anger and frustration, an *acampamento* overflows its boundaries and turns into an *invasão*, an unlicensed expansion into a nearby pasture. This is usually followed by the arrival of local police or hired thugs and a rapid *despejo* — an ejection. Then it’s back to the *acampamento* for everyone who

survived and decides to stick around.

Every once in a long while, a judge actually grants some *acampados* permission to occupy the plots they have claimed. The issuance of deeds, however, may take years as INCRA assembles the necessary paperwork. So this phase is called a *pre-assentamento*: a presettlement. How long a claim can be sustained without a deed, or how long until the deed actually gets issued, depends on how much time attorneys are willing to contribute, how much pressure can be put on INCRA and the courts, and whether judges die, retire, or get bought off. On rare occasions, an *assentamento* goes through. But most of the *acampados* in Mato Grosso remain in limbo for years at a time, with only the MST or the CPT between them and the next expulsion.

In northern Mato Grosso, the face of the CPT is that of Sister Leonora: brown-eyed, softly wrinkled, quick to smile. In any situation, her default message is: *Don't give up*. And on a June morning in 2013, her goal is to keep several hundred people at the Cinco Estrelas *acampamento* from giving up. To that end, she has managed to get the national government's human rights commission to send a team from Brasília.

The team, which stops overnight in Terra Nova, includes an attorney, a psychologist, a sociologist, a security technician, and their director. They will visit Cinco Estrelas, study the legal situation, and assess the psychological impact of living under daily threats of death. Then, in the timeless manner of such commissions, they will conclude something and write a

report about it.

Our convoy of four vehicles leaves Terra Nova shortly after dawn, an officer of the Federal Highway Police at the wheel of each car. I don't know what Brazil feeds its highway police, but these seem a lot bigger than the Polícia Militar and everyone else in town. Dressed in camouflage fatigues and sunglasses, each carries handcuffs, a 9-mm semiautomatic, a tactical knife strapped to the thigh, and enough ammunition for sustained combat. They look grim, alert, suspicious. Leonora rides in the back seat. I get to ride in front with Officer Marco Antônio, who doesn't seem to like me. I have a feeling I'm a complication.

Cinco Estrelas is outside Novo Mundo, a town twenty miles off Brazil Route 163. There 180 families live in little homes constructed of veneer-thin slats of softwood nailed to hardwood frames. The roofs are plastic sheeting with palm leaves tossed over them to provide a bit of shade and to keep the plastic from flapping. The outhouses have no roofs, but the walls are thick planks of tropical hardwood.

The land that's been promised is just across the road — a sprawling property called Fazenda Cinco Estrelas. The current squatter, Osmar Rodrigues-Cunha, bought it from Sebastião Neves de Almeida (a.k.a. Chapéu Preto, or "Black Hat"), a notorious *pistoleiro* who owns several farms and administers various others, hundreds of thousands of acres in all. Chapéu Preto's men have tailed Sister Leonora for periods of as long as three days. (He, in turn, has

accused her of sending hit squads after him.) He has been arrested on a number of charges, including slavery and illegal occupation of land, but has never been held for any significant length of time.

While the highway police hang out in the shade of a hut, a couple dozen residents gather in a circle. Sister Leonora explains why the visitors have come all the way from Brasília. Then, in simple, graphic, ungrammatical terms, the residents report the problems they have encountered. At first they take turns, but the testimonies soon break down and they start completing and elaborating on one another's stories.

Seven people have been murdered. One young man was granted permission to fish on private property and then was shot for trespassing. Another was axed in the head and took six months to die. Another disappeared. Almost every day they receive threats phoned in or hollered out the window of a car. When they go into Novo Mundo, thugs hound them. Their motorbikes get run off the road. Their children are harassed at the bus stop. Their tarps have bullet holes.

On February 21, 2013, four months before the commission arrived, twenty-two military police and associated goons chased everybody off the land, burned the camp, and razed whatever remained. The *acampados* fled thirty miles to Guarantã do Norte and stormed the INCRA office there. They stayed for more than a month, demanding the land they'd been promised for so long. Finally some federal support came along, and everyone got to go back and build

another camp.

The *acampados* are mad, they tell the commission, because there's no justification for the delay in granting land titles. The federal government is sure it owns the property illegally occupied by Fazenda Cinco Estrelas. INCRA has expressed every intention of deeding the land to the campers. Family plots have already been laid out. So why doesn't it happen?

"We want an answer," says one man, palms tilted to the sky.

Another offers an answer: "The law here is money. Those who have the money determine the law."

"Seven years under the tarp is a long time," says an old man.

"What do they want us to do?" says a younger man. "Go to a slum somewhere and live by robbing people? Do they want us to mine for gold? Do they want us to raise pirate cattle and not pay taxes on them?"

Another says, "We have no security here. They could come any night and kill us all."

Another has a joke: "We aren't landless. We have land. It's under our fingernails."

In apologetic tones, the attorney explains that his commission doesn't control the government and can't resolve agrarian-reform issues. "Our main concern here," he says, "is to keep you alive and continuing the struggle."

Leonora tells me later that the only purpose of the meeting was to show some federal presence and give people enough hope to hang on a little longer. The

federal presence also makes her feel more secure. She's less likely to be shot if the locals think the repercussions might reach Brasília.

At Terra Nova's only decent restaurant, beside the pond that provides its fish, Sister Leonora tells me that she would never venture the half-mile from downtown if I weren't there. Not that she thinks I'm bulletproof, but a murdered foreigner would draw international attention.

And when she invites me to stay in an apartment attached to her house, I resist until I realize she wants a potential witness. So I move out of the Hotel Avenida, and there I am, rooming with a nun. We have meals with her housemate, Sister Nilza. I do some of the cooking. I wash dishes. We talk a lot. I hear horror stories of priests, nuns, and peasants murdered, widespread slavery, the time her house was burglarized of every single document while she hid in the bathroom. She knew Sister Dorothy Stang, an American in the state of Pará who was shot in 2005, at the age of seventy-three. One of the culprits spent a little time in prison, was released on a technicality, and then was imprisoned again pending further court decisions.

A week after I move in, the situation at Cinco Estrelas heats up. A judge in Cuiabá is about to sign a document that will be sent to the Federal Supreme Court in Brasília. Leonora will have to go to the capital — a bus trip of more than thirty-two hours — to represent her people. If she's not there, the case, already eight years old, will bounce back down to the state courts, a

catastrophic defeat.

Two men from Cinco Estrelas come to the house. Leonora gives them firm instructions. As soon as the Supreme Court judge signs the paper, the *acampamento* has to move onto the stolen property across the road. Everyone knows where their plot of land is. They are to quickly set up shelters and start planting. They are to stay out of the reserved forest area. Be alert. Form groups and stick together.

"For the love of God," she says, "do not touch any farm equipment that's still there. Settle *near* the main house *but do not go inside*. Make sure everyone knows what to do and what not to do. No mistakes or we lose everything."

That night she gets a call from the local police. She has to clear out of town by morning, because someone's coming to kill her in order to prevent her trip to Brasília. Sister Nilza has to disappear, too. And she'd better get that foreigner out of her house, because how does she know who he really is? So it's back to the Hotel Avenida for me, and for the next week no one knows where Leonora is. Then she shows up. The judge in Cuiabá failed to sign the document. Cinco Estrelas, she tells me, is on war footing.

The Pastoral Land Commission grew especially active in Mato Grosso in the late 1990s, as the rate of deforestation increased. The greedy had long been exploiting whatever they could get their hands on: first gold, then wood, then the thin layer of soil remaining atop the gravel that underlies most of the Amazonian

biome. The forest, however, has taken longer to exhaust, and it is still being burned and felled to make more room for cattle and soy.

A few people have come to understand that the forest must be maintained or replanted, but the rest think these idealists are communists and pot smokers. Ranchers routinely cut down every single tree on an allotment, even though leaving a few for shade would increase the growth of grass and thus the production of beef. It seems they actually *hate* trees. When the then mayor of Terra Nova, Manoel Freitas, took me to his 1,850-acre ranch, which was covered in forest just a decade ago, he expressed pride in how thoroughly he had stripped away the original vegetation. The property was now treeless, except for a narrow band along a stream. Freitas gave me a wicked, ironic laugh and said, “I am a destroyer!”

This economy, based on theft from nature, is among the most debased forms of capitalism. Not much capital is involved. A ranch, for example, requires little more than a herd and some fencing. And that investment, and the return on it, flow directly out of the region.

Here’s how it works. It takes about two and a half acres of grass to feed one head of cattle. A pasture of 25,000 acres yields a lot of beef. But the beef gets exported and the profits go to a wealthy absentee squatter. The whole business employs only a handful of locals. During the dry season — which used to be June and July, but now extends from May through October — the ranchers burn the fields to put nutrients

back into the soil. But the nutrient cycle, too, is subject to diminishing returns, and eventually the grass stops growing. As vegetation disappears, the streams and springs dry up. When this process can wring nothing more from the land, the rich will leave and the meek will inherit their dry and desolate parcels.

