

This is Our Collective Story – Nothing Less, Nothing More

Although it has been many years ago, I still wonder how I vividly remember the day I first saw the white strand of hair on my left side above my forehead. It stayed there all alone about a few years. The white strand rebelling against the thousands of brown ones. Funny though, that day was also my 36th birthday. I was looking at the bathroom mirror, all alone, trying to do my make up as I was going out for my precious birthday party.

But today, when I look at the mirror, I only see the few brown ones rebelling against the whites. So many years have gone by, the years that I have lived are probably more than what I had left. Feeling lucky that I can still wonder how vividly I remember that day. Looking at the bathroom mirror, thinking maybe that day was a threshold for me. And me thinking, how time changes or to put it more accurately how time transforms everything. I feel lucky, and I am glad that I have humbly accepted the changes and the transformations of my life during my late 30s.

I still have no idea.

Did I told you many things have changed since then, apparently it was the adversity being the key to the change and/or the transformation, and we are all going through this together. Not a single being is left alone in this planet, regardless of what it feels. The same emotions, the same feelings, the same sensations, you name it – we go through together.

Although, very occasionally, I write journals, daily ones, and I began writing reflections around my late 30s as well. Today I have more than thousand pages. Sometimes when I write, I go through them, choose some random pages and re-reflect on them. Old age really changes/transforms the way you evaluate your experiences.

This time I am going back to 2024, the end of Summer, the RIELA – RILA days. Our humble collective time of healing, change, transformation, acceptance, and more importantly the way we use our languages day. Luckily, I have found three letters that I forgot which we've sent to each other back then.

The first one is a letter from René;

“From: soil

To: silence

Dear Flee,

It has been a long time since you left this place, which we once called home for so many mourning. I really hope you enjoy your new life, wherever you are. After you left, it took us 20 min and 23 sec and 4 months to fall asleep, but now the crying stopped. There's silence. You know this silence. It's this shivering silence you can feel that makes your hair flow, which teases your warm skin and creeps right into your lungs to push you forward until you reach the shore. In the blink of the eye an entire year's work of nature torn apart and shredded into bits and pieces. You always talked about going away.

From the moment of your departure, the waves started speaking about their longing and there grew this melancholy inside my body that made me slow down as far as my eye could see. My ears were listening, while the space became a place unseen. With high-pitched tone the heavy doors of their sacred place once again tell the sorry story of

religion. Do you remember what we were told, when the spirit invited our bodies to sit on the fence?

No worries, earthling we'll be back and brighten this path with green lights again and his time we're going to stay. Bea.ting. beat.in. beat.out. Breath in. BR eath out. The impulse of life quantities in strikes. Ahead a ready steady rhythm of the never-ending tale of breaking cracking atoms into parcels of energy flowing rivers.

A garden is a garden because it has a fence. If it were not a fence, it would not be a garden.

If it were not a garden, it would not be a fence. Entrance to paradise is logical and rusty. I look up.

The bearers form two rows of six each. A lament is hummed, and the wandering begins. The way must be paved to say goodbye and put into wires to protect the horses from the rider.

Taking exterior devices to make and to take, to take and to make memory. This may seem too easy at first, but never will replace the wind that brings tears and hope alike.

When speech becomes language, the sound will be savior?

How are you doing a language without Soil? Intersounds of unparalleled exophonic ways. What is the word for word in your new language?

What must a good grave place be like?

Go see the soil-senser we were told. They know.

Soil-sensers are highly educated and carry a compass within them.

Only certain people, after many years of study, are familiar with the secret teachings where a dead person finds his rest and the offspring thrives.

If you call Soil-sensers to search for a new spot to bury, they examine the area according to its nature, the earth, the shape and the constellation of the mountains and then determine a place for the dead, but very often also for a living person who wants to provide for the future. There should be veins that run through the landscape. In a good place, the bones will turn to gold. Many thinkers confirm that our mountain is a good place for a grave. The grave keeper also holds the same view, she knows how to maintain a grave. Let us visit the good grave. It is on the top of the mountain. It should bring a lot of luck. We must climb the mountain to honor our ancestors. Remember to make a sacrifice to the mountain spirit. When the climb was no longer so steep, we ll walk for a while on a plateau and through a small forest to a small hill surrounded by pine trees. Underneath is grandfather. The other peaks are not as high as ours. Everything looks so small from here.

Why is his grave good? Does he have to see his hill as a blue dragon or is it a white tiger? Some mountain ridges resemble an eagle.

Do we have the table for the offerings with us? Let's eat, grandfather leaves us the good taste of offering.

Now that no one is allowed to have a private cemetery anymore, the sensors and grave keepers are superfluous. We have obviously become accustomed to the fact that nothing exists after death. No one visits graves and no one receives the spirits of the ancestors in his home.

