The Most Attractive Women in History

A Plea for the Art of Portaiture. Or .. Towards a Real Renaissance.

By Jean-Marie De Dijn
Philosophus, EU.
2024 - 20..

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Dedicated to Ann Christy (1945 - 1984), a rose picked too soon by life, yet with eternal fresh petals. And to Tania Fierens, a ... by ... with .... O, she knows why herself.

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Feel free to look at our revealing war studies. Only in Dutch. Very beautiful language by the way. And truly unique or above all very justifiable studies. Whereby a large manuscript part on our PC still has to be converted into texts to be published.

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in preparazione

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La Maja desnuda, Francisco Goya (Francisco José De Goya y Lucientes, 1746 - 1828), oil, circa 1797 - 1800, Museo del Prado Madrid.

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Le Baiser (De Kus - The Kiss), Frans Masereel (1899 – 1972), woodcut, 1924, 14 op 28, (dit exemplaar in) Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Gent.

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Madame Cézanne (Hortense Fiquet, 1850 - 1922) in the Conservatory, Paul Cézanne (1839 - 1906), oil, 1891, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Madame de Pompadour, François Boucher (1721 - 1764), oil, 1756, Alte Pinakothek München.

Madame Moitessier (Jean-Auguste-Dominique) Ingres (1780 – 1867), oil, 1844 - 1856, National Gallery London.

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Madame Salma Hayek, Sketches for her portrait as a gift for her 20th anniversary of her wedding with my biggest collectionneur, Luc Tuymans, the artist's personal archive, cabinet 22, shelf 7, will be released in 2026 in the Pinault Collection.

Malvina, Jakob (Jacobus Johannes) Smits (1855 - 1928), oil, s.d., Jakob Smitsmuseum Mol.

Mária s dieťaťom Ježišom (Maria with child), Ondrej Richter, behindglasspainting, 2022, private collection.

Mósa - Mohave, Edward S. Curtis (1868 - 1952), photograph, 1903, The North American Indian, Volume 2, plate 61 + and online.

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Out into the World, Maria Catharina Wiik (1853 –1928), oil, 1889, Ateneum, Helsinki.

Riekend III (Fragrant III), Victor Delhez (1902 – 1985), woodprint (épreuve d'artiste), signed version - 1 of probably only 8 editions, s.d., private collection.

Saint Georges and the Dragon (and a Woman), Paolo Uccello (1397 - 1475), oil, circa 1470, National Gallery, London.

Sebastiano del Piombo (Sebastiano Luciani, 1485 - 1547), Ritratto di giovane romana con cesto di frutta (La Dorotea) or La Veneziana by writer Vladimir Nabokov, circa 1512. oil, Gemäldegalerie Berlin.

Self-portrait (presumed) as Saint Catherine of Alexandria, Barbara Longhi (1552 - 1638), oil, 1589, Ravenna Art Museum.

Sistine Madonna, Raphaël (Raffaello Sanzio da Urbino, 1483 - 1520), oil, 1513 - 1514, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister Dresden.

Sofonisba Anguissola (also known as Sophonisba Angussola or Sophonisba Anguisciola, circa 1532 – 1625), Berardini Campi painting a Portrait of Sofonisba Anguissola, oil, circa 1559, Pinacoteca Nazionale di Siena.

Song of Songs (Das Hohelied Salomos), Painting Cycle No. 4 of Egon Tschirch (1889 - 1948), tempera on cardboard, 1923, Ahrenshoop Art Museum, Germany.

Jean-Marie De Dijn, *Het Hooglied in de 21ste eeuw. Het theoreferentieel nut van bijbelse liefdeslyriek*. Scriptie Enige kandidatuur in de godsdienstwetenschappen. KUL, 2003 - 2005.

idem, *The Song of Songs in the 21st Century. The Theoreferential Use of Biblical Love Lyrics*. Thesis: Sole Candidacy in Religious Studies. Catholic University of Leuven, 2003 - 2005.

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Preface from 2025 to a text from twenty years ago.

1. General context of Song of Songs.

2. How to present Song of Songs in a publication: a brief deontology.

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Further possible and desirable research on Song of Songs.

The Artist and His First Wife, Peter Paul Rubens and Isabella Brant, in the Honeysuckle Bower, Peter Paul Rubens (1577 - 1640), oil, 1609, Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen, München.

The deposition or the descent of the cross. Rogier Van der Weyden (circa 1399 - 1464), oil on oak panel, circa 1435, Prado, Madrid.

in preparazione

The Oralgasm or poetry in the sexual experience. Woman reading a letter, Johannes Vermeer (1632 - 1675), oil, circa 1662 - 1663. Rijksmuseum Amsterdam.

+ The Penitent Magdalene, El Greco (Doménikos Theotokópoulos or Δομήνικος Θεοτοκόπουλος , 1541 - 1614), oil, 1576 - 1578, Szépművészeti Múzeum Budapest.

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1.1. General considerations regarding the use of poetry in the experience of sexuality.

1.2. Various functions of poetry in the experience of sexuality.

2. Goedele Liekens, eternal media figure and the erurotic on the subject of orgasms (besides being a hottie, we mean on face value, because unfortunately, as far as she's concerned, we're not erurotic).

3. Luce Caponegro, once Europe's favorite hottest movie star, about the eargasm. But even better, because she was essentially the very first inventor of the ... Oralgasm!

4. Valerie Van Peel, the new important Belgian party leader and, thanks to her new poetry, henceforth and definitively a fantastic Happy Ex Single.

5. Barbara Baert, alias Barbarian, professor of art history, on Jan Vermeer's painting and his specific depiction of the Oralgasm, as the completely wordless yet wordy experience of sexuality! And with her world premiere of "*Iconography as sphincterology*", or sex is the end and beginning of all our sentences.

6. Ann Fransen, Federal Prosecutor of Belgium, on poetry in ... Or even better: on Lady and Sir Justice.

6.1. The secure, discreet location of the discreet meeting. Among plants and birds.

6.2. The discreet meeting.

6.3. Rubens; hurray for poetry, and yet?

6.4. On the 'normal', principal love for Lady Justice, Sir Justice - for Justice.

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The Rokeby Venus, Diego (Rodríguez de Silva y) Velázquez (1599 – 1660), oil, 1647 - 1651, National Gallery London.

Venus and Cupid with a Honeycomb, Lucas Cranach The Elder (der Ältere + circa 1472 – 1553), oil, circa 1531, Galleria Borghese Roma.

Virgin and Child in Flower Garland with Angels, Peter Paul Rubens (1577 - 1640) and Jan Brueghel The Elder (1568 - 1625), oil, 1621, Musée du Louvre, Paris.

+ Pierre-Joseph Redoute's School of botanical drawing in the Salle Buffon in the Jardin des Plantes. Julie Ribault (1789 - circa 1839). Watercolour and graphite on paper, 1830, The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, United Kingdom.

Virgin and Child with Two Angels, Sandro Botticelli (born as Alessandro di Mariano di Vanni Filipepi, 1445 - 1510), tempera, circa 1490, Akademie der bildenden Künste Wien.

Virgin of Gósol (the inspiration of the face for the portrait of Gertrude Stein by Pablo Picasso - 1881 - 1976 - during 1905 - 1906), wood and polychrome, second half of 12th century, Museo Nacional d'Art de Catalanya, Barcelona.

Woman reading a letter, Johannes Vermeer (1632 - 1675), oil, circa 1662 - 1663. Rijksmuseum Amsterdam.

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Introduction.

Text In Stressstruction = T.I.S..

Objectives of this study. But, what about the ... unforeseeable effects?

Text in stressstruction.

Texts by ready delivery - without parcel services.

Acis and Galathea Revisited, Romeo Castellucci (Castel Gandolfo, Palazzo Pontificio, Ricevuto Immacolato or ab urbe condita del teatro mondiale, 1???), photographic sketch, 20-- (work in long progress), private collection.

Romeo Castellucci is a well known producer of trials and errors in the world of theatre and opera. Because of our good relationship with Peter de Caluwe, director of the Opera of Brussels (1963, Belgium, capital of capitalistic EU), we were able to get him (Romeo, not Peter) for a short interview. We make an effort to summarize Romeo's verbiage, even though at one point of infinite exhaustion we dragged ourselves to the nearest three seater to sleep a long sleep. The man reportedly - thank you, Peter - just kept on talking to himself for an unknown amount of time; hopefully he remembered everything for his forthcoming automutilationbiography.

1) Peter gave me the cautiously enthusiastic request to model theatrically with the bodies of these two figures in the photo, preferably with as much live music as possible, preferably composed by a contemporary soundmaker of my level. He himself was like being stung by a wasp by these apparitions and wanted to do 'something' with them, but he needed someone like me to turn a dream into action, an act that in turn should function as a dream of yet another opera that had come out of his House of Trust. He was thinking, of course, of my infinite empathy, workaholistic and other abilabities such as to spend big bucks on ostentatious productions. The man had read my mind - I was on holiday in the Maldives at the time and he in unsightly Grembergen! - because there I was just thinking about my very first own written, composed, staged and conducted opera, a work for which I have already prepared the applause tape of four and a half hours.

It will be about the Greek shepherd Acis and the nymph Galathea. For me, certain G.F. Händel (1685 - 1759) and W.A. Mözart (1756 - 1791), already devoted some pleasant music to it. They were, I admit, not losers. But. Because of my lifelong experience in the world of opera, I finally have the courage to admit that I can do better than these, all in all, modest predecessors. These two figures of the photo are only sketch figures because for the performance itself, somewhat to the regret of declarant Peter, we will only use real Italian singers, trapezists and jugglers - if possible these three theatrical forms in the same guises. Sorry, Peter, but I am much more important than such a director, a civil servant. I serve no civils, I serve The Higher.

2) I can tell you that I am preparing a second opera, under the working title "*S.O.S.*". That abbreviation stands for "*Sempre Oriana e Selen*". I have been fascinated since before birth by these two strong and at the same time vulnerable Italian women, Oriana Fallaci (1929 - 2006) and Selen (1966, pseudolomitonym of Luce Caponegro).

Both were very physically inclined ladies because at times heavy smokers. That is a particularly dramatic element because of the immanent fire hazard in the opera house. I still find cleaning women too little to use as pawns in an opera production. But firefighters! Which bodies represent more scorching heat and symbolize the transition from life to death - and vice versa! And another world first on my account. The ladies also share a deep understanding of the male phenomenon of which I am such an inspiring specimen - Romeo suddenly shows us a pout that he was neither interviewed by Julia.A Fallaci nor spoiled by Julia.B-Z Selen. He picks himself up and continues: they also share a striking respect for the religious and the

groundbreaking. And who has pushed more boundaries than I, the Servant of the Higher Beautiful?, he now bellows airily.

The connecting "*Sempre*" comes, of course, from the closing verse of the famous poem "*Non è mai perfetto*" by my Oriana : "*Ama molto, soffri poco, lotta tanto, vinci sempre*". I find that title a personal challenge anyway because I can always be called perfect; it's only clumsy performers who sometimes make mistakes and especially the stupid audience that, admittedly rarely, doesn't want to understand me. In me is despite all my obsessive deconstruvturating theatre a great romantic and man of hope; is there nothing more beautiful than a woman, an Italian, who incarnates the best features of Oriana Fallaci and Selen annex Luce Caponegro?

3) No two without three, though this three is the One, the First, the Alpha. One day I must come to myself as the most important person I ever met, both personally and in terms of the central force of international theatre and opera work - apart from my revered mother, of course, the Virgin Mary. I am ultimately preparing an opera about myself! I'm going to introduce myself-myself-myself to the audience in a form of apotheosis. With an emphasis on Theo or God. I was always a God in the depths of my mind and my audience should know better to worship their Romeo, their Creator of Grounded Fiction and Human Wishdom.

To our not unpleasant surprise, preceded by crystal clear disbelief, our citizen of the world began to hum and then sing, in ... Polish! What an admirable intellectual, what an alien polyglot. His foreign accent is horrific, but who cares when one hears these divine words and melody:

"*O Romeo słowiczy sokole*
O tęsknoto niewieścich pokoleń
Otworzyłam Ci okno
Na tę moją samotność
O Romeo
czy jesteś na dole
czy jesteś na dole"

As you immediately know, this was sung by the divine Kalina Jędrusik (1930 – 1991). After this musical-existential outpouring or outburst there is a silent moment. Always ever again falls on a day that Talking Silence. And. Sometimes. Generally. Always. Followed by a confession: "*People, how I am to this day influenced by those communist-occupied-revolting-free Poles from Krakow. My eternal Kalina. And my infinite Tadeusz (NB: Tadeusz Kantor, 1915 - 1990). I did not invent anything myself; it was all there already, behind that Iron Curtain*."

Jean-Marie De Dijn, EU, August 2024.

PS. Some time after we had written the above text, we learned elsewhere - in Slovakia during the summer of 2024 - and by chance that Peter De Caluwe, and despite his wish, could no longer remain the director of DE MUNT. The 2024 - 2025 opera season will therefore be his last there. We have no idea who his successor will be and how this decision was made, but are suspicious and wait-and-see given that this is obviously a political decision.

In any case, we may here proclaim an opinion on behalf of very many people. Peter de Caluwe (Dendermonde, 1963) was, no is, a unique person. He is/was an extremely driven, always calm and simply a very capable man. He was/is the right man on the right place, and that place was partly because of him one of the most important opera houses in the world, following in the footsteps of the almost inimitable Gerard Mortier (1942 - 2014), also a man of whom we and many, many others may think with exceptionally warm and grateful memories.

Peter is/was not only an opera director hors excellence but was/is also - or because of that - a very open or democratic thinking person, speaking and writing about music and the world through many media. The man knows his languages and can especially say or write something in them. We did not always agree with his views or even disagreed profoundly at least once before, but that is democracy and he has devoted himself doubly and thickly and his whole life to that good.

Very personally we must regret that although we are contemporaries and from the same region, he unfortunately followed his secondary education in his father's school in Zele near Dendermonde. So not in our college in Dendermonde. He would certainly have been a great friend from whom we could have learned a lot.

We hope that after Peter De Caluwe DE MUNT will continue to be an internationally leading opera house. To put it bluntly, we do not wish Peter anything because we are absolutely convinced that, once he gets over this disappointment, he was/is/will be the same man in another place and in another beautiful function, passionate about society and art. We wish him - who has always retained something of the freshness of a youngster - much happiness in life and good health.

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A Female Study, Anna Bilińska (also known as Anna Bilińska - Bohdanowicz, 1854 – 1893), oil, 1884, Muzeum Narodowego w Warszawie.

T.I.S..

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Allegory of Growing Love. The (normal) olive tree and also the (symbolic) Toi-et-Moi Tree of Sant'Emiliano in Abbey (Abbazia) San Pietro, Bovara (Trevi), Italy.

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Appendix 3. Letter to the City Council of Trevia, la bella Italia.

1. Climate activism as a subject of Belgian State Security in 2025.

We've come to know the Belgian State Security intimately as a rather in-depth researcher on politics and WWII in Belgium. Before we comment on this, we'd like to add the following cautionary remark, so to speak. We have respect, admiration, and sympathy for concrete, politically responsible, and preferably efficiently executed resistance. This attitude, moreover, aligns quite strongly with our fairly long, or almost lifelong, fundamental attitude in our own lives - or rather, we try to live and think more or less consistently. As very good Belgians, we have a great deal of understanding and some knowledge of compromise, but always that "*but*." We indeed, and on the other hand, have no understanding whatsoever of political collaboration during WWII, nor elsewhere or before, such as by "*François I*" with the Ottomans and so on. The French were truly the European specialists in collaboration for (five) centuries, or even into WWII! But this way of thinking absolutely does not preclude the following criticism, although that is simply not done in woke times, and that is very clearly our experience. From the liberation of most of Belgium in early September 1944, the State Security Service proved to be a notorious bunch of idiots in their investigations into what they, and the same goes for the even bigger idiots of the Belgian military court who, above and especially below the surface, controlled them, called collaboration. With exceptions located mainly or exclusively among the (extreme) right and all Flemish-minded (we are neither), almost no one (we are among those no one, so the no one is not complete!) dares to proclaim this, in our view, very justified and undeniable truth. Moreover, we have been wondering for a decade how someone like Professor Bruno De Wé actually dared to officially nominate someone like us, whom he called a "*free thinker*" to our faces (if only it were public, in whatever form), as a doctoral student in modern history at his own university. That was Ghent University, or rather, our main alma mater (as far as we were concerned; we studied sociology and especially philosophy there and frequently worked as a student worker, often doing "*must-do*" work, and it was still Ghent State University back then), and it was even

officially approved - specifically as doctoral research in the most modern history, while we never earned any history degree. One can not find - or at least we can't - many free thinkers on the topic of "*politics and WWII in Belgium*". An exception long ago, because, notably, from immediately after the war was the now deceased and also recognized resistance fighter (in the Secret Army) journalist Louis De Lentdecker (1924-1999). And this must also be concluded and compared with the observation that, with the usual and appalling exceptions (certainly all Belgian employees of the German police services, the well-known ones, because those foreign police services were flooded with anonymous "*complaints*" from Belgians, either compatriots or collaborators), the globally or socially far more significant profiteering (the black market) during, and not to forget after, World War II was naturally swept under the rug of investigation and justice - a gigantic falsification of the history of the legal system of that same country, Belgium. Therefore, this Belgian State Security Service, immediately or from its inception, belonged to the top of the ranks of deceiving true democracy or was one of the underminers of truly "*sincere*" legal thinking. Whether this same Belgian State Security Service still, or again, and even globally, belongs to the top of the misleading security services; we dare but cannot say. Although we do have something to say in the affirmative about that.

Since this year (2025), the Belgian State Security Service has announced to the global press, thus to the esteemed public, or to all Belgian citizens, that it will be engaging with climate activists. Not to surround them with and more intensely encourage them, for example, with certain climate-beneficial achievements and knowledge of itself or of this State Security Service, such as... uh... and perhaps... uh2... But, as State Security should be, to screen, monitor, and possibly prosecute them through intermediaries. Fortunately, the latter is no longer possible through Belgian martial law, which apparently has been completely abolished for some time now, albeit a century too late. After all, among the category of people and worthy or less worthy compatriots of climate activists, some might dare to express themselves in an activist, even terrorist, manner! We suspect that this investigation or these checks will be limited solely to the territory of the Kingdom of Belgium. Unless? Be warned, Belgian civil servants traditionally can't be expected to show off, unless... Again, unless there's black money or, say, promotions and all sorts of other things involved. Or unless the Krauts, in WWII or even WWI, have had such profound conversations and intrigues with a string of Belgian women that at least half-Prussian children have been born from them; all for the state + immer durcharbeiten (always working hard) + niemal räsonieren (no reasoning whatsoever)! Unless, then, these new Belgian white-collar workers are going to follow all Belgians, wherever they are in the world, as potential climate activists!? That's not a crazy idea at all, because the world knows very well that many countries in this world follow their natives to all sorts of places beyond the borders of this native state. In particular, there are quite a few Blahblahblahers in Belgium with many children or a further generation of what one might call Blahblahblah descendants. Everyone knows that they are closely monitored by their home country. This happens in two ways. First, if they are very good at football and already or still young, they are screened and monitored by the Football Security Service of the country Blahblahblah and thus called upon to join the national team to defend the honor of Blahblahblah. And second, in principle and at all times, everyone with Blahblahblah ties is monitored by the 'regular' Security Service of the country Blahblahblah, which makes it one of the closest semi-demi-ultra-dictatorships to the EU, like the Soviet Union—pardon the fact that Russia is certainly an ultra. Whether that very ordinary and reportedly very effective Blahblahblah State Security also focuses partly on its own climate activists, we suspect, although generally speaking, the human and political, or more human, climate in that country is not exactly renowned. After all, a formal democracy, yet almost naked dictatorship, mainly

means: keep quiet and play football or have children, preferably future footballers, because girls are second-rate unless they produce footballers for the country.

The same Belgian State Security can always claim, without the slightest exaggeration and perhaps not too loudly or publicly, to be among the absolute top in the world, effectively when it comes to the announced monitoring of climate activists. After all, they can do this with great ease and with great precision, because just read on for the facts. All our lives we have been able to experience, either ourselves or through all kinds of literature and other sources, that the country of the Belgians loves chocolate, pralines, waffles, handball (now almost folklore, "*The times they are a-changin'*"), football, folkloric processions, Brussels sprouts, witlof (chicory + except for the children - who grow up to eat, among other things, Belgian witlof/chicory, not always from the open ground, by the way, because sometimes actually from 'water culture' which is immediately or simultaneously a curse on true Belgianism), Ghent mustard, fiddling ("*The times they are never a-changin'*") and black money (idem ditto). But those Belgians don't like trees: their leaves fall off every year (!) (how dare they!?), their roots break up the tiles that one wants to walk on unhindered and can quickly wipe away the dust with a mop, and so on, perhaps? In short, there are compelling folklore or socio-psychological reasons to make this claim in the Belgian country. Let us also consider, in all scientific honesty, that trees, whether small or large, most represent nature in general (you can't use grass as an example in that way, can you?) and thus fulfill an essential function in the local and broader climate. In other words, the majority of Belgians, or at least the majority of 'old/older' Belgians, are at least—or at least most?—anti-climate activists themselves or at home! Or do the incredibly numerous, or quantitatively very remarkable, new Belgians (who will one day become old/older Belgians) who have been present and remain there for decades (haha) love trees more? We're not aware of any research on this, so we have no results, but fortunately, there's the highly esteemed Meyrem Almaci (born 1976), who might be called a second-generation Belgian, or - everyone knows this - a Belgian compatriot of Turkish origin. She's a wonderful person, aka green politician, of whom we personally would like to see many more, or almost all, residents in this country on the North Sea; because she's looking forward to more trees and is strong and honest in public discourse.

We can say, from what we can safely call a very reliable source – a retired public prosecutor whom we've gotten to know relatively well because he was practically our biggest supporter of our project on politics and WWII – that climate activism has been followed for several decades in so-called higher, and certainly judicial, circles. To avoid any misunderstandings, we must emphasize that this doesn't mean that the judicial circles themselves are engaged in climate activism, for God's sake. We've certainly never seen a black robe with a white collar wandering around in the woods or garden, although we are absolutely certain that this would yield very valuable insights and products, such as excellent verdicts or judgments. A breath of fresh air certainly leads to fresh ink, something we unfortunately never dared to raise or question with our retired public prosecutor, who once told us bluntly: "*Stay out of that as much as possible, out of the court*!" Well, that's the third power, or one of the pillars of true democracy, and we were certainly 'once' - until we were twelve - true math geniuses: shouldn't we count on that? Unfortunately for that planned doctorate on politics and WWII, he would die before its completion. And unfortunately, we too also partly because we developed certain health problems, so he couldn't read anything definitive, and we didn't get a doctorate in history, even if we had survived a 'defense,' or earlier; if the doctoral committee had survived us, 'of course.' He knew quite well about our activities around roughly the year 2000, when we were quite active in the city of Ronse, in various areas of the res publica. He informed us (afterwards) about the potential interest of the public prosecutor's offices in the

judicial district of Oudenaarde, who, in his own experience, compiled all sorts of lists with 1) names + resp. 2) Activities: "*You'll probably be among them*." We understand this to mean that all the prosecution services in this country do this, a fact he must have helped organize himself in his then-current jurisdiction. This means with almost complete certainty that the local/regional security services, undoubtedly partly or more closely linked to State Security, have been busy tracking all, let's say, very moderate, albeit publicly outspoken, climate activists for probably six decades - or, coincidentally, since roughly the end (and probably even before) World War II.

Hadn't we, with our friend, the unfortunately deceased and worldwide birdwatcher Wim Jourquin, carried out an important, literally historic, albeit politically unaffiliated, action in 1999, around the "*De Fontein*" project movement in "*the Kloef*" neighborhood of Ronse, where ten hectares of land had been 'opened' near the city center, with a symbolic, and therefore politically relevant, tree-planting event attended by nearly a hundred enthusiasts? Wim had bought a linden tree, and it was then symbolically, though very concretely, planted as the first tree of the new city forest in 1999 plus x years, or in the hoped-for near future. This immediately received extensive press attention, and after a further letter to all the political parties in Ronse, the project for a central city park was included in the manifestos for the 2000 municipal elections by all of them, except the Socialists. They, very traditionally, only wanted social housing because of the tralalala. We would especially like to thank the perhaps crucial local politician, then-city council member, also CVP chairman, and a rather pathetic math teacher, Guy Heylens, who passed away in 2009 at the tender age of 60. We knew him well for a reason, and he personally assured us before the elections that although his own party had been wanting to build up that enormous space called "*De Kloef*" (more than 10 hectares a stone's throw from the Grote Markt!) for centuries, there would be a park, and thus much more greenery, and thus much better air, and thus ... After all, the man understood the ongoing, let's say, future workings of algorithms. Two other, so-called "*surviving*" CVP politicians would publicly carry that honor in a subsequent coalition, but it was the other way around; years before, as aldermen, they were solely focused on building up those 10 hectares, without any park, the city's only central park. One of them would immediately speak out publicly against our action! One of them, the same one from earlier, and a very clever man, a civil engineer, had sneered in his best Ronse dialect a few years earlier when the Flemish Community had actually classified a tree—in Ronse: "*Classifying a tree - pfffff*" (so in the otherwise wonderfully fine or juicy Ronse dialect). Because Ronse politicians are ordinary politicians, thus, in the usual lonely wolves, predominantly ... and ... people, 'naturally' later our linden tree - the first tree in the city park - was happily destroyed. As if they couldn't have left it standing, in what ultimately became a meager, too meager, far too meager, or literally too transparent copy of a park or even a city forest - read: especially a 'better' housing project, say, with the maximum number of houses/apartments next to, so to speak, the maximum, from a Belgian perspective, or normally, a rather bland forest, sorry, a piece of park. The result would be sold and remain in existence today and tomorrow under the telling, yet meaningless, title "*De Stadstuin*" ("*The City Garden*"); the public was actually allowed to choose this name through a public call. This ultimately definitive and partly regrettable development ties in wonderfully with what we previously mentioned about the so-called green municipality of Latem, next to Ghent. We repeat our sentences: "*Indeed, we know that for the average Fleming, ten trees and a blackberry bush already constitute a forest. But ultimately, the operational definition of open space for the average Fleming is a space where no very 'typical' farmhouse ("fermette") has yet been planted, naturally with a garden and a garage, now also with a swimming pool and whirlpool, and we don't even keep up with the developments of the last ten years or so because we don't feel like spatially fueled impressions*

and depressions." (SEE **Jenny Montigny**). Thus, one of those two Ronse political policymakers or socially partially destroyers of a genuine or crucial and exemplary, and therefore very spacious or very intensely green, city park or urban forest actually became honorary mayor, received a social honorary title for eternity, or at least for the rest of his life, while to us it seems more logically the opposite. Shortly after his political retirement, the man, speaking to the regional television station AVS, actually called it the most important political legacy of his equally political life. Well, not His idea, or long the opposite, not his decisive political approach, and certainly not the result that absolutely or truly should have been. A huge, improbably huge missed opportunity. This all means, very logically and equally tragically, that the Belgian State Security should only include in its record system that small number of Belgians—or those actively climate-loving—who would truly love a real or concrete, tangible tree and many more of them, and not the majority who worship bricks or concrete and plant some geraniums in their own garden next to the City Garden. And very quietly, albeit deafeningly, it says: "*green = NIMBY*" Oh, "*Not In My Public Backyard*." Incidentally, the headquarters of the Belgian State Security is located in Brussels across from a small park. When the staff get tired of analyzing, they can take a two-minute break there. In the meantime, however, they should first check whether there are any time bombs stuck under their benches. Because in modern Brussels ... That same State Security wouldn't have seen this kind of activist in time. And the world traveler cum bird watcher cum exemplary, beautiful human being in every human respect Wim Jourquin certainly never lay in wait in that park to spot birds.

2. The idea of allegory with its certain historical also eternal also renewed meaning.

The word and concept "*allegory*" may not sound all that familiar, even completely unfamiliar, to you, as a very modern, contemporary person. You're forgiven, but with near certainty, you've encountered not once, but several, perhaps even infinite, examples of allegorical representations, not only in the teaching school but in life at large. And that life, however vibrant and progressive it may be, is full of the sediments of culture whose sources long ago welled up, flowed, and irrigated - to this day and to the future. At a later point in our lives, we may well think we need to return more intensely to the phenomenon of allegory, more specifically to the question of whether virtually every theme, every subject realized verbally or figuratively, can effectively be recognized or interpreted as an allegory. Phew, that will certainly be difficult for us, or quite the opposite, because naturally, and fervently hoped for by everyone, there exists something like "*advancing insight*." That's an interesting prospect. And you know very well; les extrêmes se touchent.

But now, 'something'. Already. About allegory. We encounter allegory throughout our entire, and certainly not exclusively Western, culture, except in the pure forms of architecture. Although we do want to reserve the word "*perhaps*" for the architectural sector, and naturally, and as it were, millions of allegorical representations of all kinds are encountered occasionally in buildings that cannot be called allegorical in themselves. Allegorical representations have certainly been encountered for centuries, even millennia, in both literature and the visual arts, whether in abundance, in great numbers, in an enormous amount, or constantly. It is therefore only natural that we should joyfully thank these Wikipedia contributors for their contribution on this subject of allegory, for which we immediately quote/copy the descriptive section flawlessly, with our sincere thanks - and think of them and thank them:

"*As a literary device or artistic form, an allegory is a narrative or visual representation in which a character, place, or event can be interpreted to represent a*

meaning with moral or political significance. Authors have used allegory throughout history in all forms of art to illustrate or convey complex ideas and concepts in ways that are comprehensible or striking to its viewers, readers, or listeners.

Writers and speakers typically use allegories to convey (semi-) hidden or complex meanings through symbolic figures, actions, imagery, or events, which together create the moral, spiritual, or political meaning the author wishes to convey. Many allegories use personification of abstract concepts."

Source: **Allegory - Wikipedia**

Incidentally, like so many words from Western languages, the origin of this important cultural concept lies in Ancient Greek thought ("*ἀλληγορία*"), which, except for the usual idiomatic stamps, was adopted in these languages entirely analogously. Nor was it fused with another word from Ancient Greek - or from Latin, as in a hybrid form. Naturally, we would like to take the time to consider a more universal or anthropological approach to what this word represents throughout all times and all peoples. But, it is highly likely that its use through stories and images is an absolute, universal constant. Simply put, an allegory is used everywhere and at all times by the human being, because that human being always seems to have the tendency to express everything and in all sorts of ways, even in complex ways, and perhaps especially so. He and she and they and us have an extreme or profound need for allegory. Judging by the title of the "*work of art*" we discussed, this is clearly not a personification. For you perceive a non-human thing, a matter from nature outside of us; in this case, it's precisely about an olive tree. No, it's about a tree. No, about a Toi-...Tree! And here we go, or are we already doing so ... Moreover, we arrive at the Toi-et-Moi Tree from a completely different reality, because from something - at first, fundamental glance - completely material, which one can essentially claim doesn't even exist in itself, though it does - by or for humans. That human! Precisely for that reason, these material things undeniably have an extremely high social, say, financial, value. It's about the manufactured and enduring combination of metal and gemstone, two things that must first be found or "*seen*" and often, if not always, mined - that is, sought underground and extracted, almost always with great effort and constant danger. Metal and gemstone can fulfill various functions or possess value, as in the Toi-et-Moi ring, after at least intensive use/reuse (purifying, smelting, etc.) and relatively high human knowledge to create that one attractive, valuable, and significant ring. This ring can have multiple functions, but in interpersonal and social terms, its most beloved or sought-after function is the bond it represents between two people. However, we must certainly not forget the historical importance of a ring as a symbol of the strong bond between the wearer and their group or order, with something higher, such as a god. Didn't (most) nuns, the Christian women living in regular cohabitation, were wearing and still wear a ring as a sign of their connection with Christ? Be that as it may, we're stating the obvious: the ring, whether "*merely*" made of metal or additionally adorned with another metal, or perhaps with something much more attractive, one or more (two, hahaha) gemstones, represents a deep bond, and that means the desired, hoped-for, eternal human bond; engagement and "*more*" for the eternal love between man and woman! In this way, the profound human experience and the all-important value of love come into play, so that we can, may, or must speak of Love; Love, or, to put it mildly and tremulously: "*Love for all time*." We understand (...) of course that the historical and universal fact of the man-woman relationship encompasses this extremely important social component, both in organizing the survival of the minimal social structure in which such a couple finds itself and, consequently, in its reproduction, in having and raising children. We are not going to discuss that purely (?)

functional because survival aspect of Love/Love, although not absolutely not, but only in its most, let us say, pleasant, encouraging way; the romantically borne love/Love.

One can either utilize or completely ignore this tree, however one perceives and names it, observes it, and encounters it, using it as a metaphor for something like strength/Strength, viewing it as an allegory or a form of - call it a light opera about and for love/Love - applying it even - is it gradually the final step out of and toward this tree? - or, as it were, necessarily using and institutionalizing it for "*lighter*" veneration as both a place and an object. Apparently, we must think in distinct and intertwined ways, via a ring and a "*ditto*" tree and with regard to - Love. We must, in any case, point to a modern problem, or a problem with something like understanding, or especially misunderstanding, throughout modernity, a fact that we roughly situate from - 1900 (?) or roughly the time when an interesting French painter, formerly a banker, had to go to the endlessly distant and exotic island of Tahiti, to be able to breathe again and, above all, exhale again! We will try to return to this more seriously later, because it seems to us a cardinal problem of 20th-century art that so-called self-proclaimed artists insist on using their own, essentially non-communicative, iconography or visual language. Their "*own*" even almost entirely psychotic, visual language must be understood not only by their rejection of or lack of knowledge of "*traditional*" iconography, but also by simply confusing the need for originality with sheer arrogance, in addition to a lack of training in iconographic and technical knowledge/skills. Is the/a tree still present in the modern/current visual language or iconography of the modern/current artist, at least in the West? If so, the question is how, because as a component or part of what one might call background; that's a bonus, so to speak, but ultimately just filler. Although for highly reasoned Western artists, that's already a lot - compared to something apparently so natural, so self-evidently present, yet utterly meaningless as a/the tree. In Western culture, the tree as a symbol, even as part of a cult, has perhaps largely, though certainly not entirely, disappeared. Consider the continued, powerful presence of the Judeo-Christian "*Tree of Life*". There is that well-known, deep tradition among the Celts, among the founding fathers of Europe, where in countless cases trees were worshipped or held specific cultic significance. Justice was administered under quite a few important trees, an ancient tradition that may well be revived given the unimaginably stale nature of much of the contemporary Belgian legal system. In quite a few cases, the cults were later adopted by Christianity; an important Celtic tree was adorned with a simple statue of the Virgin Mary in early Christianity, later a modest chapel was erected around it, and ...! You see the evolution unfolding before your very eyes. That's a very beautiful, historically demonstrable case of syncretism. In a humorous and likely enduring way, this centuries-old knowledge is, as it were, perfectly passed down by the legendary comic series "*Asterix*"; this certainly doesn't require any explanation. Furthermore, the Asterix comic series also adequately indicates the cultural importance of the tree at the time; one could easily distill a single applied comic strip from that. A tree as the subject of a metaphor or an allegory; okay, historically that's perfectly justifiable. And/but what does that accomplish NOW in THESE times, also so that it retains its power in future times, and even so that it unlocks a power of interpretation for the past times, of the remark "*Oh yes, that too*!"? Why not first depict such a tree in a more ordinary or intellectually simple way, say, more or less as a reasonably normal representation, emblem, or stencil printed on T-shirts? Why not simply depict a tree as something else, but rather as a symbol in itself? A symbol for what, and what symbol to represent it through? A symbol of a tree that represents = ??? Any tree is usually large, colossal, but in quite a few cases it is still movable, though certainly no different than in open spaces; from a forest, for example, to the garden or private park of that very wealthy person who can and wants to afford such a gigantic transport. We find that idea appalling and, fortunately, can count the photos of such tree transports on our hands.

Sometimes, of course, this can be justified for very pragmatic and social reasons. But. The Japanese: they have lived in very small or cramped spaces for centuries. And for just as many centuries, they have loved trees. So they invented something like the bonsai, real miniature trees that are therefore manipulable: they can be placed, for example, at a window or inside a house. But that, too, is just a cast of the real tree: a miniature tree that is supposed to represent a real, say, large tree, well. We certainly don't like it at all; is the tree 'pure', or is the tree as a metaphor or allegory?

Here, in this study on the theme of "*Most Attractive Women in History*" we essentially present the image of a tree as a metaphor, as an allegory or a multi-layered metaphor for the fairly universally valued value of love. That love is something expansive, something lively, or a double, mutual love. There is a form of movement in it that, indeed, also occurs in a tree, something at first glance merely static. The movement of this tree - this olive tree in Bovara, Italy - also transcends itself, moving as an example for similar trees you can encounter yourself. Just look, you will see what you see, for there is more olive tree, pardon Toi-et-Moi Tree, in your world than you thought. Naturally, this one - or the other one, which you naturally choose - serves as a brilliant and charming, broader image of that infinitely important quality of life, that (human) love. Human, too human? Human, of course, while that 'further' excludes nothing at all if we, to put it mildly, don't want to consider ourselves modern at all, given the rather extreme a- and anti-religious thinking prevalent in the West. We must emphasize, however, that this text about this olive tree, a Toi-et-Moi Tree, carries no theological references or associations. Whoever wishes to add that to or add to it later; that is, after all, the freedom of thought. Once released, as now on the worldwide web, they are free like birds to fly, land, and lay their eggs.

Here, in this study, actually exploring the theme of "*Most Attractive Women in History*" we're discussing what we should discuss: a tree, an olive tree, in the context of love - love, that is, to or around a woman, whom we find - or make - extremely attractive. What? Are we almost completely out of our minds now, because we can't be completely crazy yet, since there's nothing left for us to think of and share through this medium. A tree, for goodness sake, in connection with love - from a man to a woman!? Yet, yet, yet once more. Because, or rather, logic follows. Compare that with something you've probably given dozens of times in your own life, or will give, or received, and will receive: flowers! Aha! In this case, it's probably mainly or exclusively about cut, commercially produced flowers. Or, sometimes; by a child's hand (we've seen this a few more times, or experienced it wonderfully spontaneously, like that one time when little Miłosz decided to pick Easter lilies from the garden and then gave them to the Belgian queen on a visit to our town; a photo that immediately appeared in all the newspapers!), or picked wild flowers (and no, it certainly wasn't in a neighbor's 'field' or garden, which would have been an act of pure theft – shame on you, stealing flowers at a young age leads to ... later in life!). You're probably familiar with the obviously commercially invented expression: "*Say it with flowers*" So, say 'it' with what, exactly? We've certainly never seen the expression: "*Say it with trees*" – hahaha. The comparative logic is clear, however; you give something beautiful and natural. Admittedly, with the small difference that the dimensions differ in quantity. But ...? Especially in duration or lifespan! Aha. Incidentally, we must insert this interlude, because it's necessary and businesslike. We know of several European countries where people have much less capital, say, monthly, precious cash, and live mainly in blocks of flats, even in smaller cities. They can barely afford real flowers, if at all. And so, they feel socially/personally obligated to buy plastic flowers - to give on certain days! Now imagine the previous comparison further: plastic trees - and that giving! But. Of course, that also happens mainly or exclusively at Christmas. And there, with this undeniably

important annual holiday, despite all modernity, we consider the use of a plastic tree (the combination alone!) to be perfectly justified, for several reasons.