This scenario isn’t some distant, dystopian nightmare. It’s already happening. The agronomist Epifânia Rita Vuaden gives the region another five or ten years. “The dime has dropped,” she says. “Terra Nova has already lost fifty-six springs. Some areas cannot be farmed anymore, and people have just abandoned their land. It’s dead.”

She knows twenty-year-olds who have never seen a forest. When their parents were that age, there was nothing here *but* forest.

In collaboration with Sister Leonora and a number of social organizations, Vuaden launched a project to begin reforesting the area. In 2013, landowners were obliged to keep 80 percent of their property as natural, native forest. Virtually no one in Mato Grosso obeyed the regulation, and to be fair, it was unrealistic to expect them to do so. If the farmers of the American Midwest let 80 percent of their land revert to its natural ecosystem, the United States wouldn’t have much of a breadbasket.

Vuaden says that two and a half acres of forest produces more economic benefit — nuts, fruits, wood — than the single cow that requires that same land for grazing. But while just a handful of people can oversee

thousands of acres of pasture, harvesting the forest is more labor-intensive. An absentee landlord in São Paulo can't easily direct such an operation from afar. It's a job for a family farmer with 250 acres of land — a scale that would allow farmers to maintain 80 percent as forest, with the rest dedicated to a garden, a small field for cash crops, and a couple of dairy cows. A 125,000-acre ranch, which destroys the region's environment without returning a penny to its inhabitants, could instead support 500 family farms.

Such a transformation, which flies in the face of almost every vested interest in Mato Grosso, will not take place without a struggle. It will require time and an almost inhuman level of patience. Meanwhile, Vuaden and her colleagues have created the Seed Project, which pays people to bring native seeds to a depository in Terra Nova. Many of the seed gatherers are rural workers who know the forest, have time to seek out seeds, and can use the cash. The project then mixes up a *muvuca*, a carefully formulated blend of seeds. Some will sprout early and provide something that can be harvested relatively soon — corn, for example. That early growth then produces shade for fast-growing trees such as balsa and pine, which can be harvested within a few years. And *that* shade will support slower-growing trees.

Come rainy season, the *muvuca* gets planted in carefully spaced patches, each slightly more than a yard square and a few inches deep. The result: a nascent rainforest. This new growth must be thinned every once

in a while, but apart from that, it's on autopilot. The plan is to plant 220 tons of seed on around 3,000 acres.

Leonora, like Vuaden, recognizes the utility of free enterprise. What she objects to is the greed at the base of it. She has a better idea: solidarity economics, a do-unto-others brand of capitalism that can thrive in the nooks and shadows of the current system. It takes the form of co-ops, nonprofits, neighbors or friends starting microbusinesses, and associations of local entrepreneurs who have decided that the betterment of the community is in everybody's interest.

From time to time, Leonora organizes two-day seminars on solidarity economics, one of which I attend in Colíder. Among the several dozen attendees, I recognize several people from *acampamentos* I'd visited. Others are college or high school students. We break for periods of song, a prayer, lunch in the cafeteria, siestas in the dorm. Everyone drinks water from the same jelly jars at the water fountain. We write and act out pageants of righteous lower-class life depicting solidarity economics in action. It's all unabashedly touchy-feely, warm and fuzzy — and, to an outsider, even a little silly. But in Leonora's hands, it seems a perfect way to teach business to simple people with good hearts and close to zero entrepreneurial experience.

Leonora takes me to an *acampamento* hunkered down alongside Brazil Route 163. The people there have planted a veritable farm in plastic bags, paint cans, old tires, a busted tea pot, and anything else that will hold



soil. A thin, eager, bright-eyed man named Sílvio shows me dozens of seedlings that he's going to plant as soon as he gets his piece of land. Half of these I've never heard of, among them *cajá*, *cupuaçu*, *bacaba*, *camu camu*, *jataí*, *jabuticaba*, *fruta pão*. The promised land (in every sense of the phrase) is on the other side of a barbed-wire fence, already bought from a rancher and approved for redistribution, pending confirmation that it can be used for farming rather than forestation.

On the way home, driving through an indigo dusk, I'm at the wheel, an eye on the rearview for anyone following, an eye ahead for bandits and potholes, and finally dare ask Leonora something I've wanted to know since I first met her. Did she believe God would protect her from the bullets of *pistoleiros*?

"*Não*," she says with a wag of her finger. "God has already done everything he's going to do."

"Does prayer work?"

"We shouldn't ask more from God. The question is not whether to expect anything from him. It's a question of expecting something from man. God did his part. Now man is making a mess of it."

The mess in Mato Grosso, she says, is the fault of *os ricos* — the rich. The concentration of natural resources in so few hands is the ultimate cause of the poverty, corruption, and environmental devastation. The only possible solution is the distribution of land to family farmers.

"That's God's plan," she says. "That's what he wants for us."

And that's what she's working for. She isn't dodging *pistoleiros* and prodding bureaucrats to spread the Gospel or save souls. She's trying to save the earth and its people, and I hear those words — *a terra e o povo* — from her lips a lot more than I hear *Deus*.

"And the new pope?" I ask. "Good one?"

Another wag of the finger. "I don't like him much. He doesn't have the right idea. As soon as I get time, I want to organize a strike by all the women in the church, all around the world. The church won't function without women. We can make it stop until the pope reorganizes the rules. Slow down up here."

I downshift into a tight descending curve. The headlights pick out a cluster of wooden crosses and plastic flowers on the bank. Leonora touches her forehead and both sides of her chest and says, "A lot of people die here."

We're quiet for a while. I'm thinking about drunk truck drivers and families packed onto motorcycles. She's still thinking about the Church.

"Some of the bishops help us," she says, "but most don't. They just want money."

And there they are again: *os ricos*. The upper class, the dairy cow that the Church has been milking since colonial days, doesn't want to see change, she says. It wants the clergy to stick to the Gospel and stay out of politics. She's disappointed in the Church's failure to use its global power to overthrow tyrants, force corporations into submission, effect the equitable distribution of land, and otherwise resist civilization's

urge to exterminate itself. This is, of course, a tall order. But Leonora sets her sights high, and shows no sign herself of flagging.

“I could be at peace,” she says. “I could retire, have a more tranquil life. But it’s impossible to be tranquil when you see your brother humans suffering. *Impossível.*”

Nearly a year later, tranquility seems no closer than ever, with the mighty and the meek still locked in their customary tug-of-war. Elizete Pinheiro was fired from her job in Terra Nova do Norte for her involvement in social-justice and conservation campaigns. A warrant was issued for the arrest of Sebastião “Chapéu Preto” Neves de Almeida on various charges, but he was still free and making no effort to hide. Five farms were caught employing slave labor. A plane sprayed something toxic on the homes and gardens at the Renascer camp, killing crops and sending people to the hospital, and someone shot up a house occupied by children and elderly people. A bomb blew one wheel off Leonora’s car. And while the Brazilian congress debated (and eventually passed) a new law that indirectly allows significant increases in deforestation, Leonora and activists all over the country were peppered with death threats. A priest to the north of Terra Nova received several, but Leonora, in what has to be viewed as a sign of progress, got only one. ♦

## A Question of Desire

by Michael Humfrey

A long time ago when I was young and when much of the world was still coloured red on the map, I chose to join the British Colonial Police Service. Today, for many people, the whole concept of empire is redolent of theft and exploitation. I will say only that it did not seem that way to me at the time – and has never seemed so since.

For the first seven years of my service I worked in East Africa; then I was transferred to Jamaica and a very different kind of life.

It was during my fifth year in Kingston that Petersen arrived from New York. He was an American architect and he came to take up a post with a local firm which had won contracts for two new hotels on the outskirts of the city. He was a tall, good-looking man, about thirty years old, with a mane of fair hair which fell over his forehead. I remember hearing that he could have played professional tennis in the States if he had cared to. He carried himself with an athlete’s assurance and he looked as if life had been good to him. Socially, he was one of those people who seem to succeed without effort. For instance, he was invited to join the Racquet Club before he had been on the island a month. Someone

there, watching him in action on the courts, referred to him as the Golden Boy and the name stuck. I had never been invited to join the Club.

The road which I took back to my bungalow from work each evening passed by the Racquet Club. Among the players I could be sure of seeing most evenings was Anthea Palmer. She was the Colonial Secretary's daughter, and she had very long suntanned legs and chestnut hair coiled in a single braid on top of her head. She wore brief white shorts and a white blouse with the top button undone. If I had been a member of the Club, I could have met her on equal terms. As it was, she always seemed to me as remote and inaccessible as the summit of the Blue Mountains which overhung the city.