To set adrift it did not need much overcoming or persuasion when you knew where you belong and how to return. If you need help just follow the pulse on the horizon.

Now you are absent, but the thin line that was there when we were born is still here and it will be there tomorrow. I am quite sure. I know. I hope.

I will stay here by the riverside and will see what is coming down.

Now the muddy water is as grey as the sky and its little waves break incessantly against the pebble beach. It is as if the water was not in fact travelling but merely wobbling back and forth.”

We were all longing, together – probably with mother nature.

So long have been changed since then like my white strands. This world is not as its used to be. You know what, somehow along the way, a few “time spans” after 2025 we have managed to decline the climate change. It happened in the most unexpected ways, when the manufacturers decided ‘really’ to cut off their excessive production, all at once, one after another and it didn’t even have a negative effect on the people’s income.

After that everyone started to breathe again.

In and Out.

S.L.O.W.L.Y

F.R.O.M. T.H.E.N.O.S.E

I N H A L E (now) – s l o w l y, until four, three, two, one...

Stop, hold your breath until four, three, two, one...

E X H A L E... (now) – s l o w l y, until four, three, two, one...

Stop, do not inhale – s l o w l y, until four, three, two, one...

Then return to your normal breathing, or repeat this as much as you like.

Oh, yes. There are still many more good news ahead. All the crises of the “Covid Era” (this is what we are calling them) ended in the most unexpected (yep, again – expect the unexpected), peaceful ways – when the people on the frontlines decided to STOP! Somehow people, the folk understood the power of individuals.

Yes, where there’s life, there’s also death.

Probably, like anyone else in the world I have also accepted the terms and conditions of my precious life (and instantly forgot that I have) just as I was coming through the canal into this fantastic word.

Those terms and conditions, reminded me Geraldine's letter, touching upon how there is a constant change in our lives, for better or worse (both miraculous), making this breath more treasurable, serendipitous and beloved.

"A Letter to My Late Sister Eugenia

Dear Eugenia,

It's one hundred and forty-four months now since the harsh events of life ripped you out of my physical sight. It is October two thousand and twenty-four and the rains are still very much around. Every afternoon it rains in our city and torrents of water cascade down the earth roads and dig under layers of worn-out tar on the roads that were once tarred. You have been not only an elder sister to me but also a friend, guide and companion and I remember all the sad and happy moments we shared together. We were two little very contented orphans though we had very little to live on. You taught me how to hold on to life even when everything seemed too loose beneath our feet. You walked the fields in your tender teens to get me wild food; mushrooms, termites, black crickets, grasshoppers and wild raspberries. I hardly ever noticed the thinness of the skin on your face, arms and legs because I was overwhelmed and carried away by your heroic beauty and the dark skin beneath your cassava-white teeth, the chocolate gums which contrasted your perfect whiteness of your teeth. You were a wonder in creation, and I can still visualize your shiny eyes which could light a large hall each time you smiled. The aura of your affection for every bit of life around you gave warmth, hope and strength for one to hang on to life and for the future it promised.

So many things have changed since you walked that road of no return. That day you left, I opened my mouth to cry, but no sound came, but I felt pangs of pain hitting my forehead like a hammer. The world seemed to have closed in on me, but I knew that God would give me the grace to walk through that chilly, dark lonely valley of sorrow. The sad thing is that I did not attend your burial, and I have never set eyes on your grave. All I know is that you were buried at some corner of the home you constructed with your hard-earned money in spite of your heart-condition. I did not even see your remains, but I prefer it that way so that I can remember you as when you were alive than when you had slept forever.

Change has been fast-paced and some of the things we dreamt about have materialized. At least you witnessed the internet and the computer age alongside mobile telephones. Technology has taken a different curve on the graph, and everyone is now talking about AI. At first the talk was about distance-learning, and I am sure you witnessed the age of ACCA and others. You never owned a Facebook account, but I guess you knew about it. Shortly after you walked out of this stage called the earth, another communication technology appeared with modifications on mobile telephones as they were now called android phones. One could connect to the internet, send and receive emails, take and share photos, make both audio and video calls via an app called WhatsApp using an android phone. There are now many other apps such as Tik Tok, Telegraph, Messenger and a host more of them.

The entire world went dead silent with a pandemic called COVID-19. So many social rules were implemented in order to help individuals, families, communities and

nations to stop the spread of the deadly virus. Millions of people lost their lives to the virus and families were not permitted to go near the corpses of their loved ones because if they did, they would get contaminated. People were asked to wear face masks and keep at least one metre distance from other people when in public. Social gatherings were prohibited and many public places including markets, schools and churches were shut down. Handshakes and hugs were forbidden and till date, even long after the pandemic, handshakes have become a distant thing. International borders were automatically closed in order to curb the spread of the virus from one country to another by travellers. Many people were taken unawares by the sudden declaration of the lockdown as airports, seaports, train stations and other travel agencies closed down and so got stuck where they were before the lockdowns. The universal lockdown saw an increase in domestic violence, hunger, starvation and mental health issues as people were compelled to stay in all day long and for several months.