Once again, and now finally in conclusion. How can a tree, and even this specific tree alone, represent something else, something human and socially 'higher', a value, a valuable thought, say, an ideal (how that word always sounds like an ... ideal!)?! It can. It can be communicated perfectly, or that tree of Bovara - that (first) Toi-et-Moi Tree - can truly communicate or move through words and, not to forget, through images. Just see our appendix at the end of the full text, where we propose a letter we addressed to the city council of Trevi, Italy, where this simple (sic) olive tree, now called the Toi-et-Moi Tree, is located. Naturally, we are not advocating for this place to be promoted as a place of pilgrimage. But let us say, as we express in this letter, as an appendix to the full text, in which we naturally communicate the same thing at a somewhat longer length, the silent wish and that still silent, if somewhat playful, appeal to effectively give this kind of unique ring to Her/Toi through Him/Moi here - as a sign of ... You-know-what, as a concrete, or even doubly concrete, because both THERE and to HER-THERE a sign of the eternal "*L'Amore*" of "*Growing Love*" This complexity to be experienced, which there in Bovara or at? or at? and also at! is not just happening yet, but is itself a kind of resultant of a development toward 'more' and therefore both marks it and provides a super-important platform for further growth - this existential complexity or multifacetedness, in our view, justifies the use of the term allegory for it. This led us to the title of the discussion of this 'work of art': "*Allegory of Growing Love. The (normal) olive tree and also the (symbolic) Toi-et-Moi Tree of Sant'Emiliano in Abbey (Abbazia) San Pietro, Bovara (Trevi), Italy*."

This olive tree has been a tourist attraction for some time now; it may even be more or less, and in a rather charming way, 'protected'. How can this wave of interest continue to grow, even in a visit or in a softly modern cultic use, as it were? This olive tree of Bovara, becoming the Toi-et-Moi Tree of the Umbria region, even of all of la bella Italia! Or even of Europe? And in any case, a beacon in itself, to learn to observe its brothers and sisters elsewhere and everywhere, to 'use' them in turn - just that one time - as their own relational, and therefore also social, orientation point; a clearly specific, yet important, starting point and a point to which one can return on all sorts of occasions, as it were, to recharge. That too can be a certain tree, a source - a re-source.

3. The Toi-et-Moi ring as a stepping stone to the Toi-et-Moi Tree, the tree of Growing Love.

The Toi-et-Moi ring, of course, didn't originate in a volcanic eruption, when, after their flight, that one cunning person returned somewhat faster than his other villagers to search and rummage through the many smaller fragments of lava. Wasn't there something shining among them, something of precious value, something invaluable, something in this superior case of combined or double value; a Toi-et-Moi fragment!? No, not at all. While we use this ring to jump seamlessly and hopefully timelessly from there to those almost most noble creations of nature - the trees, and the most noble creations of nature are the birds, and what would they be without the trees anyway? - we are absolutely certain that you will never find two identical stones in nature. Excuse me, you say? Are you now thinking of marble and other precious stones, millions of which you've inadvertently seen, perfectly identical pieces, usually in fantastic buildings where, as if by some pleasant miracle, a few flakes have detached here and there, creating a slight variation? That's a correct observation, because all these stones were, of course, made as perfectly similar as possible by human hands, later by machines - from

drawn models cut in quarries. And you can count yourself lucky, because in current architecture (2025), all these types of stones are rarely, if ever, used, except for the overly flashy interior finishes. Or perhaps another one of those sick, in this case, schizophrenic, excesses of so-called new, and therefore 'better,' technology—and please don't call us conservative, because; tene quod bene! But let's not elaborate, as usual, though we may do so indirectly, or in other words, always think as much as possible in parallels or analogies and use their conclusions or applications. We don't know the first, and immediately historical, dating of the Toi-et-Moi ring, because we certainly weren't there - once again, how human history is the somewhat personal account of many, almost all, interesting moments that the curious person wasn't present for. Perhaps we'll one day encounter a solid history book, not so much about jewelry art, because that obviously exists, even on a universal level, but about this wondrous, poetic, and oh-so-romantic element of the Toi-et-Moi ring. The Toi-et-Moi ring certainly couldn't have originated with the very creation of the "*ring*" phenomenon, purely logically and mechanically speaking. In any case, soon after the ring's discovery, some wealthy and therefore powerful lady - more specifically, or more proactively, the wife of a wealthy and powerful man - must have become somewhat bored with 'just' one ring on her one finger, then bored with multiple rings on her undoubtedly multiple fingers, then even bored with multiple rings on the same finger, until it became too much for her and her husband; the ring with a single gemstone was born! It happened that easily, and then it was quite logical, literally just one step, to change the position of that first ring, naturally simply in the center of the ring, at least when the ring is ... slid on (hahaha), in an interesting metaphysical way, more precisely, multiply - or divide? For such a rich and powerful man, one stone more or less and best more did not matter. Especially if his wife was a terribly hot woman in bed, like a certain Joséphine La Belle a few millennia or centuries later, such an extra ring brought some extra fucking and some extra moans: "*Baiser vaut bien une bague*".

This previous collection of words was nothing more than the very clear history of the Toi-et-Moi ring, where at a certain point, a fairly global increase in value within society led to something like true romance emerging as a motive to give this special ring to Toi or Her, from "*L'Etat-c'est-Moi*" or Him. Simply type "*bague + Toi-et-Moi*" into your venerable search engine, and you'll find all sorts of more or less similar, albeit slightly more embellished, stories originating from - what else did we expect? - fashion houses, often of French origin. You'll find the same information, somewhat less obtrusively, more subtly (the owners are probably the same again), in a special edition of very flashy, ultimately silly, and very internationally oriented monthly fashion magazines like "*Cosmopolitan, Since 1965, The Women's Magazine for Fashion, Sex ...*". These magazines are meant for the wealthier and, more importantly, somewhat bored woman to browse through when she's been sitting at the hairdresser's for a few hours and, for a few moments, tired of all the chatter, or rather, gossip, wants to start masturbating with that one ring-free finger—but can only do so with her eyes. But don't be distracted by these stories and believe in the Toi-et-Moi ring yourself, even if you either don't have enough money to buy one or simply have much, much more love for ... trees. Then buy one, or better yet, just plant 'something' like the Toi-et-Moi Tree! And don't believe a word of the global belief system that "*Diamonds are a girl's best friend*." No, your tree (hee hee hee) is ultimately her very best friend, because she can play with it just as any Moi, and of course also as his Toi.

Perhaps you once gave a Toi-et-Moi ring to a very dear lady, and she still wears it on that one - therefore almost - most important finger!? Because that seems to be the most important movement or meaning of this ring: it goes from Moi (Me) to Toi (You). Or Toi is the most important! Yes, and a little less "*Yes*"! Traditionally, it is the man who gives to the woman.

We apologize, but all sorts of other variations are lost on us here, as men and a certain traditional macho; we wish you all the best, and in our view, everything discussed here applies, mutatis mutandis, to the whole of humanity, growing very sincerely and full of love. From Moi (Me) to her, or to the addressed, the adored, the given, as Toi (You). Thus, the interaction or act of giving is purely from him to her, and the symbolism, through the appropriate naming, is also from her to him. The Toi-et-Moi ring is entirely dual in relational meaning, but is traditionally only worn literally by her (Toi) because it was first given by him (Moi). That literal wearing is symbolically a double wearing - you understand? Also understand that the purely linguistically theoretical variant "*Moi-et-Moi*", let alone the barely theoretically conceivable variant "*Toi-et-Toi*", would simply come across as silly or ridiculous, as a form of damned double egoism and devoid of the slightest romance, as if it were about a more or purely material connection. Of course, everyone understands this symbolism and that the romance and love are completely mutual. We obviously don't know of any distinct social contexts in which this Toi-et-Moi ring is used, so we don't know what is symbolically being compensated by the woman for the man. Does she give him a gold ... or a silver ... - besides a bit of more attentive sex, of course? It can't possibly be of the same nominal value. But as we've already said, de facto, only she wears this ring, but de jure, pardon de amore, both wear this (single) ring with (double) gemstones. We suspect this kind of arithmetic may have been applied when a certain Jesus of N. began multiplying a few meager loaves of bread and fish to a fairly massive size, a Nous-et-Moi? But even though we don't know the Toi-et-Moi ring outside of Western, and therefore in any case deeply Christian, thought, we don't at all rule out its significance for areas where other worldviews prevail, even dominate.

Indeed, the Toi-et-Moi ring possesses some, say, significant, measurable value. It naturally consists of a precious metal (gold or silver) as its holder and therefore already has a specific value. Remember, gold is worth its weight in gold. SEE: **Gust De Smet**. Moreover, it carries a gemstone; no, this specific ring carries two gemstones. And these two gemstones have an identical appearance, consisting of the same precious stone and having a completely identical appearance or being cut like two completely identical twins. In this way, the wearer of the Toi-et-Moi ring - and that is, of course, always the Toi or her - symbolically carries both her and him as equals or complete equals within the whole of their unique relationship. This combination of gemstones on one ring is symbolically somewhat more powerful than the ring, nevertheless, blessed by marriage (possibly doubly, legally, and in church), because while it is identical in principle, it exists twice and is therefore worn twice separately. Of course, the Toi-et-Moi ring doesn't carry a blessing from any 'higher' authority (the actual government or even a religious institution), but the blessing lies in displaying this symbolism; anyone who sees this type of ring knows "*it*" and can therefore implicitly bless the bond it demonstrates. For this reason, we are reasonably certain that, anthropologically or universally speaking, there must be cultures outside this Western tradition in which this kind of Toi-et-Moi bond exists, and is possibly also established through long-established social rites, perhaps even completely replacing something like the wedding ring?

We've (till now) never owned (...), given or encountered the Toi-et-Moi ring, for example, from a close family member, nor from couples we knew very well and for a long time, who certainly had a wonderful married life. It's entirely possible that we were simply too oblivious, or that, for example, a widow like our grandmother no longer wanted to wear this type of ring for understandable reasons, as an additional sign of mourning. Incidentally, who in Belgium and other neighboring, so-called modernized countries still dares to wear outward signs of mourning, as we certainly did as children in the 1970s - or were forced to do so? That last

nuance doesn't really make any difference. The command to wear signs of mourning came from the elders or from the family; it was just the way it was. Well, in present Europe, we only see these signs of mourning on widows in Central European countries like Hungary and Slovakia, and probably the same culture also exists in neighboring countries; is this progress? In any case, there's plenty of work to be done on this subject for young anthropologists in countries like Belgium, not only around those last apparently vanished outward signs of mourning, but (especially now) around the wearing of that famous Toi-et-Moi ring. Hopefully, very hopefully, the wearers of this unique ring, now widows, haven't removed a single stone from it upon the death of Him or their spouse—as a sign of ... How did we learn about this ring then? In our neurologically better times, we could sit still and be attentive as long as we wanted, or we could spend hours like that at auctions, waiting for that one item that interested us. It wasn't that we were wandering around the Flemish and Brussels auctions, but we believe we've seen and heard the Toi-et-Moi ring pop up in a few places in Flanders. We were instantly won over by this type of ring; you can imagine it just by reading this! Purely heuristically, it's a small, almost self-made, step for us to see Toi-et-Moi as a schema in nature, specifically with—trees! At those aforementioned auctions, we were either certainly present or lurking in the shadows for the most reasonable purchase, for something completely different than rings, and certainly not for the potential acquisition of bonsai, of which we, in turn, have seen several horrific versions—in jade, sir and madam. A tree, a miniature tree in gemstone, or whatever passes for it. Cheap Chinese junk it must have been. And to say that we are almost certain to have encountered poems at some point in the fantastic classical Chinese poetry, kindly translated into Dutch or English for us and you, that may not worship trees but nevertheless glorify them somewhere, if not even associate them with something like love, including its carnal variant, or something else throughout the rich Chinese tradition of erotic imagery, at least before the time of their historically dated communism. In a next edition of this text we hope to offer you such a text, although we are already doing our best as a conclusion, in the epilogue. Did you know, by the way, that Dutch is probably the only European language in which all and absolutely all the poetry of the famous Chinese poet Bai Juyi (also Bo Juyi or Po Chü-i; Chinese: 白居易, Mandarin pinyin Bǎi Jūyì; 772–846), has been translated and of course everything has been published together in a beautiful, nice and thick book: Bai Juyi, *Poems and Prose*. Selected, translated and annotated by W.L. Idema. 2001. Publisher Atlas. Translator, lecturer and of course sinologist Wilt Lukas Idema (1944) should receive a form of Chinese Nobel Prize for that alone, although the man is active in a much broader field so more prizes will follow!

SEE: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bai_Juyi

In that sense, and we will conclude this digression, which also serves as an introduction, we urge all dedicated publishers worldwide to compile anthologies from their world literature poetry sections, on the theme "*singing trees for the sake of* ...". They already have one buyer—though not for all editions at once, unless they are discounted or payable in installments.

We'd like to add that in recent years we've encountered more of this kind of attractive Toi-et-Moi Tree than this pictured Italian olive tree. We also see no danger in these remarks for the far too many tree haters among the esteemed public, who might/possibly/hopefully be convinced by this unique and almost intoxicating tree of many a human sense—of the importance of "*tree*" itself. Now, something a bit more scientific! A Toi-et-Moi Tree has generally - hahaha - the following appearance or traits:

a) Or there is one purely physically distinguishable individual tree that branches (on its own) just above the ground. Of course, this branching can even occur at the bottom in various or multiple ways, and we will not list the tree species that have four, five, or even more quasi-direct separate trees branching off from the bottom of their trunks, like ever-busy families. The root shoot (another great word) for the Toi-et-Moi Tree is by definition limited to two shoots or branches, or, if you will, the nearest near-trees in this location. Indeed, we will not go any further with trios, ménage-à-trois, or figure-it-out-yourself—you understand and accept the rationale;

b) Or the situation is even simpler, and two trees grow very simply, yet visually and, of course, symbolically powerfully, neatly side by side. We don't need to operationalize or quantify that "*side by side*." This dual and connected presence occurs at a distance, so to speak, clearly identifiable to every eye and heart, as identifiable proximity, as connectedness. Of course, it doesn't form a forest itself ...

We hope we're not going to mobilize any woke activists of all kinds here, but we opt for trees of the same species. That's self-evident anyway, as long as they branch just above the ground, as if they were two trees. On the other hand, we readily admit to being quite charmed by larger trees in all sorts of shapes, especially those that can provide some ground in a relatively horizontal position, where a seed from another tree has landed, perhaps via some bird or simply the wind, and can manifest as something tree-like. Usually, this isn't too significant in terms of size and probably lifespan, and we wonder, by the way, if botany has a name for it. Besides, in our opinion, the Toi-et-Moi Tree doesn't (yet) exist - scientifically speaking!? A Toi-et-Moi Tree is by definition two trees that are very close together. They can be so close that they are intertwined. We clarify, although we admit that purists among you may disagree. You look down where every tree begins, according to the general laws of metaphysics, unless you've realized the science fiction in your life and money grows on your back, and you can make the trees around you grow downward. You see a slightly thicker than normal trunk of a tree. You look up, or through the normal path of a tree. And you might simply see a slightly thicker or simply thicker tree. But perhaps you see, indeed notice—we won't specify a measurement in centimeters - quickly a serious and beautiful branching or two almost independent trunks that have developed, as it were, as two individual trees: that's a true Toi-et-Moi Tree. The second variant is the same, but naturally with a perfectly independent trunk - that is, with an independent root shoot or from independent roots—but just as naturally at a very, very close distance or extremely close to the other tree. We simply call that other tree "*the other*" because, in a very metaphysically lasting way, according to the human laws of vision, you can only see one tree at once, albeit a duality. From a later moment on, we see "*trees*" and then something like "*forest*" a small, larger ... of trees. In this second case, we observed this duality while, rather ironically, the trunks here climbed upward, as it were, moving away from each other. You will see that it is not uncommon for the Toi-et-Moi Tree to be narrow at the base but develop into a V-shape; beautiful, isn't it? Of course, everything has to do with the situation or the presence of the foundational elements: the soil (which can hardly be anything but completely similar), the air (ditto), and the sun. The latter is, of course, completely identical except for the specification that the leaves of both trees, or of both branches as trees, each desire maximum light, or nourishment, which is why that V-shape can almost always be found. Beautiful, isn't it? Indeed, in truly deep forests, and certainly not at the edges, trees have to fight high to capture the sunlight with their leaves. In this way, there are, as it were, countless trees growing very close together and often of very different species. Allow us, as we allow you to deviate from this, not to speak of a Toi-et-Moi Tree in such cases (...).

In all cases, whether it's a single 'pure' tree bearing two trunks shortly after they become visible in the sky and, of course, in your eye, or whether it's two trees very close together, or adjacent or parallel, in both cases the roots are either completely the same or nearly identical, intertwined in the most intimate way possible. Isn't there an enormously, as it were, insanely beautiful or important metaphor in this, (almost) sufficient in itself to illustrate the importance of the Toi-et-Moi Tree!? Roots, by the way, have that unique quality that you not only know they are the literal foundation of every tree - say, of any relationship, such as yours - but that, with few exceptions, they are invisible and continue to develop. Beautiful or charming, isn't it? A unity whose foundations you can barely see! You can see that same romance a little further up; branches intertwine, protecting each other from a somewhat too-intense sun, leaves that ... - and the eternal and so on; just look. If it's a double tree of the exact same species, the flowers will attract the same bees. Or better yet, if they're from a different species, these bees actually return to the same one, because they're two trees! Some Toi-et-Moi trees even become evergreen; just imagine the species! However, we might suggest a comment and a restriction here: please never combine a deciduous tree with a conifer if you're trying to create a Toi-et-Moi tree yourself (at your engagement, or at/with ...; do it!). Personally we literally can't stand that combination, and you'll undoubtedly understand why. We love the time- and effective movement of a deciduous tree anyway. That enormous extra movement, also in colors. That literally eternal life, because leaves, flowers, and insects and other kinds of life come and go with every season; what more is there to pure life? And silly or funny; everything grows upwards and outwards and certainly never downwards or into the ground. Although, how can the beauty of a weeping willow be matched, given all the shade it provides? Every tree, and even the Toi-et-Moi Tree, is no exception; it seeks the sun, seeking The Light every day. Or for the Italians who are said to be very fond of romance, or at least of "*L'Amore*" and have created a surprising number of immortal operas about love: La Luce! There is no tree that grows straight, perfectly straight. But there is not a tree in the entire world that doesn't - grow! We have all been familiar for centuries with "*everything flows*" from the famous Old Greek saying "*πάντα ῥεῖ*." Now with a slight variation like "*everything grows*"!? And we no longer need that Ancient Greek. Hence the tautological title of our discussion: "*Allegory of Growing Love*." Everyone knows the immensely pleasant but ultimately oh so superficial and inherently somehow treacherous nature of falling in love, a fleeting feeling that by definition is not the foundation for a solid relationship. Or perhaps the beginning, the planting of the seed or the first ... spurt of growth? That's when it really begins, the inseparable and yet constantly surprising growth. That growth grows or continues—and so on. While the Toi-et-Moi Tree, in purely analytical terms, consists in one case of two interconnected tree trunks, and in the other of two other trees in close proximity, through the synthetic lens of being seen as such as a couple or a unity, there is also no beginning or end between these tree trunks/trees. More specifically, or decisively, there is no order or "*higher-lower*" relationship between what one might call the components of the two-unity. The phenomenon of a tree is necessarily subject to all sorts of metaphysical and biological laws, such as rain that always falls on one side and then on the other, or those stupid animals that prefer to shit on one side (a self-reinforcing phenomenon, of course). This causes that one side to evolve more or less. In short, just as there is never a single tree in the world that grows perfectly straight, there is no Toi-et-Moi Tree that grows as two equal sides or something like that, or grows perfectly together. Have you ever seen this kind of metric similarity and perfection in a human couple?

In any case, something like the expansion of dimensions and the colors of evolution, even the attraction of those insects and birds to slightly different ones, is phenomenally determined. It

goes without saying that two species of trees, no matter how closely intertwined, will evolve remarkably differently. It's even possible - the astute observer sometimes sees it happen - that one completely different species begins to grow from a completely different tree, because its seed has found the opportunity to germinate somewhere in a bit of "*cultivation soil*." That, in itself, is quite self-evidently spectacular, but due to the essential dimensional disparity, it cannot possibly be called a Toi-et-Moi Tree with any seriousness, even ironically. Because we ourselves have a fair amount of intimate interest in women from, let's say, other cultures (we believe Belgian-Moroccan women are among the most intriguing women in the world; very good in bed, though we obviously couldn't have judged them all live, usually well-educated and with a good tongue, and after their studies building interesting careers or contributing to society, attractive and the very familiar and never-to-be-estimated "*and so on*"), we are conditioned to leave open the question of whether two different kinds of trees also qualify as a Toi-et-Moi Tree. There are quite a few "*true*" racists around the world - until they get into bed with/lie with such a person of the so-called other and especially inferior race - who might raise objections on this point. But the answer can only be: plant and give it time! Try it out or (s)experiment! And enjoy it! Let's just say, a thousand pardons, smell two kinds of scents together or one after the other; Our bee friends couldn't be more affectionate toward a tree than to a Toi-et-Moi Tree. In the same place, in the same setting, blooming and smelling for a consecutive period! Or imagine this kind of symbiosis developing, where the two formally distinct species of trees, the Toi-et-Moi Tree, produce a blended scent. Imagine: a shared perfume: for both man and woman.

Uh... So, very much so. In those auctions where we've seen a Toi-et-Moi ring a few times, we certainly didn't examine or purchase it. We're not exactly jewelry enthusiasts, although we've sometimes considered interesting for special gifts. That's personal, or otherwise, of no consequence. Since these rings, among others, ended up at auction houses, they clearly didn't remain in the private or personal sphere. This could essentially point to four motives: 1) they didn't have enough money and wanted to use this method to hopefully maximize their profits, and in doing so, they apparently didn't have any moral reservations about the true and universally understood meaning of such a ring; 2) it's an heirloom and... no moral...; 3) the ring was stolen and... no moral...; 4) the woman in question is involved in a legal separation and the ring(s) and may therefore need money and, above all, has very serious moral reservations. If you do buy a Toi-et-Moi ring at an auction house or anywhere else where it's clearly an older, and therefore used, piece, there's bound to be a story behind it. That story could be negative or very dramatic, although any traces of blood will likely have long since been cleaned up. Of course, that story could also be very beautiful, and it may have ended up where you encounter it, thanks to unsuspecting or even incompetent heirs (which is more common than you think), where it's waiting for you, albeit unconsciously, because it hasn't been communicated to you, but has actually been warmed up by every enthusiast! Knowing these experiences makes buying an existing, older Toi-et-Moi ring literally a gamble. What are you saying? Are you making a specific objection and gesturing with a shrug? Are you even laughing, which isn't easy to do simultaneously with a shrug!? As children, we once saw a fascinating Dutch youth series about a kris, which had a name that was also the name of the TV series, "*De Kris Pusaka*".

SEE: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/De_Kris_Pusaka

A kris is a large, asymmetrical dagger, found not only but mainly in Indonesia and there or more precisely in (Central) Java.

SEE: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kris

To give some idea of the meaning of this seemingly ordinary weapon to the uninitiated, we quote from this latter website, which, by the way, is remarkably successful in terms of information and imagery: "*Both a weapon and a spiritual object, kris are often considered to have an essence or presence, considered to possess magical powers, with some blades possessing good luck and others possessing bad*." This is not something to laugh at too lightly for the thoroughly skeptical, because just read the magical, compelling, and downright astonishing book of pure world literature by the very unique Dutch writer Louis Couperus (1863-1923), "*De Stille Kracht*" (1900 + also, and of course, very rightly, published in English, under the, in our opinion, not entirely successful title "*The Hidden Force*."

SEE: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Hidden_Force

That "*Kris Pusaka*" seemed to cause a lot of trouble among those who found it interesting, but underestimated its magical properties, primarily or exclusively negative effects, or even intentions (...) for any illegitimate owner, i.e., anyone who wasn't the original or rightful owner of this kris. Could the same thing happen with such a Toi-et-Moi ring? We quickly called Skepp, the Belgian association with the clever abbreviation of its monstrous name "*Study Circle for Critical Evaluation of Pseudoscience and the Paranormal*" - which, by its very name, seems more like a paranormal organization. SEE: https://skepp.be/

The person who answered his smartphone - a man, or was it a woman, with a distorted, deepened voice, or was it a voice machine to avoid all confusion like the one just described - since this organization is naturally skeptical in all respects, and therefore better at prevention than cure - this human voice immediately bursted into laughter after barely finishing our - admittedly quite long - sentence, containing the problem just described to you. We certainly understood his (or her?) answer was that one can safely continue to wear such a "*Toi-et-Moi*" ring, purchased at auction or anywhere else, even if it has dirt stains that might contain sweat and even ... You undoubtedly have a very positive attitude and believe in the theory of probability, and that such a ring, like all the endless junk you buy secondhand, cannot inherit any negative traits whatsoever. Moreover, besides your ecological motives for reuse, you are enthusiastically open to all the beauty with which this object - like countless others offered for sale for a specific human use - can be associated. Dreams may be called deceptive by some, but they happen to everyone every day and therefore have a scientific function of the highest order. Therefore, we wish you the very best of daydreams when purchasing, perhaps gifting (to her), and wearing a Toi-et-Moi ring you bought secondhand, anywhere in the world.

That, in any case, is the unique difference between a Toi-et-Moi ring and its correlate, the Toi-et-Moi Tree. The latter changes because it grows constantly in ways that are sometimes not very obvious, let alone spectacular, to the average, relatively unobservant human eye. If every tree, and therefore also the Toi-et-Moi Tree, is a fully evolved plant being, then metaphysically speaking, no additional, single, moving evolution is possible. The only, and even fervently hoped-for, moving movement of the Toi-et-Moi Tree occurs through the eternally sociable birds that come to land and nest there, perhaps even making an annual nest there while being migratory. Beautiful, isn't it, this extra planetary, or as it were, cosmic, bond for this very primal, symbolic tree. At the same time, this is completely untrue, not only for the die-hard biologists among you. This Toi-et-Moi Tree moves, just like any other tree, in some extraordinary ways. The air is purified by it, and of course, it doesn't just linger around this tree; the leaves fall and defile, being partly dispersed by the wind. Insects that pass by

leave again ... And so on - that "*continue*" is the fodder of these die-hard biologists. Incidentally, we know of no, absolutely no, negative effects whatsoever from such a Toi-et-Moi Tree, which, as is well known, can be somewhat ambiguous if you start looking at the trunk from the bottom and identify it, and indeed notice two trees growing side by side. Yes, housewives here and there will say that the leaves fall off and that they need to be cleared away - because their beautiful tiles or pebbles become dirty, which will eventually cause more greenery to develop there, forcing them to clean more in the same, and even longer, time; and that was certainly not the intention behind the installation of those tiles or pebbles - quite the opposite! We experienced this ourselves once and were deeply saddened each time - amen. If you love movement, movement itself, going from here to there, seeing 'things' and, of course, capturing them, and more than naturally sharing them directly via ... media, if you've been doing all of that for years, for a couple of decades or so, and probably, according to your suspicion and even full expectation, will (want to?) be doing it for the entire next part of your life, then! Then you think: standing still at a tree, even if it's a Toi-et-Moi Tree? It's still a tree. That's something unmoving - steady standing, static. Uh ... May we ask you something, please? Have you by any chance heard of the acronym "*LAT*" or "*L.A.T.*"? It means "*Living Apart Together*." The somewhat (?) strange thing is that the kind of contrast, or rather its better complement or fulfillment, the "*LT.T.*" or "*LTT*," or "*Living Together Together*," doesn't seem to exist. As a word, anyway. But it certainly does exist in reality, as in the ... abbey of Bovara; Oh, those Italians, if they didn't exist, they'd have to be invented - with all their inventions! It's no wonder the greatest or most diverse inventor of all time was Italian, and we dare to suspect that somewhere in the many, mostly lost, manuscripts of the multi-phenomenon Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519), the concept of the Toi-et-Moi Tree and Ring already existed, drawn and further explored, but unfortunately, apparently couldn't be realized in his own lifetime. This is understandable, because if Isaac Newton (1643–1727) had been dropped an apple on his head every day, he wouldn't have had a head anymore, but an apple instead.

4. A man makes a child, plants a tree. And the woman or the couple? Indeed, a tree for each child!

Just very concretely, and also for all you tourists from many, sometimes very distant countries, as well as for the residents living nearby. Because now we go to our normal olive tree, which from now on is also the symbolic, even emblematic, Toi et Moi Tree. And that is the already famous tree of Sant'Emiliano in the Abbey (Abbazia) of San Pietro, in the Bovara district of the Italian city of Trevi. One sees its special form of duality and, not to forget, its very high, as it were, infinite or never-ending, eternal lifespan. If that isn't a combination that automatically made it famous! Because the following is the most important, or the common motif. After all, and you know this through all sorts of wonderfully romantic Italian films, not to mention collections of songs also called operas; the Italians are simply mad about beauty. And preferably in tandem with that, they are mad about love, in love with love. So, naturally, or by the very nature of this people, this tree became something exceptionally romantic. But they forgot to name this tree as such; an olive tree... Indeed, that's how it's also recognized, so to speak, but it's so much more of a tree, or a symbol. The fences around this olive tree are funny, but they themselves seem more like a symbolic construction. In any case, it's wise to remain somewhat practical, or rather vigilant, because this little creature is indeed quite old, as olive trees are known to be. Eternal olive trees, eternal love.

How did we come to this tree in Bovara, in bella Italia, as an example of a Toi-et-Moi Tree, making it not just a common (well, yes) example, but perhaps the very first such description?

It has always been a (double) olive tree, attracting a lot of attention due to its specific shape. From now on, it is, moreover, or for some, entirely a tree for young and old, all of whom know themselves to be eternally beloved, and is therefore certainly no longer just for tourists, Italian or foreign. This olive tree, also known as Toi-et-Moi Tree, can, of course, be found on the world wide web, because even a non-techie like us could find the image there. And how we actually found it; it's what's called personal or a guided coincidence. Nothing spectacular, then, or anything to post on our Facebook, Instagram, or other accounts (the day after tomorrow, when we finally create those accounts). But what makes us a little surprised, perhaps a little sad, is that: this tree isn't yet listed on the website for the abbey on whose grounds it's located. Please check and verify.

SEE: San Pietro in Bovara - Wikipedia

Moreover, this is an exclusively English-language Wikipedia page. Please! Is there really no short and concise Wikipedia page about this abbey - including, of course, this tree - in the abbey's own language, perhaps the most beautiful language in the world, in certainly the most beautiful country in the world? So, please, please adjust! In our third appendix, we address a letter to the city council of Trevi regarding this "*olive tree*", also known as "*the Toi-et-Moi Tree*" and point out this omission, among other things.

So you can leave tomorrow, and preferably not all at once to this tree in that old abbey in bustling Italy. It's a different kind of tourism than just visiting the unimaginably much-to-see. Anyway, the "*must-see*" list is indeed an incredibly strenuous "*must-do*" and from a relatively short point on, a rather frustrating one because it's simply impossible, especially when considering the world as a whole and, in fact, even for the wondrous la bella Italia. For the French speakers of the world alone, Italy is an absolute must, the true conclusion of every individual life. After all, they say, person by person: "*Je veux voir Naples avant de mourir*." Incidentally, we are only secondarily French-speaking, because as a Fleming, thus (...) a Belgian, raised in French from a young age. Although, as far as we're concerned, it should have been much more than ever a Flemish dialect alongside the common, albeit beautiful, Dutch. That's what one or two years at a purely French-speaking school would be like; fantastic, isn't it? And then the opposite for our Walloon compatriots. But precisely because of that, we must one day, at least, go to this same Naples for our civil deaths, because that's where one of our favorite paintings, "*The Parable of the Blind*" by Pieter Brueghel (the Elder), hangs in the Museo di Capodimonte. And, we're talking summer 2025, and in the 2025-2026 season, two undeniably Belgian star footballers will also be running and frolicking there! So, we'll definitely have to postpone our demise a bit to see Kevin (De Bruyne) and Romelu (Lukaku) perform there, and we'll seize that opportunity to visit that museum—or vice versa. Only, it's been a compelling fact of life for years that the enthusiasm of such an Italian, and certainly that Neapolitan, crowd is absolutely impossible for our soft-headed minds to endure for even half an hour, let alone two. But rest assured, so to speak, because we, and you too, can practically stay home or at least only visit the first, and therefore best, forest in your neighborhood! Rest assured, because if you simply spend an hour or so exploring a forest or even a better, authentic park, following this Toi-et-Moi Tree scheme, the chances are sky-high (a sky in a forest?) that you'll encounter your very own, authentic version of the "*Allegory of Growing Love. The (normal) ??? tree and also the (symbolic) Toi-et-Moi Tree of ??? (in a place near your house or at ....).*" That's how simple the combination of Plato (idea) and Aristotle (experience) works. We have, or can go and see, a perfect Toi-et-Moi Tree, barely a hundred meters from our very modest Hungarian summer residence - not an olive tree this time, but a beautiful ash (Fraxinus excelsior + halo, it's also a member of the

olive family, or Oleaceae!). You can think even more ambitiously, even somewhat exaggeratedly pompous, and actually plant what you've just described yourself! Please follow our construction plan very carefully, or you risk failing the exam—hahaha.

We whisper it as quietly as possible, so loudly that together we can just hear the roots of this tree - these trees? - growing, or at least notice the rustling of the leaves in the almost windless day that prevails in Bovaro, this normal thought: how did we arrive at the existence, ergo, at the image of this tree? And we won't say that here. Consequently - or is the logical order actually reversed? - we also cannot say which ... er ... personification (???) or at least person, or at least Toi/her we can/may/should have in mind in the second part of the tree, or in the second tree, especially if we were to recognize ourselves in the first part or in the first tree—in which case we would have to use the saying "*Panie najpierw*" or "*Ladies first*" and thus replace "*first*" with "*second*". You undoubtedly understand, but with all these role reversals, we are gradually losing our way. By the way, what about the loyalty or psychology of a so-called informal, deeply personal image or metaphor, even an allegory, of a very specific beloved? Can a person—we're not just talking about Moi/him, but about any kind of beloved/loving person—in that known, cherished, 'received' or love-given image, one day, that very familiar day, shift in meaning, or become not so much unfaithful to it, but rather, a little less attentive, a little less involved? Or, above all, of course, at some point during that day, that same very familiar day, a little more attentive, a little more involved with - you guessed it - that "*other*"!? In that way, there is one certainty, both existential and, in any case, relational, throughout this person; the tree, the concrete Toi-et-Moi Tree, remains. Unless, that shift internally brings so much anger and aggression that the tree is... chopped down, or at least completely neglected, until it's neatly sawn into firewood (from a purely practical perspective, this remains the most grim of thoughts and actions). Let us look at the matter from a more soothing and therefore constructive and calming perspective. Things happen, and you already know it, because you're familiar with the famous Old Greek saying "*πάντα ῥεῖ*" or "*everything flows*"! We previously gave a slight variation on that with "*everything grows*" That growth, through all its stages, inevitably has its biological, metaphysical, and existential or human ends. Everyone, even from a relatively young age, has to experience it; the favorite dog of the house, the beloved ... of. .. - goes away, goes to pieces; finito! Reportedly, or according to novelists and psychologists, this grieving process after the death of a very important person, a loved one, takes about six or seven years. We're talking about a person. What if that person is symbolized or represented by a tree, more specifically (naturally) by a ... no. .. by THAT ONE Toi-et-Moi Tree? You'll certainly have to figure it out, perhaps even over and over again.

Our long-time intimate friend Meloni (1977) - we don't need to use a first name here, nor her status as a European condotierra, regularly sends us all kinds of nice text messages about which we obviously can't say anything, not even to her, because we simply don't answer them because we just don't want all that political junk in our lives anymore - our intimate friend Meloni, who, whether she likes us or not, considers us one of her "*Il Consigliere in Questioni di Amore per la Vita*" (probably the only foreign one after probably "*The Donald*"; "*I have Giorgia, Giorrr-giaaaa, always on my miiiiii-iaaaa-ind*" and "*bien étonnés de se trouver ensemble*"), this Meloni who is quite influential - you should hear her speak, although seeing her speak is enough; so just turn the volume knob to zero and the pixels almost to the same measurement level; This modern Italian condotierra, with her telling nickname LGBT ("*Let's Great ...*"), sorry, LMTWGA ("*Let's Make The West Great Again*"), wants more bambinieritti, or little children conceived by her worthy and valuable compatriots. We suspect she prefers children who aren't "*abbronzato*" as "*Berli-bama*" once called "*O-bama*." Apparently, her

country, or "*la terra delle terre, quell'Italia eternamente bella*" desperately needs more inhabitants. But they already have - or still have - more than fifty million!? In our opinion, as "*The Consigliere in Questioni di ...*" one solution is certainly obvious, and it lies there, even on and probably in the ground: "*Tene quod bene*" said certain predecessors of the Italians, the Etruscans. More precisely: "*To have is to hold*" and in modern Etruscan: "*Avere è mantenere*" It all seems very simple indeed: that young, especially young Italian graduates, be offered more opportunities locally for decent work, ergo a decent income and thus a perspective or future, so that these young, highly motivated people stop emigrating to other countries offering more opportunities—outside Italy, of all places! Tourists, foreign tourists, countless numbers of those people who flock annually to this same bella Italia, are being massively or statistically almost constantly emptied everywhere by overpriced hospitality facilities, primarily due to the laughably high average room/hotel prices. Apparently, that doesn't seem to be a social or political problem. This means that undoubtedly, on the one hand, some of that enormous amount of money goes to the Italian treasury, which can then spend it on many necessities - olé, okay, or great! That mainly means that the largest part goes to private individuals, Italians in particular or primarily, who earn far too much in that not so clean way, not only in comparison (1) with what is offered in return, but therefore (2) especially socially, politically and morally seen against their own people, their own youth, their own future! Enough and above all; not enough or get to work, say, on a better socio-financial redistribution or reallocation. Ergo: tourists happy - and they will therefore certainly stay longer or come back more = thus consume more! Ergo: the Italian youth happy and they will stay (read: no longer emigrate) and make a future and children at home. And therefore the majority of the Italian population "molto o più felice". But how can this be achieved socio-economically and politically? That will probably require countless Meloni's and the like ... In any case; if those same Italians are politically so Italian, say nationalistic by a majority, well; Reread our previous advice as the unofficial Italian "*Il Consigliere in Questioni di Amore per la Vita*". Incidentally, we don't offer this advice for free or for pay, but entirely voluntarily—apparently something miraculously peculiar to Italians—and so we maintain: "*Avere è mantenere*"! See APPENDIX 2 for some tips for Giorgia Meloni, around this Toi-et-Moi Tree and much more greenery.

Attention/attention/attention. People in our lives, who were very close or known through various media or simply as numbers or static units, disappear and fade away, constantly, daily. And at the same time, have we gradually, or have for decades, been allowed to speak of the overpopulation of the earth - except, apparently, in present-day Italy? During our own lifetimes, because we were born in Belgium in 1963, we quickly learned in "*our national geography*" textbooks that our country was one of the most densely populated countries in the world. That meant around 9.5 million inhabitants then, or around 1970. During our own personally very happy lives, or roughly fifty years later, that Belgian population will easily reach 12 (twelve) million. Or 20 (twenty) percent more, and that within a single lifetime, in just 50 (fifty) years! Moreover, the demographic forecasts for this same Western European country are nothing short of extremely, truly extremely, alarming. Yet another slew of inhabitants means even less space to simply be human, individually, with family, and within society. Flanders and Brussels, in particular, are becoming one giant, industrial pigsty. Our apologies to both the people and the pigs, because the former are naturally valuable, and the latter equally so. You should look into the eyes of any pig - really! And then ...? So, from roughly the most densely populated country in the world in 1970 with 9.5 million inhabitants, to now already 12, largely due to the consequences of the collapse of the Berlin Wall - to soon 14 million!? Note: this recent, half-century-long increase has nothing to do with more babies or larger, more expansive Belgian families, but purely with immigration and the subsequent

internal growth, if we may be so objective. Just blame all those incoming people, especially since we ourselves have strong Polish roots, who arrive here either fleeing poverty, seeking freedom, or something like love; who can object to that!? Every week, the entire globe is growing by about a billion people, or is it slightly less? Because no one can follow that evolution anymore, can keep an exact count. The Low Countries have been among the most densely populated regions of Europe for centuries, but in the past, you could still breathe a little and hear a bird sing. What free space is left beyond brick, asphalt, plastic, and concrete? Even those who absolutely want to see the remaining open space in Belgium, and that is primarily or exclusively on the North Sea, would have to turn their backs on the land to avoid seeing the improbable, pompously scandalous construction of apartment blocks along and along the sea wall. It's unbelievable what a thoroughly corrupt country Belgium is, especially on its relatively small North Sea coast: real estate agents, notaries, and mayors (mainly blue and orange) became as rich as the sea itself and, of all places, would want to continue building in that sea. It was, of all places, a socialist from Dendermonde who, as a minister, signed the ultimate (sigh) saving "*Dune Decree*" in the 1990s. Although, as a municipal councilor and mayor of Dendermonde, he happily, like all the other blue and orange political leftovers, parceled out the city at will, concreted up thickly (except—and that's right—for that one park in a social housing project), with the wealthier, including some remarkably unremarkable super-socialists, also enjoying an "*exclusive view of the Scheldt River*"—all things considered, it resembles the North Sea of Dendermonde, albeit without... dunes. And there, what did you expect? Luxury apartments, with, lo and behold, each the same size as, say, an entire city block used to 'contain' the older, true socialists, the underclass of society.