Apart from the occasional brief greeting when our paths crossed at some official cocktail party, I had found an opportunity to speak to her alone only once. She had been a witness to an accidental drowning at Port Royal and I had arranged to take a statement from her myself. In my office she had been helpful and not unfriendly, and that night I lay awake on my bed and read too much into her smile when I had seen her to her car. Next morning I telephoned to ask her to the races on Saturday and she said briskly: 'I'm sorry, but I'm always booked up these days ...' and I knew that I had been foolish to hope for more than that.

The Golden Boy had no such difficulty. On Sunday mornings, I would see him in his open Jaguar on the road out to Port Royal with Anthea seated beside him. I can remember her long chestnut hair released from its

braid and streaming out in the wind as they went past me.

Everyone thought that Petersen would settle for Anthea, but after the first two or three months I got used to seeing him with a succession of other girls from the Racquet Club. He rented a house on the slopes of the Blue Mountains and bought a sailing dinghy which he moored at the Yacht Club. I heard that Anthea had broken her heart over him and was returning to England. I found myself disliking him more and more.

Then one day I met him. He had come into the CID offices to extend his permit of residence and we walked into each other in the corridor outside my office. He apologized for not looking where he was going – though the fault was mine – and explained what he wanted. I took him into my office, rang for one of the Immigration Officers on the floor below and had them renew his permit while he waited.

It was clear that he had never heard of me before, but we talked for ten minutes until his permit was ready for signature. Then he thanked me and returned to his own office downtown.

The strange thing was that I found I liked him. He had none of the self-regard I had expected and he seemed genuinely grateful for my help. He

was quietly spoken and he had some interesting things to say about his work and about the new trends in tropical hotel design. I could understand why he was well liked by everyone who knew him.

About a month after that meeting, I was woken up at

half past two one morning by the duty officer at the Central Police Station. There was a body outside Madame Tanya's establishment on the waterfront. I knew the place well: it was one of the joyless brothels that catered for sailors from the ships which docked close by. Trouble there was not unusual – generally, drunken brawls which stopped as quickly as they began and left only a few cracked skulls and broken noses in their wake. Murder in Jamaica was uncommon in those days, and a body meant that I had to visit the scene in person.

I arrived twenty minutes later. I do not wake easily from sleep, and I was red-eyed and irritable. The first thing I saw as I approached the building was Petersen's Jaguar. It was parked at the front of the brothel and the top was up.

A uniformed sergeant met me as I got out of my car. He saluted and reported the situation in the prescribed way. I nodded and walked over to the Jaguar. The acrid smell of exhaust fumes hung on the still air. The windows of the car, with one exception, were tightly closed. A length of black rubber tubing ran from the exhaust pipe through the narrow ventilation window on the passenger's side. The sergeant had opened the driver's door to switch off the engine. When it was clear that the man inside was dead, he had left the body where it lay slumped against the steering wheel and telephoned the duty officer. Apart from another constable on beat duty, the waterfront was deserted.

I shone the beam of my torch on the body and saw at once that it was Petersen. His face was relaxed; his thick fair hair had fallen over his forehead and his mouth was open. I put my hand on his wrist: it was not yet cold.

I sent the sergeant to get a pick-up to take the body away, and then I had a closer look at the car. I detached the rubber tubing from the exhaust pipe with some care but I was already sure that the only fingerprints I might find there would be those of Petersen himself.

On the passenger seat there was a letter. The envelope was addressed simply to: Marie at Madame Tanya's. I slit it open with my pocket knife and, in the light of my torch, I read:

Marie –

Spend the money and be happy.

He had signed it 'Ronny' and the cheque was in the same envelope.

It was not the first note of its kind I had seen and in my experience suicide notes tend to say much the same banal things. But the cheque in this case – made out in the name of Marie Robinson – was for \$50,000. I knew that any of Madame Tanya's girls would think herself lucky to clear fifty dollars a week. I could recognize a few of the girls on sight, but I did not know which of them was Marie Robinson.

The sergeant had returned by this time and I told him to get Madame out of bed. He hammered on the front door of the brothel with his truncheon, a light came on inside and Madame herself appeared in the doorway.

She was a stout woman with dirty feet dressed in a stained silk negligee, and she evidently hoped that we were late night customers. Then she saw me and assumed at once that we had come to raid her place again. She opened her mouth to essay the customary howl of protest, but I told her to shut up and take us to Marie. She pointed to a door at the end of the passage which ran from the bar to the rear of the building. The brothel stank of dirty mattresses and marijuana, and there was that pungent smell peculiar to brothels everywhere and which can only be described as the odour of stale sex. Doors opened cautiously on either side of the passage and then shut quickly again as the sergeant and I passed by. It was a Monday and business was slow on Mondays. Most of the prostitutes were sleeping alone.

I pushed open the door at the end of the passage and switched on the light. The weak bulb had been painted blue and at first I did not recognize the girl on the narrow bed. She was wearing only a pair of soiled panties; her breasts were pendulous and her belly was lined with the marks of child-bearing. Her skin was light brown and her hair had been ironed straight. You could see that she had once been pretty – but that must have been a long while ago.

She woke up as the light went on and turned towards the door. As soon as I saw her face I knew who she was. A thin, semi-circular scar ran from the hairline at her right temple under the eye and across the bridge of her nose. A few years earlier, a drunken Venezuelan seaman

had pushed a broken rum bottle into her face. I remembered the case quite well only because, immediately afterwards, the man had done the same thing to another prostitute he had met in the passage on his way out. This time, a shard of glass had punctured the girl's jugular vein. We had charged him with murder and he had hanged for it. Marie's evidence had helped convict him.

Prostitutes are an unpredictable lot: you can't type-cast them any more than the rest of us. Some, in a curious way, retain a child-like innocence all their lives no matter how many men degrade their bodies. A few are compassionate and moral souls who will receive their reward in another place. It is not incredible that, just occasionally, ordinary men can love them in spite of what they do. But Marie Robinson was not one of these. She had always been a coarse and bitter virago, and her disfigurement had only made her worse. Nevertheless, there could be no doubt about it: Petersen, the Golden Boy, had loved her. In fact, he had loved her so much he had preferred death to the prospect of living without her.

I told Marie to get some clothes on and the sergeant took her to my office.

Before daylight, we had fitted together the pieces of the case and the picture was clear. Anthea and all the other girls, it seemed, had meant nothing to Petersen. Their idle lives and predictable chatter had come to bore him: he wearied of their company. After a while, he had stopped going to the Club in order to avoid

them.

One night, he had paid a visit to Madame Tanya's and met Marie. What strange, unlikely chemistry of the heart caused him to fall in love with her in the weeks that followed only God knows. Nothing in my experience throws up the slightest clue. In any event, his feelings were not returned. Perhaps it was because Marie could never bring herself to believe that he meant it when he said he wanted no one else; perhaps, in spite of every-thing, she enjoyed the life she led; or perhaps Petersen was just an incom-petent lover. Whatever the reason, when he tried to persuade her to leave the brothel and live with him, she refused. When he brought her gifts, she took them from his hands without a word of gratitude. In the stinking, blue-lit cubicle where she sold her body to anyone with the modest price, she turned her back on him when he said he loved her.

Finally one night he asked her to marry him. They would go back together to New York: she would live the comfortable, respected life of a successful architect's wife. The past would be buried forever. Without a word, she turned him out of her room and locked the door. She would no longer let him touch her.

So every evening after that, when he had finished at his office, he came to sit at the bar of the brothel, watching in hopeless silence as other men went with Marie to her room. Because of the scar, only the poorer clients sought her services now.

After three weeks, he could no longer bear it. So he

waited one Sunday night until the waterfront became deserted, drove the red Jaguar to the place where he could be nearest her and slipped the end of the rubber tube over the exhaust pipe. Then he closed the windows, started the engine and killed himself.

The inquest was a routine affair. The cause of death was quickly established: Petersen took his own life while the balance of his mind was disturbed. The matter was closed. His body was released to his family who had come from New York to attend the proceedings. The cheque was destroyed.

As I was leaving the court, the Coroner's orderly ran up to say that his master would like to have a word with me in chambers. It was the lunchtime recess. The Coroner poured us each a drink and despatched the orderly to find more ice.

We talked about the case for a few minutes and then the Coroner said: 'I just wanted to ask you why a man like that could have preferred a bitter little whore to all the girls of his own kind in Kingston. I can't make any sense of it and I've been doing this job for twenty-five years.'

I knew the Coroner was a member of the Racquet Club and would have known Anthea.

The orderly returned with a bowl of ice and the Coroner poured himself another drink. 'I suppose the man went mad,' he said quietly. 'Let's thank God it doesn't happen more often. He might have handed her the cheque before he killed himself ...'

