

FOREWORD

“Love is the heartbeat of the entire universe”
Francisco Maria Viade in “La Traviata” by Verdi

Dulce Maria Cebrián Flores, from the Canary Islands, and Francisco Javier Gozábez Esteve, from Valencia, pharmacists in the Alicante mountain towns of Beniarres and Muro de Alcoy, looked beyond the confines of their towns, their country and their professional commitment. They had, in the words of the famous tango, “*their hearts looking to the South*”. And they came to know Africa. And to know Africa is to love it forever.

Ethiopia, the cradle of the world, captivated them in particular. Ethiopia where Father Nile **likes to flow slowly** before, full of colors and essences, begin a long journey to the sea, through the desert valley, which is green only along its banks.

*And Father Nile
nears the sea...
slow, solemn,
reaches the end
of his wanderings,
fertile boundary
to the desert...*

*Father Nile,
perhaps weary now,
nevertheless
shows no bitterness
at his great journey's end.*

*And Father Nile
nears the sea...
Slow, solemn,
he arrives at the end
of his journey,
fertile
limit
of the desert...
Father Nile,
weary perhaps by now
does not appear bitter
though
At the climax
of his tremendous run.*

(In “Aguafuerte” 27th June 1988)

This book, reader, is the fruit of four years of reflection and writing, considering and selecting the most appropriate graphic illustrations. Every photograph is a source of admiration, emotion and contemplation. Sometimes a single photograph is worth more than several pages by the most seasoned author. It is, as it were, the distillation, the essence of a whole chapter. Each image encompasses many messages that are revealed as one examines it in more detail.

Africa! In February 1994 I wrote:

*...arise, Africa,
fly with your own wings.
Unfetter
the enormous strength
which, for centuries,
you have held*

*... Take flight, Africa,
with your own wings.
Spread
your enormous strength
for centuries withheld,
in your warm hands*

*in your warm hands
now free
to embrace.*

*now freed
for the embrace*

(In "Terral")

With **its** own wings, with **its** immense cumulative wisdom, with **its** natural riches, the **topics** of famine and poverty are referred to over and over again as something irredeemable and insufferable. Those who present Africa, Ethiopia, in this way are using the negatives of photographs which **they don't know** (at best, because I do not want to believe that, knowing that these are negatives obtained by trick lenses, they pass them off as reflections of reality, in order that everything remain the same, that no-one attempts change).

Firstly, reader, they show us the land, the water, the trees, the animals ... And, underlying everything, the incomparable inner light of the human beings who populate it. The children have place of preference. Those children already born and those who will arrive one day on these lands. The children, to whom, together with their own children, they dedicate this marvellous book. In Ngorongoro, Arusha, Tanzania, I wrote in July 1993:

*Here, in Gorongoro,
I decided from this day forth
to devote myself
totally to you,
my love,
humankind.*

*Here, in Ngorongoro
I have decided
from now on
to take care of you only,
my love
my fellow creature.*

The natural resources, crops (the finest coffee), minerals, energy sources ... so that everyone may know - and primarily the inhabitants of this land - the gifts they have received, so that they figure in the balance accounts of self-esteem, so that they do not pay attention to the detractors, **to** pejorative descriptions.

Ethiopia, its valleys and hills, the cradle of humanity, according to many authors. "Lucy" would take her place at the very beginning of the human adventure, this miracle, this indecipherable mystery.

*...footprints of the first steps
of the human race
on earth.
First steps
on a planet
which is a strand
of the universe
and yet
they are perhaps
unique steps,
unique knowing eyes,
a unique voice
a unique being
who creates...*

*... are the marks
of the first footprints
of the human race
on earth.
The first steps
on a planet
a mere fragment
of the universe
and yet
they are perhaps
unique steps
unique eyes
consciously
seeing,
unique voice,*

*unique being
able to create.*

(Tanzania July 1993 in “Terral”)

Dulce and Javier have viewed Ethiopia from different perspectives and angles and have proceeded to weave, with images and words, the publication which the reader can now read and reflect on: to see with the eyes and, as Antoine de Saint-Exupery recommended, above all to see with the heart.

Southern Lands: Untouched by Time allows us, together with the authors, to traverse the impressive landscape of its riverbanks. Shepherds, livestock ... and the multicolored aesthetic decoration of the body, the most beautiful ornaments of extraordinary diversity.