When it comes to organizing public space, the Dutch are at least very correct or reserved. They adhere meticulously to many of those urban planning standards, and the coast there is still a coast, or no excuse for "*sea views*" or expensive, usually still horribly ugly, blocks of boxes (apartments) for Belgian seniors who are ultimately becoming very lonely, who now want to come from the interior to enjoy the fresh air, where, everyone knows, the suicide rate, due to the ultimate, extremely profound loneliness, is unusually high. Meanwhile, just like in the Netherlands, half the world comes to us for asylum or to earn a decent living, temporarily or longer, which, again, is entirely humanly understandable. It does, however, make our countries largely unliveable anthills. Such an observation has absolutely nothing to do with any form of racism, and that human perspective is, personally, completely alien to us for life. Cities with barely an inch of greenery, both in and around them; that is the world in a materially wealthy country like Belgium. We have long been gripped by the unpleasant feeling about it. Around 1976, or when we first took a bus tour with our Hemaco Dendermonde basketball team, which would subsequently become extremely successful throughout the country for years, to, say, the relatively nearby city of Ghent, we already thought on the way: "*Why not cover that highway*?" Around 1976 ... You understand why. And again, fifty years ago! But just as obviously, covering that economic space—in order to reclaim living space—is completely impossible, and even more so; it's completely unaffordable. Funny or sarcastically enough, there can be no question of "forest overpopulation" in the world: too many trees or 'greenery,' come on?! But apparently, for the Low Countries at least, an inversely proportional relationship can be established: the more inhabitants, the less space, less greenery/trees—or less air, less physical and mental freedom.

Although this can be very surprising or more brutally nuanced from country to country. Consider, for example, the very important and famous Po Valley in Italy, which has been a European cradle of food for two millennia, abundant in quantity and quality. We know it a little, or enough, to be truly astonished wandering through it. It's chock-full of food

production, which is produced there and requires all that space, so you expect a lot of greenery At the same time, it's almost completely treeless, or in that sense, a green desert, a "*deserto verde*'. That speaks for itself, you say very loudly. Well. It is indeed obvious that you can hardly grow rice or grain or anything else on and between trees, at least on an agro-industrial scale, because it's necessary to sustain large populations. But alongside or along the roads! In one of the agricultural countries of Europe and the world, which has for centuries had an exceptional canalization system where, even canal after canal, one doesn't encounter a single adjacent tree, the following is perfectly possible and, according to a certain logic, simply appropriate. There are, incidentally, plenty of historical and current examples of intensive agricultural production on plots neatly bordered and therefore covered by smaller trees, such as maypoles, pollard willows, and so on. As if small, successive trees weren't, conversely, extremely beneficial for water management, in particular, as well as for the entire (micro)climate and ecosystem of this unique region in la bella Italia. It's possible, of course, that the Italian State Security, and that through all its long predecessors, maintains strict control; not a single tree for the Po River - because ...! Because ... - erm? You're guessing the same as us, because nobody knows! This is how the historically regular occurrence of "*Nothing*" arises without a single reason for its existence. Or how an unmotivated yet thoroughly motivating motive works, is effective (and very inefficient).

Back to Belgium. It goes without saying that all European intensive agriculture can be approached perfectly systematically, i.e., greened with at least less forest presence on the periphery. We'd better not call it strategic forestry, because a forest on a strip ...!? Anyway, you know the expression "*A man makes a child*." And that man and his wife, all things considered, might try a little less hard, but mutatis mutandis, they should just continue in this equally traditional sense: "*A man plants a tree*." Or every man, together with a/that woman, makes a child and plants a tree. That sounds very revolutionary, doesn't it? And note the logic of the equation: a (1) child next to a (1) tree. Well, well, well. That certainly has nothing to do with rabid climate activism, only with a justified, judicious desire to survive, to want to live better again, at least ecologically. Because, of course, among many examples, extreme progress has been made in these regions in an area like medical care. As students around 1985, we first let the existing, albeit somewhat modestly kept, rosebush grow quietly on the kitchen side of our single-family home. As a corner house, it was part of what in French and Flemish was called a "*citeetje*" (cité = city), a small, independent street, where, once upon a time in the 19th century, almost exclusively Ghent dockworkers and the textile proletariat lived with their often very well-off families. And where these people shared plenty of fun, beer, and gin, and thus much, much misery. A more Flemish word for this specific type of tightly knit and essentially very simple housing was "*beluik*" To our knowledge, this word has no English equivalent; the best description is "*working-class housing*".

SEE: **Beluik - Wikipedia**

Ghent at that time had a large number of these working-class neighborhoods, often found alongside smaller canals or city canals. While these looked picturesque in images for today's viewers, they were extremely harsh on the residents, especially regarding hygiene. Between 1982 and roughly 1988, we actually had running water because it was a corner house. But - the following seems like reverse science fiction - each resident further down the street had to use a single tap, which was outside and shared. Even in the 1980s, and in Western Europe, and in a cultural and university city like Ghent, such a situation - no private running water! - was practically unbelievable. The rent was correspondingly extremely low. The small, old worker's house itself was a corner house on what, for the most part, was a separate street

called "*Bandelierstraat*" So it was partly on the main street (well, anyway), which was "*Stokerijstraat*" and it still bore and bears number 57. Ah, those days, because thinking back on at least our time studying and living there always evokes a certain melancholy. We read and studied incredibly, albeit too little, and made nothing less than a few lifelong friends, and after our studies, in the now-insulated attic, we even fathered two children together: in those ways, an extremely fruitful time for us personally! But there, despite all the relative poverty that never affected us for a moment, there was, objectively, something more or better, both personally and socially. Ghent, until at least the 1980s (sigh), was so much, truly almost infinitely quieter, so much more humane or more livable, and indeed - not to be underestimated, of course - so much more affordable. That reality, lived through for years, now seems truly a very distant dream that probably will never return, despite what the urban planning department anticipates. After the current renovation (we'd been out of Ghent for years, and the new, insanely high rent price was a real shock when we visited again, which we, as students, could never have afforded), thankfully, Bandelierstraat not only has a local driving ban and a parking ban, but also a minimal amount of greenery, essentially just "*ligustrum vulgare*", an evergreen we've loved since childhood. Incidentally, the planting is very conservative, as it's planted very low, and there aren't a single large shrub, let alone a low-bearing (fruit) tree, nor even a few berry plants, for example. This is a shame, because the 'main street' of Stokerijstraat was and still is truly always dreadfully dark or unpleasant, except in the best summer months – because there's absolutely no greenery. Of course, we can't resist expanding on or initiating this fantastic plant, part shrub, part ligustrum, which, in our opinion, is not at all "*vulgare*" is. Shame on the inventor of this scientific name, which is existentially very incorrect.

SEE: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ligustrum_vulgare

Indeed, the Latin "*ligustrum*" in the fairly well-known modern English means "*binder*", or is a preferably also symbolically important plant that can be planted in abundance and everywhere, moreover an evergreen and even with a very subtle green, not like other more obtrusive evergreens such as ... and ... We have given this plant in a small park project of our own somewhere in ZX. in MC. a more loose or independent role than just edging, or at least as a very substantial and constantly clipped border plant. If you want to use a plant as a 'binder', you must do so with full understanding and respect, also for its more idiosyncratic appearance.

We came from the provincial town of Dendermonde, where at least our grandmother lived in a garden district ("*Het Keur*"), which, as the name partly suggests ("*tuin-wijk*" or district/wijk shaped like a garden/tuin), was a district with much more greenery than the Belgian "*normal*" all proportions considered - for the record, there were two older social housing projects like garden districts in that city. All houses were, as it were, abundantly hedged. These green and perennial hedges were homogeneous or exclusively made up of our beloved, and later even much-planted, ligustrum vulgare. We never remember fences made of, say, concrete or plastic, or any of the modern, terribly ugly, and inhumane alternatives that now exist among ordinary neighbors. This immediately meant fences that, even as a growing child, you could easily look over and therefore easily strike up a conversation with your neighbors. You could, and were allowed to, just as we did so intensely as children with one neighbor (on the constant and, for our entire life, extremely beneficial search for their comics) simply walk through those hedges - sigh - because there was always some kind of 'crack or disturbance' Call it a part of the hedge that wasn't perfect: doubly beautiful, isn't it? Just imagine what concrete or plastic as a barrier between two properties or two neighbors can do—or more

importantly, can't do! As students and headstrong guys, we had already done some planting on our own initiative in the early 1980s. Incidentally, there was someone even more impressive on Stokerijstraat who went much further in that regard: he allowed entire trees (willows) to grow along the facades (plural), which - need I explain? - was completely out of the ordinary in such an urban and truly dark context. The result was indeed unprecedented, yet incredibly poetic. Incidentally, our neighborhood police officer at the time was rather relaxed or tolerant; he even enjoyed a drink ... We ourselves weren't, and still aren't, experts in bricklaying, but we did build planters around the corner house for gladioli, among other things. These fully grown flowers, in particular, were sometimes pulled out, bulb and all, by the mischievous boys. A few neighbors then asked us to build a similar planter for them. bricklaying, and at no. 61, it might still be there, complete with a plant. Some fifteen or more years later, we asked an architect friend to co-write an article for a "*Manual for Green Facades in an Urban Environment*" which we still considered necessary at the time. He didn't have the time, and we had no talent for technical drawings, so the manual remained with a non-manager. But lo and behold: ideas grow, often truly simultaneously, certainly from the Flemish/Belgian/Western European absolute necessity for more or 'real' life in cities! Some time ago, we read (somewhere; we honestly don't remember where, but see below) that in Ghent, at least one non-profit organization - probably started around 2010 - and probably also a truly professional company, is working on exactly that: making facades as intensely green as possible!

SEE: **Groene Gevels - Groene Gevels**

Here and there, Flemish cities are already encouraging their residents, apparently only very sporadically and with far too little success or green initiative, with small subsidies to add greenery to their streets, specifically to facades or adjacent sidewalks. This should absolutely become the general rule for the entire Belgian urban area—and where else in the EU and...? That would only mean progress in general, local quality of life, or: Belgian, Italian, and Blahblahblah State Security, stay home or: come and help us recreate green spaces!

We just wrote that there are at least a few municipalities in Flanders that allow, albeit sparingly, even encourage, greening of streets. Streets? Call them "*stone deserts*" primarily intended for cars and some pedestrians, preferably shoppers! It's unbelievable how little greenery one sees in and between (the highways) of cities and municipalities. Especially in the centers of cities and municipalities, one still encounters hardly any trees, if any at all, naturally where the medieval pattern is concerned, but certainly not only there. In our hometown of Dendermonde, you can find new housing developments with (sic) sufficient space in each lot for a driveway, possibly a front garden, and thus also a smaller personal garden. But without a single tree in the streets. One relatively recent social housing development can be seen as an example, with abundant greenery and even a separate, adjacent park. This social housing development predates the aforementioned housing development, or in this city, urban planning is – in fact – regressing! This comes as no surprise to us, as this city has been extremely poorly managed in terms of urban planning, and therefore in terms of green spaces, for forty years, or simply exemplary (sic), as one of many Flemish municipalities in a skewed and even more skewed list. A city official as far back as 2013, or when we moved to this city, and whose name we will never mention, but a very sincere person and lifelong lover of green spaces, literally told us: "*In this city and in the city council, they hate trees.*" It's striking. How alienated can you become as a person and a society? Even when one of the greatest Belgian/Flemish painters of all time, Constant Permeke (1886-1952; deceased for barely half a century), was still thematically characterized as having "... *touched*

the heart of the matter, namely the relationship between nature and humanity, seen through Flanders and its people of farmers and fishermen." (" *... de kern van de zaak heeft geraakt, namelijk de verhouding van natuur en mens, gezien doorheen Vlaanderen n zijn volk van boeren en vissers*.", Gemeentelijke kunstschatten. Vijftig Schilderijen, Brussels, 1960, p. 278).

Things are indeed changing, but concrete, once poured, is hard to get rid of. Incidentally, a "*concrete freeze*" ("*Betonstop*") is reportedly being considered in the Flemish Community: interesting to follow, as it will never happen, and is already decades overdue, partly because the inherently necessary commercial buildings should have been built literally on top of each other long ago, like towers of industrial blocks. Quite a few cities are revealing and reopening the urban rivers, or at least parts of them, that were vaulted over in a 'modern' way about a century ago. With maximum enthusiasm and creativity, one can create a remarkable amount of atmosphere, space, and thus a better life, in relatively few areas. And indeed, all kinds of trees can (ah, that word 'must') play a literal human role in this, although that's putting it rather negatively that, with the undeniable warming of our part of the planet as well, you can find something like "shade/refreshment" under a tree, and especially under several trees. For any country with a high population density, such as the two Low Countries, there are a number of structural solutions or truly profound emergency solutions, although it is, of course, vital that the soft side or essence of a democratic system, the alert citizen, is also somewhat stimulated in a process towards a greener awakening, and then continues to stimulate itself. The Netherlands, as is well known, is much stricter in its urban planning, and its residents are much more attached to rules, which is actually a matter of life and death, as their population density is even higher than that of Belgium. Belgians show little concern for civic duty or behave according to the general, in this case rather unspoken, motto "*Our people first*" ("*Eigen volk eerst*") understandable from an ecological, social, or simply neighborly perspective. There's hardly an ordinary or more affluent Belgian without a neighbor who keeps an eye on everything, especially if the hedge is too low, damaged, and especially not allowed to be repaired because of... In this way, it is of vital social importance to thoroughly amend the legal basis of the "*Field Code*" (het "*Veldwetboek*") a completely outdated basic law that regulates these kinds of green neighborhood matters and dates back to just as Napoleon departed for Russia. The all-suffocating or somewhat 'green'-impossible regulation of the Field Code states that "*Every tree/shrub that even slightly borders another property must maintain a distance of one meter from it*." which of course (sic) also means that the infamous, rather infamous "branches" that hang over (the neighbor's), lead to endless neighborhood disputes in the countless urbanized residential areas. Just try to create some greenery like something like a tree, considering its beauty (greenery, birds, and butterflies, all very pleasant and educational for growing children - please!!!), and to obtain more shade or refreshment, if you have a neighbor who hates trees (and hates people; the two probably go together 'well'), within the metaphysical and social context of normal Belgian circumstances of parallel and rather narrow building plots! We cannot, of course, go into this issue, but at one point in Dendermonde we decided to create a "*driveway garden*" a garden on - what else did you expect? - what is 'traditionally' a driveway, or a place where a car is driven from the street to the garage on one's own property. That word, which certainly cannot be found in a dictionary, indicates, on the one hand, that the garage is not used at all, and certainly never, as a car storage area, so that, on the other hand, a large part of the driveway (for such a car) can be redeveloped as... a garden. We'll write a separate piece about it sometime – with photos. We've certainly never seen a single imitator in this Belgian city ... , even though traditionally most building plots are house to house, without any greenery or 'air' in between. Stone deserts, you know. Incidentally, no one has ever asked us why we did that, creating a driveway

garden. The city once held a sort of garden competition, so we presented our driveway garden example; no response... Fortunately, the city of Dendermonde does have a phenomenal library, with, incidentally, a rather interesting garden adjacent to it.

A few years ago, we read a study on the VRT website (the website of Flemish radio and television) with a somewhat disturbing title, but certainly not a clear message: "*Per capita, there are eight times more lawsuits in Belgium than in the Netherlands, and three times more than in France*." France and the Netherlands, for the record, are either neighboring countries of Belgium or all modern Western European countries. And, the problem seems to be internally clear, or primarily located in Flanders, the part of Belgium most adjacent to the Netherlands. Throughout Belgium, which is nevertheless very wealthy and prosperous, and therefore essentially happy, or especially in Flanders, the richest part of this country in several decades, there is an extremely broad or deep societal problem. Or indeed: "*Our own people fight first*." ("*Eigen volk ruziet eerst*"). It is absolutely not the so-called "foreigners" who are responsible for the colossal number of neighborhood disputes in justices of the peace and so on (higher/further). Although we will meticulously demonstrate in a future study that Belgian lawyers are becoming as rich as the North Sea, often very deep to dip your toes in, precisely because of these immense numbers of disputes, which they assiduously 'milk' or 'suck' away, thus gleefully prolonging, thus squeezing people even more money from their apparently overly deep pockets. The role of the far too powerful and money-sucking notaries in Belgium, particularly in the area of real estate, and thus in the housing problem, should also be seriously scientifically investigated, because an ecologically minded notary seems to us something like "*the Green Smurf*" In this problematic legal case, a mutual love of trees or much more greenery is very, very cost-effective—in many ways! We can imagine that this problem just outlined ("*8 times more lawsuits than in neighboring country N. + 3 times more than in neighboring country* F.") is extremely sensitive politically, both party-politically and in general administrative terms. This means that scientists must, of course, investigate these known facts more clearly, map them statistically, and try to formulate solutions, because the motto is known and loved by everyone: "*Prevention is better than cure*."

When the need is greatest, help is near. That's a very interesting, hopeful, and familiar expression. However, why did people let the need become a need in the first place, or ultimately, and why didn't they already initiate help before it was deemed necessary? And why not see the help itself in that need? We suspect that the Scandinavian countries, and certainly Germany, are organizing themselves best, or in the most innovative and humane way, on a broad ecological level. In any case, it could very well be the intention of this text, within the theme of "*Most attractive women in* ....", to quickly write an ecological manifesto, even if only focused on the tree aspect. Let's just say we'll make a few more casual observations, and later on, indeed, one more fundamental one, which, otherwise we wouldn't be proposing it now, is highly likely original and, of course, humane and socially responsible: "***A tree per child***." So please, be sure to read on. Let us return for a moment to the Low Countries of Belgium, with its rather complex political structure, of which Flanders is an administrative entity that dreams a lot and occasionally experiments (the once world-renowned education system has been deteriorating for decades under Flemish authority, but don't worry; Walloon or French-language education is on course to become Zimbabwean - all things considered, improbable). In 2024, or during the last municipal elections, a miracle occurred because almost every emerging political party had one party point that was completely identical, absolutely! It seemed that Flanders, at least in the areas of cities and municipalities, was on its way to a one-party state, the usually well-disguised wet dream of almost every political party, not just in Flanders. Since we have to spend our time in several

countries for the reasons we know, and hardly use the internet, we only learned later that this unison, multi-party point was, in fact, born from the dream of the Flemish Community. The Flemish Community's new idealism or reinvention of green spaces or trees, with its formula "*3-30-300*" was apparently invented by a Dutch urban planner. Well thought out, sir, but here that ideal or hope is absolutely unattainable, like long jumping nine meters and fifty centimeters, and even then, for women with disabilities - in this case, legally, because they wear an electronic ankle bracelet. On both legs?

Under the uplifting title, which sets in motion a new Long March, as if borrowed from the propaganda for the Soviet Union's Second Ten-Year Plan in 1929, we can read further what this title announced: "*Towards a healthy Flanders with new green standards: the 3+30+300 rule*." ("*Naar een gezond Vlaanderen met nieuwe groennormen: de 3+30+300-regel.*"). A healthy Flanders will thus be achieved through the following scenario:

"*Every home needs three visible trees, 30% 'climate green' in its surroundings, and accessible green space within 300 meters. These are the new green standards, also known as the 3+30+300 rule, which provide spatial planning policy with a well-founded quantitative framework to keep our urban environment livable. Flanders faces a range of challenges: the increased impact of climate change, the negative impact of construction on quality of life, the decline in biodiversity... Urban green elements are an effective strategy to help with this*."

("*Elke woning heeft nood aan 3 zichtbare bomen, 30% 'klimaatgroen' in zijn omgeving en toegankelijk groen op 300 meter. Dat zijn de nieuwe groennormen, ook wel de 3+30+300-regel genoemd, die het ruimtelijk beleid een onderbouwd kwantitatief kader bieden om onze verstedelijkte omgeving leefbaar te houden. Vlaanderen staat immers voor een waaier aan uitdagingen: de versterkte impact van klimaatverandering, negatieve impact van bebouwing op levenskwaliteit, de achteruitgang van de biodiversiteit... Stedelijke groenelementen zijn een effectieve strategie om daarbij te helpen.*");
+
Elsewhere, this 3+30+300 rule is expressed as follows, which unfortunately demonstrates its complete infeasibility: "*The rule states that in urban areas, three trees must be visible from every home, 30% of the neighborhood must be covered by treetops, and everyone must live within 300 meters of a public green space*."

("*De regel stelt dat er in stedelijke gebieden 3 bomen zichtbaar moeten zijn vanuit elke woning, 30% van de wijk bedekt moet zijn met boomkruinen, en iedereen op maximaal 300 meter van een publieke groene ruimte moet wonen.*").

Source: https://www.natuurenbos.be/groennormen

This very fine goal is to be sincerely admired and supported, and only to be rejected, naturally through 'arguments', by real estate agents, notaries, and... uh... Yes, unfortunately also by those countless Flemish people who continue to insist on a "*home-garden-garage*" even if it has to be within the very minimum width of the smallest plot, say, at least the width of a car and the driver's side of the exit, as seen from the front of that house. This 3+30+300 rule is truly decades too late and therefore completely impossible to achieve for all of – urbanized – Flanders. It would literally require demolishing masses of houses and concrete, which is self-evidently impossible and inhumane. The hardware or institutional policy is, at least theoretically or in terms of direction, starting to function relatively robustly, but the software or the opinion of the majority (Belgium is a democracy, after all) of the population or voters is

not yet sufficiently developed. Now, if even the Titanic is turning in time, surely all the sea devils and all the unfortunate mermaids, rejected for too long by the crews of many passing ships, can also start turning, right? Something like old-fashioned public education or public awareness is apparently necessary. Although beware, with Flemish nationalists now in the majority in Flanders, the Soviet Union is closer than ever; Lord, forgive us, but we are always on our guard against anything that 'smells' of nationalism. Perhaps there should be some mass or widespread, gentle brainwashing? The Flemish are truly 'sincere' haters of trees or greenery, except with geraniums on their windowsills. That geranium, by the way, is an extremely stinking flower = who is that stench directed at? It's unbelievable how a nation could detach itself from its greatest origins in barely a hundred years, even though Flemish cities were already at the pinnacle of - indeed - urbanization in Europe almost a thousand years ago. But again, the tide is turning—while that tide, or almost structural spring tide, has already caused enormous destruction. There is certainly a clearer awareness of the importance of "*green*" and there is a greater love or commitment to preserving what is "*left over*" (sic) or that "*something more*". Naturally, we refer here to the phenomenon of architect and visual artist Friedensreich Hundertwasser (1928–2000). See, among other things, his both humorous and charming, yet almost brutally challenging concept of "*Fensterrecht*" or "*The Right From Your Window*" SEE Vlasta Flendrovská. That, and his broader ecological-architectural vision and the realistic possibilities that have likely emerged from it, especially in Germany, seem to us to be a leading example for many European countries struggling with urbanization.

Analytically, we believe there are only two alternatives for more greenery/trees, given the extreme spatial encroachment caused by urbanization and its near-impossibility to reverse, alongside its near-impossibility on a social level. This means (1) finding all creative solutions and, as it were, searching for and finding every green space in the city and municipality. Facades, and somewhat less so roofs, are essentially repurposed, as the green end result is considered above and beyond. Furthermore, (2) maximizing the potential for open space or existing forest wherever possible. This also means, in the long term, no longer renovating dune development, but rather demolishing it. The same applies to deltas and riverbanks. The motto sounds almost ridiculous, but statistics have their iron logic: "*Every little bit helps*." We must reiterate the crucial importance of an adapted legal instrument, such as the Field Code for Belgium, which is completely outdated and, incidentally, applies to the entire national territory, not just that of the Flemish Community. That existing Field Code is truly setting the future back, because one bad, say, anti-green, say, anti-human neighbor does indeed make a winter, or here's a necessary variation on "One swallow doesn't make a spring." Beware, this implies that the entire Flemish Community, a regional government, will be monitored regarding the current plans by the ... Belgian, so federal, State Security? Belgium is also incredibly surreal in terms of governance. That will work out; with a culture of centuries of tinkering and tinkering, it can now get a worthy variant, an ecological one!

Besides these two roughly sketched options for making our urbanized living environments more ecological and livable, we might offer a new, third option. This involves a kind of exit, geographically speaking, though not entirely politically or socially. As mentioned, we won't offer the ultimate ecological solution here, but perhaps a small and sympathetic part, which in itself is beneficial to the health, vitality, and joy of a society, a democracy, or a civil society. We know from our own experience that in both southern and central European countries of the European Union, tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands, up to ??? and in non-exclusive alphabetical order, Belgians, Germans, Dutch, and other more fortunate individuals of their lot in life reside, often permanently, for 'for example' their retirement. We've consistently observed that many people have relatively little contact with the local population, precisely

because perhaps only one percent of them actually speak the language at a child's level (claiming to even master it would seem rather embarrassing here - the exception is certainly Spanish). These European foreigners, or intra-EU migrants, live rather isolated lives. They go out to eat, bathe, take trips to a nearby larger city, as couples, sometimes with compatriots from the same municipality or region. They party and renovate or are already starting to re-re-re-....renovate. You know how it is from your emails, that re-re-re-re... They shop, not just for subsistence but 'therefore' to literally "*get out*" This is, of course, a peculiar situation for the local population and their respective governments, because we don't know of any of the European countries we won't mention that offer anything like language teachers, which can be done easily or, of course, for a decent fee. Indeed, in many of these countries, hardly anyone speaks any other language (say, English or German; we once encountered French with a former member of the "*Légion étrangère*" – the Foreign Legion!). And, conversely, and de facto essential, some European languages are simply not easy, or even extremely difficult, to learn on your own. You really need a qualified teacher to reach a minimum level. In any case, this kind of isolation is strangely difficult to break, at least for a certain time of the year – that sounds a bit harsh – but then it can be alleviated (hahaha). One can also view the entire social language problem of, say, Belgians, Germans, and Dutch people in southern and other interesting EU countries, where the weather isn't necessarily better, but there's much, much more room for everything, from the other side – from the side of their own homeland! Bring, invite, a child from Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, and so on to your "*casa belgica-germanica-hollandica*" and similar places, so there in... or... - where there is so much space, so much greenery!

We diplomatically propose, and immediately invite everyone to propose a better alternative to this designation, to call this initiative: "***A tree per child***!"—or would you rather speak of one child per tree? The tree, of course, serves as a metaphor or allegory for the infinite space, silence, and bliss that can be shared through a specific form of solidarity with one's homeland, particularly during the long school holidays, perhaps especially the summer months, and we're also thinking of Easter and Christmas. And this sharing can, of course, be done entirely informally with children from personal networks, especially family. But so! Surely this can also be done with the countless city children, especially those confined for months in often gigantic apartment buildings with little to no green space around them. Not unimportant; That country, now somewhat further away due to the transnational relocation, will continue to pay their national pension, among other things, which, as things stand now and in the future, almost always ensures a good life in the 'new' country that is also a member of the EU family. Such initiatives certainly already exist in our own country, Belgium, and also at a local level, as we learned in Dendermonde about enthusiastic seniors who volunteer their time to try and improve the lives of disadvantaged children in cities or regions. In any case, there are quite a few 'alternative' holiday options for disadvantaged, urban children in Flanders and the Netherlands. We have the greatest admiration and respect for this. We believe that, parallel to these Belgian and similar Western European initiatives, childcare and youth care can be provided relatively quickly and, so to speak, very easily by Western European city children, by their compatriots or at least by people with the same language who were fortunate enough to purchase a home in a very peaceful environment somewhere in more southern or Central European countries. "*A tree per child*!" is a catchy slogan. A tree connects a growing child with a couple in a peaceful, green environment. Incidentally, something has existed for decades in Belgium, and undoubtedly in other Western European countries, that may have been in the back of our minds when we came up with this idea of "*A tree per child*": the petting zoo! You understand that moving this petting zoo within the EU isn't the plan here, but it certainly can and will be partially established, if not with the host families themselves,

then through their neighbors or in the village. Moreover, it's hard to imagine from an urban environment; city children will be surprised almost anywhere by how many species of (smaller) wild animals live in such peaceful, green surroundings! And we're certainly not thinking of mice - or not just mice, hahaha.

'Someone' or 'an organization' should certainly support this, and the possibilities of the internet will certainly bridge the communication gap. The physical transport of the child from the home country and back is likely the most delicate operation. Someone with a strong talent for persuasion and diplomacy, in addition to organizational skills, could adopt and develop this idea. Why not within the EU's possibilities (which are incredibly numerous!)? Indeed, in our view, the EU, with its virtually infinite possibilities and its core concept of all kinds of intra-European solidarity, can do 'something' serious, both at the start and in the follow-up. For more information, see our APPENDIX 1, containing a letter addressed to the President of the European Commission. Under the motto: "*Hope keeps you alive, and while you're alive, you can bring more hope*." We might add that we ourselves have never heard of such purely personal initiatives. We know, for example, that very many 'foreigners' or residents from Western Europe, once back in, say, their second country, regularly bring clothes or toys for neighbourhood children who are native or resident of those new EU countries. If we may remark, for example, we brought half a bucket of ... sea shells to a nursery school in the EU country XCV, which we had picked ourselves on the Belgian coast. And our gesture was received there with rather intense enthusiasm, of course because the phenomenon of the sea is very far away in that region. Very specifically, and then almost exclusively family-related, such an initiative can be more or less compared with those who live in Western Europe as second- or even greater generation immigrants from North Africa, who 'therefore' return, as it were, 'over there', albeit on a real holiday. Whether or not a feeling of spatial/spiritual enclosure is also present in their resp. urbanized Western European living environment and that this would play a role in making that journey to North Africa, we can assume, but we completely lack scientific knowledge on the subject.

We don't find it necessary here to conduct a truly scientific SWOT analysis of this proposed initiative. Not even intuitively, everyone understands that children and young people from highly urbanized environments in Western Europe, perhaps precisely because of their alienation, might be somewhat suspicious, but then once there they can fully enjoy such a peaceful and more nature-oriented holiday. In any case, they are then immersed in a slightly different culture, insofar as they regularly encounter it. But such more informal holidays are certainly not punishment holidays, so regular encounters with parts of the host country will occur, allowing them to learn the familiar 'things and everything' through them. We certainly believe this initiative, "*A tree per child*!" will be beneficial for everyone, even in the long term. We are not at all thinking exhaustively of the beginning of later, adult network development, during their later professional, artistic, or any other life. Conversely, this initiative also opens up all sorts of possibilities, even if it's just keeping track of 'their' new children through the many possibilities of the internet. Consider the specific but crucial issue of elderly care, naturally affecting Western Europeans who are eager to enjoy their older or freer days in peace and quiet or green spaces, but (...) while feeling younger, they don't really become so. We certainly know of many Western Europeans who, for these reasons, will one day, one day in their later years, return to their country of origin. And that, in the meantime, also happens to be the country of their new, as it were, children! Perhaps these foster children of "*once upon a time*" ("*Tempus fugit*") can, in turn, partly contribute to better social/medical care with their previous foster parents now that they have become frailer/older and have therefore returned to their own country, their now completely shared country. These and many

other considerations are all being worked out, and time, as always, will tell! The most important thing about "*A tree per child*!" is the principle or this ideal.

This form of intragenerational and geographically nuanced solidarity is absolutely nothing new in the EU, or even on the European continent. Through our very intensive research on WWII in Belgium (especially, but certainly not exclusively, around the city of Ronse) and also partly in the Netherlands, we know that after the First World War, tens of thousands (!!!) of Hungarian children were taken in by these and other European countries. Several scientific studies have been conducted on this in recent years, resulting in publications! We know of many such cases for the Belgian city of Ronse, and presumably for that city alone, which had just emerged from WWI, around a hundred were welcomed by host families—of all political or religious persuasions. Meanwhile, the Bologna project has been in existence for several decades, naturally named after this Italian city with its world-famous, ancient university. This project, of course, and of paramount importance, ensures that EU students can continue their studies in other regions and countries within the EU, as smoothly as possible, within the same study program. Incidentally, it extends even further than the EU, as, together with related, supporting countries, there are a total of around fifty participating countries! No one doubts the enormous personal, social, and political gains this initiative has generated—and are very lasting. There are, of course, other, albeit much less visible or spectacular, examples of solidarity within the EU or even globally, such as the ... European CO2 emission rights—hahaha. Hopefully, no wokist will wake up and shout loudly about emissions from this form of solidarity between children from urban environments and their compatriots who have moved elsewhere, say, more peacefully because they are greener, to another part of Europe. Perhaps all transport will run on biodiesel or solar energy, right?

In this way, something like the EU, which many so strangely often feel motivated to be angry about and complain about, almost causing cancer in the listener itself, but which is without a doubt the most important political, and therefore interpersonal, and 'simply' human project in the history of Europe, and indeed of the entire world, can help save European humanity in the proposed way. A tree - "*nen buum*" in the dialect of our beloved Belgian town of Ronse (in correct Dutch: "*een boom*") - can help save European humanity. The Belgian, Italian, and other relevant State Security departments can rework or reposition themselves somewhat here, not too much or too difficult for them, as guides and guides, or - co-leaders! - that seems to us a worthy goal anyway, since we ourselves propose it, and not too difficult a means for these services. This way, many are happy, and "*Gross National Happiness*" increases. SEE: **Gust De Smet.** You know that every tree, even a very large one, starts with a seed. A rather small one, perhaps. Our idea for both the "**Toi-et-Moi Tree**" and the "***A tree per child***" project originated from a single tree—or rather, a pair of trees—from the Bovara district of the Italian city of Trevi. It's a given that all good things come in threes (sic), so we're also writing to this city council in APPENDIX 3.

5. The birth forest with a Toi-et-Moi Tree.

A man makes a ... A man plants a .. Do you remember? Forgetting that already seems rather difficult. It was barely a while ago; see the previous paragraph. And a woman!? She... too... And together, Toi-Moi, Her-Him?!

Although quite a few inhabitants of this planet are, in spirit and in deed, clearly tree-haters, there is, as always, hope on the horizon, especially in nearby soil and then in the local air: the BIRTH FOREST. Of course, we only know of this initiative in Belgium, more specifically in

Flanders, where every now and then a farmer no longer needs agricultural land, and where a municipality sighs and donates a plot not to real estate agents but to the community or to life itself. We don't hesitate to suspect that the idea for the project itself, and for the descriptive word, might well have sprung from the wonderfully restless, eternally constructive mind of Father (SJ) Luc Versteylen (1927-2021). Perhaps, as a new centenarian, you don't know that Western religion, at least its traditional dominance, has declined sharply in a relatively short time, to the point of almost disappearing in some places. The majority of so-called atheists—they are, by necessity, also restless seekers of meaning - try to find something of the 'higher', very meaningful, where ... But this concrete man, always known as a priest, this Luc Versteylen, is, for the second half of the twentieth century, one of the undisputed most driven and driving Belgians of the same century, and of all previous ones, and a little hopefully perhaps (so preferably not) of the following centuries as well—not amen. In any case, he should truly and forever be world-famous for his story of "*The Three Lives*" ("*De drie levens*").

SEE: https://www.kuleuven.be/thomas/pastoraal/vieringen/text.php?id=5227&textty=

For Christianity, which is reasonably important on a global scale, and in whatever form it has expressed itself theologically and worldly, the Easter story is essential; without resurrection, there is no Christ, and without that Christ, there is no Christianity. Countless articles and books have been written about this resurrection or Easter story, many more sermons and stories have been told about it, in addition to the equally countless artistic depictions in ordinary (folklore) and in more serious art, such as in public, especially in churches, not to mention collected hymns (thank you, Father Bach, but he is not alone!). Yet this crucial Christian and life-orienting story remains shrouded in mystery, if not in misunderstanding, and thus in rejection. This story of the three lives comes from the deep, often mischievous, and always fresh hand of spoken-word artist Father Luc Versteylen. He wrote it after the death of a young child and preached it there at the funeral (the requiem mass). It was heard there once, and it has always been, and perhaps not only to our knowledge, the only story that most clearly explains the essence of the understanding of the (triply) vibrant hope of the Easter story, also but not just for children; for everyone! The man was known for decades for his innovative use of language and, to some, even notorious. Achachach. Given his very well-known and chronologically or historically crucial role in the green movement or "*A Different Way of Living*" ("*Anders Gaan Leven*") we strongly suspect that he gave this initiative its name: the birth forest. What a beautiful word! That greener thinking - simply connecting with how dealing with nature has been for centuries/millennia - was certainly in the air, because, born in 1963, we must have spontaneously planted an acorn in our grandmother's garden sometime before 1970, until, according to this lady, it became too close to the house and too big or too much of an oak. We readily assume that every word in any language in which the separate word "*birth*" forms the core of any compound word always has a positive connotation. A beautiful name and a beautiful custom, that birth forest. With each new birth of a resident of a municipality that has created (or established?) such a birth forest on its land, a tree is planted that ... symbolizes ... life and ... = hope for ... and air that ... with birds that are there ... next to ... squirrels and ...!

May we quietly imagine that this child comes, first with their parents, then with their friends, and sometimes alone, several times to visit their tree - the birth tree? - in that/their birth forest. Keep coming! And in the most essential, existential sense, the hope that this child, for whom one tree was planted at the beginning of their bare life, for whom a tree and a forest were born, will later help plant more trees, will contribute to the true, or even truer, birth forest.

That birth forest that itself should never have been born. And let us secretly hope that in every forest, now and then, or at least every time, a "*Toi-et-Moi Tree*" appears - as in a forest of love?

Epilogue.

May we fittingly conclude these thoughts on the Toi-et-Moi Tree from Bovara, Italy, with the hope that one or more poets will, someday, write a beautiful and fitting poem for it, or simply devise a poem for their own, or more personal, Toi-et-Moi Tree! With the equally obvious additional hope that this poem, that these poems, perhaps even more beautiful, if less unique, will become fully public property. As a warm-up, we would like to offer here, in a kind of premiere, the original text of the beautiful poem "*Ballad of an Old Cypress*" by the eternal Du Fu (Chinese: 杜甫; pinyin: Dù Fǔ; 712–770). SEE:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Du_Fu

So, depending on the age, you'll be thinking of a cypress that's just as old, albeit somewhat younger. You'll understand why, and if not, they'll be equally good friends. We hope you enjoy reading:

古柏行

孔明庙前有老柏，柯如青铜根如石。
霜皮溜雨四十围，黛色参天二千尺。
君臣已与时际会，树木犹为人爱惜。
云来气接巫峡长，月出寒通雪山白。
忆昨路绕锦亭东，先主武侯同閟宫。
崔嵬枝干郊原古，窈窕丹青户牖空。
落落盘踞虽得地，冥冥孤高多烈风。
扶持自是神明力，正直原因造化功。
大厦如倾要梁栋，万牛回首丘山重。
不露文章世已惊，未辞剪伐谁能送。
苦心岂免容蝼蚁，香叶终经宿鸾凤。
志士幽人莫怨嗟，古来材大难为用。

For those Moi whose Chinese is no longer up-to-date-to-date-with-a-Chinese-Toi, we are happy to give you a firm hand.

SEE: https://thechinaproject.com/2019/04/18/du-fus-ballad-of-an-old-cypress/

Jean-Marie De Dijn, EU, July 2025.

Undoubtedly. Dedicated to Toi-et-Moi, Frans, and Gaby. And therefore very, very much - Nous. And sorry, Dirk. Truly sorry.