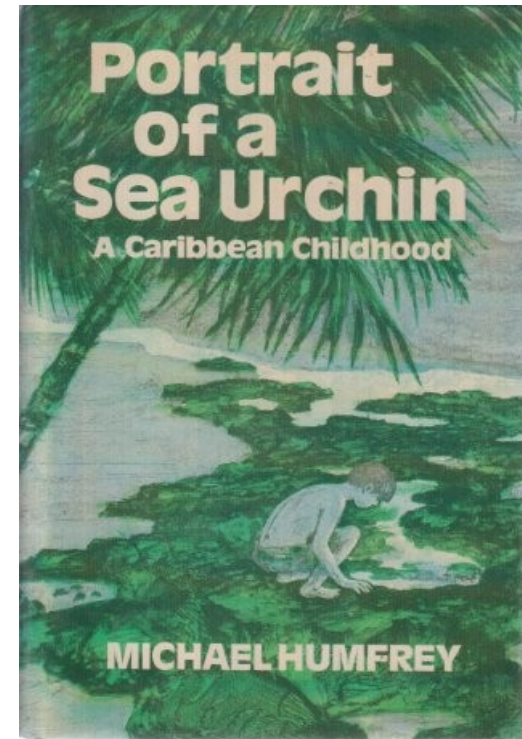
I nodded politely, but I didn't agree. I didn't believe

that Petersen was out of his mind. His taste in women might seem bizarre, but he had not been mad.

I worked late in my office that night. A three-quarter moon laid tall shadows across the courts of the Racquet Club as I drove past. The windows of the clubhouse blazed with light and I could hear music, but I knew Anthea would not be there.

My own bungalow sat in a little pool of darkness just off the main road. I left my car in the driveway, opened the door and switched on the light in the hall. The house was empty and unwelcoming. I sat down and poured myself the first brandy of the evening.

Outside in the darkness, a potoo called once and was silent. The brandy scored my throat. I thought of the unfairness of it – how so many of us seemed always to want what we could not have. Life had cheated Petersen and, just then, I felt that it had cheated me. Perhaps I was already a little drunk: with an effort, I pulled myself together. The Coroner's question still deserved an answer – but I knew that a man's infatuation with a woman was a rash and mysterious thing and in the case of the Golden Boy, whatever the answer, he had taken it with him in his ruin and despair. ♦



Michael Humfrey was born in Grenada. His novels and works of non-fiction have been published both in the United Kingdom and in the United States. His short stories appeared in *The London Magazine* and in literary magazines in the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. He is an authority on Caribbean molluscs and author of *Sea Shells of the West Indies*.

*Side by...***Grand Tour, 1764**by *James Boswell*

MONDAY 24 DECEMBER.

After calling on my bankers, Cazenove, Clavière et fils, from whom I received payment of a bill granted me by Splitgerber and Daum, and on Chappuis et fils, to whom I was addressed by Messrs. Herries and Cochrane, I took a coach for Ferney, the seat of the illustrious Monsieur de Voltaire. I was in true spirits; the earth was covered with snow; I surveyed wild nature with a noble eye. I called up all the grand ideas which I have ever entertained of Voltaire. The first object that struck me was his church with this inscription: “Deo erexit Voltaire MDCCLXI.” His château was handsome. I was received by two or three footmen, who showed me into a very elegant room. I sent by one of them a letter to Monsieur de Voltaire which I had from Colonel Constant at The Hague. He returned and told me, “Monsieur de Voltaire is very much annoyed at being disturbed. He is abed.” I was afraid that I should not see him. Some ladies and gentlemen entered, and I was entertained for some time. At last Monsieur de Voltaire opened the door of his apartment, and stepped forth. I surveyed him with eager attention, and found him just

*...by side***Találkozás Voltaire-rel**

fordította Tárnok Attila

DECEMBER 24, hétfő

Miután felkerestem a bankárait – a Cazenove, Clavière és fiai céget, akiktől megkaptam a Splitgerber és Daumtól küldött kifizetést, valamint a Chappuis és fiait, akikhez Messrs. Herries és Cochrane irányítottak –, kikocsiztam Ferney-be, a nagyhírű Monsieur Voltaire kastélyához. Jó kedvem volt, a földet hó borította, nemes szívvel tanulmányoztam a természetet. Átfutott a fejemen, mennyi nagy ívű gondolatot dédelgettem egykor magamban Voltaire kapcsán. Elsőnek kápolnájának felirata tűnt a szemembe: „Deo erexit Voltaire MDCCLXI.”<sup>1</sup> A kastély szép látványt nyújtott. Kéthárom lakáj fogadott, és egy elegáns terembe kísért. Egyiküket megkértem, kézbesítse urának a hágai Constant ezredestől származó ajánlólevelem. Azzal a válasszal tért vissza, hogy Monsieur Voltaire fel van háborodva, hogy valaki zavarni merészeli, ágyban fekszik. Félttem, nem lesz módom találkozni vele. Néhány hölgy és úriember lépett a terembe és egy ideig foglalkoztak velem. Végül kinyílt Monsieur Voltaire ajtaja, és megjelent az idős filozófus. Külső megjelenésre éppen olyannak mutatkozott, amilyennek a róla készült

<sup>1</sup> *Istennek emeltette Voltaire, 1761-ben.*



as his print had made me conceive him. He received me with dignity, and that air of the world which a Frenchman acquires in such perfection. He had a slate-blue, fine frieze greatcoat nightgown, and a three-knotted wig. He sat erect upon his chair, and simpered when he spoke. He was not in spirits, nor I neither. All I presented was the “foolish face of wondering praise.”

We talked of Scotland. He said the Glasgow editions were “trés belles.” I said, “An Academy of Painting was also established there, but it did not succeed. Our Scotland is no country for that.” He replied with a keen archness, “No; to paint well it is necessary to have warm feet. It’s hard to paint when your feet are cold.” Another would have given a long dissertation on the coldness of our climate. Monsieur de Voltaire gave the very essence of raillery in half a dozen words.

I mentioned the severe criticism which the *Gazette litteraire* has given upon Lord Kames’s *Elements*. I imagined it to be done by Voltaire, but would not ask him. He repeated me several of the *bons mots* in it, with an air that confirmed me in my idea of his having written this criticism. He called my Lord always “ce Monsieur Kames”.

I told him that Mr. Johnson and I intended to make a tour through the Hebrides, the Northern Isles of Scotland. He smiled, and cried, “Very well; but I shall remain here. You will allow me to stay here?” “Certainly.” “Well then, go. I have no objections at all.”

I asked him if he still spoke English. He replied, “No.

nyomat ábrázolta. Méltóságteljesen fogadta bemutatkozásomat, de olyan leereszkedő modorban, amilyenre csak a franciák képesek. Hálóköntösre emlékeztető, palaszürke, bolyhos posztókabátot viselt, és három varkocsba fogott parókát. Egyenes háttal ült a székén, és kényeskedve mosolygott, miközben beszélt. Nem volt jó kedve, nekem sem. Csupán csodálkozásteli, buta arcot tudtam vágni.

Skóciáról is beszéltünk. A Glasgow-ban megjelenő kiadványokat nagyon jónak tartotta. Elmondtam neki, hogy egy festőakadémiát is életre hívtak, de nem járt sikerrel. A mi Skóciánk nem a megfelelő ország az ilyesmire. „Hát persze, hogy nem – felelte csintalan mosollyal. – A jó festészethez meleg végtagok kellenek. Nehéz dideregve festeni.” Mindenki más talán hosszas fejtegetésekbe bocsátkozott volna zord időjárásunkat illetően. Monsieur Voltaire néhány szóban gúnyosan összefoglalta.

Megemlítettem a *Gazette litteraire* szigorú kritikáját Lord Kames munkájáról, Az irodalomelmélet alapjairól. Úgy gondoltam, a kritikát Voltaire írhatta, de nem mertem rákérdezni. Ő csupán elismételt néhány frázist az írásból, ami számomra azt bizonyította, hogy valóban ő lehet a cikk forrása. A tárgyalt mű szerzőjére folyamatosan úgy hivatkozott, hogy „ez a Monsieur Kames”.

Azzal is előhozakodtam, hogy Doktor Johnson és jómagam egy nagyobb gyalogtúrát tervezünk a Hebridákon, Skócia északi szigetein. Ezen csak nevetett és felkiáltott: „Igazán nagyszerű, de én maradok itthon.

To speak English one must place the tongue between the teeth, and I have lost my teeth.”

He was curious to hear anecdotes from Berlin. He asked who was our Minister there. I said we had only a charge' d'affaires. “Ah!” said he, “un chargé d'affaires est guère chargé.” He said Hume was “a true philosopher.”

As we talked, there entered Pre Adam, a French Jesuit, who is protected in the house of Voltaire. What a curious idea. He was a lively old man with white hair. Voltaire cried in English, “There, Sir, is a young man, a scholar who is learning your language, a broken soldier of the Company of Jesus.” “Ah,” said Père Adam, “a young man of sixty.”