However, something positive was born out of the situation as people started developing new ways of surviving. At World Pulse, we had “Thriving-Thursdays” where those of us who were ambassadors met every Thursday on zoom and shared ideas, exchanged stories and built resilience. Many companies started organizing work from home sessions and that is how technology hit a high score. International conferences were held online and participants comfortably participated from home. Many people learned new skills while others intensified their spirituality as they had more time to meditate.

One terrible thing happened in our country, war broke out in 2016 due to the Anglophone crisis, and it is still raging on now. Many people have lost their lives, many schools have been closed down and many children dropped out of school. Villages have been set on fire and internal and international displacement is currently the talk of the day. Many people are suffering but there is hope that it will come to an end. We have no access to our village, but we hope for the time that the country will be a very peaceful place again. Many people have relocated from our villages to the city because of the unbearable hardship due to the war and so did our mother.

Now, dear Eugenia, I want to tell you that we also have happy news, mama now lives with us in the city and is healthy, happy and more confident. I have visited many countries in the world and so have our siblings. We want to share our knowledge with those who are ready to learn in the countries around the world. We also help the poor and needy persons in our little way that we can. I am sponsoring some few young people in school, and I am happy for this gives me satisfaction.

Finally, dear Eugenia, you know that we grew up in nature and I cannot part with nature. I am an Eco activist; an environmental protector and I do a lot with plants. Wherever I go, I bring with me a plant, either edibles or just flowers. I’m planning to build a magical house with flowers that know my daily program. Every morning as I open the door, different species of flowers will greet me and hug me as I walk pass. For instance, roses will greet me on Monday morning, lilies on Tuesday morning, sun flowers on Sunday morning and so on and so forth. You are now aware of what is happening around us and around the world. I know that happier days are unfolding day after day and the world is becoming one large, beautiful village with one large harmonious family.”

During silence, world gives us its own power. Good old 'Covid Era' thank you for the teachings. You made us to ponder everything else other than our own authentic-selves – (the ones we got with the terms&conditions), and nothing worked out, until we begin to re-member who we really are, search for the light(ness) in the dark. That tiny spark of the little star above the mountain became the sun.

And last but not least, remember the millennials, gen Z, the ones the world complained about the most, they are the governing ones today, as an elder these are the most enjoyable times I've had. They really tore apart broke down every nonsense law and made the world relax a bit.

Oh, forgot to mention one more thing happened after the 'Covid Era'. The tech developers, valley people (indigenous people of the networks of the internet), decided to quit their illusionary competition with the speed of life and to get beyond how the universe works. Phew. That day, all the valley people did a public release and the whole universe exhaled in awe.

You guessed, as a result, we went back to our own normal pace. This was not slowing down. For all of us, this was becoming the new ancient me.

So, what remains is as Anja said, "our quiet remembrance and [(imho) not so called] urgent questions...

"What remains

It was assumed to be very fast.

The technology must have been ironclad, robust and powerful.

The skilled labour was determined and experienced.

First of all, the bureaucracy probably had to be taken into account.

Excellent cooperation between the heir to the estate and municipal administration.

The white and red striped ribbon was probably skilfully unrolled from a large metre of material.

I wonder if it was windy, and the ribbon danced in the air while 70 years of life was razed to the ground in a matter of minutes?

I wonder if there were onlookers watching the goings-on?

I can only speculate about that.

Car park.

Why preserve unoccupied living space?

50 new parking spaces in the middle of the old town.

Why preserve construction methods, materials, objects from another century?

It must have been a good deal.

Why preserve emotional ballast?

Underground. Ultra-modern. Spacious.

Where butterflies once danced over the wild meadow flowers, there is now a large, gravelled meadow.

Definitely a win for all consumers. Direct parking in the centre of town.

Above ground, a functional glass building, already smeared by urban vandalism, marks the new entrance to convenience.

Urban glass body instead of a former private residence and neighbouring wooden barn passed down from generation to generation.

What remains when life ends?

What remains when the old has to go?

What remains when attitudes, when technologies, when structures change?

Sober functionality and rationality of purpose.

Determined destruction instead of alternative reutilisation and preservation.

Dusty grey, inanimate gravel instead of living biodiversity.

Visually loud urban vandalism.

...Quiet remembrance and urgent questions.

Kaleidoscopic Visionaries”