Appendix 1.

Contact the President - European Commission Ursula.VON-DER-LEYEN@ec.europa.eu

EU, August 2025.

To Ursula Von Der Leyen, President of the European Commission

Dear President of the European Commission,
Dear Ursula Von Der Leyen,
Hello Urska!

We thank you for allowing us, as ordinary EU citizens, to address you directly. It might have come as a shock to you, not that we just wrote to you, because our reputation as thinkers and macho men is, of course, beyond our control. But addressing you as "*Urska*"?

Oh, well, hasn't everyone known Urška, Urška Žigart, or the girlfriend of the already legendary Tadej Pogačar for several years now? This man is incredibly athletic in every way. And mischievous, and above all: he loves his sweetheart so much. Many are inspired and charmed by him. Will a Slovenian citizen, and a Slovenian woman, one day also become President of the European Commission? It seems written in the stars since ...

But let's not dust off the crystal ball of the future before it's blown. Let us now be guided by your star and the many stars of the European flag. We ourselves are Belgian and fervent Europeans - both lifelong. The EU is the best thing that could ever happen to us as European citizens; thanks to you, your group, and all the other contributors for helping to shape it.

In the meantime, we're writing something on our website "*burgerzin-en-logica.com*" about politics and about women and art. That last section will become a separate website sometime next year, but who cares? We just wrote a text for a 'work of art' with this title:

Allegory of Growing Love. The (normal) olive tree and also the (symbolic) Toi-et-Moi Tree of Sant'Emiliano in Abbey (Abbazia) San Pietro, Bovara (Trevi), Italy.

A common olive tree, albeit already quite famous locally. That tree inspired us to symbolically name it a "*Toi-et-Moi Tree*", a special tree of love. This text is available for free on our website in English. For the love of ...

There are two main ideas in this text, and we are sending you this letter for one of them. You and your team can easily change the name: "***A tree per child***". We admit it could be catchier, more inspiring. The principle is simple. There are a great many intra-European migrants, primarily from Western European countries, who go to live in southern and central European countries. The reason: there's a lot of space there. We know that in some places, and perhaps especially in Spain alone, this causes significant problems for the local population. We cannot and will not comment on that here. In any case, there is a great deal of open space within the EU. And people don't just love sun and water, but oh so much: space, or something like daily freedom!

In any case, we know personally that many of these people feel relatively lonely (or are beginning to feel lonely) because they barely speak the native language, which is usually extremely difficult for Western Europeans to learn. We hope that some of these countries, particularly Central European ones, will finally recruit more language teachers, so that more cultural and human exchange can take place. However, we are not addressing you on this point.

Most of the world realizes they need to do something about the climate. "*More green*" isn't even an ideology, but a commonplace (sic) thing, like eating and drinking, sleeping, and getting up every day. Many children in the same countries as Belgium, the Netherlands, and others have little or no green space at home or in their living environment, living in extremely urbanized areas. They are often also poor, or their families can barely afford vacations, if at all.

We know that in Flanders and the Netherlands, all sorts of volunteers are working to offer these children alternative or "*real vacations*" something that carries our greatest respect and admiration.

Let's try to summarize it into one conclusion. Couldn't the EU help launch such an initiative, allowing Belgian, Dutch, and so on, intra-migrants in, say, Central Europe, and so on, to give children from their countries living in urban areas a real, spacious holiday during the school holidays? After all, the language is common, and there could be many advantages – even in the long term. We don't want to provide a SWOT analysis of "*A tree per child*" here. Your services have highly qualified people. It's about the ideal, which exists nationally but apparently not at all within Europe.

With this ideal, we believe we can contribute to many positive human and social goals. It's not a Bologna project for students (18 years and older), but you understand; something along those lines, or thoroughly European, embodying one of the ideas of this wonderful human and social project of the EU.

We don't know if your husband speaks sweet 'nothings' to you in the morning, like "*meine süße Urska*". We obviously can't, or rather, may not, and won't repeat that here, partly because we have a few German-speaking girlfriends whom we simply don't address in that intimate way, but only friendly - and not in the morning. We do hope, however, that you can establish a working group, or in some other way, perhaps in collaboration with various EU member states, so that this ideal of "*A tree per child*" can become a project.

We thank you for your willing reading and wish you a wonderful mandate, and of course, a very pleasant life, with your Tadej, pardon, with your süße Liebe.

Sincerely,

Jean-Marie De Dijn

Appendix 2.

Scrivi a MELONI Giorgia: MELONI_G@CAMERA.IT

EU, August 2025.

To Giorgia Meloni, Prime Minister of la bella Italia

Dear Prime Minister of la bella Italia,
Dear Giorgia Meloni,

We can hardly congratulate you on your appointment as Prime Minister of this wonderful country, as you've been Prime Minister for quite some time. Although!? That, in fact, is a remarkable achievement, and doubly so. You are both the first female Prime Minister of Italy and, apparently - always keep your fingers crossed, even when all the time passes - a truly long time, by your Italian political standards! So, sincere congratulations.

It's great that you use a public email address for your position. Hopefully, it's not just for your fellow countrymen. Let's try it out.

Tens of millions of foreign and, of course, local tourists visit la bella Italia. You live in, without a doubt, the most beautiful country in the world that simply has everything. Everything? Indeed, everything can always be improved. Even when these tourists only stay in Italy for a relatively short time, they see things with their own standards - with their glasses, with their perspective - that they learned at home, wherever that home may be. This way, they see a lot of things, or different things, and occasionally, genuinely things that might make bella Italia a little better. Are they allowed to?

This means that Italy receives millions of visitors each year who pay to stay, but who can ***offer ideas for free***! To, of course, la bella Italia, whether very locally, regionally, or for what's called structural purposes! You undoubtedly won't meet anyone but a stray student who'll be making economic or even military proposals to the country.

But this is both more realistic and idealistic. In infinitely small to somewhat larger administrative domains, a vast number of proposals can flow in statically every year – many of which will certainly be useful. These proposals are, without any compensation, out of what the old-fashioned term goodwill or a form of extra gift to the country that has brought this tourist so much joy. How can these ideas be received/processed? You have enough staff to devise and implement them in the simplest and most effective way. Like a waiter asking, "*Did you enjoy your meal*?" when clearing the empty plates, you can ask, "*What did you 'see'*?" – or something like that.

May we now tell you two things ourselves, after seeing them?

Of course, we've already been to la bella Italia. There's so much to see. We were also amazed. We love three things: books + women + trees. On the endless roads in the vast Po Valley, but also alongside the countless canals in, for example, the Emilia-Romagna region, you can

hardly see a tree, which is quite remarkable for a traditional cycling country. Where can cyclists rest in the shade, leaning against a ...? Those vast areas resemble a "*deserto verde*" Industrial agriculture, necessary to feed the world's population, surely doesn't stand in the way of any intensive tree development, especially along those roads and canals! Trees offer so many advantages. Could you please establish a serious working committee that simply brings more trees to large parts of la bella Italia?

There's something more. La Bella Italia loves beauty and love. We just wrote a text about an Italian ... tree on our website "*burgerzin-en-logica.com*":

Allegory of Growing Love. The (normal) olive tree and also the (symbolic) Toi-et-Moi Tree of Sant'Emiliano in Abbey (Abbazia) San Pietro, Bovara (Trevi), Italy.

Allegoria dell'Amore che cresce. L'ulivo (normale) e anche l'albero Toi-et-Moi (simbolico) di Sant'Emiliano nell'Abbazia di San Pietro, Bovara (Trevi), Italia.

A common olive tree, albeit already quite famous locally. That tree inspired us to symbolically name it a "*Toi-et-Moi Tree*", a special tree of love. This text is available for free on our website in English. For the love of ...

Your sleeves are being pulled in every direction, both domestically and internationally. You have to stand your ground to survive it all, but it gives you adrenaline and certainly personal satisfaction. Do you still have time for the little things in life, for the almost invisible Italy? For an ... olive tree, something green!? Which perhaps from now on can also be a living symbol of something you Italians have been giving us for so long, especially through film and opera: love. Credi ancora nell'Amore?

You could always organize something around that eternal olive tree in Bovara-Trevi, from now on also a place where young Italians can express their eternal love by giving a Toi-et-Moi ring, under the Toi-et-Moi Tree. You could give a fiery, inspiring speech there about more greenery (trees) in all sorts of important regions of la bella Italia. And/or about love, truly, l'amore o l'eterno sale della vita.

If you ever want to visit this ordinary/symbolic tree, please don't invite us. We'd love to look into your strong eyes. But our aging hearts can't handle it. Yet time is fluid. Perhaps on a later visit, preferably with a grande amore femminile, we can share a bite of the "*Pizza Giorgita*" you introduced there and then. A pizza that will henceforth be the symbol of Italy's love for itself and for the world, and of the world's love for l'eternamente bella Italia. Credi ancora nell'Amore?

Sincerely, and all the best in your politics and ordinary life,

Jean-Marie De Dijn

Appendix 3.

sindaco@comune.trevi.pg.it; mirko.menicacci@comune.trevi.pg.it;
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isabella.burganti@comune.trevi.pg.it; cinzia.speroni@comune.trevi.pg.it
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marco.baldacci@comune.trevi.pg.it; giuseppe.rosichetti@comune.trevi.pg.it
dalila.stemperini@comune.trevi.pg.it; sandro.mignozzetti@comune.trevi.pg.it
nicola.terenzi@comune.trevi.pg.it

EU, August 2025.

To the City Council of Trevi, la bella Italia

Dear Mayor,
Dear City Council Members,

As Belgians, members of the EU, we have been convinced Europeans our entire lives. The EU, though it always has its shortcomings as a human project, is without a doubt the best political and human project in all of political and human history. Imagine if we could simply pay with the euro in Italy a while ago. And so on!

We are quite multilingual and, wonderfully enough, know Italian quite well from operas. No drawing is needed, and we won't make a sound here either. Unfortunately, we would have to write this letter to you through a translation into Italian, of course, in this case free of charge (...) via Google Translate. But out of respect for your language, which is so melodious and which we hope to master one day, we are sending you this short letter in English only. For which we apologize. We hope you understand our message.

We currently have one website, "*burgerzin-en-logica.com*". We expect to add a second one next year, titled "*Most.attractive.women.in.history.eu*". It goes without saying that many of these most attractive women are located in la bella Italia, historically speaking, and that's how it should be! Meanwhile, the section about these women is posted at the bottom of our (main) website. If you're interested, you'll see a series of attractive women already discussed, alongside one text discussing them.

We are, among other things, academically trained as philosophers and are keen to offer a "*different perspective*" For example, we've just published an "image + accompanying text" with a title that will be familiar to you—at least partially at first:

Allegory of Growing Love. The (normal) olive tree and also the (symbolic) Toi-et-Moi Tree of Sant'Emiliano in Abbey (Abbazia) San Pietro, Bovara (Trevi), Italy.

Allegoria dell'Amore che cresce. L'ulivo (normale) e anche l'albero Toi-et-Moi (simbolico) di Sant'Emiliano nell'Abbazia di San Pietro, Bovara (Trevi), Italia.

It goes without saying that we cannot translate this English text into Italian either. We apologize.

This tree in your sub-municipality of Bovara is beautiful in itself. It inspired us and led us to write a story about a special tree of love, a Toi-et-Moi Tree - compared to the 'more familiar' Toi-et-Moi ring. We found this olive tree - or pair of trees - rather by chance via the internet. There is already an English Wikipedia page about the abbey.

See San Pietro in Bovara - Wikipedia

We couldn't find an Italian Wiki page; may we suggest that you...!? Hopefully, that tree itself will also acquire symbolic meaning, as a special tree of love. You probably know that the Toi-et-Moi ring is normally given by a man to his wife. It signifies the start of their engagement, as a hope for eternal love. It would be wonderful if couples would give such a Toi-et-Moi ring - here!!! Under this olive tree, perhaps from now on the (first) Toi-et-Moi Tree, of la bella Italia, of the entire world!

For reasons, we have also addressed a letter to Ursula Von Der Leyen and Giorgia Meloni. We naturally have no (party) political motives whatsoever, but certainly a social, idealistic, or constructive one. You can find those letters on the website under the aforementioned text as attachments 1 and 2. You have received attachment 3 there, purely in accordance with the rules of certain diplomacy.

We wish you a pleasant reading of this letter, a beautiful life in Trevi and in beautiful Italy. And have a nice day.

Sincerely, and very grateful for the careful preservation of this unique tree – for us too! Grazie mille a tutti!

Jean-Marie De Dijn

Andrée Geulen (1921 - 31 May 2022) + with young student (EU, 19XX), photo dated 18/02/2010 taken at AG's home by amateur Jean-Marie De Dijn. personal collection of 'photographer' and now also of you + triple portrait Andrée Geulen, student and her future son, Ľubica Hromadova, acrylic, 2019, Slovensko/Slovakia.

T.I.S..

.....

Anna Achmatova (Анна Ахматова, pseudonym of Anna Gorenko of А́нна Андре́евна Горе́нко + 1889 – 1966), portrait by Nathan Isaevich Altman (Натан Исаевич Альтман or Натан Ісайович Альтман + 1889 – 1970), oil, 1914, State Russian Museum (Государственный Русский музей), Saint Petersburg.

T.I.S..

.....

Betty (but for reasons replaced by us by White on Withe from ... = read further please), Gerhard Richter (1932 till?), oil , 1988, The Saint Louis Art Museum, Missouri.

T.I.S..

.....

Bildnis des Lächelns einer Dame (Portrait of a Lady's Smile), Paul Klee (1879 - 1940), watercolour, 1921, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts.

T.I.S..

.....

Chez Père Lathuille, Édouard Manet (1832 - 1883), oil, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Tournai.

T.I.S..

.....

Clara Serena Rubens, Peter Paul Rubens (1577 - 1640), oil, circa 1616, The Liechtenstein Museum, Wien.

T.I.S..

.....

De harmonicaspeler, Gust De Smet (1877 – 1843), oil, 1926, private collection.

+ in attachment: Zoals de ouden zongen, zo piepen de jongen (1593 - 1678), oil, Jacob Jordaens (1638 - 1640), Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Antwerpen.

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Epilogue.

1. The harmonica player, who plays the accordion. Or musing about extramarital sex at a foreign world exhibition?

The future painter may have been born with the caul, but certainly not in a pot of paint. That would have greatly hindered the mother with her now most intensely developed senses and therefore prevented this birth. Gustave Franciscus (Gustaaf) De Smet was simply born in Ghent on 21 January 1877. He would therefore very logically die, incidentally very close to that same Ghent because in the then very rural village of Deurle on the 8th of October 1943. That Deurle was so much or so small as a village that it was incorporated into the larger village of Sint-Martens-Latem sometime after WWII. That (abbreviated) Latem has been, because it was close to the big city of Ghent and because it was very village-like and therefore very beautiful and quiet, already about half a century ago expertly destroyed by those who, apart from the usual notables, never had a place there; the rich snobs; **see Jenny Montigny and especially part 5.** He, once a baby then a toddler and a growing row further through the all-go-rhythm of life until he became very capable and sought after, even more so after his death among other things and preferably in his old village Deurle where ... Latem ... Amen (and Out) ..... He was the brother of Leon De Smet (Leon is also known as Léon while Léon is certainly never recognized as Leon), who was a little younger but apparently somehow had better genes because he would live much longer because he breathed the air of Ghent and surroundings continuously between 1881 - 1966. Both were the sons of a professional 'regular' painter - in fact a house painter who was also reportedly a "*photographer*", when photography was still a profession that was perfectly in line with the artistic pursuits of at least half painters and has since been declassified - oh, you know why that "*oh*" is appropriate here because you

too ... selfies ... This father De Smet indeed also painted some scenery in his spare time for, among others, theater companies from Ghent. Paint was instilled in the lungs of these sons from a young age like air and would descend completely responsibly and simultaneously ascend via their skilled hands; both became celebrated or sought-after painters. It's just that one thing sometimes goes together with the other.

The (paint)brothers Gust and Leon both also became members/collaborators/participants/??? of or were simply drawn into what one may call something like "the Latem school". However, three times pay attention: there is complete agreement among the very broad Belgian - Flemish public and not to forget among the richer collectors, so among all gallery owners/sellers, about the 'real' existence or the correctness of - the attribution of - this term. This is more nuanced or more or less thoughtful among the let's say somewhat more experienced Belgian - Flemish art historians with especially few or hopefully no ties with the rich collectors and gallery owners - who seeks, will sometimes find and even nothing. They nuance or count better; they distinguish at least several or different (three, four, ???) Latem schools. There is a great deal of and often very impressive professional literature on this on Belgian soil, which we ourselves gladly went through to the max and were even able to purchase in part. Which in turn strangely results in a total absence of a wiki page in English! Indeed, "*a Latem school*" or "*School of Latem*" you will not find so quickly. Although there may be one villain who reads these lines and - of course not going to thank us but - urgently produces such an English, French, Chinese wiki page, among other things or at least mainly with a view to and more tourists for the so-called attractive village of Sint-Marterns-Latem (attractive in any case for anyone who wants to see with eyes and books in hand how man is a rapist of what he/she lists as very much to see). And certainly to let even more money, now international money, flow around those Latem (art) school goers.

Gustave also Gustaaf also Gust and always De Smet has been considered by the good people of art historians for some time now as a member of the big three of Flemish expressionism, for which a duo must form this trio. Although the trio could also have been a quatro or quartet! His brother (Leon/Léon) is never mentioned in that trio, so in that quatro, although he had great qualities as a painter and was always busy there in Latem. That duo in turn needs two individuals, the first of which is the giant Constant Permeke (1886 - 1952), a wonderful, you could say, world-class painter and graphic artist who was also present and busy in Latem for a relatively short time. And who unfortunately also wanted to make real sculptures. Every bird sings as it is caged, but Permeke apparently had a bit too much energy and desire for freedom and would not want to fly the skies of the painters alone with the swallows. But that was not enough for him: this energetic man began, and then in a truly horrible way, to make sculptures. These are works for which one could certainly design those mentioned foreign-language Wiki pages, because if those statues are exported, that could above all slightly increase the GNP of our country, help stabilize social security, ensure development aid for the good children in Bimbamdonia for a few more days - all the best in the possible worlds of ugly, expensive art. That sculpting business of Constant Permeke is qualitatively a strange thing. He is forgiven because of more than enough monumentality, tenderness (certainly even!) or simply genius in his graphic and pictorial work. That sculpting business is, mind you, in a perfectly logical, now three-dimensional monumental way, a continuation of, or a worldly example of how logic likes to become illogical: beautiful, isn't it! The other of the duo and trio and de facto quatro was Fritz Van den Berghe (1883 - 1939). He - we do not want to call him "*Fritz*" here in a friendly way because that became one of the nicknames of the Germans shortly after his death - was a phenomenon such as 'it' is born every so often (namely ... years/decades). He was a man/artist who could not be grasped and followed by

himself, a wonder of imagination, sensitivity and technical skill. Among these two brilliant artists, both apparently little known internationally to this day (so you see, gentlemen and ladies art historians of all countries, unite once in a while!) Gust De Smet remains somewhat quiet or - to put it in painterly terms - pale. Also (paint) brother Leon, to be honest, because let's be honest, pales in comparison to that duo-trio-quatro.

We will then, as it were, automatically not talk much about this discussed (sic) work of art "*The Harmonica Player*" (*'De harmonicaspeler'*), then and in fact as almost always about what associations it brings about with a person, preferably relevant associations because we hopefully never and never write intellectually scrolling, say intellectually bedwetting. But we like logic that at times and even publicly beloved becomes illogical - just see the sculptures of Permeke, who just like "*Fritz*" is never called by his first name "*Constant*" - now for other reasons. In a small because anecdotal way we can also establish that illogic in this one work by Gust De Smet, because an exhaustive, monographic analysis or study of his oeuvre; we have neither the time nor the desire for that. We thank the gentlemen or ladies or both sexes of the internet, for that internet. And we also thank even the gentlemen and so on of the UG for making some theses or final works available completely free of charge to any reader via this medium. We ourselves must devote a writing - partly but proudly - to this apparent, scientific freedom in the foreseeable future, which must therefore also produce ... censorship, mind you, by the current dean (the well-known histerirorica or whatever Gita D.) himself of the Faculty of Arts and Philosophy, within which this study of art history is also housed. But for that writing you may exercise some patience and we must cultivate some extra sarcasm. Our collection of writings on this medium of the internet, as has been said from time to time, has no need for pure scientific practice and is therefore not a collection of continuous notes from professional literature, as if that would therefore (sic) be very and above all multi-sidedly informative. Here we have caught an interesting fish on our casting line of art and women. The work from 1926 by the unmistakably professional painter Gust De Smet discussed or referred to here was given the name or title "*The Harmonica Player"*. How that happened, we do not know. It is understandable that a work of art that had been worked on for so long, could be given something like a name. The title therefore implies that it has 'something' to do with 'something' from the work. This painting is now really not completely abstract, say totally unreal, life-worldly definable. Perhaps you are familiar or just familiar with Mrs. or Miss Stefanie Heyvaert. But we do not know this lady at all, then purely businesslike because this lady was so kind and above all called and qualified to study art history and to complete this master thesis: "*Comparative narratological study of popular entertainment in the oeuvre of Gustave De Smet and Edgard Tytgat*." ("*Vergelijkende narratologische studie van volksvermaak in het oeuvre van Gustave De Smet en Edgard Tytgat*."). That took place in 2006 - 2007 at the UG, the University of Ghent, the city where our Gust and his brother and their father ... and later nearby ...

Mrs. or Miss Stefanie Heyvaert looked and wrote wittily in and about the oeuvre of these two important Belgian painters, at least as far as this painting is concerned, because we really had no time for the further more comprehensive reading of her final work - but we did have a lot of desire! She did her research thoroughly because she found no less than three variants of this theme from 1926, including this oil painting next to a drawing and another - preceding - oil painting. Because of this as it were redundant information-wise confrontation, which is nevertheless fairly self-evident in art history and especially in terms of preceding pen drawings or sketches, this young lady must see what we as owlets indeed have not seen once, when we nevertheless selected this work to say 'something' about it on this website. Therefore, we feel called upon by our conscience and by our sense of respect to quote from

her master's thesis: "*Why this work is called „The accordion player" is a mystery to me, since an accordion player is depicted*." ("*Waarom dit werk „De harmonicaspeler" wordt genoemd, is me een raadsel aangezien een accordeonspeler is afgebeeld.*"). Which we had not seen! Who else had seen that - not? You see what confusion a title can cause if it apparently does not fit the depicted; one does not even see the 'real' depicted, in this case the real musical instrument! There is nevertheless a very big difference between a harmonica (of the title) and an accordion (of the work with that title), especially materially, because both produce music - if played at least.

The statement of the excellent art history student that the musical instrument in our painting - apparently a beloved work in the oeuvre of Gust De Smet; see further - is wrong, is purely objectively correct. But this statement is not entirely true. It is also half wrong in the sense that the thing that the man is holding in his hands, that he is using to produce sounds with certainty, is a musical instrument tout court. In addition, it is an instrument that one can play relatively easily. An accordion is certainly not an organ, although it has a lot to do with it because it can be considered the poor man's organ. Incidentally, the accordion also has in common with the harmonica that both instruments need air. In one case, air is blown into it by the player, and in the other case it is drawn in by simultaneously playing and pulling the instrument. Such an accordion does have something special, something of both fairly great force (the pulling), of subsequently reduced force (the pushing in again) in addition to the playing itself (by plucking the buttons). It seems tempting to see in these three interrelated actions of this man again and again something similar or symbolic concerning his broader, say possibly relational attitude towards this woman. That, that we are not going to do here: may you also think along and think further? The very well-known Dutch/Flemish art historian Piet Boyens (Netherlands, 1947) studied art history in the Low Countries. That happened near the Ghent of Gust De Smet, in the Netherlands and he would also obtain a doctorate there just about Gust De Smet! Unfortunately, due to circumstances we cannot look up and read everything, or unfortunately we have not gone through the results of that doctorate or afterwards his by definition very valuable oeuvre catalogue about Gust De Smet. Piet Boyens has certainly openly shown a preference for this painting - the harmonica player or the accordion player. He - or the publisher, but what does it matter? - has just placed this painting on the cover of another published study of his, "Masterpieces of Belgian Art. The Simon Collection" (Brussels, 2003). We know almost nothing about this collection and hope to be able to buy that book about it anyway, preferably second hand or second priced. This collection is apparently impressive and was built up by the important German journalist and publisher Heinrich Simon, 1980 - 1941, a man who, as the dates suggest, found it better to leave Germany after the Nazi takeover. See:

Heinrich Simon (Verleger) – Wikipedia

On that wiki page, there is - still - nothing about this absolutely astonishing collection of Belgian art, which is in foreign hands and shows a pleiad of Belgian artists between roughly 1880 - 1930. You can get an idea via the following link, where you can find this work by Gust De Smet in actual or relative size among other works by him. See:

Simon Collection of Belgian Art

It goes without saying that one or the other Dutch-speaking person - hello Piet Boyens - may also dedicate a Dutch-language wiki page to this, and thus amend the German-language wiki page accordingly.

Now, unfortunately we have not looked into this book by art historian Piet Boyens either, which is much less present in Dutch-language libraries (so in Flanders). In other words, we have no iconographic knowledge about this remarkable painting from an absolutely certain formal because academic specialist. To be honest, we have also not checked whether the student mentioned has processed this earlier study from 2003 in her work from 2006 - 2007, although students usually simply cannot read 'everything' about their subjects. We have read a small book from our own library about Gust De Smet, which was written by a certain cultural officer of the modern municipality of Latem. With something potentially interesting for this study in it. That cultural officer was between 2001 and 2011 the same Piet Boyens, who was also chosen as an honorary citizen of that municipality very nicely later on his retirement. In that booklet, which we cannot handle for the time being because we are literally far away from that book from our own collection and also from those other relevant books from the collection of Belgian libraries, we have nevertheless remembered something funny, let us say. Gust was happily married his entire life. Even more; his widow would do everything to literally keep his artistic legacy alive. It was an intention in which she would succeed with flying colours because their house with many furnishings (paintings among other things), became a public museum as part of the heritage of the rich snob village of Latem. That is quite interesting and commendable but whether that is sustainable, also given the multiple and always relatively small museum presence in the region; see Jenny Montigny? Well, hopefully not every interesting artist residing in Belgium will get his own museum after his life because then the traditionally overpopulated Belgium will have an even greater housing shortage. But in that little book by Piet Boyens the reader can suddenly read that somewhere before the year 1926 - the year of finishing this painting, if it is not antedated at least - the good Gust sometimes bragged about his special trip to Paris in a café in Deurle and the surrounding area. And while his own legal wife apparently did not sit in a café, or in that same café. He did have something to say about Paris, Gust De Smet, because he had apparently met special women there. The iron construction that is clearly visible on the harmonica player and accordion player, is therefore perhaps not part of a harbour scene but simply the representation of the already fairly famous Eiffel Tower. Even our mother once brought us that as a small statue as a child in the late 1960s, while we knew nothing about Paris and even thought that small plastic statue was rubbish. Admittedly, always honestly or given up: in that background of that same painting, a Belgian tricolour flag can also be seen! But don't worry. In pre-WWII Europe, people were crazy about world exhibitions, to which a part of the then known, say civilized world was invited. And by a great coincidence, in 1925, or the year before this painting was finished, a world exhibition took place in the French capital of Paris.

See: **Exposition internationale des arts décoratifs et industriels modernes — Wikipédia**

And there, besides a pavilion of the still new and unfortunately still existing USSR, there was also a pavilion of the also relatively new Belgium, a country that at that time had not yet celebrated a centenary but was in sight! Among the more than ten million visitors must have been Gust De Smet. And where there are many tourists, and especially foreigners or rich and lonely men, there are ladies, ladies of pleasure. Germany was not present for one well-known reason: WWI or the Great War. Was German and enormous art lover Heinrich Simon visiting as an individual? Or for those same ladies as for Gust and All Men? Or more specifically: was Heinrich there for or with that one lady, from this painting, that would end up in his collection quickly because before 1933 - as a souvenir from Paris or something much better and let's say much more cultural than something like "*the French disease*"!?

2. Anything goes? Or how to increase from August /Gust and Augusta/Gusta to - quantitalitive augmentation!

Isn't it wonderful that the eternally, even after his death, deeply married painter Gust was allowed to make such pleasant, wide-legged excursions from his dearest wife, even if it was perhaps literally only once physically. Perhaps he continued that real-real excursion in a half-symbolic, half-concrete way, because in a perfectly saleable and clearly also - to Heinrich Simon - sold painting, if it had not been made for that man - as his art sensual souvenir d'amour. Did the necessary secrecy behind the possible less moral facts behind this painting make the painter so doubtful or did it suddenly throw him completely off the map, resulting in the awarding of this title (with the wrong harmonica), as opposed to the actually depicted musical instrument (the accordion)? We know of no works by Gust De Smet that completely or predominantly testify to surrealism, even though that was a style that he may have already known in 1926, possibly certainly because of his previous trip to Paris. La Ville Lumière was, together with the rather Belgian Brussels, the double capital of surrealism. Gust De Smet was then quite quick as a very partial and especially never officially proclaimed semi- or pre-surrealist. After all, his fellow countryman, contemporary and currently internationally terribly overpraised René Magritte (1898 - 1967) would precisely before this painting by colleague De Smet from 1926 artistically orient himself differently, namely completely towards surrealism. Magritte stayed after the creation of this painting or between 1927 and 1930 the entire time in Paris, with the so-called fine fleur of surrealism including the completely deranged, intellectual dictator André Breton (1896 - 1966).

We can further think how it was possible that a sensible and sensitive person like this painter could make such a rather stupid mistake with the name of this painting. If we want to give possible reasons for this right away, then we make reservations about those reasons at the same time and in advance with the following three meta-meta-reservations (?):

a) We know nothing about ego documents of this man with possible writings about his own work. And we have not (yet) read the previously mentioned important study work of specialist Piet Boyens;

b) We also have no idea, because of the previous remark, to what extent Gust De Smet made other such confusions between titles and their respective paintings. Was there a system in his partial madness?

c) And what about his brother Leon/Léon, who incidentally lived not far away all his life. Did they sometimes or regularly - or never!? - look at and evaluate each other's work? And consequently, did they then compare the titles of those works of art, did they discuss what, according to them ultimately always bourgeois standards, were appropriate titles, and so on? We also know no ego documents about brother Leon. And we have read something about his work, although not a standard work or oeuvre catalogue. The latter may be forgiven for the time being, because that oeuvre catalogue does not seem to exist yet: work for motivated and time-minded (younger) art historians! There is a thorough overview work by - not surprisingly - Piet Boyens in collaboration with art historian Hans Bosschaert: Leon De Smet, Tielt, 1994.

For what non-exhaustive reasons could Gust De Smet have committed this stupidity? We try to logically penetrate what is/seems illogical:

1) Gust De Smet simply could not technically reproduce a real or credible-looking harmonica in painting. It sounds almost ridiculous, but something as simple as painting a

seemingly small musical instrument like a (mouth) harmonica, and moreover connected to a special body part like the crucial mouth; we assume that this is not at all easy, even for a professional painter. We would like to see an art-historical study of paintings, in this case almost exclusively portraits, of musicians during their professional or at least intensely musical actions! Besides, how difficult must it be to depict group performances with musicians, if we ourselves, despite our fairly extensive knowledge of art history, do not know of a single (not even successful) work of art by one person who plays music alone - with a known instrument such as a piano, flute, accordion or harmonica, if you will. Anyway, we do know of one exception; see our epilogue;

2) A stupid reason could be that an ultimately visually hardly noticeable (mouth)harmonica would not stand out compositionally and/or symbolically there is hardly anything to be done with it. We already pointed out the formal ergo possible content similarities between the woman and the man via his accordion;

3) We were not there again. Gust De Smet and/or just his client Heinrich Simon, one of them, or both together, indulged their lusts with an interesting lady in Paris. While he or both were accompanied by a real harmonica player in the sex rhythm; in Paris all the airs are sultry. We have read and looked around quite a bit out of eternal curiosity, but of the combination of live sex with live, say really played music, we still have very little knowledge. To be completely honest; we know nothing about it at all. But we can imagine such a connection, think of the Bolero by Maurice Ravel (1875 - 1937) which is apparently ... We are already considering going through the oeuvre catalogue of Gust De Smet by the venerable Piet Boyens ad hoc. Considering his last mention in a smaller publication about certainly scabrous or 'honest' chatter or pub talk and before that (...) sexual adultery by Gust De Smet, we expect to be able to pick up more gossip! Let's go Pete!!! In the meantime, something like electronically playable music has existed for more than half a century, where one can play perfectly nice, rousing or just more intimate tunes as one wishes;

4) Here is a possibility for an interesting or instructive variation on the previous possibility. And avant. How liberal, say, sexually promiscuous Gust De Smet was before his marriage and especially afterwards and thus until his death in that marital bed; to know an answer to that, we will probably have to wait for further confessions via the seriously mischievous connoisseur Piet Boyens et allii tutti quanti. What we know with certainty or in social generality, is that the sexual life of contemporaries such as Gust De Smet and almost all previous ones up to or from roughly the entry of Christianity in our regions, was a feeble affair. It was mainly either exclusively on and off, or by the man on the woman, who (therefore ...) only had to be, if not receptive, just almost completely passive. Gust De Smet would also throw some more spicy scenes on the screen in and around 1926, which clearly take place in brothels: wow. He was very much in agreement with quite a few of his Belgian and European contemporaries. What was not on display there and to this day in the museums, was something in terms of more sexual or erotic technique ergo pleasure - for the man. With absolute certainty this was because certain sexually pleasurable practices were never, ever 'performed' in the marital bed, no matter how liberal let alone how devout one was at the table before and after. Why in these times of the interbellum this sexually and therefore both privately and extremely socially important behaviour changed or became more creative, is not discussed here and is certainly not an easy theme to unravel. It is easy to guess at which places at least men went looking for all kinds of techniques. The confusion between (named) harmonica and (shown) accordion may provide a small clue here. All in all, one should never underestimate how everyone had been steeped in all kinds of referential matters (symbolism/iconography) for centuries. And then that symbolism was about to explode publicly or at least artistically via the now flaming surrealism, although the worldly prude James Ensor (1860 - 1949) and before that and purely provocatively even more intensely,

albeit in his life course ambivalent Félicien Rops (1833 - 1898), had done their introductory erotically exploding best. We may safely assume that this Parisian light lady in question, in the matter of Gust, Heinrich or both, was extremely willing to him/them because he/she had given him/them a wonderful 'extra' blowjob or, in another Dutch expression; had sucked him/them off, more technically expressed, had satisfied him/them orally. And that was, the repetition is a didactic principle, an act in addition to a special or extra pleasure for the man in any case, which the good housewife who in any case remained faithful to Gust all her life and did so until long after his death, did not or never did. At least she would never do that while he was alive and well because afterwards she might even have sexually disturbing dreams about his harmonica, his penis, his brush of love. By the way, a harmonica is also called a "*mouth-harmonica*" (mondharmonica) in Dutch. In other words, a terribly complicated lapse could have been made here. The painter, whether or not at the request of client Heinrich Simon, knew perfectly well what had happened, namely pleasant, adulterous or not, sex in Paris, whether or not initiated or with oral snacks in between. And what other variations are possible? In any case, such new and very intensely received oral sex, in itself justified the symbolic image of a harmonica taken in the mouth by definition, into which air (...) 'must' be sucked in vigorously. But that would be a bit too risky or suggestive because who knows what Mrs. De Smet or Mrs. Simon or both would/would think!? After all, both ladies were very familiar with very art-involved husbands: one was a painter himself and the other a top collector of mainly paintings. And, of course, they too had been brought up in another, say deeply of iconography saturated world, not like now for decades where since then one knows almost nothing more - of among other things, if not in the least of traditional images or the iconography that has prevailed for centuries. So that in these psychologically distorted times, but for the sake of preserving bourgeoisness and good marriage, a distorted image partly arose, namely in the image of not a harmonica but of a very modest accordion, so to speak. The title of this painting ("*The harmonica player*") is then an extremely complicated lapse. Although we admit that we ourselves do not find a way in this reasoning very well. In that ultimately slightly frivolous way, this painting from 1926 is an intriguing reflection of a beautiful new experience of sexuality? It was a sexual experience that during this concrete social life, because of so-called (bourgeois) decency, had never been possible, also behind "huis clos" or the densest walls that a person could build then and now and in the past, because in his mind and around his body. It is no coincidence that shortly afterwards, because in 1943, a controversial play would be written, by a Frenchman who spent most of his life in Paris. In that year 1943, writer and philosopher of something like existentialism Jean-Paul Sartre (1905 - 1980) wrote the play with this famous name: "Huis clos". The pulling and pushing of the effectively depicted accordion could therefore clearly (...) refer to an era in which something like a straitjacket, not only but certainly strongly in the sexual area, had to be pulled and dragged, in order to create beautiful, entertaining, if you like, more cynical art such as theater or music with it. It is otherwise quite funny that Sartre had understood nothing about his so-called essence of this play: "*L'Enfer, c'est les Autres*." The man was also gigantically but really gigantically ugly; who could see in him something like heaven or "Le Ciel", than at his very best with the most admiring gaze an earthly oasis? And consequently there was the "looking glass self": how could this man know himself as attractive, for the other sex, for the Other? In itself, that observation is part of another, moral problematic. But Sartre understood absolutely nothing of the inviting appearance of Man to the Other through his Body. And that role of the body in the encounter with fellow human beings, was/is sexual indeed and certainly: something more, higher, better or more human than just the missionary position or 'even' "*Blowjob and fucking*".

We sincerely thank art historian Stefanie Heyvaert, who graduated with her master's thesis, for the implications of her, in our opinion, reasonable provocation: "*Why this work is called „The accordion player" is a mystery to me, since an accordion player is depicted*." ("*Waarom dit werk „De harmonicaspeler" wordt genoemd, is me een raadsel aangezien een accordeonspeler is afgebeeld.*"). Of course, we have some formally higher or academic experience and especially at the UG then also RUG (Rijksuniversiteit Gent - Ghent State University). We studied there in prehistoric or pre-woke times, although we also had to pay attention then and there, to our thoughts and words versus the teaching staff. Although we will have to go into some of this elsewhere, in suddenly pure woke times in 2013 we formally registered for a doctorate (in history) at the same university UG previously RUG. And it would go down terribly badly despite all the truly informally scientifically shared top expectations - by woke, in addition to the apparently eternal jealousy. Our theme, politics around WWII, is of course a very delicate or difficult subject if one wishes to treat it somewhat passionately, overarchingly and in depth. But. In that UG now RUG, or at least in the history department, in contrast to our philosophical study period in the 80s, you are not allowed to think freely, say thoroughly, say really responsibly, let alone write and especially not publish - the public must be spared new insights! We can do nothing other than conclude that formal or so-called academic historians, paid by the community to do their best, partly to thoroughly deceive that public. But as just announced, we will write about that later or soon elsewhere, motivated because with the courage of despair for better intellectual times. Moreover, what is something like science in essence, insofar as one can call art history or the history of art scientific? That is of course certainly at most in the field of renovations of works of art, because there it is strongly necessary and maximum to implement the knowledge of chemistry and physics. For the rest of art history and history, we would almost sneeringly, because mainly experience-based, want to say: let the beast of analyses and conclusions go! Or: **ANYTHING GOES**!!!