Monsieur de Voltaire did not dine with us. Madame Denis, his niece, does the honours of his house very well. She understands English. She was remarkably good to me. I sat by her and we talked much. I became lively and most agreeable. We had a company of about twelve. The family consists of seven. The niece of the great Corneille lives here. She is married to a Monsieur Dupuits. The gates of Geneva shut at five, so I was obliged to hasten away after dinner without seeing any more of Monsieur de Voltaire.

At Geneva I called for Monsieur Constant Pictet, for whom I had a letter from his sister-in-law, Madame d'Hermenches. I found his lady, who asked me to stay the evening. There was a company here at cards. I saw a specimen of Genevoises, and compared them with

Ugye, megengedi, hogy itthon maradjak?” Természetes, feleltem. „Akkor hát, menjenek csak. Semmi kifogásom ellene.”

Megkérdeztem, beszél-e még angolul. „Már nem – felelte. – Az angol hangzókhoz a nyelvet a fogsor közé kell illeszteni, de az én fogaim már kipotyogtak.”

Berlini anekdoták érdekelték. Ki is a miniszterünk ott? – kérdezte. Mondtam, hogy csak ügyvivőnk van, chargé d'affaires. „Ó, vagy úgy – felelt. – Un chargé d'affaires n'est guère chargé.”<sup>2</sup> Hume-ot nagyra becsülte mint filozófust.

Beszélgetésünk közben megérkezett Père Adam, egy francia jezsuita, aki Voltaire házában védelem alatt áll. Fából vaskarika! Ősz hajú, élénk öregember volt. Voltaire angolul kiáltott: „Uram, itt egy fiatalember, aki az Ön nyelvét tanulmányozza. Jézus megtört katonája.” Hogyne, toldotta meg Adam atya, egy hatvanéves fiatalember.

Monsieur Voltaire nem velünk ebédelt. Madame Denis, az unokahúga, irányítja a háztartást, kiválóan. Ért angolul is. Felém kivételesen kedvesen viselkedett. Mellette ülve, beszélgetve, jó kedvre derültem, igyekeztem én is a kedvét keresni. Tizenketten ültünk asztalhoz, a család hét tagból áll. A nagy Corneille unokahúga is itt él, Monsieur Dupuits-hez ment férjhez. Genf kapuit ötkor zárják, így közvetlenül ebéd után kénytelen voltam elbúcsúzni anélkül, hogy Monsieur Voltaire-t újra láttam volna.

Genfben Monsieur Constant Pictet-nél tettem láto-

<sup>2</sup> Szójáték: Egy nagykövet helyettese aligha lehet elfoglalt.

Rousseau's drawings of them. Constant, the husband, was lively without wit and polite without being agreeable. There were a good many men here who railed against Rousseau on account of his *Lettres érites de la montagne*. Their fury was a high farce to my philosophic mind. One of them was arrant idiot enough to say of the illustrious author, "He's a brute with brains, a horse with brains, an ox with brains." "Rather, a snake," said a foolish female with a lispng tone. Powers of absurdity! did your influence ever extend farther? I said, "On my word, it is time for me to leave this company. Can women speak against the author of the *Nouvelle Héloïse*?" Pictet, a professor of law, father to Madame Constant, was an acquaintance of Lord Erskine's. He said he had seen Voltaire morning and evening during a severe sickness, and Madame Pictet, his wife, had watched him, and he was toujours tranquille. I supped here.

#### TUESDAY 25 DECEMBER.

Although this was Christmas Day, I fairly fasted, nor stirred out of doors except a moment to the Église de St. Pierre, which was formerly a Catholic church and is a handsome building. Worship was over, but I heard a voluntary upon the organ. I was in supreme spirits, and a noble idea arose in my mind. I wrote a very lively letter to Madame Denis, begging to be allowed to sleep a night under the roof of Monsieur de Voltaire. I sent it by an express, and Voltaire wrote the answer in the per-

gatást, akinek levelet hoztam a sógornőjétől, Madame d'Hermenches-től. A ház úrnője ott fogott estére, kártyatársaság gyűlt egybe. Megismerhettem néhány genfi polgárt, így módomban állt összehasonlítani őket a Rousseau által róluk rajzolt képpel. Constant, a férj, vidám de humortalan, udvarias de egyáltalán nem kedveskedő ember. Néhányan hevesen kikeltek Rousseau ellen, a *Levelek a hegyekből* című írása okán, de haragjuk filozófusi szemmel csupán komédia volt. Egyikük volt annyira címeres gazember, hogy kijelentse, a kiváló szerző mindössze egy „gondolkodó vadember, gondolkodó ló, gondolkodó ökör.” Vagy inkább kígyó, fűzte hozzá egy beszédhibás nő. Az abszurditás magasfoka! Meddig terjeszkedik az ostobaság? Így szóltam: „Esküszöm, itt kell hagynom a társaságot. Hogy beszélhet egy nő Az új Heloise szerzője ellen?” Az öreg Pictet, Madame Constant apja, a jog profeszszora, távolról ismeri Lord Erskine-t. Azt mondta, régebben reggel-este meglátogatta Voltaire-t, amikor nagyon beteg volt. Madame Pictet, a felesége, vigyázott rá, és állítja, a filozófus toujours tranquille.<sup>3</sup> Velük vacsoráztam.

#### DECEMBER 25, kedd

Jóllehet, Karácsony napja van, böjtölök, és alig mozdultam ki, kivéve egy pillanatra az Église de St. Pierre-be, az egykori katolikus templomba; csinos épület. A szertartás már véget ért, de valaki saját kedvére orgonált. Nagyszerű hangulatnak örvendtem, és egy nemes

<sup>3</sup> Mindig nyugodt.

son of his niece, making me very welcome. My felicity this night was abundant. My letter with the answer to it are most carefully preserved.

WEDNESDAY 26 DECEMBER.

The worthy Monsieur de Zuylen has written me a kind but mysterious letter. I have answered him with warmth, and pressed him to be explicit. I have also sent, enclosed, a letter to my fair Zélide. What are now her ideas, I know not. She has not written me a line since the letter which I received from her at Brunswick, although I wrote to her a long letter from Berlin, in a severe tone, and one from Dessau in a tone more mild. This will undoubtedly clear up matters. Temple is charmed with her character, and advises me to marry her; but he does not know her well enough. Time must try all.

I went with young Cazenove to see a Monsieur Huber, a man of great variety of talents, in particular, an amazing art of cutting paper. He was too rough. He raged against Rousseau, and when I talked of his adoring his God, he cried, "Where is his God?" We then waited on Madame Bontems, sister to Mademoiselle Prevost. She was a jolly, talking woman. She had known Zélide, and said, "She has always followed the thoughts of her own little head. Now she has become so wise and so philosophical that really I am unable to keep up with her." I dined at our table d'hôte, after which Madame Gausson introduced me chez Madame

ötlet fogalmazódott meg az agyamban. Élénk hangú levélben arra kértem Madame Denis-t, hadd töltsék egy éjszakát Monsieur Voltaire házában. Gyorsfutárral küldtem el a levelet; Voltaire, unokahúga kézírásával lejegyzett válaszában biztosított róla: szívesen lát. Túláradó öröm töltött el. A levél eredetijét a legnagyobb gonddal őrzöm.

DECEMBER 26, szerda

A nagyra becsült Monsieur Zuylentől kedves de titokzatos levél érkezett. Meleg hangon válaszoltam és kértem, ne kerteljen. A jó Zélidének<sup>4</sup> is bezártam egy üzenetet a borítékba. A Brunswickban kézhez vett levele óta nem jelentkezett, pedig én hosszan, komoly stílusban írtam neki Berlinből és valamivel játékosabb modorban Dessauból. Az ügyeink kétség kívül tisztázódnak. Temple barátom odavan érte, és bátorít, hogy vegyem el feleségül, de szerintem nem ismeri elég mélyen. Az idő majd mindent megold.

A fiatal Cazenovével meglátogattam a számos tehetséggel bíró Monsieur Hubert. Egyebek mellett kiválóan ért a papírsziluet portrék készítéséhez. De a modorra mogorva: vagdalkozott Rousseau ellen, és amikor arról beszéltem, mennyire szereti Rousseau Istent, rámförmedt: „Hol van annak istene?” Azután Madame Bontems-nál tettük tiszteletünket, Mademoiselle Prevost nővérénél. Madame Bontems vidám, beszédes asszony. Régebbről ismeri Zélidét, és azt mondja róla, hogy „mindig az ő kis fejében fogant gondolatok után

<sup>4</sup> *Boswell hollandiai szerelme.*

Pallard, a German lady, very amiable but very vapourish. She gave me a curious anecdote. "There is a young Russian here of a good family, whose father has absolutely forbidden him to see the English. His governor does not dare take him into any society where these gentlemen are." This is most excellent; so rude are the young English that the very Russians shun them. I supped at the table d'hôte. Monsieur de La Sale said he had been much with the Chevalier Ramsay, who was governor to the Prince de Turenne, who, when young, "was very witty. Once I was dining at his house. He served me with chicken. I wanted his Highness to be served first. He said, 'No, Sir, that is the right leg, and I never eat anything but the left leg.' There was finesse for you."