In this chapter, Javier recounts to us his impressions as a witness of the ceremonies of the Hamar. They let him be present at their rites and the extremes of their happiness and tears, because they know that he is their friend, that he admires them. And so Javier “walked around the tree twice” and the *dunguri* said to him “you are not going to have any problems on your journey” ... There will be many - an increasing number - instructed by books like this, by the accounts which feature in it, by testimonies like those given in the book- we will travel a new path, convinced that other signposts must guide humanity, that another world is possible.

Consequently, we must, each one of us and all together, sign new contracts in the social, economic, natural, cultural and moral spheres to re-direct the present developments, to guarantee the equality of all human-beings, to design and put into practice a great global plan of endogenous development. To move, without further delay, from a culture of force and imposition in which we have lived for many centuries, to a culture of understanding, brotherhood and dialogue. A culture of peace instead of a culture of war and violence.

In the chapter Northern Lands: A Great Civilization, there takes place the encounter with the churches of Lalibela, hewn out of living red rock where one can sense in the air the power of faith which was necessary to carve out of the mountains and leave engraved eternal prayers. One looks to the sea from where came Portuguese and Ottomans, from where came those who bore on their chest the crosses of the artistic wealth of orthodox Christianity. Crosses which, like lattice-keys, tell us in a whisper the secrets of the past so that we may open wide the windows of the future. In the place called Goha, from Gondar, - “goha” in Amharic means “to dawn”- I wrote, greatly moved, these lines in January 1989:

*...I will not let
-although it hurts me-
anything escape
which may be felt:
I await all sights,
all scents,
all sounds,
so that I do not forget
that which every day
must not be*

*... wanting to let nothing
escape me
- although it hurts -
that can be felt:
I watch for each sight,
each smell,
each noise,
so that I forget nothing
of what should be
each day*

forgotten.

unforgettable.

Next, the chapter Eastern Lands: Meeting the Orient. The encounter with Harar, Holy City for Islam, whose faith and commerce illuminated the Ethiopian eastern lands. A thirsty land open to the Indian Ocean winds, breath of life ... breath of the Orient.

Finally, Modern Ethiopia: The Road Ahead, its historic fight for a free space in the world, the extraordinary richness of traditional craft work, the development and the potential of its university, the yearning for freedom of a people who can still have more future than past.

Addis, elevated capital, looks out over the fantastic territory that encircles it with bittersweet feelings, still with open wounds, but with inexhaustible hope. A hope, the Ethiopian hope, reflected so beautifully in the photograph that opens this foreword, the gaze of the Mursi child on his mother's breast, whom no one can betray, no one must forget. Yes – love is the heartbeat of the entire universe.

As in the poem written in Bata in January 1991:

*I am going
with the reproach
of your unfathomable eyes,
I am going with your plaintive cries
Unheard
... no. No, I am not going,
I cannot go,
I cannot leave you
and I am not leaving you.
I am only moving away...*

*I am going
with your disregard
and profound reproach
of stormy pleadings;
I am going together
with your unnoticed
loneliness...
I cannot go,
I cannot leave you
and I don't
I move away
only...*

The whole book follows the route marked by two key concepts, to set so many fractures, to heal so many wounds, to make good so many disparate misconceptions: cultural diversity and solidarity. One understands from the first moment that as happens with all actions of solidarity, it is not a question of thinking what is good for Ethiopia but rather doing it with Ethiopia. Books like the one which the reader now has in front of him have contributed not only to all of us having a better understanding of these people and this land but also that they themselves understand better the extent of their heritage.

The dream of Javier and Dulce, looking affectionately towards the future, has become a reality. They have given generously of their time and expertise. They have immersed themselves in Ethiopia with empathy and they have garnered the most abundant and valuable of all the harvests: that of recognition, the smile of the children with their large dark eyes, perplexed and longing. Pharmacists in towns in Alicante, they have a house, with other Spanish travelers and Ethiopian friends, and ten young pupils studying and forging another future for their people.

Ethiopia, crucible of cultures, a scene of complexity, a scene of confused reality for two Spanish people whose great treasure – why today so feared by some? – is the diversity, the plenitude, the plurality of cultures, often so painfully imposed, which allows all of us to confront with hope the present challenges and design a common

future, necessarily heterogeneous, which one can glimpse through the mist, as in the unforgettable dawns of Gondar.

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