Anyone who wants to read through our few thousand pages that we have already released on the internet, albeit 'only' on our website burgerzin-en-logica.com, can already repeatedly determine how distorted something is as the so-called science - of history, historiography. One could moralize and point out the bad characters or at best the ideologically distorted semi-thinkers from the academic apparatus. It is, so to speak, even worse because there is a second fundamental problem, of which we do not know how it is being tackled worldwide, or whether it is being dealt with better or more scientifically honestly elsewhere. In the already better, albeit past or sincere because it is easy to situate historically, times at the Faculty of Arts and Philosophy at the UG then RUG, we received a great deal of philosophy of science as philosophy students in the 80s (of the previous century - sigh, deep sigh). And that by various professors/philosophers, often with a very high level including purely world level. We also know nothing about the curriculum of the academic art history programs in the Low Countries. But we are 100% certain that in the academic history programs not a single subject "*history of science*" is taught - at least in the Lowest of the Low Countries, namely in Belgium. That is to say that in Belgium university-trained historians know NOTHING about the history of something socially reasonably important like science!!! While they are hardly, if not completely insufficiently trained in something like scientific thinking itself: in the academic history program they have hardly any philosophy, no formal or informal logic at all, no notions of economics, political science, sociology nor of the crucial social psychology. Because they only have histories, each time anew a 'history of'. So in practical PRINCIPLE or at a meta-level all Belgian academically trained historians (in Dutch we have another great word or also the independent word "*geschied-kundigen*", or the experts ("*kundigen*") of history!!) alias the historians (in Dutch then the "*historici*"; presumably only in Dutch and

German can one make this very interesting distinction), know NOTHING about the HISTORY OF, among other things, THEIR OWN SUBJECT HISTORY! If necessary, reread the previous one - or preferably two or three times. Presumably that is somewhat more difficult or better or more nuanced in the academic study of art history because there have simply been quite a few diverse, more or less consecutive art styles, at least in Western art history.

Perhaps you have gleaned some history of science from texts large and small. Then you have almost undoubtedly heard of the historian of science Paul Feyerabend (1924 - 1994), who was trained as a musician and opera singer, among other things. Or, let's forget the rest of his interests and studies (haha). In his case, a musical education turned out to be an excellent or extremely suitable preparation for thinking about the history of all sciences on this globe. The man was aware of "*Publish or perish*" early on and wrote/published quite a lot. Of these, the most notorious book is certainly known to many: "*Against Method. Outline of an Anarchistic Theory of Knowledge*." (1975). The title is not a slight or understandable mistake like with our "*The Harmonica Player*", which could/should/could also be or somewhat more responsibly be "*The Accordion Player*". We simply cannot expect everyone to have a certain ambivalence or a sense of acrobatics, although Paul Feyerabend certainly does his utmost to do so. In particular, he did his meta-scientific best by launching the now famous scientific principle for others, and probably for quite a few the infamous scientific principle (pardon?): "*Anything goes*". Translated into simple language, the principle or call "*Anything goes*" means something like "*Kiss my *** firmly. Or never really kiss it*!". Or better expressed: "Study, study and study even more and thoroughly, as infinitely long and wide as possible. And ignore, do not accept everything relevant as relevant". By ignoring that we mean that you as a scientist should try to let gray and white, black, blue, and ??? steam escape from your gray cells, which you then let precipitate on your accompanying double folded sheets of paper (we are a bit backward, but writing with a PC does indeed have many advantages). Which you then lick or something similar the other way around, to let it dry anyway. And exclaim: "*Eureka*" - always with an exclamation mark but keep a question mark of a slightly larger font at hand! Indeed, then you have found your own chemical or ... or ... product, possibly via a previously non-existent formula, a formula that you then have to quickly and very hard look up again, as it were, this time purely scientifically or not just by chance. We will have to write more about this at other times and places, but certainly twenty years ago we proposed to the important Flemish politician, who was very well known as ... and also as ... Consequently (...) we proposed to this person, who we consider to be sensible and broad-minded, no less than five, let's say, innovative or applied courses in logic in the so-called "*Free Space*" ("*Vrije Ruimte*") of a large school group within his political area of influence. This free space is or was the legally permitted space to teach any other than normal subject to the (pre-)final year pupils of secondary education for a few hours a week. There was no interest and so our plans lie somewhere modestly gathering dust in one of our countless banana boxes. We detest complaining, as the verbal expression and psychological mechanism of the hypochondriac in particular. So always keep your chin up and push through, in addition to resting - although for health reasons we now have to completely reverse this order and priority for years and probably until our definitive eternity. In the meantime, we continue to think and look around and are amazed, astonished and personally and socially indignant that our so-called world-important doctorate on something as important as politics in times of crisis (as if WWII was not a major crisis), has not received any public follow-up whatsoever, in any way whatsoever. That since the so-called formal or real doctorate was started, it has been more than ten years since 2013, and then stopped somewhere in 2015 for some strange reason. We will also have

to discuss these not only scientifically strange reasons later on, or write further on the content (sigh) and therefore also meta-scientifically (deeper sigh).

A fitting joke here is that somewhere around 2014, or when we were already/still officially doing our PhDs, we almost literally bumped into professor, philosopher and mathematician Jean Paul Van Bendegem (1953) just as we were leaving the office building of the history department of the UG after a visit to our then formal supervisor Bruno De Wever. He hardly had time and we were able to share our admiration for a particularly successful PhD with him by the philosopher Karen François ("*Politics of mathematics. A theoretical-philosophical trajectory on the connections between mathematics and politics, with a practical application to mathematics education.*", "*Politiek van de wiskunde. Een theoretisch-filosofisch traject over de verbondenheden van de wiskunde met het politieke, met een praktische toepassing op het wiskundeonderwijs*.", VUB, 2008 + NB: we knew this lady because she had previously worked with Rudolf Boehm at the UG). He laughed once: "*We're doing our best.".* We told him of course that we were actually writing a new paradigm in (modern) history, in a different direction than ours (mainly philosophy; we never followed academic studies in history). And remember his short and telling answer: "*Very, very risky*". Indeed, the man had/has so much to do that we cannot blame him, as a philosopher of science among other things, for not having asked for our personal email address, so that 'therefore' we never received any follow-up through him. However, an attempt to write a new paradigm; how many Belgians have dared to do that in the last decades!? It is quite remarkable of course; either we were simply crazy. While we were at least formally or officially doing a PhD on such a gigantic, even doubly ambitious project or were therefore academically encouraged. Or we were extremely arrogant as well as far-sighted. By chance we recently found an interview with this philosopher, who has been retired for a few years now, on the well-known world wide web. And there we read again with great joy and, in the meantime, some reservations, his justification for introducing and cooperating in something like a post-graduate study "*School of Thinking*".

See: **School of Thinking: postgraduate studies to change your mind**

Because we also find this initiative very important in this context and want to advertise it in any way, we provide the full, original English-language justification here. By the way, this post-academic and one-year course is only in English, a matter with which we do not fully agree. You may also pay a hefty registration fee.

See: **About - School of Thinking**

"*Motivation*

The School of Thinking offers transdisciplinary postgraduate studies grounded in philosophy, psychology, and systems theory, applied to the challenges of both personal and professional life. It is based on the recognition that complex social systems, from education and religion to advertising and even science exist with the purpose of teaching us to think in a certain way and accept certain beliefs – often without question. While such systems can be useful or even essential, we believe that a human being is, or can become, more than a standardised product of social and cultural influences.

To outgrow these influences and begin to address them critically requires reshaping one's own thinking: becoming more independent, more creative, or simply more playful. This

process also enables us to take up a more active role in society – to question unspoken norms and rules, to bend or renegotiate them, and to relate to others in more authentic and meaningful ways. This is not an easy task. It involves more than learning new facts, theories, methods, or tools. Rather than reinforcing existing worldviews or simply becoming more effective advocates for them, we aim to help learners broaden their perspectives, embrace alternative viewpoints, and question their underlying assumptions.

This is the purpose of the School of Thinking: a one-year, intensive, transdisciplinary postgraduate journey. We welcome adults of all ages and from a wide range of cultural, academic and professional backgrounds, offering a rich blend of academic and personal learning. Far from being a comprehensive and complete curriculum, the School of Thinking is an ever-evolving, co-creative project that revels in ambiguity and incompleteness, reflecting its intended outcomes."

As a primarily trained philosopher and given our own interests in various forms of - applied - logic and our years of trying as a regular teacher, especially to final year students, to really teach them to think (the student who dared to agree with us, was ... - hahaha), we must of course support this by a lot of percentages. The initiative (started somewhere in 2019) should have happened much earlier! Even more, in a sense it should never have happened! Because this initiative to think about thinking, should be integrated into almost every academic study, such as certainly in the courses of historiography, economics, psychology, sociology .... And of course in the courses of philosophy itself! Moreover, the name does not seem right to us because it would be better not to call it "*School of* ..." but "*School for* ...." because ...: think for yourself! Now especially our but! During our brief exploration of this course, we noticed a few gaps, on an essential or fundamental level. To our amazement and extreme simplicity, we can name two important domains of thought, in which this university (VUB Brussels) also participates and where there is little motivation, no, where there is too little or too wrong thinking. Of course - what did you expect - it is about modern history and therefore WWII, and we will therefore at that later moment also give a pressing example for this same university VUB. There is another domain, namely the study of law (and notary) where in our opinion a thoroughly renewed thinking must finally and truly be started on a general scientific, political and moral scale, a thinking that nevertheless has roots that are more than ... two thousand years old. That too - damn it - we will have to go into later. By the way, in the few texts as science or as an interview of Jean Paul Van Bendegem, we noticed several times how this man has cold feet around the theme of Islam. Now tell me, the religion Islam, or its most common face (is there such a thing as a modern, self-critical Islam?), is more or less the emanation of the "*School Against All Thinking*"! But of course you will never read that in woke times, let alone see it taught - at this so-called free in fact 'only' freethinking university of the VUB (to be clear; we are not freethinkers but feel or express ourselves as an infinitely more free thinker, than ....). Being courageous is different and it is not a principled advertisement for such a principled intellectually innovative and overarching academic initiative. And in this way we have arrived at the most important element, which is connected to this anyway very important or universally responsible academic initiative: the human. By this we mean these human factors or characteristics: 1) the cognitive dissonance or the knowing/realizing at the same time the denial + 2) besides indeed a lack of courage + 3) besides pure, age-old and probably ineradicable human jealousy + 4) besides the apparently ineradicable mania of mania for intrigue.

We now automatically think of an anecdote that we heard from the mouth of perhaps the most brilliant person we have ever met, Rudolf Boehm (1927 - 2019) (was it from his own mouth

or did we read it somewhere; we knew him very well so that source is of no importance). It is an anecdote about that other person regarded as a brilliant philosopher in all of Belgium, Mr. Leo Apostel (1925 - 1995). In his exceptionally interesting and deep, deep or truly principled philosophical work, Rudolf Boehm has focused his lifelong attention on the basic idea of our - objective - thinking, and therefore on something like the phenomenon of (Western) science and therefore he was extremely concerned with the philosophy of science. The following is therefore self-evident. Boehm probably wanted to invite Paul Feyerabend to come and teach at the Ghent department of philosophy in the late 1970s, which was certainly one of the best philosophy departments in the world at the time (and fortunately it did not attract any 'foreign' students, or rather; it did not give courses in English). Leo Apostel himself is said to have been the driving force behind the invitation to bring German Rudolf Boehm, who worked in Leuven (KUL, Husserl Archives), to Ghent as a professor when Boehm could really become a professor anywhere in the world after his time in Leuven. How grateful many may be to him. But Apostel refused to accept a professorship for Feyerabend in Ghent, with the forceful words: "*He's going to destroy my life's work*!". Incidentally, we ourselves had a tremendous intellectual clash with Rudolf Boehm around our licentiate thesis, quite disappointing on a human and philosophical level. But we do not want to go into that here. It certainly cost us a heavy price. It certainly cost us our greatest distinction, and we probably lost a grant for a doctorate in philosophy because of it, which Boehm had proposed to us in addition to, mind you (he did propose to publish our thesis as a book, albeit mainly formally and partly improved in terms of content, but we refused that for a number of reasons). Oh well, that cognitive dissonance is (almost) everywhere, even among those who are extremely critical and propagate criticism as part of their philosophy. Does that philosopher - Leo, Rudolf, Johannes, Paulus, Jean-Paul and tutti quanti want at least to have knowledge (yes, knowledge) of something cognitively, psychologically, intellectually, morally and politically fundamental as cognitive dissonance or realizing it but not expressing it and not acting on it? Does he/she want at least to know this mechanism well, and to recognize it in himself/herself? Does he (she + ???) especially want - afterwards - to know how to deal with it!? According to our knowledge in the wide world, and we have visited many schools and in addition an infinite number of schools not yet visited because we are so finite sir and madam, not a single school that teaches us how to deal with cognitive dissonance. And certainly not for various profound reasons, not even in Brussels, at the so-called freethinking university with this extremely noble, praiseworthy and to be followed and therefore to be amended or expanded initiative!

What do the cheerful friends Paul Feyerabend, Jean Paul Van Bendegem (can that man be logical or consistent, and finally use a simple "*trait d'union*" with this first name(s)?), Leo Apostel and other Rudolf Boehm have to do with this **** painting!? We must limit ourselves here to Gust De Smet - so!? With this painting that was sold, then and probably fairly quickly in 1926 or at least before 1933, the year that the collector Heinrich Simon had to save his skin from Nazi Germany as a Jew.

Gust De Smet was from a relatively early adulthood a professional completely one-sided painter, or all things considered an extremely annoying and inflated person. He was also humanly strongly connected almost his entire life because years before WWI he was married to his eternal Augusta, undoubtedly known as Gusta. He signed his products, also called paintings, probably always, with his name underneath because for example never neatly in the middle. He often performed this finishing ultimate personal touch with "Gust. De Smet". You see the abbreviation "." as part of his first name. That usage still occurs in the Dutch language area but is rather a rare usage, comes across as nothing other than ridiculous or pedantic and is completely unnecessary. Indeed, in general (almost) always just "Gust" is used as a first

name. Therefore we find the use of the signature "*Gust*." a pity, not to repeat: simply laughable. Every person has the right to some personal snobbery - right!? Another and especially more important thing is that Gust De Smet has certainly produced enough interesting products/paintings; one person can fill a thick book with them, and you can buy that. Whether he was also internationally worthy or perhaps not (not according to our modesty in comparison with the then giants Constant Permeke and Fritz Van den Berghe); that can be discussed endlessly. We have sometimes received the comment around a number of our lessons as religious education teachers that we were a bit too interested in the noble art of etymology. Oh, if we could be somewhat consistent in our search for the roots of the meanings of words/concepts (one cannot teach in complete silence!?), of handed-down motifs via bastard words from Greek, Latin, hybrid too because composed of Greek and Latin; then it is therefore necessary here to get the eternal thoroughbred of etymology out of its ever-open stable!? Furthermore, we demonstrate throughout several moments in our studies on women and art - hopefully - that the Dutch language is etymologically a very interesting philosophical language, incidentally one argument to regret the language of the "*School of/for Thinking*". Ergo. On that etymology we will focus with our ego, more specifically on the famous and for some therefore almost infamous motto "*Nomen est omen*". Indeed, we also still have to finish our old course "Logic for non-logicians" from the previously mentioned "Free space". We were happy to do that for one year, and it went down well with those secondary school students. But for personal reasons we did not want to give it any further there - or another one of our far too many unfinished manuscripts or who is waiting for that? So we gave that course once - "*Bragging stinks*." ("*Stoef stinkt*."), says one of those many so-called wisdom-containing ancient proverbs - to the satisfaction of final year students. And consequently, attention will be paid to this interesting/misleading motto, among other things. Let us use "*Nomen est omen*" usefully here, as a peg on both a pedagogical and political level.

August alias Gustaaf alias Gust, Augusta alias Gusta were until very recently and for centuries very popular first names in the Low Country of Flanders. We ourselves are very fond of that first name for personal reasons. In the Dendermonde of our youth from the age of 4/5, there was that legendary Gust Dierickx (1924 - 2005), of whom we still loved and love some close relatives. What a wonderful youth, in that area of art or pleasure. Because this man would introduce us forever to the love for puppetry or opera for .... er ... children and adults, or opera in miniature and often much, much more pleasant and educational! Our painter was not a puppeteer, to our knowledge. Gustaaf De Smet or Gust "." De Smet or simply Gust De Smet married a woman in 1898 - at that time that was still possible, or only. She was the Belgian lady Augusta, from then on also or mainly addressed or known as Gusta. Her family name has no importance whatsoever. We do not think her first name is a bad thing because we knew two sisters of our great-grandmother, one of whom was also called Gusta - "*Aunt Gusta*". This aunt Gusta was a wonderfully sweet person. We can still see her mild beauty in front of us, although we completely lack a real, objective photo; if we die, she will die a little with us and therefore a second time for her. We are deeply sorry, aunt Gusta! She still cooked at the end of the sixties on the legendary Belgian or Leuven stew, with every visit from our grandmother and us with the same simple but delicious meal; meatballs with warm cherries. In la bella Italia the mothers, grandmothers, even great-grandmothers and ditto aunts all cook a hundred times better or rather diplomatically formulated, more diversified. But/Ma? But do those ladies there also - still - call Gusta, Augusta? Because that name has so much to offer, so much future, so much beauty or pleasant because extra interesting because effectively fruitful and therefore shareable wonder. In concrete terms. One can go to all the schools in the world where one learns to think. One can now even go to Brussels, capital of the EU and second city of universal diplomats, to actually attend a School Of Thinking (but pay an entrance fee; it is

not for poor people or wimps, although statistically speaking there are an awful lot of great thinkers there - POTENTIAL 'therefore'). There or there, and also ...:? It all doesn't help - NOTHING! It is indeed in principle, in essence about ... nomen est omen! More precisely or even a little more in principle, even a little more or that very last more in essence: it is about who the person - is and wants to be, about something like good will or good genes or good origins. Or give every child a name: does he want to be AUGUST as a man? Does he want to be AUGUSTA as a woman? Does he want to dream as an adult and also work on AUGMENTATION or on an constructive life; quantitative, qualitative or quantitalitive? Here we come to the certain traceable origin of the once until recently very popular first names August/Augusta.

See: **Meaning, origin and history of the name Augustus - Behind the Name**

We ended up with the Roman citizen Augustus (63 BC - 14AC), who by the way had several other or more correct names before he received this honorary title. Anyway, as "*Augustus*" he became the very first Roman emperor, in a kind of eternal line of top kings (emperor or tsar, also a derivative of Caesar). And that was funny in itself because that concept "*emperor*" of course came in turn from a certain "*Caesar*" (100 - 44 BC), who himself ... Anyway, you know that story by heart. And Augustus immediately became an - important - personal name but in Latin it was actually a predicate with the meaning of "exalted, venerable". And that predicate in turn came from the Latin verb "*augere/augmentare*" which meant "*to increase*". Growing, that can be both quantitative and qualitative. Or both at the same time, you know: quantitalitiv. For a modern or current philosopher, and look at that also from a Belgian or even Ghent school, Maarten Boudry (1984), it can or rather must be done both ways; quantitatively and qualitatively (therefore) - and now also quantitatively. The man consistently or proudly calls himself a "philosopher of progress". Too bad we didn't know that before his existence and we still wonder what the meaning of a .. regression philosopher is; does that really not exist? But well, who as even a reasonably limited curious person did not know from an early age the very famous motto 'Plus est en vous" - rhetorical question, or no sentence that may end in a question mark but must end in a ... = ! That is not Greek of course but in any case very old French, more than roughly five centuries or originated somewhere in the heart and capital of the Low Countries. It is a motto frequently also systematically used to indoctrinate countless pupils with it or to encourage them with integrity. It is completely logical if it is illogical. Just ask philosopher and logician Jean Paul Van Bendegem to convert this motto or proposition into a "well-formed formula": full of contradiction! But let us not deviate with a deviation from an ideal; "augere/augmentare" or building up is the case. Building up on man or yourself. Building up on your environment. Building up society. The moral of the story behind THIS painting is therefore that it is not the title that is partly wrong (it certainly is not completely wrong!). But that we just by the peculiarity through the title and his somewhat corresponding painting, must (...) or may start thinking about Gust - and the women. And thus about his Gusta. And thus about AUGUST/AUGUSTA or AUGMENTATION. Or, no more thinking about "*Anything Goes*". But better, about "*Everything can be better*"!

Therefore we arrive at a bizarre but pleasant conclusion for this section. This painting may be about adultery and that possibility - that modal aspect "maybe"! - is perhaps revealed by the wrong title at the same time: "*The Harmonica Player*" or "*The Accordion Player*". And we only found out about that after meeting an alert female student, at least from a final academic year. In other words, we had not seen that ourselves in the past, or: every final judgment remains a prejudice. While we had already chosen that painting to say/write 'something' about

it. But adultery or not, Gust and Gusta would stay together even after his death. That could not be otherwise because they were predestined. You know: "*Nomen est omen*", August + Augusta. They had to build double or together, or logically speaking over his death, now via the alert female student and us as an awakened thinker. An error reveals a form of hidden but adjacent sur-reality which in turn reveals extra-reality, or nothing other than true reality: the quantitalitive humanity.

3. Everyone with their own little Taj Mahal!?

We quietly suspect that India will become a/the next big world player, not only economically and politically, which is absolutely already the case. But we assume above all - what interests us personally the most - that this country will play a leading, stimulating role in educational, intellectual terms as far as the entire world is concerned. We are of course thinking of higher or academic education. There are several fundamental reasons in favour of this hypothesis, but first we must say 'something'. Our assumption does not mean that India will become a leading country in the field of pedagogy. We know absolutely nothing about historical pedagogy on a global scale and more specifically absolutely nothing about a possible (excuse us, Indians) qualitatively valuable and therefore also universally applicable 'own' or traditional pedagogy on the Indian continent. Considering the very long age of something like civilization in that country/continent and the strikingly important and different philosophies of life and worldviews that circulated there and are still active (Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam and yes, a bit of Christianity), we should be able to investigate that pedagogical, intellectual history thoroughly, purely theoretically (after all, we no longer have enough life time to study everything relevant). And of course investigate its remaining values and strength and just as naturally its values and strength as they have apparently completely disappeared or been partly snowed under for the known 'reasons'. And. On its shortcomings

The fundamental reasons why we quietly but strongly suspect that India is soon going to join the world's top academic and intellectual ranks are these:

1) India is already world-class in what are called leading directions of science and technology; space travel, metallurgy, computer science and pharmacology. What is next - or is already there?

2) It has a phenomenally competent English-speaking intellectuate. In this way we even wonder whether those Indians also speak an Indian or a native language? In any case, the English language is completely integrated into this society; see also point 6;

3) The country has absolute top chess players and given the size of the country, the best/better is yet to come, so to speak. We do not know of any famous Indian logicians, to date. But logical thinking or the kind of thinking that is required within/through the leading scientific/economic areas that we just mentioned; the Indians can do that like no other;

4) The following is more of a guess, but can imagination in India also - co- - come to world power, and thereby stimulate other, say more or exclusively scientific forms of thinking in that same country? India has a tremendously intense film industry that currently mainly excels in quantity. Now, compare it with the intense quality that has existed for decades in the case of the neighbors of the Japanese, Chinese and (South) Korean film industry. By the way, when will the Indian Akira Kurosawa (1910 - 1998) stand up? It is so conceivable that, spurred on by intra-Asian competition and ordinary ambition, the Indian film industry is supposed to make an enormous qualitative leap. That (more) imagination in power, can then in turn stimulate general cultural creativity, pride and entrepreneurship;

5) It is completely unknown to us to what extent there is a terribly personal and socially undermining sentiment such as jealousy in the broad Indian society, which lives and therefore simmers and scourges, which undermines thinking and acting extremely broadly and deeply. Jealousy is, as our age has shown us, in any case in (Western) Europe an extremely negative and in its consequences very tangible personal and social experience. In addition, it is laughable and pitiful how we have seen how so-called formally very capable and so-called 'progressive' artists or socially recognized and widely acclaimed suppliers of cultural products, are at the same time (sic) great schemers and small people next to money wolves, say generally culturally seen small, poor or pedagogically not very exemplary people. Does the Indian continent have more real or generally human civilization to offer?

6) Last but not least, the current (we are writing spring 2025) and apparently unstoppable arrogance, in addition to pure xenophobia, of the US government will drive many scientists, academic staff and, not to forget, the coming generations of students away from these Un-united States of America (UuSA) with its formally - still (for a while?) - existing university top education. And indeed, who speaks the best or most regular English outside the USA: the United Kingdom! But. That is ultimately rather small and has top universities that are already overflowing with top talent, including for more than a century students from ... India! And in which other country in the civilized world is English spoken on a large scale, also and especially at university level? That is of course India! There is not the slightest doubt that the fact of its reasonably short but intense colonization has given India one eternal and intense qualitative and quantitative advantage; the mastery on an enormously broad scale of the world language English. There can also be no doubt that the English language will never again relinquish its dominant lead as a "*lingua franca*", whatever may be the dreams of, say, Russians and Chinese, Germans, Italians and French.

This means that - and India obviously does not need external advice to prepare for this because it is undoubtedly already preparing for this tempting scenario - a number of universities in that country are warming up to receive more foreign and even (sic) European students to train them. We are very curious - and wish the country all the best. But still. Always that but. We have already given a few questions with slight doubts about areas where the general intellectual climate in India could be worked on if necessary - as of course there is 'something somewhere' everywhere. But we strongly suspect that there are two unique and fundamental problems in themselves, which are specifically related to the country/continent of India. And matters of a cultural and socio-psychological nature have an enormous, as it were, eternal inertia or effect. We will briefly discuss them:

1) The Hindu caste system may be soberly considered as an enormous, historical or internal brake on one's own development, not in the least 'purely' socially seen.

See: **Caste system in India - Wikipedia**

How many masses, how many countless concrete people of Indians cannot find a decent education because of that system, indeed already at lower and secondary level!? And as a result, a statistically relevant part of the own population does not get to higher or academic education. It is scientifically known perfectly well that something like intellectual aptitude is not socially bound or effectively distributed over all people or social classes. Take now the approximately smartest person in Belgium, philosopher, mathematician and so on because unfortunately also intellectually deviating as a real freemason Jean Paul Van Bendegem (1953). Without the socially organized Belgian university education, the man would never have obtained even (sic) one university degree, according to his own words. And it is

scientifically known just as well that social background on the other hand has an absolutely positive or negative effect; stimulating for good social background and the opposite for low social background. If we then plead in this paragraph for "*Everyone with their own little Taj Mahal*!?" - see directly further - is that also a sincere, broader because socially and intellectually/pedagogically oriented exhortation to India as a society, and as a state;

2) There has always been an incredibly fascinating religious life on the Indian continent with world religions such as Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam. There are also Christians in India. We once saw a great exhibition of watercolours in Zurich, made in India under the influence of education by Jesuits. It is just an anecdotal example but it was indeed impressive. In any case, we do not know the exact figures regarding the religious division of India. It is no secret that those figures, that reality is rather sensitive and it was also the cause of the post-colonial division of British India, with various wars as a result. We do not need to go into that further but the question remains open: how can those specific, historical religious relationships possibly prevent and undermine an international, at least English-language, foreign-oriented academic education? We suspect that those religious differences and contradictions will not have a direct consequence on a possible ambition of India to be recognised as a world leader in the academic field. But there can be serious, indirect and therefore direct consequences, because of all the unrest that religiously charged conflicts can bring to general and specific social unrest.

Now what does the Taj Mahal from this subtitle do with the previous thoughts? And what does that in turn have to do with the selected painting by Gust De Smet, "*The Harmonica Player*" or as you prefer, "*The Accordion Player*"!? That harmonica player could just as well have been painted by an ... Indian artist, let's say mutatis mutandis? Indeed, do Indians use accordions and/or harmonicas? That doesn't matter much: they also play all kinds of musical instruments, and for each other. Because what is that guy doing with his accordion (in Dutch, funnily enough, called a "*squeezebag*", the "*bag*" that you can pull with (the Dutch verb "*trekken*" is to "*pull (with*) or just the opposite of to ... squeeze!)? He is entertaining another, this lady and apparently also her dog. There may be more people being entertained in this space, at least if the space shown is part of a café. But that is not clear because perhaps it is an ordinary living room? The surroundings indicate an industrial place, possibly a harbour; see the background behind the window. The dog and the flowered vase indicate a more personal environment. In any case, the man is playing for the seated woman, who is quite clearly listening to him, although she is apparently not pining, let alone drooling over his music, over his action. Someone who certainly or more attentively appears to be listening to that music is the dog sitting next to and almost against the woman. Is that an indication of something symbolic? There is in any case a formal, say substantive, connection between the two people. The man has his accordion more than clearly open and so you see the repeated vertical line play of the wind parts. In the same rhyming way you see 'something' as a kind of extended collar or scarf (?) on the woman. Furthermore, the man/musician has exactly the same line motif in the same place but then horizontally. Formally, ergo, in terms of content, they are strongly connected. Incidentally, the work dates from 1926 and the father of this painter was also an amateur painter. So it is 99.99999999 (and so on) % certain that they all knew much if not almost everything about the applicable iconographic rules, from then, say for centuries. The presence of a dog in a painting with two people or, as is usually the case, a woman with a man, that had been established as a symbol for centuries or with generally known certainty dated from before the relatively well-known painter Jan Van Eyck (1390 - 1441) - You know! It was a symbol for marital fidelity, a reasonably important social and personal fact. It was also the symbol for lust, also a fairly important social and especially personal fact. Incidentally, the first aspect does not exclude the second - rather the opposite? It is certainly

not unimportant to say that here and much else, Gust De Smet is as it were an old-fashioned or traditional painter, now viewed in terms of content. Because the man actually used 'still' recognizable images or icons or traditional iconography - which at the same time could mean his new, expressionistic style. It would change drastically and apparently inevitably for a while later because artists from many countries and certainly from the countries traditionally known as painting countries and from the new image-defining countries such as the USA, they would actually think they had to start using an extremely personal, say very artistic iconography. With all the consequences. But that is a later story.

What else does the depicted musician do to please her, which he apparently does 'only' musically here? Of course we don't know, but playing music for someone else (another person, a lady, a lover, a mistress, a candidate ...) is timeless, is always humanly beautiful. It is part of the general, universal culture that the man gives and the woman receives, given "Do ut des" - this entertainment for other entertainment. Or you can see pure romance in it, even at its best or in the best of ideal worlds, something very friendly, social, ... It is almost certain that painter Gust also - partly or mainly - seduced his own Augusta with his artistic qualities, via one (hahaha) so several drawn portraits of her, with sultry or at first shy letters? You know that because "*Amantes amentes*". You too very likely wrote your first and probably only poems when it came to showing off the necessary feathers as in courtship. That is of great value in itself and it is perfectly conceivable that a courting man/woman can never repeat that technically higher level of courtship, not even on subsequent anniversaries of the first kiss - and the like. At the same time and that is the essence here; in what let's say lasting or structural and above all pleasant or enjoyable or somewhat more culturally charged ways, does a man (or vice versa) show his dearest wife how he loves her daily, weekly, monthly and above all eternally! How do you entertain the woman you want to seduce, is one question - which of course 'must' be asked several times and can therefore be fine-tuned or improved in the meantime. In repetition the master shows himself; the master of seduction shows himself through perhaps repetitions but certainly through ultimate success. And above all; how do you keep the lamp of love burning in a calm and cultural way, without this leading to raging fires, let alone an extinguished lamp!? How do you keep that lamp burning, so that you can see sufficiently, so that you are never blinded by too many units of "lux" (instead of the more familiar units kilo, meter, ... or here the unit of light), yet not too little so that you do not cause cataracts, yet occasionally seek out some shade to literally rest visually? Seek it and so on! Anyone who has seen the delightful, subtle, profound "Brief encounter" (1945) by the incomparable British grandmaster and film director David Lean (1908 - 1991) understands how ultimately very fragile this lamp burns. Or how important it is that this lamp continues to get a constant, albeit somewhat sluggish, fire. How do you show long-lasting, partnered, marital love - without it becoming pathetic every time, so to speak - that's the important question, isn't it? And prevention is better than cure! In other words, almost everyone who is at least not a psychopath and yet has a minimal conscience, realizes the value of this remark if he/she is already somewhat old, and thus has life experience with indeed bumps and bruises. So how ... let ...!!!??? What human or cultural extra can you ... give to the other ... reasonably regularly ...???!!!

Let's go back with our Passage to India. There is something in India, a great architecturally attractive building and at the same time an intriguing symbol (as so many attractive buildings are), which is historical or has existed for a certain time, and is very famous and internationally loved and which can serve us all or universally effectively now and ever in the future as an example because of that enormous symbolic value: the Taj Mahal.

See: **Taj Mahal - Wikipedia**

Presumably there will be few other buildings and symbols in the wide world that will have more wiki pages in the languages of this same world. We are not going to count those variants, also because we would not know how many languages are officially spoken now. That applies to us as the first Dutch speakers all the more because even for Dutch there are quite a few wiki pages in an important dialect, West Flemish (from the province of West Flanders). That is also a dialect that is most linguistically close to ... Medieval spoken Diets or Dutch. Apparently the Taj Mahal is generally or universally or worldwide considered something unique. It is immediately and semi-officially even considered one of the Seven Wonders of the World, as literally something universally extremely wonderful! Incidentally, there is no text, no book that is considered a worldwide wonder, because that applies remarkably only to buildings - or are there many times more, hundreds, thousands of times more so that one can hardly speak of the "*Fourteen Thousand Four Hundred and Forty-Four Wonders of the World*"? The content and number of that list of world wonders can be seriously debated, which we certainly won't do here. But that this Indian building/symbol is rightly considered world-famous is simply objectively valorized by the enormous mass of literally millions of tourists who have been flocking there from all over the world for a long time. Unfortunately, we will never be there for all sorts of reasons, but we would of course have liked to see the building. However, there is more than what the eye offers us live via the various types of images or representations of it. And perhaps above all; there is that idea of it, an idea that is naturally based on its concrete, architectural reality. Incidentally, the Taj Mahal is also regarded in India itself as a monument of inestimable value, although (...) the country has many others: many, many more! But here there is something very, very special - for the tourists who are always flocking to it, for the viewers at home in books and other media, and for the Indians themselves. It is about wonderful, visually detectable beauty. And about the valuable, apparently world-wonderful idea or motive behind it.

It is about this idea, about this symbol that we want to talk briefly and powerfully here. With this we do not work unofficially for the national tourist office of India but for the universal idealistic service - by definition or in principle unofficially because idea-alistic. Or should we write: ideal-alistic? As you wish! That idea for a building was born in the head and especially the sad heart of an emperor from that then part of the Indian continent, somewhere in the 17th century or historically not so long ago but long enough to create a living legend. That man had fought quite a lot in that life. And that happened among other things and not in the least against his own brother. And by fighting we mean waging war - with real soldiers, with armies - and winning on the one side respectively losing on the other side. The man would unfortunately also lose his wife before his own earthly end. She bore him no fewer than fourteen children, would die in that last childbirth. And he was sad about that, immensely sad. So much sorrow that he wanted to convert this into something permanent, tangible, visible, in a surpassing way, be it as an equal of her - presumed beauty or whatever qualities more. That building, her architectural memory or mausoleum would be worked on for at least about twenty (20) years by thousands (1,000s) of people. And there was certainly one terribly skilled architect among them. And an incredible number of incredibly skilled workers, not least with the many applications of inlaid marble or other stones, the technique of "*pietra dura*" (hard stone). Which professionally involved formal craftsmen in the modern building world, still know, can or master a 'real' building profession - compared to ....now? Compared to all - past - times?

We may be a bit sour or pissed off, or simply critical or humanly amazed that this ruler had no sorrow and therefore had a less conspicuous building built, for his brother whom he had previously decisively defeated in the battle of Taj-Tij-Toj, whereby this brother would ... It was indeed a great dynastic mess around this ruler because during his later, sicker and therefore weaker days a great fight arose between three of his sons. Which would eventually lead to the gruesome fact that one son would ... Whereby he would also gallantly capture his father and still the official ruler, although he would not kill him. He would let him live in a living mausoleum or an excellent prison, as it were. The ever official ruler remained imprisoned in this way until his death, after which he was deposited next to his wife or the 'mother of'. He was - then/from now on - in any case extremely well cared for because to this day he has been excellently preserved and remains very presentable, at least now for tourists. That is what happened to the inventor and builder of the Taj Mahal. Please don't laugh at him and let's forget all that as side information? The Taj Mahal is visited annually and guaranteed eternally by countless tourists, from a pleasant to very exuberant manner, not because these people want to have a message about all the misery surrounding the life and death of the builder. They yearn for the lively, albeit very one-sided or always optimistic message of this building: the love, the remembered love, the .... (fill in the adjective that suits you for unique love - if you have ever known that deep human love) - for the deceased wife of the ruler. The Taj Mahal is therefore nothing more than a gigantic bunch of flowers, flowers that are indeed dead but still bloom eternally if you do not just water them but occasionally maintain them properly, with not too acidic, aggressive water and preferably with biodegradable cleaning products. As if this building and this experience also contain a marketing trick, if you will, a philosophy of life to all tourists: from now on, buy only biodegradable cleaning products at home, like here. And of course, maintain biodegradable love, like here. And so forget artificial ... For the intimates of the applied writing, applied in a unique and almost intoxicating way in what is called the art of calligraphy, one can also read incredibly beautifully written texts. It is highly likely that the vast majority of visitors do not understand a word of these texts. One cannot learn everything about the world, but one can view (almost) everything about that same world. But those texts on the Taj Mahal are in any case striking, breathtakingly beautifully displayed or part of the exceptionally aesthetically impressive whole.

Now one can be so pleasantly stupid by not knowing or wanting to know anything about all the misery that surrounded the life of this Taj Mahal-building ruler from the 17th century, in many, intimate, but extremely familial and always terrible ways. One can be totally ignorant of all the symbolism, both written and in other ways, due to a lack of knowledge. In any case, this calligraphy or even just trying to learn/read these texts is extremely difficult for the vast majority of visitors to learn. There is also the well-known 'something else'. These texts are deeply connected to one of the world religions in terms of their philosophy of life, which is a special, delicate matter even for many Indian compatriots. But. Always that but. But (therefore), one can indeed learn the already known and always exemplary 'something' from it. Or one can see it as an edifying example for one's own life, within one's own life, and thus perhaps working exemplarily for the current, next and ultimately historically eternal life of - family members, friends, neighbours, fellow countrymen and the well-known and so on! Edifying, exemplary or may we formulate it so generally but deeply humanly: "For everyone his Taj Mahal!"? Where you take, in addition to the possessive pronoun "*his*", of course also the feminine "*her*", which would, by the way, better suit the person for whom the Taj Mahal was intended; a woman, a she/her - by a man, a him!? Or for her and for him because for both at the same time, also for "*their*"! That every visitor of this absolute wonder of the world, leaves this building or this experience with impressions that one knows will last forever, as it

were, is realized by everyone and is certainly, albeit somewhere unconsciously, one of the driving forces to go to that building! Yet the same deep impression and the driving force to experience it can, quite easily, last for a much longer time than the ultimately fleeting eternal experience of the Taj Mahal: that of the similarity in one's own life, or even better; that of the even better or more impressive impressions from one's own life, namely the deep life - itself!

Let's go back to our painting "*The Harmonica Player*" or if you like to "*The Accordion Player*" (You want a lot today and you can get even more; the most, the deepest, the ...!). Just because you want so much today, and because you are so impressed by your journey or upcoming journey to that world wonder somewhere in India, we transform this subject of the painting into "*The Sitar Player*". None other than one of the world's best violin players ever or Yehudi Menuhin (1916 - 1999) liked to play together with probably the greatest sitar player ever, Ravi Shankar (1920 - 2012). One can remember that meeting forever while one especially enjoys listening to their playing together.

See (for instance): **West Meets East - Wikipedia**

Of course, we are dealing here with truly exceptional musicians, in their genre and, strangely enough, in their interplay. The latter is not so self-evident; surely everyone enjoys a quartet more intensely than one even extremely endearing musician? We were not there again and that was also the best for those really involved. We want to say; both Yehudi and Ravi played in the morning, at noon, in the evening, at night or sometimes for days on, and only alternated with sleep, a light meal and lovemaking. And always playing for their respective lovers, in huis clos or within their very own of their very own, their joint intimacy. We would have liked to ask one of them the following carefully, but of course we did not do that because one simply should not bother too many other people with questions (even good questions). Oh well, we realize that in the meantime the opposite is happening and will continue to happen, with the phenomenon of the "*fans*" with social media. But we simply (sic) have no interest in that and we have every right to that right. We are for real life - or as macho for the/a/one real wife! We now come to our point that can be everyone's or universally human point anyway, as an idea, as an ideal, so following the mourning then building ruler somewhere in India but on a much lesser yet more humanly penetrating scale:

what do you/do you do for her, you for him, ordinary and yet deeply human, everyday and therefore transcendent?