#### THURSDAY 27 DECEMBER.

I waited on Professor Maurice, the friend of honest Monsieur Dupont, who lived in the house of his grandfather. I had no recommendation to him, but entered freely, and told him my connection with Monsieur Dupont, and immediately was well with him. He was a man of knowledge, of rough sense, and of that sort of fancy which sound men have in abundance. He received me well. My ideas were somewhat Presbyterian, but of the best kind. I was too lively, and was not master of my vivacity.

I then went to Ferney, where I was received with complacency and complimented on my letter. I found here the Chevalier de Boufflers, a fine, lively young fel-

szalad. De mára olyannyira filozofikussá vált, hogy igazán képtelenség őt követni." Mindnyájan megebédeltünk, azután Madame Gausson bemutatott Madame Pallardnak, egy nagyon nyájas de ideges német hölgynek. Ő egy érdekes anekdotát mesélt. „Van itt egy jó családból származó fiatal orosz, akinek az apja megtiltotta, hogy angolokkal találkozzon. A nevelőnője nem megy vele olyan társaságba, ahol angol úriemberek is vannak.” Ez igazán mulatságos: a fiatal angolok olyan faragatlanok, hogy még az oroszok is kerülik őket. Estére menüt ettem. Monsieur de La Sale azt mondja, hajdan sok időt töltött Chevalier Ramsayvel, a turenne-i herceg nevelőjével, aki szerint a hercegnek fiatalon „nagyon vágott az esze. Egyszer, amikor náluk ebédelt, és csirkével kínálták, előzékenyen kérte, hogy előbb a herceget szolgálják ki, de ő elhárította, mondván, Nem, Uram, ez a jobb comb, én mindig a bal combját kapom. Ilyen leleményes volt.”

#### DECEMBER 27, csütörtök

Meglátogattam Maurice professzort, a derék Monsieur Dupont barátját; a nagyapja házában él. Nem volt ajánlólevelem, de érkezéskor elmondtam neki, milyen kapcsolat fűz Monsieur Duponthez, és a professzor azonnal meleg szívvvel fogadott. Nagy tudású ember, nagy formátumú gondolkodó, egészséges képzelőerővel. Kálvinista nézeteket hangoztattam, bár a legjobb fajtából, de túlzott jókedvemben nem tudtam fegyelmezni életerőmet.

Azután Ferney-be mentem, ahol megnyugvás foga-

low and mighty ingenious. He was painting in crayon a Madame Rilliet, a most frolicsome little Dutch Genevoise. There was here a Monsieur Rieu, a Genevois, a heavy, knowing fellow. Monsieur de Voltaire came out to us a little while, but did not dine with us. After dinner we returned to the drawing-room, where (if I may revive an old phrase) every man soaped his own beard. Some sat snug by the fire, some chatted, some sung, some played the guitar, some played at shuttlecock. All was full. The canvas was covered. My hypochondria began to muse. I was dull to find how much this resembled any other house in the country, and I had heavy ennui. At six I went to Père Adam's room, which was just neat and orderly as I could fancy. I know not how it is, but I really have often observed that what I have experienced has only corresponded to imaginations already in my mind. Can pre-existence be true? Père Adam has learnt English in a year's time. He read and translated a paper of *The Spectator* with surprising ease. He and Rieu entertained me with the praises of Monsieur de Voltaire's good actions in private life: how he entertains his friends and strangers of distinction, how he has about fifty people in his château, as his servants marry and have children, and how the village upon his manor is well taken care of.

Between seven and eight we had a message that Voltaire was in the drawing-room. He always appears about this time anight, pulls his bell and cries, "Fetch Père Adam." The good Father is ready immediately, and they play at chess together. I stood by Monsieur de

dott; dicsérték a levelem stílusát. Itt a kedves, élénk zsenialitású Chevalier de Boufflers-rel találkoztam. A fiatalember az incselkedő, genfi illetőségű holland ifjúhölgy, Madame Rilliet képén dolgozott rajzkrétával. A társaságban jelen volt még Monsieur Rieu, egy jól értesült, nagydarab genfi. Később Monsieur Voltaire is előkerült, de nem ebédelt velünk. Ebéd után visszatértünk a szalonba, ahol – ha élhetek egy régi kifejezéssel – mindenki a saját szakállát szépítgette. Volt, aki meghitten ücsörgött a kandalló mellett, volt, aki énekelt vagy gitározott, mások társalogtak vagy tollaslabdázak. Mindenki jóllakott, a vásznat betöltötte az új kép, engem beteges lehangoltságom kezdett mulattatni. Lassú észjárásommal alig fogtam fel, hogy ez a kastély ugyanolyan, mint bármelyik másik vidéken, fásult fáradtság vett erőt rajtam. Hatkor felkerestem Adam atyát a szobájában; olyan tisztaság és rend fogadott, ahogy azt elképzeltem. Nem tudom, hogy van ez, de megfigyeltem, hogy a megélt valóság sokszor meg egyezik az előre elképzelt részletekkel. A valóság már előzetesen létezik? Adam atya egy év alatt tanult meg angolul. Meglepő könnyedséggel olvasta fel és fordította franciára a *Spectator* egyik cikket. Ő és Rieu azzal szórakoztatott, hogy Monsieur Voltaire jócselekedeteit sorolták: miként lát vendégül barátokat és neves idegeneket; hogy legalább ötvenen élnek a kastélyban, miután a személyzet közül többen családot alapítottak; és hogy mennyire szívén viseli az uradalommal szomszédos falu sorsát is.

Hét és nyolc óra között kaptuk a hírt, hogy Voltaire

Voltaire and put him in tune. He spoke sometimes English and sometimes French. He gave me a sharp reproof for speaking fast. "How fast you foreigners speak!" "We think that the French do the same." "Well, at any rate, I don't. I speak slowly, that's what I do"; and this he said with a most keen tone. He got into great spirits. I would not go to supper, and so I had this great man for about an hour and a half at a most interesting tête-a-tête. I have written some particulars of it to Temple, and as our conversation was very long, I shall draw it up fully in a separate paper. When the company returned, Monsieur de Voltaire retired. They looked at me with complacency and without envy. Madame Denis insisted that I should sup; I agreed to this, and a genteel table was served for me in the drawing-room, where I eat and drank cheerfully with the gay company around me. I was very lively and said, "I am magnificence itself. I eat alone, like the King of England." In short this was a rich evening.

#### FRIDAY 28 DECEMBER.

Last night Monsieur de Voltaire treated me with polite respect: "I am sorry, Sir, that you will find yourself so badly lodged." I ought to have a good opinion of myself, but from my unlucky education I cannot get rid of mean timidity as to my own worth. I was very genteelly lodged. My room was handsome. The bed, purple cloth

a szalonban tartózkodik. Minden este ilyen idő tájt mutatkozik, csenget és elkiáltja magát: Kerítsék elő Adam atyát! A jó pap azonnal rendelkezésre áll, és leülnek sakkozni. Monsieur Voltaire mellett helyezkedtem el, jó hangulatot teremtettem. Néha angolul beszélt, néha franciául, szabadon váltogatta a két nyelvet, de élesen rámszólt, mondván, túl gyorsan beszélek. „Milyen gyorsan beszélnek maguk, külföldiek!” „Mi ugyanezt tartjuk a franciákról.” „Nos, akárhogy is tartják, én nem beszélek gyorsan. Éppenhogy lassan.” Ezt önelégülten mondta. Jókedve támadt. Nem mentem vacsorázni, csak hogy másfél órára élvezhessem a négyszemközti, bizalmas beszélgetést ezzel az érdekes emberrel. Temple barátomnak részletesen beszámoltam róla, és mivel beszélgetésünk hosszúra nyúlt, külön fejezetben fogom megrajzolni.<sup>5</sup> Miután a társaság visszatért a szalonba, Monsieur Voltaire lepihent. Mindenki nyugalommal, irigység nélkül szemlélt engem. Madame Denis ragaszkodott hozzá, hogy vacsorázzam. Elfogadtam; a szalonban szolgáltak fel finom, úri módon; derűsen ettem, ittam, körülöttem vidám társaság. Nagyon megelégnélve elkiáltottam magam: Ez maga a fényűzés! Egyedül étkezek, mint Anglia királya! Röviden, gazdag élményekben részesültem.