Of course, that question can (even must) be asked in the past tense: what did ...? That is simply a self-evident question if one is already a bit old or a bit experienced, has had some positive and negative experiences, has performed some positive and negative actions towards all kinds of others, such as towards our most intimate ones (because they can be the ones to disappoint the most). And when one at least occasionally thinks, looks back, tries to evaluate oneself and life. By the way, does one learn this basic form of thinking in the Brussels "School of Thinking" - hihihi? In every culture there must be a variant of the very well-known expression: "*Prevention is better than cure*!" In this context of "*The Harmonica Player*" and the Taj Mahal we must then point out, in a broadening or deepening way, the truly pedagogical and political, but not only entertaining, function of culture. Words, songs, entire operas, sketches, paintings, sculptures, films, and whatever other existing and future cultural forms or media; they are media, means, mediators, techniques or instruments for knowledge - besides a minimum of entertainment even conviviality. Let us think further. In this case of the overwhelming Taj Mahal and slightly simple in "*The Harmonica Player*" these cultural forms

are instrumentally functionally directed towards this goal; the message of love - from someone for someone else. That love can take all kinds of forms, such as simple tenderness, deep mourning, sharp lust and so on, and so on. And not to forget: the love for knowledge or the desire to understand, interpret or ....; you name it and justify it! What moves a person, a group, a society, a culture, a ...? And where and how can we learn from it, positively or ... negatively? This attitude of responsibility - we almost explicitly do not speak of a feeling, although a certain sentimentality can be quite nice - can take the form of respect or empathic treatment, investigation, questioning, support, ... in a more general or more neutral, albeit fundamentally constructive way. This of course does not exclude aversion because it certainly contains the openness to discussion or even a certain fight for the preservation of the possibility of that attitude. We do not think this is the right place to refer in particular to, for example, historical and still active Greek, Jewish or other grounds of this kind of love/respect/responsibility/... Let us now be very "*universal*" for a moment, or while writing still play the tourist to and especially from the Taj Mahal. In any case and concretely, this seems to us to be a pressing question of the day/week/.../life: how can one, throughout time, in at least a specific form of human environment (or even more so?), bear or be borne by something of love, respect, responsibility, ...?

If we may/must give feedback or evaluate ourselves here, we may safely say that this website (or the current section on women and art - to be expanded as a separate website later), whatever surprises it may regularly offer us "*in the making*", is a concrete example of our central idea of a form of love/respect/responsibility/... That we can only shed sufficient light on these thoughts now through life experience or the sum of positive and negative experiences with women. We can of course even stick a few names of women on it. You understand that sufficient light has been shed on one thing and another for some time, or may remain completely unclear.

4. The non-showing showing. Or. Silence is the new gold! Or. No medium is the message?

Yehudi and Ravi have played little music together. This is due to their different existences. However internationally oriented they were throughout their careers, they simply lived and worked in different parts of the planet. They played a very different instrument for which no classical pieces were written anyway. Let us not forget that they lived in times when the world was much less international because prior to the extreme rise of international air travel (with its cheap tickets). And what is more, during their lifetimes there was no internet at all, something that is now truly unthinkable. Even when you see a relatively modern film classic such as "*Taxidriver*" from 1976, you can hardly suppress a smile when you see that at that time we 'only' had ordinary rotary telephones; the GSM did not even exist yet! Unfortunately or happily enough, we did not know either of these top artists personally, but they probably had a family life, a home, as we briefly mentioned in the previous paragraph to think about it further. We assume that they played at home, for family and relatives, for neighbours now and then, for colleagues and so on in a few more limited spheres of more to somewhat less intimates - on their own violin or sitar or even with a limited but oh so rich accompaniment. In this specific case of this legendary violinist Yehudi Menuhin, playing together at home was an absolute certainty because he had no less than two musically exceptionally gifted sisters. They played the piano. In this way we automatically think of the family of father Bach (1685 - 1750), who not for nothing wrote several multiple concertos for harpsichord, for two, three and even once for four harpsichords - read for four family members (he of course with three sons). We know those fantastic works very well as listeners, but unfortunately only from

recordings (incidentally and briefly noted, we never find father Bach to sound really good or convincing on the piano; the sound of the harpsichord can never be equaled on the piano according to our ear + we hope to be able to read a readable musicological text about it one day - for which thanks in advance for being very curious). We experienced it live in Dendermonde, albeit somewhat filtered, how one neighbour had a piano and especially many children, more than one of whom played on this piano. It was still so normally quiet then that we could follow the playing almost completely, at least when the weather was warmer. We don't need to go into that any further. You understand that these moments had something magical for us, also because unfortunately we never had the time or incentive to start actively practicing music ourselves at a young age.

How many family-organized concerts were given, especially in Flanders/Belgium, for the entire 20th century; we have no idea. We ourselves never experienced one in our youth in the 60s-70s (of the previous century) in the region of Dendermonde, certainly not (sic) at home or at friends' houses. There was one (basketball) friend who liked to play the (electric) piano on all kinds of more special occasions, sometimes also in his own rock band and he had his true, loyal fans among us. That domestic musical non-happening must have been in total contrast to the past; we assume that in-the-time-of-then many (more) house concerts were held, or per street, hamlet, spontaneous and light to more organized, and so on. It is certain that in many more houses and for infinitely much longer than the 20th century, music could be heard. Due to the simple fact that there was nothing at home but electricity before 1900, every pleasant and somewhat longer lasting sound that one heard in all homes was produced by the human voice, one or more musical instruments or by a combination of both. And people as a rule like music, or playing music in whatever informal way covers many functions. We have already said that in these ever-present times Ireland is probably the only country in Europe known to us, where one can safely walk into a café and hear music played live. Or one can start singing or playing there oneself! That in itself is wonderful and exemplary, even - but we do not want to elaborate and complain too much - in relation to the madness and bad taste of "*Muzak*". That originally referred to the offering of music via the own telephone lines via the American company Kodak (Music + Kodak = Muzak). See: Muzak - Wikipedia

Muzak is also known as "*Mood Media*"; music to apparently get you in the mood, of course in a good mood - pfffft. This true sound shit is really almost everywhere where the public comes over and unfortunately in the ears and brains. You encounter it completely unasked for and just as unstoppable in public places such as shops, restaurants and so on. Something like a question of freedom or the least public accountability is completely lacking or we may simply speak of the slavery of music (terror); just look up a suitable article in the Belgian Constitution, once the most liberal in Europe! Not just like that, but moreover that experience is not limited to clearly delineated places, such as this or that restaurant, so that 'in case of' one can possibly still invent the alternative to leave it and go somewhere else ... But everyone knows cities where one is 'welcomed' by brain-deadly muzak, especially in the centres - think of the so-called shopping streets. Visiting this or that city and its shopkeepers must be quite pleasant, right? So try to find an alternative there, because if you are reasonably sensitive to that auditory crap, to that noise, you can do nothing but go to other municipalities to avoid that terror: is it already indicated on "*Google Maps*" where those sound-friendly municipalities and cities are? Perhaps you will eventually be forced to even ... move, or a maximum attack on human freedom - to live and move the public! Anyone who likes to experience sports live, should at least bring earplugs when attending countless sports events; smoking is prohibited by law on sports grounds but ...; read on. You undoubtedly know the experience of the so-called stimulating, pleasant music with apparently invariably a terribly

heavy, monotonous, thumping beat at very many sports events, even in halls. Among others, the great, appealing Belgian Cats (the very successful Belgian women's basketball team - as a lifelong basketball enthusiast and dumb macho we are a great fan because what beautiful basketball they bring, and with interesting results) is always accompanied by this kind of sound crap at least in its home games - astonishing. The experience that children have to go through is completely insane, very often. On playgrounds or in party rooms of nursery schools or primary schools, the party atmosphere is apparently brought about as normal by terribly loud and almost monotonous music, a form of 'information' that is miles away from what education should provide during normal hours! And in Flanders/the Netherlands they still have many suitable youth songs, such as around Sa ... and K ... In addition, the most backward, even so-called marginal neighbours have enough money and too little general culture to preferably and in complete horror buy portable music systems and therefore (...) use them, the windows fully open or preferably next to your driveway or garden while you want to enjoy the sun. And pollute or burden the air and brains of the neighbours next to essentially every passer-by because anywhere on land, at sea and probably also in the air. With all the consequences of quarrels and stress diseases in the already long overpopulated Belgium. Furthermore, and looking ahead, or ahead ... listening: we see the woke times that prevail in Belgium, among other places, we see the somewhat understandable but in any case essentially undemocratic anti-racism legislation, especially in the area of expressing opinions (discrimination in action is something completely different or really justifiable to denounce socially!) and we see the extreme arrogance, not to say the (anti-anti-an..i-...) racism of a growing though not growing up part of the Belgian Muslim population (we will come back to this in a next study. See: **Rogier Van der Weyden**). Consequently, we must draw a logical conclusion or let us say make a reasonably predictable hypothesis. And let us sincerely personally, as Christians and free-thinking people, and socially, as Flemish/Belgian and European or as citizens formed by Christianity and free thinking, hope that we are completely wrong or that the hypothesis will never become reality. It seems only a matter of time before the muezzins present in Belgium will start to sound their calls to prayer five times a day and in public, from a platform; say an orange crate or a bit higher and especially better built out, like loudly from a minaret. That in itself is an interesting perspective on life because then we can immediately see to what extent something like secularization has really penetrated against Catholicism - in a Western European country like Belgium. And how the nevertheless traditionally strong free thinking, which in the past or not so very long ago wanted to put a Catholic between the sandwich every morning, has remained free, of conviction and of senses.

We always want to remain positive or constructive and down-to-earth or realistic. So. Let us certainly not forget that there are still relatively many musical organisations, from small bands in modern music and jazz (a form of music that is already old somewhere - oh, why weren't we twenty years old in the times of bebop!) to actual orchestral associations that, as tradition dictated, sometimes also play while walking! Until about the 1970s, there were still relatively many municipalities and cities in Belgium where the pillarised groups of socialists, liberals, Catholics and sometimes (Flemish) nationalists had their own music groups, who not only marched along in all kinds of local processions (especially in Belgium, people are pretty much crazy about that everywhere) but of course also played at all kinds of their own (pillarised) annual events. These music groups also played at 'pure' concerts, had all kinds of offshoots in the musical field (to other forms of music, support for pillar-bound theatre groups, etc.) and were of inestimable importance, of course on a musical level but certainly also on a personal and social level. In this way, and in many others, the pillarization that was despised by

sociologists and philosophers after WWII was not so bad after all, in other words it had important positive personal and social functions.

And. We absolutely certainly may not say that the active music life as in Flanders/Belgium has fallen silent; the music academies are certainly flourishing, perhaps as never before! In addition, there is a classical and other music life that is well attended by the really often large and always enthusiastic audience. At the same time, two observations can be made.

There is really an extreme amount of pure noise, if not terror, on a so-called musical no, on an auditory level because it is purely sound-producing. It is incomprehensible, as we have just mentioned and given the importance it may be repeated, how many shops, especially so-called chains, restaurants and so on, are almost drowning in noise, in so-called music that apparently has to serve to ... To - what? All kinds of construction workers have all our respect because ... building. Except for those, and it appears to be more or less the same scenario everywhere and also internationally, against those who consider it necessary to make really loud music all the time or from morning till late and even the weekend through, as 'support' for their work: shouldn't they preferably maintain professional control with all those dangerous materials and instruments and not let themselves be distracted musically, say sound-distortingly? Rare are those cities that already prohibit this noise terror through a police regulation. However, it should be a general rule of courtesy in this sector not to ... Moreover, one regularly encounters this musical terror in environments that are nevertheless medical and thus expected to be caring, namely in waiting rooms of doctors, dentists and even hospitals. We have indeed found this noise mania very rarely even in public libraries, where at our request and (of course) motivation the music was always explained except once; obstinate refusal! Now, if there are two types of places where silence is something substantial or fundamental, then where outside medical care areas and libraries!? By the way, let us absolutely not forget that silence is the working material for countless, say hundreds of thousands or several million (!!!) Belgian compatriots: in their paid work with homework or very strikingly for those statistically perfectly countable young people who have to study constantly because almost every day: without silence, no study is possible. Moreover, how can one normally read a book or newspaper or whatever as a human being, if one is constantly bothered, say molested, by neighborhood noise?! Let us return to the apparently all too normal noise in public places such as shops. We find the matter, without the slightest exaggeration, let alone moralizing, a scandal in the area of general public health. That public that wants/may/must be healthy, consists of two parts. It concerns those who have to pass through these places in some way, sometimes coincidentally, but mainly as customers or visitors. One must absolutely not underestimate how much time those customers spend in shops and such. How it goes without saying that people who present themselves in medical places should not be overwhelmed with this kind of musical terror, nothing more than extra life stress. That in libraries it is even (sometimes) considered to use music as 'background music'; it is without words. And now think of all the staff who are of course usually or always present for longer periods - have to work, mind you - in the presence of this musical terror; that will certainly pay a price one day, apart from the fact that it is purely imposed, because there is hardly a musical choice that can find agreement: try it out. Apart from the fact that many countries in the world - take for example the completely overpopulated Belgium, which we know from long experience - are indeed already overpopulated and therefore have little or no space, say peace, then the music terror or sound terror is nothing more than an additional already decisive part of the enormous stress malaise that affects many European countries; where else? In the meantime, people are beginning to realize what extremely heavy personal and social price we are paying for that stress. For example, it is 'among other things' scientifically 100% certain that small children

who are constantly exposed to all kinds of noise, structurally or permanently lose up to 10 points on an IQ scale, apart from other problems!!! So-called 'real' terror is something that every inhabitant of these countries abhors, which is self-evident. But musical terror continues with unstoppable, public streams! Freedom; everyone longs for it but is de facto not so easy to fulfill. But everyone knows the definition of negative freedom, or the given rather ideal that your freedom goes to that point that it is thwarted, damaged, destroyed by the 'freedom' of the other. In other words, in this way there is an extreme lack of freedom in, among other things, a formally democratic or constitutionally free country like Belgium! And soon, very predictably, at least an auditory lack of freedom will be added, or five times a day muezzins who also call on you (sic) to ... - lack of freedom (?). That 'ordinary' terrorist sound terror that exists to this day will one day change political initiatives through awareness, say silence them, but in the meantime, especially small children (who have to develop their brains until the age of no less than twenty-five - or very, very long!) suffer serious and actually (sic) permanent or irreversible damage, not only through hearing loss but through general brain damage: look it up yourself!

Secondly, one cannot deny that at least something like Western society is extremely individualized. At best, one comes out when something is being celebrated, such as the popular folkloric processions in Belgium. Or at important, supra-local ones such as national sports competitions and the like. Or sometimes locally, such as at a neighborhood party - if that is even possible given neighborhood problems such as ... neighborly noise!? These joyful collective events are invariably doused by that miserable shit of musical terror. For the rest; who in, say, Belgium still knows what one calls one's fellow man? At the same time, there is the fact of the rise and use of the extremely popular social media. And that is a permanent fact with an absolute certainty. And: a textbook example of the human desire for fellow human encounters.

Before we discuss the theme of social media relatively briefly, we will make a remark that is not even nostalgic, while we ourselves find what we are about to touch upon really interesting and therefore deeply regret its disappearance. You certainly know the image and perhaps (perhaps!) even with a sound: the ever so lonely shepherds. They were apparently predominantly men, but you probably especially know the image of the female colleagues! You can imagine those shepherds with their legendary flutes; for themselves, the cosmos and their - sheep, goats, geese, and ??? And not to forget for the birds above them, so for the Cosmos or the Lord and all the Saints. In our old colleague in Dendermonde there was one teacher - in the fourth year of primary school - during the 60s/70s where all the pupils in his class had to learn to play the recorder. We remember very clearly that all sorts of pupils were really relieved not to have to sit in the classroom (sic), but you understand that we had absolutely no interest in something like statistics at the time and therefore did not conduct any research on the subject. To be honest and strangely enough, we have hardly any memories of that same year, but we were certainly not in that downright musical class. And we think that was a terribly missed opportunity. now, especially in retrospect! Because a recorder, madam and sir: that is a musical instrument! And very cheap or extremely democratic: You can always have two in your pocket and therefore lend one out if ... You can take it with you everywhere and - above all; You can play with it everywhere. The true musicologist will most likely mention a few more advantages, such as ... and ..., or also ... But unfortunately we do not know that because we .. - we never learned a musical instrument then or later! We can't go into too much detail but by great coincidence we have played around with a professional flutist and we can assure you that with her professionally trained playing lips she was enormously interesting. As philosophers and machos we could hardly see that as anything

other than a great positive effect of an objective professional deformation. Back to a certain reality. Now "obligation" is not our favorite word although we are strongly trained as team players (basketball); while on the one hand strongly individually oriented, for us the team is always the most important (say ... equal - haha). Moreover, without thorough discipline or hard and continuous work/practice/training, something like real creativity is not so much impossible but remains freischwebend, without direction or (persuasive) power. For decades we have had to laugh regularly at those who say that they like to "Think out of the box". But/because, or feel free to read Spinoza's Ethics (best from chapter two because before that it was incomprehensible for non-contemporaries like everyone after him). If you do not know the rules, the principles, the necessities, the regularities, the corners and sides of any box, then you cannot vary, modulate, build and so on, always on and on. In other words: "*OWI*" or "*Out Without In*", is unrealistic. "*Thinking out of the box*" or "*Out Without In*" is somewhat crudely logically absurd or expressed sympathetically: it is an interesting wishful thinking. So-called thinking out of the box is a dream escape scenario for people who simply have not studied and thought enough about the principles of the things they are interested in. In any case, learning one musical instrument for (at least) one year at a somewhat younger (school) age; it is nothing more than an example for ALL primary schools. That is already an example from nursery school onwards, and that is the example for all European, African, ... countries! Are there by the way European countries where music education is really integrated into the primary education? After all, it goes without saying that one year is simply far too little.

Social media. Have you ever thought about that word, about the true nothing but the true meaning of it? It consists of two words, so two parts, starting with an adjective. And that always belongs to a noun. So: social + media. Funny, those two words because "social + media" means nothing other than twice social! Let's start with that adjective "*social*". Social is social anyway, although that also has connected albeit slightly different meanings. First of all, social means to be very social (...); benevolent, friendly, helpful and so on. Or: strongly focused on other people than just yourself, in action but already in thinking (that thinking precedes all action, except then in pure rage). But: many social media are not social, are not what they say they (should) be. Or even more stupid and naughty formulated; many social media are a-social. One example: even international sportsmen have to deal with an unimaginable amount of shit after a victory. Or is it after a defeat? Or is it after ...? In sports!? Secondly, social simply means concerning the societal happening. This can already be on what is called a micro-level (with two, three people) and of course indefinitely or on a macro scale.

Now the second part of the well-known yet apparently not sufficiently understood concept "*social media*". The noun "media" means to mediate or to convey. Good. But to mediate, to send, to convey or to transport to what or to whom, did you think? Indeed, not to an allegorical figure such as the Sun, the Moon, the Earth, Justice, the Truth, the ... But to another and concrete person, or to something more abstract but impossible to express completely abstractly, to the Other. Again: the meaning of "*social media*" is nothing other than twice social, or very, very social! We say that here completely objectively, at least linguistically speaking, and without the slightest irony. There is irony in this reality, if not sarcasm if not great sadness as we just saw: social can be a-social. To be clear, we are not at all against social media in principle, if used sympathetically and/or with motivation. And of course it is one of the forms of commercial communication, although we personally prefer to buy face to face or, if mediated, from concrete acquaintances. In the latter case, we personally think of everywhere because on the www to find websites, to which an email address is linked. For all further or consequent reality; we are not on any social media platform, not on

any! We do not completely rule out that for one specific future project - the fairly lame legal thinking in (probably not exclusively) Belgium, which acts strongly antisocial because in addition to being strongly deceptive, on the one hand terribly money-guzzling for customers, on the other hand terribly money-making for suppliers (lawyers and notaries) - we will later consider, 'even' use something like "*Facebook*". Of course, we sometimes have the urge to look up that or that old acquaintance or something like that - via the world wide web. If you then only meet that person on, say, Instagram and you do not want to become a customer of that medium/provider: tough luck. We ourselves have not yet found a compromise, call it an alternative in this regard. In concreto because you are apparently never 'allowed' to send a ... regular letter to the person concerned via Instagram, Facebook and all other social media; ironic or sarcastic or - undemocratic!? We don't even have a Smartphone - or whatever you call that thing? Conversely, we have been very consistently bewildered for years about its use, about scrolling with it, about the constant attention to it.

We have already stated that we want to make a relatively short discussion of social media here. We will say it right away: social media should finally become social, simply back to basics. Or the second meaning of social should coincide with the first meaning of social (we do not like to use the word must too much). Hip hip hooray for all (these) social media! An extremely important experience around or from social media is, in our perception, "*the showing showing*" of it. In the few European countries where we sometimes have to walk around, we simply cannot always sleep, eat, read, write, rest, ..., we see literally countless people with a Smartphone in their hand. Presumably it mainly concerns slightly younger people but certainly not only; it seems to be a general social norm or a general ... deviation. And also remarkable; many users hold that stuff, usually with an open or turned hand, as if they are holding it at the ready like a revolver with a drunken cowboy. By the way, now viewed very practically or medically: that posture is certainly anatomically extremely bad because it is structurally (!) deforming for all muscles and tendons involved, and it certainly provides new work for all physiotherapists. And we have other useful work in store for this important professional group; see paragraph 6! It is also striking that many users also hold the Smartphone while they walk or move, from ... and to ...; why else would you move, especially in a public space like a city, with mainly or only normal clothing on? They could also sit somewhere in that city, crouched or on a folding chair, to play, for example, the recorder, pan flute, transverse flute (Lord forgive us, but how we love the flute!), guitar or sitar, violin or harmonica or accordion or ???. In order to entertain the other people as an audience, to earn some money, or to act like a very social and also very musical person. We say the latter because we have seen/heard an infinite number of street musicians, but have never been able to discover a more or less hidden jury of examiners around them. As if street music should not be honored/examined, as if musicians should not also be allowed to show their skills (first) on the street!? But hey, we all know how conservative sometimes simply backward (or sitting in the deepest, darkest of their box) much education is, even at the formal highest or academic level (we can speak a lot about that, unfortunately not as a musician). This is about playing in a demonstrative way or playing to a more or less present and at the same time coincidental audience. However, it is certain - just check it out in a lesson of (non-participating!) observation in, say, the training of social worker or sociology - that an enormously large part of the passers-by, in this and other cities in the world, walk around with a Smartphone in their equally moving id est not just carrying hand! And they can or therefore hardly or do not want to become spectators of these street musicians. By the way, we have regularly seen how passers-by take a picture of such a street musician, with that Smartphone of course. And then just walk on naturally, without boo or bah or without depositing a cent, let alone shaking their heads or sending a thank you with their lips. And apparently of course without any permission

to take this picture, let alone for what they do with it later via their own ... social media; very, very social! These passers-by sincerely carry something manifestly or ostentatiously, so no shopping bag, let alone flowers for their beloved mother or partner or - and so on: nothing for these loved ones (at least in that one hand!). So they show that instrument that is the Smartphone, with which they are connected to social media in addition to 'normal' reporting. They show constantly or actually always, that they are very connected to messages, in that clear case brought to this person via algorithms or rather by chance through real calls from real people. Just consider it statistically: those real human messages such as 'simply' being called by your acquaintances X and Y are certainly in the minority, and are informationally suppressed by the algorithmically guided and therefore further leading 'news'.

Every wearer of this instrument Smartphone apparently feels obliged to show the public that he/she is always or really ready for connection at any possible moment, with in fact any kind of message. In that sense, every moment is one that can/must be actualized or realized. Every future is literally in the now, and that can also be seen in a funny way. If you as an attentive observer would ask someone who has just viewed something like a message on his/her Smartphone, as kindly as possible or not mockingly but quickly or very alertly, what he/she has seen there, then in the vast majority of cases that person will not even know (anymore) which message, which "*past*" he/she has seen! That says more or less everything about the value of the message that this person - and there are now billions of people (billions of planetary inhabitants) - has just received. And so there are billions of sorry countless messages per person every day - with a content or human value of approximately; nothing! In other words, in the world of the Smartphone annex social media there is simply never any rest: be ready, always ready! Quite remarkable that social media or something like media, mediate Nothingness, spread or embody something like nihilism! And that costs society tons of money, not to mention all the associated health problems. Or worldwide massive double energy, time and money - for Nothingness!!!???

This continuously and globally observable phenomenon of carrying the Smartphone everywhere and constantly, with the clear, prefabricated smile, can be called "*the showing showing*". Just pay attention and you will regularly see that when one of those showing showers has just received yet another message, he/she actually has to start smiling. This smile appears to be very necessary, as an outward confirmation - a confirmation towards or to WHOM? - that the message/content just seen/read/heard/... was personally/existentially and socially and societally relevant. The spectacle - go and look and you will see - is humanly as understandable as it is pitiful. Of course, there is sometimes a doctor, for example, walking around on the street with a Smartphone in his/her pocket, who urgently receives a call to go to a patient ...: he/she then records that after taking the device out of his/her pocket. Now, someone who smiles can certainly do so when you suddenly see something surprising or funny, that you encounter in the immediate vicinity but to which you do not necessarily want to give a verbal follow-up. Examples are endless; You notice and are cheered up by a parent walking with an adorable baby, a young cat that suddenly crosses your path, by .... - You know. Or one usually smiles when one has real human contact, something is being addressed that seems interesting or cheerful. The smile of "*the showing showing*" is forced, is essentially very lonely or on the verge of psychopathology. We just asked "*to WHOM*?"; to whom does one show that smile that seems the logical consequence of being called or by the compellingly aroused look at that instrument, the Smartphone? That "who" is the Other, not as Big Brother (please don't always keep thinking in that box!!) but as "Intimate Brother or Sister", which is of course a completely fictitious brother or sister or neighbor (the word virtual could in principle serve as a synonym for fictitious but is clearly not appropriate in this context of

thinking about social media). After all, there is never or never anyone of those others, those other people present/passers-by who will react (positively) to that smile. And that lack of nevertheless self-provoked reaction the smiling one knows of course, let us say half-consciously therefore doubly misleading himself! This wearing of the communicative instrument - Smartphone - in that way in order to be able to smile in public, is literally humanly not normal, abnormal or psychopathological. This wearing is just as literally historically or anthropologically never to be encountered by the normal observer, the entire human history prior to the period of the introduction of the Smartphone. And that is a lot or almost all history! It could not even be encountered when there was, so to speak, only something like the previous GSM. And that was already a revolutionary means of communication! One would almost forget it, but a Smartphone is among other things a GSM or a grateful, portable telephone. Note that our observations date from a few countries in the EU, various countries in any case, so that the observation of the behavior described here will almost certainly not be limited to, say, only a Western European or Central European country. Only we do not know at all whether the same can be established in Africa or Asia; the reverse would surprise us greatly. By the way, and very manifestly not at all by the way, this form of downright dictatorship of the walking walker who carries his Smartphone in his hand - very manifestly - may be placed next to this equally unimaginable; that you can talk to people, just on the street, on a terrace, on/at ... and that this conversation is interrupted as the greatest Greek metaphysical self-evidence if one of them feels something moving on his Smartphone. We apparently have a very bad character according to modern standards because we do not even want to sit at a table or "together" with someone who constantly wants to take hold of the Smartphone - unless really urgent/responsible such as with a doctor who has to ...

Once on a sociology exam we were asked the very obvious question about the meaning of the famous saying from 1964: "*The medium is the message*". That was a controversial, classic idea by Marshall McLuhan (1911 - 1980).

See: The medium is the message - Wikipedia

It is enough to laugh yourself silly when you realize that in this same year 1964 there was not even a single GSM let alone a Smartphone. How impressively wise or farsighted was this scientist. He would even die before the introduction of the GSM let alone the Smartphone, the owl chick! That professor at the time - everyone knew that - was rather backward. The professorial level in the 80s at the UG, sociology department, was, with the eternal exceptions, lackluster to truly abominable; academic staff is also human and the Gauss curve always applies, everywhere and in all parts of society. For that reason we, reflecting on ourselves and at that time stupidly provocative, answered rather backward according to our memory. In any case, if we had only achieved half or had left quickly - and then could study something more serious because philosophy! Well, we have more or less continued to remember the concept of Marshall McLuhan and may be grateful to this professor, even if we may think further out of - no - extra in the box; the concept "*The medium is the message*" remains strange because in our opinion it is only understandable now or several decades after its discovery. Only with the introduction of the Smartphone!?

The showing showing of the Smartphone naturally goes hand in hand with social media such as TikTok, Facebook and Instagram. We know something about the beginning of Facebook, namely that it was intended to maintain contact with the much further-living friends of that inventor Mark Fellatioberg, via this technical, electronic means/medium. It was a great invention because carrier pigeons sometimes get eaten by the neighbour's cat, you have to

feed and care for them daily, they get scabies if ... And so on, or long live the PC. And especially long live electricity because that, together with the wheel, the ball bearing and not to forget paper, can be used to write with, to read, to wallpaper with and to ...., is about the most important human invention. That original ideal of wanting to maintain informal, human, so human contact; it has gotten somewhat out of hand. Or rather: it has gotten very well into hand, the receiving hand of the business, big, super big business. We have known for a long time that no objective can predict the/all effects but we know for sure that besides Invidia or the Goddess of Jealousy (we honestly had to look up the name of this deity on the wowiwe) also, or just a little bit more, the God of money or Mammon, is always and everywhere looking around the corner. Except for the exceptions, which are exceptional for an exception, but can be the general rule. The remarkable thing is that the showing showing has become standard on the social medium Facebook. Facebook has become a bit more Bodybook or something like that. Or Imagebook? And in any case Junglebook. And again the smile appears, now produced towards acquaintances and towards everyone who is admitted, or towards potentially very many strangers who at best can become fans, in fact are actually desired as fans. It must bring an unimaginable amount of fun and joy as well as insane arrogance, fear and stress, constantly checking how many fans still watch you, follow you, like you, push you with thumbs ... Much of social media knows no form of self-respect or is emotional bedwetting. All kinds of exhibitionism in posting and viewing can be perfectly compared to the most primitive pornography, probably has the same source of attention or necessity. Of course there are positive effects that are now generally recognized/accepted/motivating intentions. Who knows why, for example, Facebook was designed - in so far? Just as something like eroticism is phenomenal and, so to speak, must now be reinvented! Who could deny it; the new media of "social media" only increase or make possible communication, in all kinds of areas from very personal (in any case for those who live far away from family and friends, such as refugees) and an entire society? In this way it increases the democratic possibilities of groups. As said, we cannot go into too much detail, especially the developments that have happened, especially due to all kinds of criticism. Even an internet non-techie like us knows that with the current state of affairs of social media (June 2025) there is something like a filter or more privacy, say more confidentiality.

But it is precisely here that the internet boom, with the very striking component of social media, gives us its own counter-weapon, just as the ancient Greeks already knew something like retortion as a component of rhetoric (the wonderful judo and almost all contact sports are largely based on this principle of retortion): the internet brings in mountains of money, is itself the new gold. So! We use that science against ... the internet, or better: to improve the internet (and all other communication at once?)! Now, it goes without saying that first there was 'ordinary' gold - and that is still there, mind you, although there are still shells, although they have long since lost any exchange value (hahaha?). Later there was talk of the ..., the ..., the ...; well; always another form of gold. Relatively recently and to this day there was or still is black gold, as coal and later as petroleum, although we think that olive oil is worth more than gold - but let's not deviate please. While real gold always remained the gold standard; gold apparently continues to increase in value indestructibly - for those who like to invest. Gold is worth gold, so to speak, although we dare not say whether this is something to laugh about or to ...? So our conclusion is obvious or all things considered we make a plea (here we are again) for not communicating, for not being constantly called upon or communicated with. Because: **silence is the new gold**. Or more simply and hopefully powerfully expressed; "*Silence is worth gold*". Or to rummage through the box of all-time seer Marshall McLuhan and dust off these words, or paraphrase them: "*No medium is the message*". However, that

does not mean at all that we should now mainly, even constantly/always try to remain silent, between people. No, and once and for all as long as there is something like a human being walking around: "*Message is the message*". Even more concisely: "*Message*". Although? We know one fairly well-known artist who would probably paraphrase now: "*To message or not to message, that's the medium*". But we admit to having devoured almost too many comics and other kinds of deforming language media. Although that was/is a thousand times better and more fruitful than what we regularly see around us, with children who scroll from an early age and don't fool around, who are made dumber and dumber by their own parents - forever or structurally cognitive. Now this is what one calls a regression in general civilization.

We talked earlier about the very remarkable and regrettable "*The showing showing*", by so many people who apparently have to walk around in public with a Smartphone in their hand. And who of course only have two hands, one of which already seems to be monopolized by that Smartphone. And very conspicuously constantly receive all kinds of messages from or have to view on that stuff; soon the Smartphone will simply be surgically sewn into the palm of the hand, oh! In the meantime, these people have to smile regularly when they look up from the screen, which, however you look at it, can be seen as a social or fellow human being-related human action. It goes without saying that we then want to turn this pass for an own goal into a pass for a goal, with the concept "*The non-showing showing*". It is almost impossible to do something human that does not leave a trace for another human being, or that does not immediately or a second later affect another human being, even when one literally does not speak or is formally silent. We will return to one important example of human interaction with a non-showing showing character. Of course, the phenomenon of the non-showing showing does not exclude the formal, effective use of social media, certainly on a more political level or for more awareness-raising, for calls for social actions, such as calls for neighborhood parties and the like. In any case, it is impossible to stop progress, that is to say, to stop technical discoveries because they may (hehe) have negative consequences, as we personally thought at the introduction in 2010 of the Smartphone (the following is not entirely correct chronologically, but was socially and commercially absolutely decisive) by the so-called genius Steve Jobs (1956 - 2011): "*Shit, the big misery is about to begin*." (we write "so-called" because the man reportedly had an IQ of 160, while we as teenagers turned out to have a slightly higher IQ, although at the time and for a very long time afterwards we had no idea of the possibilities id est positive and negative of it, certainly not in and through an environment that is permeated by jealousy like Flanders and probably almost the entire 'old' European continent; if a brain only makes money, then it is ...). Social media must go a little or more thoroughly "*inward*", not so eccentric, extreme or sometimes vulgar and far too revealing "*outward*". There is the very famous because rightly praised and appreciated saying of the important Dutch-language writer Jeroen Brouwers (1940 - 2022), a writer who is perfectly comparable in style and height to the perhaps better known Gustave Flaubert (1821 - 1880). We will come back to this equally great French writer later. See **Eugène Delacroix**. We certainly do not know of any such interesting, pleasant, uplifting, meaningful, ... sentence by Flaubert, as by Jeroen Brouwers who, although known for his razor-sharp, snappy pen throughout almost his entire long writing career, wrote it down for all of us one day and for all the days to come: "*There is nothing that does not touch anything else*." (In Dutch, or originally: "*Niets is, wat niet iets anders aanraakt*").

The non-showing showing is not only a reaction to the omnipresent auditory violence of the modern world, to all the sound shit that the world only began to produce through electronic technology (or not through real musical instruments that one actually has to make move and

master as an expert), but is at the same time very self-evident but as if forgotten, simply a continuation of age-old if not millennia-old knowledge of human relations. Where now in large parts of the urbanized worlds one is feverishly searching for real "*places of silence*", a term that did not exist in any language a hundred years ago, that geographically the same world was full of places of silence, everywhere in the countryside and in any case in the countless and constantly visited churches and abbeys. The true smile or the as it were perfect absence of it, not in a grim or drawn face but in an ordinary, normal or balanced face, is therefore not acting for the stage of humanity that is (almost) always present through the passers-by. It is the honest expression of a full-fledged, satisfied or happy person, a non-showing showing of a human positive and therefore exemplary presence. However, there is a very important social result, which can be considered both an effect and an objective. There is almost certainly an enormous appreciation of what was once called "*Gross National Happiness*" by a Flemish/Belgian politician. We may place that concept or ideal (...) next to the fairly well-known economic concept "*Gross National Product*" (GNP)? After all, the latter is quite traditionally invoked as an indicator of the degree of well-being and happiness in a country. Well, there are now several dissenting voices, counter-indications: just look outside and feel and see. We are not economists. Here we are above all making a plea for (more) silence, for more humanity. There is also quite a bit of pleading going on in this website. We sincerely abhor or disdain the term influencer, because a lot of those so-called and even full-time influencers are rather marginal idiots in terms of content, and above all; purely commercially driven or ordinary money wolves. But what does a person who sincerely wants to think about something and mediate that somewhere, do other than try to build or influence, pedagogically and politically speaking!? In any case, there can be no inner silence without a minimum of outer silence; You really must have experienced a neighbor who 'likes' to use a portable music system. Those things are so handy and ****ing small so portable so 'usable' everywhere, sir and madam = terrible, so also when you go for a nice walk in a park or nature reserve, for example.

Speaking of silence and the un-silence of music.

See: **Brian Wilson's Life Celebrated - Summer's Gone**

We would like to thank Mr. Rick Schroeppel or the man who posted this tribute on Youtube very much. But we feel free not to look this man up any further, also on or only via the existing media. Thanks, Rick! Because let's be honest, this creator of this tribute is certainly not the only one who has made and distributed this form of tribute following the death of the great musician Brian Wilson (1942 - June 11, 2025). And of course he is not the first of his kind. It seems exceptional to us - just do a comparative study - that something very striking has been used, namely: silence! See or hear at the beginning and at the end of this tribute where a striking song by this singer-songwriter has been used as an interlude (what a joke, almost). Or as a tribute to a top musician; his singing - with silence!

We are, so to speak, not only citizens of the world but above all or at least first and foremost or most profoundly raised as Flemish/Belgians. More precisely, because during our first years of readable youth during the 60s and 70s, that meant without the slightest doubt predominantly growing up with the medium of comics, in addition to one then extremely popular weekly women's magazine and never radio in addition to ultimately relatively little television. We may not elaborate, but in retrospect it was astonishing that our very devout grandmother did not have a subscription to the parish magazine; or did she successfully hide that from us each time? In retrospect, we were extremely fortunate at that time to grow up

alone or at least on weekends with this grandmother between the ages of roughly 4/5 and probably 11, who - the Lord is indeed Providently Almighty in his Providential Omnipotence - had one neighbour with an incredibly large comic collection. To which we had unlimited access. And how we used that access as an entrance to life itself! Of course these neighbours were inhabitants of Dendermonde and therefore Dutch-speaking Flemish/Belgians. Just as naturally, given the circumstances at the time, they were committed Catholics in almost every possible way. As in our case, mainly through their subscription to comics from the corner of the Christian publisher "*Het Volk*", a now disappeared part of the still powerful Christian trade union (ACV). From that we now come to the other. Because from Brian Wilson or from one somewhat more universal and musical genius to another genius, we must land and fly up with a narrative and drawing genius and in the original Dutch language (many translations followed); comic artist Willy Vandersteen (1913 - 1990).

Artist Willy Vandersteen belonged to the Ninth Art, a designation we would only learn of much later. To be honest, more than fifty years later we still don't know what those other eight arts are. And will there be any more; a tenth, eleventh, ..., including perhaps something like internet art? We are certain that the visual arts come somewhere before that ninth art, at least in chronological and probably also in art historical order. We will wisely not go into that any further here. The world of comics and of course its "content" undoubtedly formed, next to the Christian faith, the most important if not simply the only philosophical and life source of our youth. It was, and this should not be underestimated, also one of the most important forms of instruction in something like creative thinking. Although it was not the only one then; after all, we were crazy about puzzles that would ... - okay! Willy Vandersteen was worth his weight in gold, more specifically, but not only (the man has drawn many different comic series; unbelievable!) with the comic series "*Suske en Wiske*". This is known in English translations with the versions "Spike and Suzy" but also as "*Bob and Bobette*" and "*Willy and Wanda*". And even with "Luke and Lucy", although we find this ridiculous because it is seamlessly reminiscent of the equally phenomenal and internationally more successful Belgian comic series of "*Lucky Luke*", by the Flemish "*Morris*" or the pseudonym of Maurice De Bevere (1923 – 2001).

And now let us be concrete and even take the path of moralizing! Oh, if that were a reproach, such a reproach does not interest us at all. We quote this little poem from "*Suske en Wiske*" of course. It is fairly self-evidently not great poetry in itself but it is important philosophy (with its part of morality) in the making of a growing child/person:

"*Daar alleen kan liefde wonen,*
Daar alleen is 't leven zoet,
Waar men stil en ongedwongen,
Alles voor elkander doet."

"*There alone love can dwell,*
"*There alone love can dwell,*
Where people quietly and unforcedly,
Do everything for each other."

We and countless other children and adults could read this on the closing picture of the comic strip "*De dolle musketiers*" ("*The Merry Musketeers*"), Antwerp, 1953 (1969 + the English translation appeared in 1976; we never got to read those translations from our neighbors - hahaha). Now that we're at it: this comic strip is also important because "*Jerom*" appeared in it for the first time, a figure who later became a main character and also and of course got a very nice comic strip series around him by Willy Vandersteen. Important; Jerom was extremely strong and could handle anything and anyone. With this you learned as a child with this constant contact with Jerom, so automatically or willingly, the interesting, say concrete and especially always at hand and later as Ancient Greek situated thought of the "*Deus ex*

machina"; something extremely interesting in terms of logical thinking that is thought about far too quickly and too often only negatively (not so!). In other words, that was almost certainly our encounter with something like supra-logic or somewhere at least more insight into something like the Higher - think of the enormously religious atmosphere in which we grew up. In addition, there was at least the implicit hope that there was always ... Hope, that you should not give up too quickly - or just not! - because that salvation could be around the corner, so to speak. At the same time or next to it, our suddenly also our youthful and therefore receptive attention was thrown on something so-called self-evident as logic itself! In any case, you understood that as a human being, if you had a bit more spinach or something like that (we really never thought about luck in this matter ...), then you could solve a lot or almost everything! Or it meant to us; with your brain/mind, your heart, a lot of training as ..., you can overcome all resistance, like say a *** of a stepfather - hahaha. Apparently Willy Vandersteen was quite moved by these verses, because he would repeat them, and of course identically, in a later, new comic strip of "*Suske en Wiske*": "*De klankentapper*" (Antwerp, 1961 - 1970). Incidentally, we used the content of another comic strip by Willy Vandersteen from the same series of "*Suske en Wiske*" around another work of art about women: "*Het brommende brons*" ("*The humming bronze*" + 1971). See: **Emile Claus.**

Now, Jerom or not, the most important thing seems to be the motivation or basic reason why we brought this poem in "*Suske en Wiske*" here. Let's analyze this poem simply. Then with the first two verses we actually get the conclusion or the moral/pedagogical/political goal of these words, with the goal "*There alone love can dwell + There alone life is sweet*". We assume that the vast majority of humanity that does not only read (something like such comics), but just listens around every now and then to all kinds of things that are said and where something like a 'deeper' message can be found, will almost completely agree with the two proposed goals:

1) "*love*" or ... ;you have an idea behind that!;
2) "*sweet life*", or nothing but a happy life, okay with a little bitterness every now and then, but that will pass because ...!

And to achieve these two important objectives, always the same poem proposes two necessary conditions:

1) "*Where people quietly and unforcedly*"
2) "*Do everything for each other*."

The statement "*There alone .. (love ...life is sweet life.)",* repeated twice, is of course not entirely correct from a logical point of view. Let us say that there are still conditions that can be distinguished to arrive at the objectives "love + sweet life". It seems to us that being able to live together economically sufficiently, in addition to living in safety or without existential stress, are also crucial conditions. Just try to have a lot of love when there is a lack of food. In any case, with this little poem we are close to the core of a happy life, at least if you want to follow Willy Vandersteen and the many readers. That is to say that one should not only be sincere or free towards each other ("*unforcedly*") but that one should also not make a show of it: "*quietly*". In other words, you may express or show that joy, but not-showing showing or not showing off with it, not making a circus or spectacle of it in itself. It is sufficient to keep that happiness quiet (not secret!) or not shout it loudly from the rooftops. It is as if it were self-evident. Once again, Dutch is very philosophical with its language; "*van-zeff-sprekend*" or it speaks of itself, it is self-evident. Note: the self-evident truth is a core concept in Spinoza (1632 - 1677), a thinker not to be underestimated who, by the way, rarely used Dutch or

especially Latin! Mountains of studies have been written about Spinoza, but we dare to suspect out loud that no one has ever thought whether Spinoza's knowledge of Dutch (which was not very good, we know), has brought him - along - to his brilliant way of philosophical-logical thinking!? Back to here; from that silent or only informally experienced love, from that simple sum of the in themselves mimetic, exemplary units. nothing else follows of course than the formal or sociological certainty of the generally present (realized!) ideal of love or of a peaceful and cooperative society, Incidentally, Willy Vandersteen has nested himself in a normal, cultural tradition because he has borrowed and obtained this poem from its writer, the once very popular (North-Netherlands poet Hieronymus van Alphen (1746 - 1806), at least until then or just after WWII still extremely well-known to all Dutch speakers. These four verses are nothing other than the last, concluding or instructive stanza from a long poem by this man called "*Het goede voorbeeld*" ("*The good example*"). Hieronymus van Alphen was a poet who wrote very many poems especially for children, edifying (therefore). Thanks to (coughcough) the terror of the internet and social media, general cultural knowledge has of course (?) drastically decreased, and is not even compensated by the newly offered technical-communicative achievements. And that with the current situation (2025) at least in Flanders, where there are very, and really very many excellent public libraries. They are also free - except for special cases, such as interlibrary lending! So there is not a single resident there who can invoke a single excuse of ignorance. We are therefore astonished to have experienced countless times that young people of 'certain' origin do come to these places of structural or normal rest and literally unstoppable study, apparently only to warm themselves, because even more apparently to study, even though one hardly sees anything of it happening because in the meantime they chat and so on, thus extremely disturbing every normal person present, and 'of course' because for woke reasons they are allowed to do all that undisturbed. By the way, if there is any valuable integration courses in regions like Flanders where a great many foreigners want to come and live (for philosophical, economic, amorous, etc. reasons), then the double question is justified; 1) how far back or how many generations do these courses go, or in other words: what do 'even' third/fourth generations or people actually born here (in Belgium, in ...) often know about deeper native values? 2) is a value distributor like comics, something at first sight rather stupid in any case compared to 'thick' books, actually used throughout these kinds of well-intentioned integration courses, while it is highly likely that a great many of the course providers themselves do not even know this important medium and therefore cannot pass on its values?

Finally, may we add this. We - born in March 1963 - have been incredibly lucky, in retrospect. In 1974/1975 we did indeed stop reading the series "*Suske en Wiske*" with the great edition of "Het Spaanse spook". After all, that was officially published in 1974 and everyone knows that it is an important tradition to buy comics as soon as possible after their official appearance on the market, as did our grandmother's neighbours. Incidentally, it was a reissue from 1948 - 1950 (we have never seen those originals). But that is of no importance here, anyway: the creatively downright astonishing or brilliant and very hard-working and text writer and illustrator Willy Vandersteen at a certain point simply got tired or gradually and yet became written out in breadth/depth. The man was in any case born in 1913 and therefore passed the age of sixty in 1974. By the way, we generally find Willy Vandersteen more interesting than the internationally much better known Hergé (pseudonym of Georges Remi, 1907 - 1983) with his "*Tintin*'. While we ourselves also enjoyed a few other truly astonishing Belgian cartoonists, such as Peyo (pseudonym of Pierre Culliford (1928 - 1992)) and the most active and anarchistic of them all, Marc Sleen (pseudonym of Marcel Neels, 1922 - 2016), whose funeral we attended (we saw exactly one modern artist there, although we did not carry out any identity checks; it was an illustrator). And never to be forgotten, probably the most

philosophical or mischievous or rousing and haunting of them all: André Franquin (1924 - 1997). In essence, for about a few decades as a growing Belgian child, you simply did not have a formal school necessary; just reading comics was insanely sufficient for general and more high (creative/logical/philosophical) education. Incidentally, that reading could have happened in the second national language, which in our case was not possible given the apparent stinginess of our grandmother-widow, whose husband, who mastered Dutch in addition to three Dendermonde dialects, nevertheless read the French-language daily newspaper "*La Libre Belgique*" every day of his short retirement, even on his .. toilet. Unfortunately, much would be turned into sour milk by the heirs and already during the lifetime of these geniuses, by seeing the comics as cash cows - which was nothing but pure treason against the original freshness and passion. We know with absolute certainty that we (only) in 1972 or at the age of 9 started to systematically borrow reading material from a library, books or real reading books. That was in the small and Catholic library of Grembergen, the later sub-municipality of Dendermonde. Presumably we 'had' to borrow/read that youth section again a few times. Only later did we discover somewhat larger libraries in the city of Dendermonde. That is also why it is unimaginable to us in the present of the 21st century, how many children do NOT or hardly (after a school assignment ...) go to the many very well-organized Flemish libraries just mentioned - then ....! Of which the city of Dendermonde in particular has become a dream example in many areas, unfortunately also for the warm-ups. Ironically enough, because at least for us personally, this phenomenal publication from 1974 was followed by the (of course) next comic strip with this title: "*Het Ros Bazhaar*". Every Flemish person of course recognizes the very close (and in our opinion almost idiotic) pun on the very famous folklore piece "*Het Ros Beiaard*". And this "Ros Beiaard", ladies and gentlemen, has been the folklore piece or the tourist and tralalala signboard for centuries, so to speak, in .. - in Dendermonde!

This edition of "*Suske en Wiske*" that (yet) for us (and every other reader) followed the highly valued and sincerely generally enormously appreciated (tip-tip-tip or an absolute classic of Flemish culture) reissued number "*Het Spaanse spook*" (*'The Spanish ghost*"), was 'therefore' "*Het Ros Bazhaar*". And we have 'therefore' never read that, nor anything from all subsequent editions from the enormously extended series. There is certainly a form of coincidence due to the supply of 'real' literature that had already existed for us for several years at that time - books of all kinds, via a library. Of course there was that 'more'. At times we are not the most diplomatic people and at many more times all kinds of people are simply too silent, id est not openly or democratically discussed. After "*Het Spaanse spook*" there is probably not a single decent or attractive edition in a nevertheless endless series - which probably still continues!? - of "*Suske en Wiske*" still appeared, for the overriding reason that Willy Vandersteen had passed on the torch, especially to one employee - who we do not want to name here for diplomatic reasons at the most. Humanly, one and the other is understandable, but in terms of content, pedagogical and moral? It was as if Picasso had his signature continued under paintings and such, made by an ordinary village painter; no more and of course no less (those successors could do 'something'). We find this particularly painful, generally culturally, morally and pedagogically seen, and of course also for all those involved, the replacement illustrators-writers and the Vandersteen family with Willy himself, because of their collectively predominant motive: let the money - via the children - continue to come to us! When people now hardly look up at the truly insane, disgusting amounts that the average (sic) better professional footballer earns (more than the annual wages of almost every supporter of his club, per month, per week, even per ... day!?), that totally overwrought or irresponsible money-making already started at that time with what we just described. And believe us, what we say here has absolutely nothing to do with jealousy but only with something like more or

less normal relationships, human, social. In other words; when someone like Willy Vandersteen in a tradition started by Hieronymus van Alphen (or also continued by this man because it had already started with the famous father Cats, or Jacob Cats, 1577 - 1660), was acting like that same great idealist, or at least was telling his readers of especially the good children that, that idealism was trampled underfoot by his later/older self, by his closest associates and by his family. That Willy Vandersteen, as a young family man during WWII, drew terribly gory pictures and had them published in a collaborative, pro-German and therefore anti-Jewish daily newspaper, we immediately saw from that unmistakable style when we went through that daily newspaper ("*Volk en Staat*", of the Flemisch party VNV). about four decades later as part of our study on politics in/around WWII: the style was indeed that clear. That was a terrible, a shocking experience. But we can be infinitely happy that this man was never punished by the rabid Belgian military court in WWII, and that this did not ruin his career, which was/is effectively full of masterpieces and of this kind of exemplary idealism, exemplary for all good children. But the end of that career!? Or how it should/must continue now purely commercially, as a cash cow ... One sees how fragile something like culture is, and with the relationship to the money-making aspect of it.

Our digression is not yet done about that apparently miserable "*Het Ros Bazhaar*", with a name that is in any case purely moronic for Dutch speakers, which turned out to be the beginning of dozens of silly titles that apparently had to be full of alliterations, as it were, psychopathically. So we grew up in Dendermonde from the age of 4/5, with a family (on the mother's side) from Dendermonde that had been there for at least two centuries, anchored as people of the people. As mentioned, the name of this comic is based on the well-known Ros Beiaard.

See: **Ros Beiaard - Wikipedia**

For centuries, that folkloric 'horse' only went out with a public procession on the occasion of very special occasions, which made that beautiful folklore even more attractive, while this city has much more interesting folklore. Purely for the sake of so-called city marketing, that folkloric horse has been going out every ten years for a while now, or is yet another form of perversion of something essentially cultural, something that belongs to the age-old heart and mind of this interesting Belgian city. That nagging about that horse has been getting on our nerves for a long time, while it is so dear to us. At the same time, the attention of the alert citizen of Dendermonde is being diverted by a tourist-focused city council from the fact that for decades the city council has been either permanently disappearing (via demolition) or mutilating (by so-called necessary upgrading, i.e. renovation), while in the meantime many parts of the historically relatively little greenery are being sacrificed to construction projects, of course then very expensively priced: in Dendermonde, if it were technically possible, they would even build on the two central rivers. But this city has certainly produced a fantastic library - with a large department with books on the history and culture of Dendermonde, a department where we have never seen a single resident, coming from a different culture, look in for a single moment - also mind you. In any case, the experience "*Suske en Wiske*", the experience "Willy Vandersteen and tutti quanti" has not only given us as growing up people an incredible amount of joy. It has made us experience something like a sense of idealism, just like a sense of quality. If our grandmother had a great talent for acquiring certain quality in 'things' as well as in acquiring things with a cozy kitsch character, if her one, direct neighbor had a goldmine of comics that were also available to us at any time (and for free), that was all a blessing both politically, morally and pedagogically as well as in terms of experience as something like art. Children can - in retrospect - be only too happy, to be

allowed and able to grow up in such favorable conditions; with so much beauty and knowledge. And not to forget, all that always in a normal, say quiet environment. That means that only adults can and should create such a stimulating environment, id est as both concrete people and via organized society.

People want to communicate constantly to an excessive extent or want to receive/send messages constantly. By complete coincidence (?) the crucial personal and social concept "message" is linguistically or morphologically almost completely similar to the word/concept "massage"! Just look at those words side by side: message + massage. With a massage you can use all sorts of things that either create atmosphere (something great of course) and also help improve the thing itself, such as all kinds of extremely essential oils and the familiar and so on. As a curious person you can be happy in advance with the discovery of the 'extra' possibilities with a massage. However, with a massage there is one instrument that is at the same time an indivisible and irreplaceable human instrument, with which you can (almost) always and (almost) everywhere show off: the hands. Guided by the eyes (with exceptionally good masseurs, those eyes are not even necessary because those masseurs look with their hands, and effectively with closed eyelids or can be 'perfectly blind'!), the head (always thinking of course or being technically trained as well as possible or at least constantly wanting to learn/progress) and the heart (always being or remaining motivated) those hands are the core of the massage next to the body of the person being massaged of course. In the massage a very intimate, unique and extremely necessary because more than just physically beneficial human encounter takes place. From now on you can safely say:

"*To massage or not to massage, that's the message*".

And hang this motto next to it. If we have been of the opinion for many years or almost our whole lives that "*Silence is the new gold*", then we may synthetically propose this motto: "*Massaging in silence is worth gold*". But that is, as it were, functionally so self-evident, while something like relaxing music can be pleasant but in our opinion is essentially unnecessary. Although we dare not speak of superfluous here: hearing something like the waves in particular, the soft movement of the sea; that does not seem to us to be bad background music, if not almost (almost!) as functionally contributing? However, there is something much more important than what can be added to the pure massage, the stimulating, relaxing event by human hands on another human body. Indeed, when we speak about massaging, with the one who massages and the one who is therefore massaged, that functionality or that specific human encounter is not necessarily decisive at all. It is absolutely perfectly possible and even informally of the utmost importance or advisable, that those apparent roles can or may be ... reversed! That people massage each other! Probably (hahaha) alternately; hands for body, body for hands. About the existential and therefore great social value of the massage through fellow human encounters, as a human gift or present or as a non-showing showing of love, already of affection, already of in any case always crucial, sincere and responsible service for the fellow human being, we will discuss in the next paragraph.

5. Soft and powerful plea for regular or multi-daily/weekly massage - at home, on the beach, at the ... office; wherever it takes!!!

Everyone knows something like the massage. Usually in a professional way - or always that way!? Which Fleming/Belgian who was born with a cycling soul, does not know the images of improbable top cyclists like Roger De Vlaeminck (1947), Freddy Maertens (1952) or Eddy

Merck (1945), and the Italian cycling god Fausto Coppi (1919 - 1960), who was also massaged by a Belgian personal carer some time before that. They were all interviewed by journalists, next to - every pyramid has its base - the many lesser cyclists. This happened regularly while in the meantime that extremely personal or the servant-carer who was glued to their career was massaging the two unimaginably powerful legs. And also their back, arms, ... - the heart muscle even? Those were real accessible times before that *** partly virtual, partly reaching reality internet!? We certainly do not remember anyone of those legendary caretakers-masseurs who had been specially trained for this, say with a real diploma. For decades there was no one among them and consequently up to the highest sports level, who had been trained academically or 'higher', especially as a physiotherapist, let alone as a specialist doctor. We remember even more, much, much more, we experience de facto to this day, a todaying and again dying day that we hope to be able to say goodbye to soon, because the past is often less or insufficient. Never in the Low Countries have we met one ordinary person like your neighbour, colleague or drinking buddy at the pub, who could massage anyway or from home, not only for the legs of all kinds of regional cyclists. But therefore for everything physical; also all arms and all backs - of neighbours, colleagues, drinking buddies and so on endlessly. And which relevant body parts can still be entrusted to the Noble Art of Massage - because we can hear you coming quietly!? Before the semi-final of the Belgian Cup somewhere in a fairly obscure sports hall in Brussels, to our astonishment a few fellow players suddenly started to rub some ointment on their legs in the dressing room, apparently intended as extra warming. We were talking about 1975. Was that our first personal encounter with the phenomenon of massage, or at least a rather poor, not to say almost laughable version of it? We suspect so. It would remain that way, even though we achieved many top successes for about six years with the same basketball team from the small and decent town of Dendermonde - always without massage. Times change, also in Dendermonde - and far beyond.

Later came that eternal later or came more experience, or came less ignorance with even less naivety, although we find naivety a beautiful virtue to be preserved and cherished. But ignorance is not a virtue but a horror. It could also have something to do with that youthful basketball time during that later or around our 25th year, although we will not go into details; we are simply not on Facebook and certainly not about the past. In any case, a Bulgarian lady - mind you, she was the cleaning lady of a Belgian (basketball) friend who worked there - massaged us for the first time in Bulgaria. To be clear, that was completely innocent, although we suspect that the lady was a member of the ... secret service of that country. After all, we were just on the verge of the end of all communist systems in that part of Europe, but who could have imagined that, as children of the Cold War! After all, if one revolution or improvement is possible, another is also possible, at least on a less intrusive level. Read on to understand that parallel. But still; are we going to continue talking about less invasive change? Now, according to our knowledge of life, this kind of informal, say non-commercial (the contrast!) massage only existed in Bulgarian and North African (especially Berber?) cultures. More specifically, it apparently happened exclusively from the woman - learned at home by her mother - to her male partner, the husband. Or by chance for us as foreign visitors - although we might have been partly prepared by that massage, meet a literally attractive Polish woman studying there, and so on. Even though that Polish lady unfortunately had not learned to massage herself in her Bulgarian study years there: a very intelligent person apparently cannot look around or learn openly enough. We simply know too little about this men-women massage background, as in this Bulgarian case. Of course we were curious, about motivations, but cultural backgrounds. But however curious we were about the matter, we cannot say anything about it anthropologically and therefore scientifically. It is likely that

things are not so simple in the Western woke times, to openly proclaim or even propagate, both a personal and social advantage of massage. This concerns (in those two cultures) the massage for the benefit of men by (their) women. In any case, the matter as we know it seems 'fairly' one-sided. It goes solely from the woman to her male partner, say from the wife to her husband. More specifically, it seems to be culturally established that the/some young women were/are actually trained by their - married - mothers to use massage as a means of pleasure to please the male partner - the later expected husband - and thus (sic) to keep him. Just as a woman was traditionally expected to be a good cook and a bit more, and could/had to learn that at home, she apparently also had to be a good massager in some cultures. It goes without saying that a certain sexual connotation was involved in that massaging, although we have never questioned that in this regard. In any case, we have never known, and in certain circumstances (Bulgaria) we have not actually asked, whether such a happy man also thought of treating his fine and wonderful wife in the same way. It is unknown to us to this day whether he wanted to give her the same physical and mental pleasure in a very consistent way - and that in a very regular way! Unbelievable how stupid or lacking in curiosity we were, and that with, among other things, and indeed, an academic diploma in philosophy in our pockets. Regularly and intensively investigating various philosophers, as we ourselves did with the phenomenon Spinoza (1632 - 1677), has certainly never taught us the art of massaging. We are almost certain that we have not come across the word "*massage*" in all (Western) philosophical studies even once, except when massaging the ... "*little grey cells*". Indeed, grey!!!

In any case, whatever anthropological, cultural customs can be located and situated historically in these and other regions of the world, for modern times and with what one wants or even should preserve with the greatest self-evident relevant traditions, there can still be talk of a partner-equal or mutually valuable, intimate culture, more specifically massage culture. Who can sincerely, let alone motivatedly, object to that? That ultimately simple broadening, generalization or maximum dissemination of certainly existing, albeit - still far too - isolated cultures with massage, is for us a way of thinking as a common thread throughout our thinking. Good, suitable or morally and vitally responsible ways of human interaction with each other are not only preserved and, if possible, qualitatively improved, at least in parts. But it is also morally and vitally of the greatest good to develop these responsible ways of human interaction with each other elsewhere or more universally, with recognized human qualitative or call it absolutely quantitative or generally known human behavior! There is no person who still thinks that he will not encourage other people, let alone stop (forbid) them from brushing their own teeth. That is a habit that is taught to his/her/every child from an early age, as if that was once and not so long ago a matter of course. So indeed it was not at all for centuries. There is no person in the world who would deny, for example, the Chinese-Japanese martial arts or defense sports such as judo, as universally valuable, both physically, mentally and socially? Practicing judo, brushing teeth and so on, occasions where something is done to improve the body; learning to massage each other physically/bodily can certainly be included, as a valuable human contribution on a universal or worldwide level. From that positive starting point for the perpetuation and especially increasing of personal and social happiness, we propose and request further health and general political research into the matter, that every young person from roughly 16/18 years of age should start learning to massage thoroughly. By that thorough learning we mean like every child learns to ride a bike 'normally'. Cycling is a technique that is not as obvious as it seems. Every child, he and she, can learn to massage normally and thoroughly, lifelong. The funny thing is that you can only learn to ride a bike for yourself, or you take a tandem as an exception. Or you take this, or especially the modern variant such as the introduction of the multiple bike/tandem with the "cargo bike" for your

own little children. If that is not a true blessing for man and humanity, at least if the car does not remain king of the public space! But up to now you can also only brush your own teeth alone, and so on. Even a wonderfully interesting and universally practiced sport like judo, a person/practitioner can/must practice a truly essential part purely and alone - via the by definition essential katas.

But massaging is, with a few small, almost insignificant exceptions (like massaging your own hands or your lower legs: try massaging the essential back and that is technically impossible at all and you can even overstretch yourself and counterproductively, sarcastically torture yourself!) an exclusively interactive, relational or interpersonal activity. It is like the most essential human activity of speaking, or speaking with hands - while you can also just speak in the meantime (or sing to her/him lightly ...?): who is talking to themselves? For the sake of clarity, feel free to call it superficial, we are not going to concern ourselves here with the potentiality of massaging with feet or even with other body parts (which ones?). Besides, we deliberately want to limit ourselves here (sic) to giving an idea, an ideal - with in our opinion far-reaching, even revolutionary consequences. Writing a manual is the last thing on our minds: go ahead and the sky and our earth is the limit. Yet one question is briefly compelling here and that is that of which people can best perform relational massage, besides women for men, men for women, ...?! There is the obvious question of the role of parents towards their children. The only thing we think we may point out here is the special role of the mother. Because in our opinion, a father, however you look at it, would be better off not starting to massage his own daughters from a relatively young age. This moral question requires research by pedagogues, psychologists and the like. By the way; just look that up, those "*relatives*"! Because that is so easily said and written, that relatives, the "*and so on*", ... (hahaha)!) But we may/must add that in our opinion, that among those relatives, one form of profession, one form of technical skill that is professionally very well known, even if it is perhaps exclusively therapeutic: the PHYSIOTHERAPISTS!

Before we want to say anything about the crucial role of physiotherapists in teaching and continuing to teach amateurs - in all meanings and especially those of "*amo*r" - how to massage their clients as expertly as possible. Who in turn do the same to their more intimate ones, certainly non-clients and SO ON. So before we have to talk about that, we would still like to say something about what we at least in the West and so on (...) know about that body, about dealing with that body with our hands. There have been without the slightest doubt extremely truly unequaled top hands that could give bodies an image in an insanely attractive way, could depict that in an extremely artistic or highly appreciable way. One could give an image as a sculptor, such as by Michelangelo (1475 - 1564). Incidentally, that artist would produce quite a few other types of images of the body because through other techniques. Those statues/images were usually depicted with heads on them or reasonably to perfectly identifiable; By the way, who recognizes a person only by his torso, his feet and so on? Sometimes these statues were even what one calls finished - but not always: think of the slave statues of this Michelangelo! One could think of an image like a painter like Peter Paul Rubens (1577 - 1640). We may indeed show this gifted mortal a few times on this website: **SEE two x Rubens**. However, his most intense portrayal of the body is in countless other works or completely outside this website, not least in his religious masterpieces. Just go to the Cathedral of Our Lady in Antwerp on a wonderfully beautiful day and see "*The Descent from the Cross*" (1612 - 1614). And please do not forget the modern interpretation of it hanging next to it or homage to it by the Antwerp/Belgian, true top painter Sam Dillemans (1965).

But isn't the immediately following crucial question about the mastery of these top artists of 'something' like the body either a pure provocation or a rhetorical question; what did these indisputable, because so to speak long dead top artists know of the ... body? Pardon!? What did they know, who knew something like anatomy or the study of the organization of a body into its constituent, structural parts such as muscles, tendons and all the necessary junk more, or everything that can be dissected with the scalpel; what did they 'really' know about that!? The answer is as simple as it is disconcerting; the well-known twice nothing or a lot of nothing! Michelangelo in particular knew almost certainly nothing or at best very little - about human bodies! Had this man ever studied a woman or a man exploratively, not - only - with the scalpel, not - only - later in life through the study of the genius but for a long time already on all sides strongly bubbling work of Andries van Wezel (1514 – 1564)? That scientist-physician was then and later better known by his latinized name Andreas Vesalius. Vesalius became the father of modern anatomy with his truly groundbreaking work "*De Humani Corporis Fabrica Libri Septem*" ("*On the Fabric of the Human Body in Seven Books*"), from 1543. We know how Rubens, among other things due to his long stay in Italy, remained very much informed of the developments in modern science throughout his life, a happening that had indeed been at a very high level in Italy for centuries/millennia. As a painter, he had to devote more importance than anyone else to modern anatomy. Now Rubens was certainly a bon vivant, such as in sexual terms. He saw the plums hanging on the trees and liked to pick them - ripe and precocious. He produced a series of children or with certainty regularly performed the sexual act. There are tons or entire libraries full of Michelangelo and Rubens, but who has ever written a single letter about how they touched, massaged - if necessary before the sexual act - their students, models, wives, mistresses/lovers and so on (there are a few more possibilities)? We suspect, and it may be a tip but it is what it is, that after the sexual act, at least to the extent that it was not performed by a man like a rabbit and to the extent that both partners are keen on ejaculation - not self-evident in Japanese and Chinese sexual culture in particular - there will not be too much massaging - still, if already beforehand, although this last chronology is highly recommended. We admit it, quite shyly but with understanding for our finiteness that is not yet complete, that we could not or cannot read everything. Man is what he reads, which is better not said too loudly and certainly should not be spread on the internet as a popular saying because with the current scrolling; pffff. We have honestly read a great deal about Rubens and again honestly, we are not too interested in Michelangelo for the time being; perhaps he worked too much for our taste for those backward Roman popes? But effectively; who of them has ever even massaged once, who has performed that manual action continuously? Who of them, who could artistically reproduce the color and texture and tense/relaxed form of the skin as hardly any professional colleague before or since, has approached, felt and effectively artistically depicted that skin, that human skin or that person underneath/behind it in that way, from THAT PERSPECTIVE!?

May we say it a bit more boldly, for which thanks. Quite a few people have been depicted in an artistic way, in the Western world alone. Let us estimate at least a few billion times and that started with the Ancient, no with the Even Older Greeks. These human images can be roughly divided into images of the head alone (call them portraits, in themselves), or of the entire body and that in turn divided into clothed or naked. In addition, one sees individuals to couples to even several people and even occasionally groups. We are also curious which modern, say current, artists and especially painters, to the extent that they want to depict something human-like, not only want to make that not only as a portrait, say bust, but also want to 'hang' something like a real body (clothed/unclothed/variant?) to it, and/but: even couples or really connected groups (families, neighborhoods, sports groups, ...) will depict! In our beloved deprimate Luc Tuymans (1958), an undeniably internationally very successful

painter and that for decades (don't ask us why, but you will never ask us that either), one can hardly or never see a couple if something human-like - let alone something like a successful or happy couple. Later we will come back to a double portrait by this painter - of his ... **SEE: Luc Tuymans**. What you will certainly never see, and with that we only want to place Tuymans on the same level as the two previous art toppers in purely formal terms (we are happy to allow ourselves some lame jokes, and even want to make slips, but must try to remain a bit serious à bout de forces!), is the/a touched or massaged skin. A modern artist likes to be sur-realistic, even knows himself to be abstract or anti-realistic, although that can be very lyrical at times, knows himself to be constantly existentially lost or under-realistic. A modern artist even wonders whether he is still allowed to paint, still allowed to sculpt, still allowed to play puppet shows (quietly, because for his own children), may illustrate at ... or .. Ah, what a modern, haunting, calming, albeit all-round roaring sadness around The Self and around The Other. Different or almost metahistorical, yet extremely hopeful; which future artist, by the way, already living, already painting, will be able not only to 'really' massage The Other and so on (yeah yeah; caressing, kissing and so on, admiringly discussing it in something like public writings, privately reading poems - what are we forgetting now or can we warmly recommend?), but even to convey it in a painterly way: interesting prospects! Among other things, so that we as spectators can not only see it and therefore admire it art-historically, but even as it were view it exemplarily through our concrete lives. What a joke; paintings or statues, not as almost therapy but simply as infectious encouragers of reinforced, multiple and of course structural physical/mental emotionality! Or in any case far above all sentimentality, although kitsch lurks around every real artist's corner. Perhaps this question already applies to Sam Dillemans, in his unparalleled representation and interest in "*The Noble Art of Self Defense*", also called boxing? May we see (his) boxing as a stronger version of massaging? And may we quietly but loudly ask him to - now also 'really' start massaging, painting massaging!? In any case, there must be an enormous sensitive wisdom in the hands of Sam Dillemans, where he never throws away his paint brushes, but continues to use them.

Here is almost a joke next to a pure reality that can only be experienced as a necessity. Can the language about/of massaging or the "*massage experience*" encourage artists to a deeper knowledge of the human appearance of the body/person - one's own so intimately situated and constantly encountering body/person? And can the language about/of massaging or the "*massage experience*" also move artists to the deeper artistic say art-making to make the viewing public think about that appearance? Then it cannot be otherwise that this will go hand in hand with speaking/revealing via the relevant art language, that this must result as the logical resultant of a simple reasoning that was apparently not yet discovered before but can now never be denied, just as so many mathematical propositions or physical laws never 'existed', another or culturally formally seen FINALLY richer language about our body understood and used by 'ordinary' people. Unfortunately, that does not have to be an automatic or upper-world-guided interaction, because a person can survive without art, although he will then live less. Massage can do nothing other than either in itself, or alongside it, through an emerging language of art about it and thereby, enrich or incubate language about the intensity and value of the human body as - presumably - the most profound meeting place for people - alongside (the) poetry.

You undoubtedly know - or at least from now on - the motto "*Ora et labora*", or "*Pray and work*". This famous and centuries-long leading motto comes from the mouth and is from the hand of (Saint) Benedict (or Nursia, 480 - 547), one of the indisputable founders of Europe. In its heuristic simplicity, labora/work means nothing other than building, not working for the sake of working, not working to create money (and to save, to squander, to ???) but to

progress personally/socially: building dikes and draining swamps, providing education and teaching people something more than learning to write and read but at least already that - and so on. In that same simplicity, in that same principle, ora/pray does not (only) mean kneeling opposite a physically distant God, at best represented present through personally/socially valuable symbols, such as at least and most often a/the cross. But it can be in the open, wide open air (between earth and heaven) or in a closed and completely empty room/cell. It means the pushing perspective for which is built up on the one hand, and for which on the other hand is lived generally or simply. That praying then includes in the pure monastic at least catholic tradition of not only the Order of Benedictines, the absence of the purely physically experienced fellow human encounter. At the same time, because heuristically seen, that praying is as one form of meditation, making possible the most maximal purity towards one's own situatedness and towards fellow human encounters. In that perspective, the informal or intimate, non-paying and giving/receiving massage offers a combination of ora et labora. It is work, at least from about minute two relatively to very hard work, in addition to a form of sighing, humming, singing or a different-language experience of an encounter with the Other. The presence of the massaged body in the informal or intimate encounter is not at all passive, or that body is not an object for 'pure' massage as if that body were the dough that has to be kneaded into bread. It is again and again, and growing through the important temporal or chronological sequence that at the same time means the timeless surrender to the relationship, it is again and again an invitation, a call to a purely formally later but existentially simultaneous reciprocity of the massage, of the physically situated connectedness. Just as in the better or simply best, regular sexual event, something is present, not so much of the body of the Other but of the Other as Himself alongside the presence of something like the Transcending Other, the massage can be both an introduction to this kind of 'better' sexuality, and very ordinary and therefore extraordinary - praying and working together, "*una ora et labora*".

6. The physiotherapist. Or the well-known but oh so unused artist of life.

For physiotherapists, better known in Dutch by its also Greek-derived name of kinesists, and for all kinds of related people (hahaha; they exist!), a gigantic task that ends at the same time because it solves itself now applies: training, training and training - of clients to make them sufficiently competent in the technique of massage. Of course, the many rehabilitative tasks must not be forgotten or pushed aside as less relevant in the meantime. But one cannot see the following scenario as anything other than very hopeful and realistic. One starts with the very well-known Unknown One who - for normal payment - is trained by a physiotherapist as sufficiently competent in "*The Noble Art of Massaging*". And that first and paying trained person in turn goes on to train, train and ... - now completely free because within their own by definition limited circle because known via a partly shared body. We are not going to specify the limits here because people will have to decide that among themselves. Of course, a minimum of ethics or deontology is part of this, but it certainly does not have to be limited to the paying, professionally trained person who only learns to massage the partner. Here, the morals of the learning physiotherapist should speak because he/she must realize that the finiteness of his paid massages or the commercial "quid pro quo", sets infinity in motion by the massaged person himself/herself as a purely informal or free but existentially and socially very rich further massaging person. His/her logic is technically similar but differently, say differently-humanly motivated or a "*quid pro cui*" or "*what for whom*". Of course, there can be a follow-up of the massaged person who wants to continue learning, wants to technically improve himself/herself as it were with the professional who is/remains the kinesiologist, precisely in order to 'improve' himself/herself more as a giving, massaging person, or to be

able to give more intimate pleasure/happiness. They can also go to the professional together for further study of massaging! By the way, do you ever ask casually on that massage table at that physiotherapist whether he/she also and continuously 'treats' - massages! - his/her own partner in that technical but other-human way? By the way, seen from the perspective of the massaged-massager, there is something modern like serial monogamy. And, we do not want to be cynical but still down to earth, a person skilled in the art of massage can, so to speak, score 'high' in the rumor circuit as an attractive party! We should already be able to call that appreciative anyway, because far too much attention is paid to all kinds of formal presentations of potential partners, such as appearance, social status, apparently derivable financial assets, etc. The ability to massage, an ability that is known both informally (or not as a profession) and as a general pleasure and happiness enhancer in the Other, can, very optimistically thought, even slightly lead to an increase in the appreciation/evaluation of actual positive interpersonal qualities of people - as potential partners. Wouldn't you like to have a (life) partner who can and wants to (!) massage quite well, and of course would prefer to do it very regularly, such as monthly, weekly, da...!? That is a rhetorical question of the highest order. And yet we are completely unaware of this human problem or question - while we feel we have to ask it here: "*Ils sont fous, ces Romains*!". Or: "*Ils ... étaient fous, ces humains*?!"

Indeed, this education of/to massage continues to go further and further, across all boundaries of cities and municipalities, of forest and heath, of sea and mountains, across all continents and thus even at the ....! We will not go into that last aspect here and you probably had not thought of it either. It seems rather laughable or undermining to us to find all kinds of possible ethical objections in distant cultures, although they have been your neighbours for quite some time now, as it were, thanks to airplanes and the internet. So indeed start with your physiotherapist, to learn from him or her. Then apply it further, of course, and just as naturally with that Other - your neighbour, your .... Whatever scenarios one can imagine; imagining is the most important thing, although one must literally always roll up one's sleeves, at least the long sleeves. Massaging is something one can always do, summer and winter and autumn and spring: tutte le quattro stagioni! It is also something one can do anywhere; you absolutely do not need a bed for it. And so on or, and so less: less is more once again! In principle, one should just get past the stage of learning, and therefore of investing - because paying money. In this way, a professional physiotherapist can earn his money and then, as it were, simply dedicate himself to rehabilitation activities. By the way, how many Belgian physiotherapists have not also built a small to relatively large sports centre at home, where one can sweat in all kinds of strength training and the like, whether or not under their short to continuous supervision!? Where is the difference then that here, during massage, truly everyone can be involved, on the spot, and thus uniquely can further spread that message and skill and above all that dedication! From sports or fitness, to real wellness.

Every language has an essential writer, "*He who taught his people to read*"! That goes further or "*He who taught his people to massage*!" People know - hopefully - the enormous value of reading aloud, or especially reading by parents, sometimes grandparents or other brothers/sisters of children's books, of stories - to young children. The physiotherapists can therefore take over that role, albeit in a massaging manner. And start a chain reaction that reaches infinitely far. Moreover, it applies just like with the infinity of reading, where you can get some books from family, neighbors or friends, and of course you can also buy those books. But so; very cheaply or almost for free and all year round, you can go and look for those books in the library - borrow them. In other words, learning and passing on massage is a very limited cost because it is exclusively intended for the beginning via the mentioned

professional: physiotherapists and related parties. We do not want to go that far now to make that visit to physiotherapists also partly affordable via the national health insurance. Or rather, almost ... double!? With that last remark we are of course exaggerating. But if you know the number of people in a country who either sleep badly (and say they need sleeping pills), who suffer from psychological problems (and say they have to take anti-depressants - possibly together with the previous one?): in such a country there is not so much a (commercial) market but a (constructive) future for great and sincere joy, for shared and therefore increased happiness. Indeed, we see it that graduated physiotherapists, among others, make this kind of democratizing and - especially sorry also - health-giving massages their most important work, at least for a certain time. As pioneers, the first in Western society to put the body or the touching of people of each other more central and concrete. There is absolutely nothing guru-like about this idea, about this ideal. There is also nothing to imagine of potential commercial recuperation, as the modern or seemingly eternal capitalist world does intensely and continuously and everywhere. The product - the massage by you for the Other - simply cannot even be commercialized, cannot and never be processed into a product or is completely unsellable! As already and hopefully briefly but powerfully convincingly indicated, you hardly need anything. In essence, you need nothing new at all other than clean hands, hands that quickly become greasy but are dried up so quickly. We can imagine that certain purists and especially shrewd merchants will propose massage tables, even see a 'line' or sales line in it, stick a 'name' on it à la ... (these examples are remarkably numerous, who as great artists as world-famous film actors meanwhile sell their name and soul for advertising - for shoes, coffee, ...). A normal, larger towel is already sufficient. Everyone has a bed, in addition to usually also a double or triple seat. You can always blow up an air mattress, although you can buy a simple, say very cheap pump for that. You see: You can massage him or her on the beach, which does not even have to be a nudist beach. A little massage oil, or sun oil or just plain oil, that is to say ... cooking oil. But then best of the best olive oil, with the Spanish, Italian, Greek, Brazilian, Mauritanian, Korean ... extra virgin for the most virgin massage!