#### DECEMBER 28, péntek

Tegnap este Monsieur Voltaire udvarias megbecsülés-

<sup>5</sup> A „külön fejezet” töredékes maradt, legalábbis hiteles, letisztázott változat eddig nem látott napvilágot. A Voltaire történetét hiányos mondatokban híven megörökítő csonka „fejezetet”, miként a Temple-nek írt, számos egyéb kérdést tárgyaló hosszú levelet sem közöljük a jelen fordításban.

lined with white quilted satin; the chimney-piece, marble, and ornamented above with the picture of a French toilet. Monsieur de Voltaire's country-house is the first I have slept in since I slept in that of some good Scots family – Kellie, indeed. I surveyed every object here with a minute attention and most curiously did I prove the association of ideas. Everything put me fully in mind of a decent Scots house, and I thought surely the master of the family must go to church and do as public institutions require; and then I made my transition to the real master, the celebrated Voltaire, the infidel, the author of so many deistical pieces and of the Pucelle d'Orléans.

I awaked this morning had, even here. Yet I recovered, and as I was here for once in a lifetime, and wished to have as much of Voltaire as possible, I sent off Jacob to Geneva, to stop my coach today and to bring it out tomorrow. I then threw on my clothes and ran like the Cantab in the imitation of Gray's Elegy, "with hose ungartered," to Voltaire's church, where I heard part of a mass and was really devout. I then walked in his garden, which is very pretty and commands a fine prospect. I then went to my room, got paper from Voltaire's secretary, and wrote to my father, to Temple, and to Sir David Dalrymple. I sent to Monsieur de Voltaire a specimen of my poem called Parliament. I also wrote a fair copy of my Ode on Ambition for him, and inscribed it thus: "Most humbly presented to Monsieur de Voltaire, the glory of France, the admiration of Europe, by Mr. Boswell, who has had the honour of re-

sel kezelt: „Sajnálom, Uram, hogy csak ilyen hitvány szállást tudunk nyújtani.” Jó véleményt illene alkotnom magamról, de, szerencsétlen neveltetésemből kifolyólag, képtelen vagyok szabadulni kétségeimtől a saját értékeimet illetően. Pedig a szállásom igazán nagyszerűnek bizonyult. Hangulatos szobámban az ágyon lila szegélyű, vattával bélelt, fehér szatén ágynemű, a díszes kandallópárkány márványból, fölötté egy francia divat szerinti kép. Monsieur Voltaire kastélya az első, amiben a jó Kellie-család skót kastélya óta aludtam. Minden egyes tárgyat aprólékosan megvizsgáltam, és érdekes módon, minden a skót úri kastélyokra emlékeztetett. Az a benyomásom támadt, hogy a ház ura feltétlenül jár templomba és mindenben megfelel a társadalom elvárásainak. Aztán a valódi házúr, az ünnepelt, a hitetlen Voltaire felé terelődtek a gondolataim, a deista művek és a Pucelle szerzője felé.

Reggel rosszul ébredtem. Még itt is. Azonban hamar helyrerázódtam, és mivel először és utoljára vagyok itt, annyi időt kívántam Voltaire mellett tölteni, amennyit csak lehetséges, ezért Jacobot elküldtem Genfbe, hogy mondja le a kocsit mára és holnapra rendelje értem. Azután magamra kapkodtam a ruháimat, és Thomas Gray Elégiájának szereplőjét utánozva, cambridge-i diákként, félig még gombolkozva, rohantam Voltaire kápolnájába, ahol a misének csak a végét hallottam, mégis ájtatos hangulatba ringatott. Ezt követően a kertben sétáltam; nagyon szép, kiváló látványt nyújt. Aztán visszavonultam a szobámba, Voltaire titkárától papírt kértem, és írtam apámnak, Temple barátomnak



garding and loving him in private life at his Chateau de Ferney.”

He was bad today and did not appear before dinner. We dined well as usual. It was pleasant for me to think I was in France. In the afternoon I was dullish. At six I applied to the secretary for a volume of Voltaire’s plays, and went to my room, and read his Mahomet in his own house. It was curious, this. A good, decent, trusty servant had fire and wax candles and all in order for me. There is at Ferney the true hospitality. All are master of their rooms and do as they please. I should have mentioned yesterday that when I arrived, Monsieur Rieu carried me to a room where the maids were and made me point out which of them I meant in my letter to Madame Denis. Monsieur de Voltaire was sick and out of spirits this evening, yet I made him talk some time. His conversation shall be all collected into one piece. I may perhaps insert it in this my journal. I supped at the table tonight. It hurt me to find that by low spirits it is possible for me to lose the relish of the most illustrious genius. Hard indeed!

#### SATURDAY 29 DECEMBER.

I this morning visited Monsieur Rieu and Monsieur de Belle Pré, a gentleman-painter. They lived in the same room. I then visited my excellent Père Adam, who gives lessons to some of the young servants and is in all re-

és Sir David Dalrymple-nek. Monsieur Voltaire-nek küldtem egy mintát a verseimből, a Parlament címűt, valamint egy tisztázatot A becsvágyhoz című ódából a következő ajánlással: „Monsieur Voltaire-nek, Franciaország és Európa dicsőségének ajánlja mélységes alázattal Mr. Boswell, aki abban a megtiszteltetésben részesült, hogy ferney-i kastélyában, a mindennapi életben megismerhette és szerethette őt.”

Ám Voltaire ma nem érezte jól magát, ebéd előtt nem is láttuk. Bőséges ebéd, mint általában. Kellemes érzéssel töltött el, hogy Franciaországban vagyok. Délután kissé tompán viselkedtem. Hatkor üzentem a titkárnak, hogy szeretnék egy Voltaire színdarabjait tartalmazó kötetet, a szobámba mentem és a szerző saját házában olvastam a Mahomet sorait. Nem mindennapi élmény. Egy megbízható, illedelmes inas figyelt a kandallóra, és viaszgyertyákat hozott, hogy jobban lássak. Ferney-ben a vendégszeretet valódi. A vendég lakosztálya ura, és minden a kívánságának megfelelően történik. Tegnap elfelejtettem megemlíteni, hogy érkezésemkor Monsieur Rieu elém rendelte a cselédeket, és tréfásan megkérdezte, melyikük szobájára utaltam a Madame Denis-nek írt levélben.<sup>6</sup> Monsieur Voltaire ma este beteg és nem örvend jó hangulatnak, de azért egy keveset beszélgethettünk. Mindent, amit mondott lejegyeztem, talán egybegyűjtve közlöm itt, a napló lapjain. Ma asztalnál vacsoráztam. Nagyon fájt, hogy rosszkedve miatt le kell mondanom a legkiválóbb zseni társaságáról. Őszintén sajnálom.

<sup>6</sup> T.i. a levélben Boswell szerénységéből úgy fogalmazott, hogy a cselédszobában is hajlandó aludni.

spects obliging. I talked of religion and found him to be a sincere Christian. He said, "I pray for Monsieur de Voltaire every day. Perhaps it will please God to touch his heart and make him see the true religion. It is a pity that he is not a Christian. He has many Christian virtues. He has the most beautiful soui. He is benevolent; he is charitable; but he is very strongly prejudiced against the Christian religion. When he is serious I try to say a word to him; but when he is in the humour of casting shafts of ridicule, I hold my peace." Worthy father! How strange is the system of human things! I reasoned with him against the eternity of hell's torments. He could not escape from the opinion of the Church, but his humanity made him say, "I shall be delighted if it proves to be otherwise." I then went with Rieu and saw the theatre of Monsieur de Voltaire. It is not large, but very handsome. It suggested to me a variety of very pleasing ideas. One circumstance rendered Monsieur de Voltaire's particularly agreeable to me. My association of ideas was such that I constantly thought of Temple. I can account for this. Some years ago he wrote to my father proposing that he and I should go together to study at Geneva, and should see "Voltaire! Rousseau! immortal names!" Besides, we used to talk much of Voltaire with Nicholls and Claxton. Such little circumstances which recall my dear friend are valuable.

I next went with the secretary and saw Monsieur de Voltaire's library, which was tolerably numerous and in very good order. I saw there the Elements of Criticism and, by the secretary's denying it, I was persuaded that

DECEMBER 29, szombat

Ma reggel meglátogattam Monsieur Rieu-t és Monsieur de Belle Prét, egy úri festőt. Közös szobában élnek. Azután a nagyszerű Adam atyánál tettem látogatást; leckéket ad némelyik fiatalabb cselédszemélynek, minden tekintetben szolgálatkész. A vallásról beszélgetve úgy találtam, őszinte keresztény hittel bír. Így szólt hozzám: „Minden nap imádkozom Monsieur Voltaire-ért. Talán Istennek sikerül megérintenie a szívét, és felismerteti vele az igaz vallást. Nagy kár, hogy nem keresztény, pedig rengeteg keresztény értéket hordoz. A lelke gyönyörű; jó szándékú, adakozó, de erős fenntartásai vannak a keresztény hittel szemben. Komoly hangulatban néha próbálok erről beszélgetni vele, de amikor mindent csak kifiguráz, nyugton hagyom.” Derék lelkipásztor! És mily megfoghatatlan az emberi lélek építménye! Hangoztattam, hogy a pokol kínjai nem lehetnek örökkévalóak. Ő az Egyház tanításának nem tud ellentmondani, de emberi módon kijelentette: „Örülni fogok, ha beigazolódik, hogy Önnek van igaza.” Ezután Rieu-vel megnéztem Monsieur Voltaire színházát. Nem nagy, de csinos terem. Számos kellemes ötlet jutott róla eszembe. Egy bizonyos körülmény okán Monsieur Voltaire-t rendkívül kedvező fényben láttam. Az ötletek burjánzásában állandóan Temple barátom járt a fejemben. Ennek értem az okát. Évekkel ezelőtt írt apámnak, engedjen el vele Genfbe, hogy továbbtanuljak és meglátogassuk „Voltaire-t! Rous-

Voltaire had written the severe letter upon this book in the Gazette littéraire. The Jansenists used to publish against the Jesuits what they called Mémoires ecclésiastiques. Voltaire has got a thick volume of them bound up with the title of Sottises ecclésiastiques. I saw upon a shelf an octavo with this title, Tragédies barbares. I was sure they must be English. I took down the book, and found it contained Cleone, Elfrida, Caractacus. I was mightily amused with these little sallies, which were quite in the taste of Sir David Dalrymple. I heartily wish Voltaire had titled more of his books.

I was dressed the first time at Ferney in my sea-green and silver, and now in my flowered velvet. Gloom got hold of me at dinner, in so much that I thought I would not be obliged to stay here for a great deal of money. And yet in reality I would be proud and pleased to live a long time chez Monsieur de Voltaire. I was asked to return when I should be at Lyons. I took an easy leave of the company. Monsieur de Voltaire was very ill today, and had not appeared. I sent my respects to him, and begged to be allowed to take leave of him. He sent to me his compliments and said he would see me. I found him in the drawing-room, where I had near half an hour with him; at least, more than a quarter. I told him that I had marked his conversation. He seemed pleased. This last conversation shall also be marked. It was truly singular and solemn. I was quite in enthusi-

seau-t! Halhatatlan nevek!” S ezen túl rengeteget beszélgettünk Voltaire-ről Nichollsszal és Claxtonnal.<sup>7</sup> Az ilyen mellékes részletek, amiről drága barátom eszembe jut, sokat jelentenek a számomra.

Később a titkárral megtekintettem Monsieur Voltaire könyvtárát. Túrhető gyűjtemény, szépen rendben van tartva. Észrevettem a Az irodalomelmélet alapjait, és mivel a titkár rögtön tagadta, meggyőződésemmé vált, hogy Voltaire a szerzője az éles kritikának, amely a Gazette littéraire hasábjain megjelent. A janzenisták régebben kiadtak egy sorozatot a jezsuiták ellen, Mémoires ecclésiastiques címmel. Voltaire könyvtárában egy vastag kötet gyűjtötte őket egybe módosított cím alatt: Sottises ecclésiastiques. Az egyik polcon egy nyolcadrét könyv ezt a címet viselte: Tragédies barbares. Biztos voltam benne, hogy angol darabok. Kezembe vettem a kötetet, a tartalomban a Cleone, az Elfrida és a Caractatus.<sup>8</sup> Ez a Sir David Dalrymple stílusára emlékeztető pajkos gúny rendkívül mulattatott. Kár, hogy Voltaire nem látott el címmel minden bekötött könyvet.

Ferney-ben az első napon a tengerzöld és ezüst felöltömet viseltem, most pedig a virágmintás bársonyt. Ebédnél lehangoltság vett rajtam erőt, olyannyira, hogy úgy éreztem, a világ összes pénze sem marasztalhatna itt tovább. Valójában mégis büszkévé tett, hogy ily hosszan élveztem Monsieur Voltaire vendégszerete-

<sup>7</sup> *Temple cambridge-i barátai, akikkel Boswell Londonban 1763-ban összejárt.*

<sup>8</sup> *Az első Robert Dodsley, a második és a harmadik William Mason műve. Tartalmi vonatkozásban hagyományos darabok, semmi barbár, bennszülött vagy egzotikus vonás nincs bennük, ami Voltaire címadását indokolhatná.*

asm, quite agreeably mad to a certain degree. I asked his correspondence. He granted it. Is not this great?

BOSWELL. "When I came to see you, I thought to see a very great, but a very bad, man."

VOLTAIRE. "You are very sincere."

BOSWELL. "Yes, but the same [sincerity] makes me own that I find the contrary. Only, your Dictionnaire philosophique [troubles me]. For instance, Ame, the Soul –"

VOLTAIRE. "That is a good article."

BOSWELL. "No. Excuse me. Is it – [immortality] – not a pleasing imagination? Is it not more noble?"

VOLTAIRE. "Yes. You have a noble desire to be King of Europe. [You say,] 'I wish it, and I ask your protection [in Continuing to wish it].' But it is not probable."

BOSWELL. "No, but all cannot be the one, and may be the other. [Like Cato, we all say] 'It must be so,' till [we possess] immortality [itself]."

VOLTAIRE. "But before we say that this soul will exist, let us know what it is. I know not the cause. I cannot judge. I cannot be a juryman. Cicero says, *potius optandum quam probandum.*' We are ignorant beings. We are the puppets of Providence. I am a poor Punch."

BOSWELL. "Would you have no public worship?"

VOLTAIRE. "Yes, with all my heart. Let us meet four times a year in a grand temple with music, and thank God for all his gifts. There is one sun. There is one God.

tét. Ajánlották, ha útban hazafelé Lyons-ba érek, keressem fel újra a kastélyt. A társaságnak könnyen mondtam búcsút. Monsieur Voltaire ma nagyon rossz érezte magát, nem jelent meg köztünk. Üzenetet küldtem neki, kértem, engedje meg, hogy távozzam. Visszaüzent, hogy még látni kíván. A szalonban találkoztunk, majdnem fél órát töltöttem vele, de legalábbis több, mint egy negyedórát. Megismételtem, hogy lejegyeztem a beszélgetéseinket, ennek, úgy tűnt, örül. Az utolsó beszélgetést is rögzítem. Egyedülállóan ünnepeles modorban társalogtunk. Lelkesültségemben, talán érthető, kissé örülten viselkedtem. Megkértem, levelezzünk a jövőben. Hozzájárult. Hát nem fantasztikus!?

BOSWELL: Amikor elhatároztam, hogy felkeresem, arra számítottam, hogy egy nagyszerű, de hitvány emberrel fogok találkozni.<sup>9</sup>

VOLTAIRE: Ön nagyon őszinte.

BOSWELL: Valóban, de ugyanez az őszinteség mondatja velem, hogy várakozásom hamisnak bizonyult. Csupán az Ön Dictionnaire philosophique című munkája zavar. Például, Ame, a Lélek...

VOLTAIRE: Az egy jó cikk.

BOSWELL: Nem. Megbocsásson. A halhatatlanság nem csiklandozza a képzeletet? Nem nemesebb így?

VOLTAIRE: Hogyne. Önben nemes ösztönök dúlnak, hogy Európa királya legyen. Ezért így szól:

<sup>9</sup> Ezt a párbeszédet Boswell tisztázatlan jegyzetben hagyta hátra. Voltaire angol mondatai szerkesztői értelmezésre szorulnak, ebben a Yale egyetem Boswell-életmű kiadását követjük, de a beszélgetés még így is enigmatikus. (Boswell on the Grand Tour: Germany and Switzerland, 1764. Heinemann: London, 1953., szerk. Frederick A. Pottle, pp. 295-296.)

Let us have one religion. Then all mankind will be brethren.”

BOSWELL. “May I write in English, and you’ll answer?”

VOLTAIRE. “Yes. Farewell.” ♦



„Igényt támasztok rá, és kérem, álljon ki mellettem ebben az igényemben.” Csakhogy ez nem valószínű.

BOSWELL: Persze, de nem lehet minden egy, és ugyanakkor egy másik. Catóval szólván, ennek így kell lennie, amíg a halhatatlanságot magát nem birtokoljuk.

VOLTAIRE: De mielőtt kijelentjük, hogy ez a lélek létezik, állapítsuk meg, hogy mi is valójában. Én nem ismerem az okokat. Nem alkothatok ítéletet. Cicero szerint, „a hit nem igényel bizonyítást.” Tudatlan létezők vagyunk, a Gondviselés bábfigurái. Én magam egy szegény bohóc.

BOSWELL: De nem venne részt közösségi szertartáson?

VOLTAIRE: Dehogynem, tiszta szívből. Találkozunk évente négyszer egy szép templomban és zenei kísérettel köszönjük meg Isten ajándékait. Egy Nap van. Egy Isten. Legyen egy hitünk, és akkor az emberiség egymás testvére lesz.

BOSWELL: Megengedi, hogy majd angolul levelezünk?

VOLTAIRE: Nem bánom. Isten Önnel! ♦