Ohlalala. For the West and undoubtedly in many other places in the world, the proposal we are launching here is somewhat difficult. For centuries there has been a division between a Christian and another philosophical, call it ideologically enforced and still working form of modesty, even fear of the body. That social psychology, that mental straitjacket (quite ironic because on the one hand figuratively around the mind, on the other hand literally around the body) has logically led to something like a total absence of a full-fledged body or touch culture. That means that in many parts of Christian Europe - and so on - family members have hardly or never touched the full body of their closest family members, nor have they even seen it in its entirety! In this way, we personally have been raised mainly by our mother and her mother (our grandmother), but we have never seen anything of their bodies other than their heads, necks and hands. Even something like caressing was never discussed, and you could be happy, so to speak, if you never got a beating from them. For our generation the same certainly applied and before that it was even worse, again so to speak. There was actually something to talk about or especially to read, because speaking truly or openly was not the strength of a Catholic tradition - and how long does something work through socio-psychologically seen as obvious secularization as if that in itself would have real advantages? Anyone who knows the literature of a Dutch-speaking, Belgian and world writer like Hugo Claus (1929 - 2008) knows how girls, like boys, at the - predominantly quasi exclusive - Catholic boarding schools until after WWII, were never allowed to sleep with their hands under the covers. So the hands had to be ABOVE those covers ... because .... Of the then many nuns until roughly the 1970s, nothing could be seen physically, except for some of the

face and the hands. Has the climate, has the physical interaction with each other or at least with our intimates, changed so much, improved in the meantime?

On the other hand, there is the hypocrisy of much sexual abuse on the one hand, next to the fairly massive banality of 'ordinary' pornography. The first is an incredibly painful chapter that we do not want to go into here. Something like pornography or "the noble art of eroticism" (the latter name sounds 'better', doesn't it?) undoubtedly has a lot of value in itself, but on the one hand it is predominantly too male-oriented or simply unfriendly to women. In addition, there is something like tenderness, something like - fine - techniques of massaging, there - probably - completely unknown. So on the one hand there is still a huge way to go commercially for the many lovers of this noble art. There is especially a huge way to go for education in massaging. Incidentally, before we go into that further - not too long but hopefully intensely or convincingly - we want to make a huge plea for the truly general and years-long introduction of "*First Aid After An Accident*" (EHBO in Dutch) in education. So; how to promote this noble art of massage? How to introduce that to the large and especially small, because always intimate, audience - to 'influence' it, hihihi'? We must therefore go into that deeply. But unfortunately, we do not understand that, and to be honest, we have neither the desire nor the time for it (we have so much to write and are getting older, weaker, ...). We gladly and necessarily leave this task (...) to the ... Fate, to Luck, to La Forza del Destino!

Yet one more substantive, if you will, strategic remark. Even a reasonably unworldly person or bookworm like us, knows something of the real world. We too must know how to find the light switch and turn it on, if we want to write or read from the moment the light of darkness comes on. So we know (hahaha) that there is such a thing as different types of massage: from such and such schools, wherever in the world. We indeed have no desire nor knowledge to specifically speak out for this or that school of massage. Let us kindly and very democratically remark that it probably does not matter at all which type of massage, or which worldview is used, by that beautiful person who does not want to apply The Noble Art of Massaging to that Beloved Other, but wants to give it, quid pro quo pardon quid pro cui.

Epilogue.

Massaging or speaking with hands and without words. We certainly also like words, which roll over our tongues and into our ears like massaging sounds. Spoken or sung words, if possible accompanied by music. Or just music, passive for most people as listeners (a blessing in any case, sometimes the opposite because it can be "*noise*" - but tastes can differ ...). Or active; what a blessing to be able to play an instrument in which we also understand the voice as an instrument. We ourselves would have liked to have learned the accordion early, but life turned out differently. A doubly intriguing instrument because you can really play with that instrument anywhere; at home, at school, at work (...) and on the street! And it is infinitely musical or a small organ. In the past - can we still use that word? - and not so long ago because until roughly the 1950s (of the previous century), people in Belgium still sang in cafés. You can now experience that in Europe perhaps only in Ireland, which is phenomenal for that alone!? Maybe also in la bella Italia? How can you try to regain the loss of such a unique and extremely valuable cultural experience in most parts of Europe?

Above we express our surprise that we do not know of any paintings with musicians in action, such as in our "*The Harmonica Player*" or "*The Accordion Player*". In the meantime we had already found a second and much more famous work for some time. And before we wanted to discuss this piece, a suitable and very famous image occurred to us during a walk in the soft

hills of XYZ: "*The Flute Player*" ("*La Fiffre*"). This simple and lush painting dates from 1866 and is by the magical hand of Edouard Manet (1832 - 1883). In our opinion, the man is the most fascinating French visual artist of all time. But there are still many times to come and we are also curious whether among the literally busloads of French top footballers of, let's say, foreign and especially African origin with a French accent and also that nationality, there are also or further great painters: "*Allons, enfants de la peinture*!" We will discuss this, let's say, traditional and at the same time groundbreaking painter as planned from the beginning of our project on women and art, with a work that hangs in Belgium (Doornik/Tournai). See: **Edouard Manet**. Because this is the epilogue, we cannot go into this work - about which we could hardly say anything other than that we find it magnificent. But then, again that but. That real second work on musicians in action!

We would not be Flemish/Belgians with a lifelong interest in culture and certainly visual culture, if we did not know this painting. We have almost certainly encountered that work on the lids of ... biscuit tins or the like. We will keep it as short as possible now - it is an epilogue, isn't it - but we would like to see an art historical study of what types of works of art end up on special surfaces such as the lids of very everyday or ordinary biscuit tins. The why is fairly obvious and it is highly likely that this will involve a very extensive study. It concerns a painting from 1638 - 1640 by Antwerp resident Jacob Jordaens (1593 - 1678) and the work still hangs in Antwerp, mind you. You can find a Dutch and English version of it on Wikipedia:

Zoals de ouden zongen, piepen de jongen - Wikipedia

As the Old Sang, So the Young Pipe (Jordaens, Antwerp) - Wikipedia

The painting is beautiful as well as pleasantly moralizing because it means that the young can learn something from the old because blah blah blah. Like learning to sing and play music; honestly an excellent idea - which can also lead to musically revalued or completely new lids for cookie jars for future generations. Except for one - the proud mother and daughter - everyone in the company really sings or plays music here or wonderful that one of them 'only' listens: an extremely cultural company! This work is/seems to be a much more intense experience of/through culture, than with our "... *player*" or ".... *player*"?

Ah, what is culture? Probably the passing on of existing forms, as valuable. And modulating them, making them grow and pruning them. Because also; massaging or gently pushing away or reshaping the less good, the 'bad', the least responsible, the irresponsible forms? But who or what should judge that each time? Something from the human being probably; his head, his heart - or his eye, his ear ...

Jean-Marie De Dijn, June 2025, EU

Dedicated to Mr. Marcel, who loves playing with words and playing with the harmonica. And play it again, Sam - and Marcel!

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Dulle Griet, Pieter Brueghel (the Old, circa 1525 - 1530 - 1569) oil, 1563, Museum Fritz Mayer van den Bergh, Antwerpen.

T.I.S..

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Femmes d'Alger dans leur appartement, Eugène Delacroix (Ferdinand Victor Eugène, 1798 - 1863), oil, 1834, Musée du Louvre Paris.

T.I.S..

.....

Georges Sand, Thomas Sully (1783 - 1872), oil, 1826, Johnson Collection, Spartanburg, South Carolina.

+ ???**:** as an exception a second portrait? Eugène Delacroix. sketch of Frédéric Chopin and Georges Sand, drawing, 1838, Louvre Paris.

T.I.S..

.....

Het Joodse bruidje (The Jewish Bride), Rembrandt (Harmenszoon van Rijn, 1606 - 1669), oil, circa 1665, Rijksmuseum Amsterdam.

T.I.S..

.....

Hlava dívky (Slepá)/ Head of a girl (Blind), Josef Čapek (1887 - 1945), olej na plátno/oil on canvas, 1916, soukroma sbirka/private collection.

T.I.S..

.....

Empress Theodora (Θεοδώρα, circa 500 – 548), mosaics, 547, San Vitale, Ravenna.

+ together with husband Emperor Justinian

T.I.S..

.....

.....

Female model for French Job-cigarettes, Alphonse Mucha (1860 - 1939), lithographic poster in colours, 1896/1900, in some collections worldwide in different conditions and once in several editions hanging some time on several French walls and always printed in Paris.

T.I.S..

.....

Female Worker (Работница), Malevich, Kazimir (born as Kazimierz Malewicz + Казими́р Северѝнович Малéвич + 1879 – 1935), oil, 1933, State Russian Museum (Государственный Русский музей), Saint Petersburg (Санкт-Петербург).

T.I.S..

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Fiatal Flora, Kálmán Borbála (2005), acryl, private collection.

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Epilogue.

1. One day an interesting "*kiállítás*" in a pleasant, provincial library in Hungary. Or whoever keeps his eyes open a lot, can have them caressed regularly.

In the cozy Hungarian provincial town of AAA, so cozy for us because there is … + … + …, besides not forgetting a great library, we like to - visit. For everything for this library: the building is fresh or full of light, although the direct sunlight is well shielded. An excellent architect, and that is no surprise to us after ten years in Hungary; there have been interesting architects for decades, at least for government contracts, because privately it is rather bland. That library: there is very friendly staff, about which we must say something more immediately. That one male staff member not only gives a real because firm handshake – every time – but is genuinely always friendly and good-humored. The other staff members are therefore ladies, and all are .. There is really and not only here, in Hungary something that one should gradually, throughout today's Europe, call old-fashioned friendliness and politeness. In any case, far from all the woke and its pomposity, the alertness that one 'must' have in order not to say anything 'wrong' because … That openness and friendliness are experiences that should essentially be a normal human experience, and that we value strongly for the rest of our lives anyway.

If we may summarize our lives now just over 60 years old, we have a fundamental interest in: women, books and trees. We encounter those three in this library. Indeed, there are a remarkable number of 'trees' or large plants. This library also has the pure space for it, but the combination is surprising to us - and particularly pleasant. First and foremost or fundamentally, there are of course many books, very orderly and attractive 'although' of course exclusively in Hungarian. Where we are what is called reasonably highly gifted, and therefore could learn languages relatively easily (up to a certain level because there was still a certain laziness ...), Hungarian is terribly but really terribly difficult for someone who, like us, mainly knows Western European languages in addition to the Slavic language Polish (can speak it after all, so can also listen to it). Incidentally, as an eternally curious or social person in Hungary, in at least ten years, we have never met a single German, Dutch or other non-native who can speak more than a few short sentences in this language. By the way, we sometimes make this kind of standard joke to the new Hungarians we meet:

"*Tudtad, hogy minden magyar zseni? Tudod miért?*
Mert beszél ... magyarul!"

("*Did you know that every Hungarian is a genius? Do you know why?*
Because he/she speaks ... Hungarian!").

In the Hungarian language there are very few bastard words, or words that come from Latin and/or Greek, such as, as a striking example, the universal word "*universiteit/université/university/.... - and so on*". Well, the concept of university and so the same on, it is unrecognizable in Hungarian because it stands for "*egyetem*". We do not know the etymology of this word but it can be very interesting. Of course we have known the Hungarian word "*egy*" for a long time because it means "*one*". And then it begins. What a rich language, both grammatically and in terms of its exceptionally diverse and nuanced vocabulary! It cannot be a coincidence that Hungarian is also an exceptionally important literary language, with an unimaginably rich fruit of works from world literature. Oh dear … All that wealth, we like to sit among in that fine library. And we cannot taste any of those many fruits. So we are only there to use the internet, on the computers that are there. Incidentally, the Hungarians are like the French. A "*computer*" is not an "*ordinateur*" but a "*számítógép*". We understand something of that compound word because "*gép*" is a machine. And "*szám*" is number as we have of course known for a long time what a "*számla*" means; the bill after you … We don't do much arithmetic on those computers, although we do have to check our account balance regularly to pay bills with it, for example.

What we have experienced or visited several times in this library in the cozy Hungarian town of AAA (three times A or does that promise anything, at least for us), was a "*kiállítás*", an exhibition. Each exhibition was always centered around the work of young people, the kind of people we miss quite a lot because in better (neurological) times we liked to teach young people between the ages of 16 and 18. We found that infinitely more interesting than, for example, 'teaching' university students. The so-called cultural sciences in particular have been flooded in recent decades by something that should be applauded in itself, the democratization of education. As a result, many more young people can follow higher education. As a result, you can hardly have any contact with students or professors and other teachers, it all becomes something like higher education annex industry – and the quality of the average, graduated student irrevocably decreases. With young students - in higher secondary education - you can have much more intense learning contact!

In the provincial town of AAA good secondary education is apparently given, we also heard in the other, slightly less pleasant town of BBB. In any case, we will never be able to give guest lessons in any of those places, not only because Hungarian is terribly difficult and we simply cannot learn Hungarian perfectly due to our existential conditions (older, weaker and we have to write maximal in addition to maximal rest). But also because our didactic approach – rather free and full of experiments – does not fit at all within the standards and traditions of the very traditional (Central) European secondary education. In Belgium too, our more open or experimental at the same time perhaps much more demanding way of working was not suitable for every school - or appropriate. We still have a specific manuscript about it lying around among so much 'junk' on our PC - for more than ten years ...; about (more) freedom as (more) responsibility in secondary education. Moreover, and now we are getting onto more thin ice or real ice, something that we have encountered there very rarely because of that climate, because on the surface of national politics. We generally like Hungarians very

much because we share a desire for curiosity and even politeness and blah blah blah. But we really never talk about national politics, so not even with those who speak excellent English or German to very rarely French (like DDD who was once in the French Foreign Legion and speaks good, albeit very slowly, French). We strongly suspect that with our way of teaching openly we would have little to no chance of lasting longer than, say, half an hour in that nationally run school system. That does not rule out that we have already bought a painting twice from a pupil in the last year of secondary school from the Hungarian AAA. Coincidentally, both times they were young ladies, who always spoke excellent English. That certainly helped with communication! We could also approach the second one more easily because her mother also ... blah blah blah. And she was/is Kálmán (family name) Borbála (first name).

"*Borbála*" is therefore purely (sic) Hungarian but is generally known in its basic form because it comes from "*Barbara*". And that name is quite funny in this situation, because it does not only come from the Ancient Greek "*βάρβαρος*" or "*barbarous*". And that, dear people, means nothing else there than … "*foreign, non-Greek*"! That is correct here. Because Borbála is Hungarian or non-Greek, hahaha. By the way, the core of this name is "*bor*" or thoroughly Hungarian. Bor means "*wine*" in Hungarian; beautiful, isn't it! We ourselves actually only drink fresh organic milk in addition to thermal water or practically never alcohol such as wine. Consequently, we did not get drunk from Borbála. By the way, she could mathematically have been our granddaughter. But we did get more or less drunk from her painting – this truly delightful and cute work. Moreover, we had the feeling that this work represented a portrait in some way, a portrait of her … mother. And this remark – made by us in English and translated by the daughter into Hungarian or her mother tongue – was appreciated by this mother present! Still nice, if everything is the best of all possible worlds!

2. A work after our heart and especially after our mind! Or maybe after both?

That we like paintings is quite clear throughout this website. And that we like the combination of painting and flowers is also evident from our (later) historical choice of a famous historical masterpiece. SEE: **Virgin and Child in Flower Garland, Rubens + Jan Brueghel The Elder.** This bright or floral painting is called (here) "*Fiatal Flora*". "*Fiatal*" is obviously Hungarian and means "young". Of course it sounds good together with the noun "*Flora*" because it is a – simple – alliteration. In terms of content it is certainly good, although any art history expert can ask us the question whether an older, even old to ancient Flora has ever been depicted. On the English-language Wiki page about this famous "*Roman goddess of flowers and spring*" one sees at least ten images of all cheerful ladies like Flora, all rather young, say up to the age of about 25 at the most. SEE:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flora_(mythology)

This statement is immediately followed by the historically certain statement as an aside, that the inhabitants of Europe until roughly the year 1900 were on average only 35 years old. In that average sense, all these art historically selected Floras are actually already ... old. But a critical remark must be made about that too, because due to centuries of very high infanticide and generally very poor or bad hygienic conditions, people lived on average very short lives. But so, those who survived birth and the first period of life and were subsequently able to live in better, say financially and consequently also hygienic conditions, actually usually reached blessed ages. Although, and we must also make this as a final aside; everyone who depicted a Flora was of course a ... woman. And they almost all had a child - or more. And not a few

ladies, were they beautiful as Flora or even more beautiful as Venus, they would die in childbirth.

That dying in childbirth, or the place where new human life has almost always appeared in the world for centuries, after having stayed in the womb of that mother for no less than nine months, is of course at odds with what Flora meant as a goddess. After all, she was one of the so-called "*Fertility Goddesses*"! Incidentally – we didn't even know this until writing this very article! – there are or were also male counterparts, the "*Fertility Gods*". SEE:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_fertility_deities

Who among modern women still calls upon a Flora, a ... - as a fertility goddess or god? We have no idea. That the name Flora lives on to this day and will live on into the long, unfathomable future; it seems certain. You know enough derivatives yourself. And how many garden centres do not have this goddess in their brand name!? Now this painting, when we noticed it for the first and subsequent times in that one room of the library in the Hungarian AAA, was without a title. Or better; we do not remember any title, possibly because it was not only sometimes a little dark in that room and we did not feel like turning on the harsh fluorescent light. But most likely the painting was without ... a title! We will discuss that title or the event "giving a title to a work of art" in the next paragraph.

We saw this work among twenty works of art by this relatively young lady and artist. Of course, we cannot go into the whole of what she exhibited here. It was very diverse, in quality and in emotional charge. First, we knew about the existence of that exhibition in a – separate – room of this Library, because there was a poster about it. And as is to be expected with such posters or announcements of an art exhibition, one work by this artist – largely and not completely but with something like the 'core' – was depicted on this poster. Of course, we also saw that work in its entirety, it was interesting but in terms of theme or emotional charge completely the opposite of this work we chose. That work showed a woman's face mixed with a snake that … Anyway, there was more to explain, to fear, so to speak, and so on. Anyway, this work "*Fiatal Flora*" stood out for us, because we have, let's say, a certain weakness on the one hand for hard thinking and strong, idiosyncratic, but always responsible critical thinking, but also and not at all in contrast to that, for the subtle, tender, more ... – more feminine, perhaps? In any case, after sixty years of walking around here and gradually thinking and also self-critically for the most part, we can say that we personally and socially consider constructive thinking and doing to be the most important thing in life. Or giving "*added value*", adding to the ... fertility – of life itself, right!?

We find this painting sparkling, in form and colour. Of course it is about a youthful work and one can make some more critical remarks, such as ... and .... In this respect we just laugh at ourselves because even though we have literally read tons about art, looked at countless works of art quite attentively; we are and will never be a 'real', call it a real art historian. With that we want to say this; that at least some academic art historians, according to our reading of their scientific work, make very beautiful, actually more technical or 'purely' art historical analyses of even entire oeuvres of artists in addition to of course more penetrating analyses of individual works of art. But still; that read truth does not exclude for us the authenticity that we consider to our own eyes, through the actual encounter with a work of art. Of course, we must humbly admit, that encounter can only be half visual in the sense that we may only encounter the visual work via an image, via paper or via an image on a screen. That of course has its own technical imaginative or present-bringing value, while it is even more self-evident

that the actual encounter with the – often half-known long before – work of art, is the most or only important encounter. Although that very close experience has also been disappointing throughout our lives, possibly because we now stood live in front of a recently restored masterpiece while we knew that work as it were ‘dead’ through the many, previous encounters on photos in art books.

It goes without saying that the moment in one's own life when one encounters a work of art also influences the appreciation of it. After all, we were plus sixty when we saw this work, with two annoying or structural illnesses that still allow us a lot but in any case make us weaker, and can sometimes literally paralyze us. With that existential experience or 'act' (...) we know anyway, of course not always projected on our forehead as an idea or guideline, that life will come to an end anyway - although we still pick, so to speak, every day along the way, a fruit that makes us ... more fruitful - hahaha. To put it bluntly or simply: this work gave us joy when we first saw it. It gives us joy with every further viewing. It gives us such joy that we would like to share it, so to speak, and give it to several people we love. That's how we are now. We are not going to do that giving - at least for the time being - because we shouldn't always want to give everything away. And yet we do it, by placing this work here on this all in all modest website about “*The Most Attractive Women in History*”, next to an also rather modest text or review. Yet in that sense we always remain awake or on our opportunistic qui vive because just a part of the experience around exactly this painting, we can or rather must use to think about it intellectually or simply humanly: the title, or see next paragraph! And before we continue thematically, we can possibly see this work extra as an honorary expression and symbol for the fine, creative, open, positive, constructive, … Hungary! These are valuable ways of doing and thinking that we, as it were, in the most sincere way, insofar as we are important as people meeting this work and the artist, really want to give our solemn “*fiat*” (Latin for “*Let it go/be*!”) – at least as a form of moral support.

This or any other title; what more can we say about it? Why, after all, come up with a title for an (important) own work of art, a work that was not made by oneself but acquired? Now, why not!? Let's briefly look at it legally. Owning a work of art means having the right of ownership over it. Does that also mean having the right to use it or to show it? And how far can that go - or not go? One can hardly imagine that someone would want to adapt a purchased work of art, improve it at least - because who would want to .. deteriorate something like that? There are historical examples of this, but then indeed historical or rather art historical. For example, a certain Pieter Paul Rubens sometimes dared to simply adapt or say adjust or improve a work of art in his own possession but of another make. And so on ... - but so few continue!? We are effectively talking here about an absolute top artist himself who dared to slightly adapt a work of art by someone else but therefore in his own possession. From a purely art historical perspective, one cannot imagine a more handsome or versatile painter, who effectively preceded Rubbens – or was it then of course Brueghel (the Elder) or Titian!? Incidentally, to our knowledge, that adaptation work was never done with the reportedly quite impressive collection of the noble gentleman Rubens as regards – small – antique sculptures. There was clearly a limit for this top artist, alias very independent, partly arrogant man. Nevertheless, everyone knows examples of how works of art have been effectively adapted by the owners throughout the centuries and certainly up to the present day. We give these clear and generally known examples:

1) So to speak, any work of art must be restored shortly after its creation! You know the phenomenon; you buy a new car and from the moment you drive it out of the sales garage, it is already partly worn out. Mutatis mutandis .... Restoration of works of art has been a

specialty in itself for a very long time. Of course, due to scientific progress in particular, renovations are no longer done in the same way as before. In fact, the intention was always to obtain an improvement of the work through a renovation. In the past, this was often very disappointing based on current knowledge, so that quite a few historical restorations later (now) have to be ... restored. In any case, there is hardly an art lover who is completely opposed to any renovation;

2) Somewhere after WWII, painters started painting – in any style – purely and solely on canvas or without any frame. Of course, they worked on canvas, although another surface was certainly also possible, such as linoleum, cardboard, plastic, etc. Almost throughout all times, with the exception of frescoes of course, frames were used for every painting. The same happened with etchings, drawings, pastels and so on. The verb "*to frame*" that is generally used in the art world and in the ordinary world can simply mean that one prepares an ordinary canvas to hang it up, so without any real "*frame*". Or framing without a frame – what a joke sometimes, that art world big and small. So that is possible and has been considered the new normal for decades. We personally do not like that frameless at all, although we are surprised by a certain age-old aversion to painting the frames themselves, even very partially. Frame or no frame, and how frames can or 'should' be tackled in a purely painterly way by the respective artist; it is a discussion in itself. In any case, anyone who buys their own painting, etching, etc. on paper or canvas or 'something' similar, which is as it were naked, can perfectly frame it themselves or have it framed by a professional. In our experience, that last professionalism or professional person is not so easy to find anymore. We personally know one excellent professional, who is now passing on his knowledge to his son or future is assured. SEE professional and artist Hans De Munter in Dendermonde:

https://www.schilderke.be/

If all these adaptations are socially permitted and even promoted, and are usually and preferably done by professionals, why not also this kind of adaptation to works of art such as sculptures, paintings and so on, by means of another/better/more suitable/…, or in particular an own, personal name or title!? In any case, it is not a purely material or tangible, in any case visible adaptation as in the previous two cases. Of course, it happens that the work of art in question is very famous and represents an undeniable social interest, and at the same time is in personal or private possession. For example, there is the Flemish "*TOPSTUKKENDECREET*" or the legislation concerning top works of art within the legal context of the Flemish Community. SEE: https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Topstukkendecreet

This regional law concerns a list of Flemish cultural masterpieces that must remain on the territory of the Flemish Community forever. It contains a concrete list of currently a good thousand specific masterpieces. The vast majority of these are, not coincidentally, in Flemish museums or universities or churches. However, less than ten percent are indicated with "*s.n.*" or "*sine nominee*" or "*naamloos*". SEE: https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Topstukkenlijst

These 'pieces', always important works of art such as paintings and so on, thus always have an official name or title, at least for the Flemish Community. But what prevents the owner – who certainly cannot alienate or sell it across the Flemish border! – from giving it his own title!? There is of course not the slightest impediment to this, although the personal necessity must be hard to find. In any case, we have no knowledge of such a title-deviating example of a Flemish masterpiece from the heritage. There are of course countless more works of art present, in particular in private possession, where fewer than a hundred of these Flemish

masterpieces form a part. In any case, many works of art are added to that mass of art in private possession every day. How quickly a part of these works acquires a certain broader or general importance is another matter. In any case, even when lending these private works to all kinds of exhibitions or when displaying them in photographic reproductions in all kinds of media; where is the problem if a work of art is named differently by the owner than the artist intended? Even when the work has already acquired a fair amount of publicity over time, so that it is actually considered well-known, with 'therefore' this or that 'public' title?

3. Our Young Flora! Or make up your own title for a beloved artwork!

In an earlier phase of our lives, when we had, so to speak, ten lungs and four hearts – or was it the other way around? – and also because of circumstances in the Belgian city of Ronse we knew ourselves to be extra intellectually and socially motivated, we, among many other initiatives, made quite a few titles for one artist of excellent quality; probably about a hundred titles. We will not elaborate on the beginning, continuation and end of this special intellectual activity. In any case, we received the photos of the works at home or went to see the works in question ourselves. And then we made up titles, usually in bed. And those titles were always ‘accepted’ as far as we can remember; good bed work! We also wrote – now admittedly at our desk – various articles for these artists and even speeches that were given by ‘personalities’ at his request on major occasions. Wonder if they ever knew which strange guy had written ‘their’ speech?

We are very happy to openly admit that we really enjoyed the intellectual work of creating suitable titles for a whole series of works of art (by one artist). Although at a certain point we started to find that a bit too much of a good thing. In the meantime we are older and call it weaker and we are above all busy with gigantic research and thinking and therefore writing about human behavior in times of crisis, more specifically during WW II. And we do that without a doubt at the highest possible level, because with the use of our maximum time and strength, although we are of course no Spinoza and we therefore sincerely hope that really everything we let go of and will let go of, will be improved by other, probably mainly younger people. Wait - and see! That mainly political theme is of course not our orientation here. Here we actually write for women or a few specific women, more specifically for XXX and apparently also for a certain Italian Lucella - ohlalala. Whether those ladies read one thing or another and even enjoy it; that would be nice. But in the end it does not matter that much, although we will come back to this problem later. SEE: **Gust De Smet.**

In the meantime, we have been, as it were, smoothly and pleasantly buried and survived by a very recent and as yet unstoppable avalanche of works of art with (sic) corresponding titles by the Belgian artist Willy Deventer (°Ronse, 1945), alias Daventra. SEE:

https://view.publitas.com/atelier-92-94/pdf-vijfenzeventig-gazet-255-april-a-25/page/1

You can see it and please first rub the sleepers from your eyes, especially if you have slept too long and especially if you want to wake up: this remarkable man is already at 15,000 (fifteen thousand) “*heads*” (“*koppen*” in Dutch) or – fictitious – portraits, which he produces daily at a regular rhythm. And indeed, the man is exceptionally skilled in language or he ‘produces’ his daily titles just as often – together of course with a “*head*”or portrait! At a later time we want to pay brief attention to one of those head-portraits, especially also (…) because we have written a fairly long article about this very remarkable and worthy art-historical fact much earlier on the internet edition of this artist. In any case, already 15,000 fictitious portraits

seems, humanly speaking, a form of madness or call it extreme skill and drive. And at the same time also and therefore already ‘inventing’ a title 15,000 times; il faut le faire! The verb “*to invent*” does not do justice to this great intellectual and of course artistic achievement! In that referenced article (hopefully also on this website soon) we firmly ask that “one day” several researchers will investigate both the works themselves, the accompanying titles and of course the combination thereof. In any case, this should be done by someone with an excellent knowledge of Dutch because Belgian/Flemish Willy Deventer is so linguistically proficient that he indeed plays or juggles with the Dutch language. In many cases it seems to us almost impossible to try to translate one thing and another. Oh well, the expression “*Traduttore, traditore*” is well-known, or “*Translating is betraying*”. That should be seen in its nakedness as an exaggeration next to a truly annoying truth. At the same time, that expression should be viewed positively because it should be seen as an encouragement to learn as many languages as possible from a very young age. In the EU, ideally, every child should learn not only their mother tongue but also (later on) two or three other (father) languages from an early age! That this literally opens up the world, in this case the European world, is something we regularly see in Slovakia, where a traditionally rather closed population is changing, or rather opening up, because at least one ‘foreign’ language is taught at school from an early age.

To our somewhat justified surprise – we are not yet speaking of bewilderment, but perhaps one year after the publication of this text we may use this term? – we openly admit here that we have never heard of studies, articles or directly more serious or thicker (sic) books, about the importance of titles of works of art. The number of works of art that are in the official museums of, say, the EU alone, is simply incalculable. Who would count something like that, as if one were to count the trees in one's municipality (incidentally, for many Flemish, so very urbanized municipalities, that is not such a difficult task; on the other hand, we have planted between 350 and 400 trees with our own hands somewhere in Hungary alone – not too bad, is it!). It goes without saying that here and there we have read 'something' motivated or intellectual about titles of artists. That certainly happened by the artists themselves and usually very briefly explained, or then by museum directors or curators of thematic exhibitions, and also sometimes by contemplative art historians. We can say here frankly that of the package of titles for his works of art that we have invented for one Belgian artist for years, most were, so to speak, attempts to express impressions of those works of art. We have a certain affinity with ‘something’ like poetry and mystery and we have to leave it at that for now. Secondly, the event happened a bit too long ago to have retained specific memories of that work (…) and in a certain sense it involved a bit too many different works. Although we have to add that it was not a production line (sic) and we always did our sincere best to make ‘something’ attractive or nice. That must have been successful because we do not remember a single refusal on the part of the artist, whose wife was not just rather dominant and ambitious and – how to put that diplomatically? – was greedy for money: those works of art were always sales works or those ‘things’ had to be sold of course. We have in any case remembered that once a Dutchman had become so addicted to the ‘respective’ work by one of ‘our’ titles that he immediately ordered – and bought – that work. Sometimes our then structurally not humorous partner would say that our titles were better than some works of art. That is not an insult to this artist (and certainly not to that partner – hahaha) because what artist besides Brueghel, Goya, Picasso, Rubens and Van Dyck can now deliver consistently high quality? In that sense we dare to say here, and we will definitely leave it at that, that perhaps inventing suitable titles as a verbal/intellectual activity is easier or simpler than making interesting works of art. That seems to us a certainty afterwards, and seems to us as it were beforehand or purely theoretically even more self-evident. On the other hand, we would like to point out once again the truly exceptional achievement that the modern Belgian graphic artist Willy

Deventer (alias Daventra) produces with his ‘heads’ and the accompanying titles. We would of course not go so far as to claim that his titles can stand on their own, but we do have a feeling (a feeling, an impetus for thoughts) that someone – who wants to analyse and think about it in writing – can think about it and therefore write about it in the well-known ‘much more’.

Ultimately or very fundamentally; one may – must? – ask the question whether a title of or by or through or …. a work of art, or such a title has (any) importance? Sometimes, often, usually … it has only an indicative, so not an added value to the work of art that it titles. Often an artist tries to suggest, or supposedly give, a “*layer or so-called depth*” to the work of art with such a self-chosen title (that exists – hahaha). And we have to laugh about that on occasion – but do we blame that on our bad character or less moralizing, on our excess of analytical or untangling ability or our love of credibility? What use is that to a title or a so-called more profound description or suggestion? In that, let us say, rather liberal or intellectual as well as in a materialistic sense (in the sense of property and user rights) freedom-loving view, one can quite safely name any work of art in one’s own possession as one wishes. For example, one can observe the beloved grandchild who may one day once again express – must express! – the very familiar ‘something’ about a work of art, as happened to us with our dearly beloved son who commented on a very beautiful work of art by the Belgian artist WDZGB3 with … “*Kaka*” (“*Shit*”). Namely, on that magnificent lithograph there were two swans approaching the feet of a naked woman on the shore. And this naked woman was really completely naked and stood with her … turned towards us – the viewers! Indeed, “*Kaka*” or well thought out, Miłosz!

Much can therefore be thought of about titles, if one wants to dwell on them for once. But let us conclude these considerations about this issue with a more or less pressing question, a question perhaps about freedom (yet again!!!)! Pardon me, a question about freedom in the context of looking at and evaluating works of art? Indeed, why do we all, at thematic exhibitions and in ordinary (private or public) museums, apparently always need titles for the works of art we encounter? Why do we apparently NEED them – TITLES? Even more! Why do we even need name tags on or next to the works of art in all these same circumstances, more precisely why do we even need (must we?) to know the identity (first name + family name, or if necessary just the alias) of the respective artist!? Now it's getting hotter or more exciting, yes? It seems literally unimaginable; no name tags next to or on (on the bottom edge of the frame, for example) paintings, etchings, sculptures and other forms of works of art!!! Isn't that a form of perfect freedom or call it sincerity or credibility, perfect throughout the contemplation where the eye - and therefore the mind or the brain and the heart - are not hindered, say distracted, say conditioned by a stupid name tag, an annoying "*name*" like there is: a title + first name and surname (or alias)!!!?? Away with all forms of snobbery or "*name-watching*"! You look - and above all; you enjoy, or not! - the works, pure and simple or in other words completely unhindered by the real redundancy of purely verbal information - again, of a (normal) title and of a (normal) first name and surname. Something tells us that once a wicked museum director came up with this plan but was then either removed by a very startled mayor and city council, or was 'asked' via an urgent and compelling letter to abandon the intention to convert this concept or theory into reality. But you know the expression, which is very, very simple but equally clear or convincing: “*Wait – and see*!”.

Once, in 2005, we went with some reluctance to a hyped exhibition in the Brussels Bozar. The umpteenth world-famous curator or master of masters in assessing and showing works of art, the Swiss Harald Szeemann (1933 – 2005), had created a so-called unmissable and very

unique retrospective exhibition there. With the title (of course): "*Visionary Belgium: C'est arrivé près de chez nous*'" ('*Visionary Belgium: It happened close to home'*). It would be the swan song of this grey art goose because he died shortly before the vernissage. So we left with a (rather gigantic) prejudice, even before we had bought the entrance ticket. We admit that. With what is called in Flemish "*long teeth*", we dragged ourselves through one and a half rooms – with (for us) a lot of nonsense about so-called important or interesting works of art. When we made the turn to start the second and fortunately last length of the exhibition route, we saw through the mass of people – we readily admit it, there were many people walking or it was a real success in terms of quantity – finally, finally, "*O Nostra Signora della Salute – Mille Grazie*" – a real work of art, right at the end or through the people! We then continued somewhat cautiously because we did not want to crush or even hinder the other parts of the mass of people. We kept our gaze fixed on nothing other than "*The Redemption, or the Encounter with a True Work of Art*". And, dear viewers or readers, it turned out to be a Rembrandt that was unknown to us until then. But a Rembrandt. Whose light – The Light or La Luce – had gripped us through a mass of people and after we had become doubly dull, as it were, by all the artistic hip-hop nonsense present. That was/is an encounter with true art. We experienced it a few more times, and in more or less similar circumstances.

Oh, of course. The title of the work, of that wonderful painting by Rembrandt! We forgot … Or …? Oh, oh, oh. Could we have been … mistaken? A Rembrandt, great and overall! But why did he then appear in … '*Visionair Belgium' …*?

4. Young Hungarian artists for 'older' Western European immigrants in Hungary?

We have known the Hungarian countryside and the provinces quite well, for a while now. We literally needed that incredible peace and space there (space always gives peace) compared to the extremely interesting but extremely busy Belgian country, without going into that any further. What we had to establish with absolute certainty, besides trying to enjoy the peace, is that besides our rather poor or modest Western European presence as a passer-by or temporary immigrant, there were and continue to be a great many Dutch, Germans, and some Belgians who were and continue to flow in – so they live there or stay there permanently. You don't have to use a microscope to also establish that it mainly concerns people from the pensioner class. In addition, there are to a very decreasing extent the usual adventurers, a few desperate ones (hahaha) and even white or other colored entrepreneurs. We shouldn't look into other people's wallets, but everyone, so also almost every Hungarian who has ever heard (...) of the internet, knows what an average house in the Netherlands costs, once sold – by those Dutch people of course. We assume that when those Western Europeans have sold their house – or houses – there, they do not give that capital to the poor people of the Netherlands, Germany or so on, or to the Holy Roman Church, the United Protestant Temples and the well-known such. Or at least very, very partially. Long ago, when monkeys were still …, we suggested to a Dutch estate agent to organize some charitable work by Dutch, Germans and Belgians for Hungarians. That was – of course? – laughed off with a certain cynicism, although this estate agent genuinely had/has a lot of sympathy for us. We then modestly keep silent about the differences in monthly incomes between the natives – Hungarians – and the Western European, mainly retired residents. We better not go into that either.

In any case, young artists, in whatever country they are, always have a hard time launching themselves. And quite a few fail. And fortunately for those who do become teachers - in art, at whatever level (and thus do extremely important work!!!). That social art phenomenon is generally known. Picasso too - you probably know him and hopefully you probably know

more than just him and hopefully you know a lot, a great deal about him because the man is extremely interesting - spent a time, in their younger years, selling paintings as street vendors for literally peanuts, together with his friend Georges Bracque (1892 - 1963)! Preferably with a piece of cheese and even a good bottle of wine. Incroyable mais très vrai! That starting scenario would turn around or improve for them, but of course that desirable scenario never happened in the same way - not even that spectacularly but just decently - for many artists. Coincidentally, we know a Hungarian, let's say, folk artist who paints beautiful flower frescoes (so not making and applying ceramics), on houses. She does this very coincidentally only for ... Hungarians, or on Hungarian buildings. Just as coincidentally, we have not yet personally sought out that lady; it is a matter of time. Or not; it is perhaps a matter of age, because she is already a bit older. We would like to see something like that happen - painting houses, outside or also inside - by naturally (!!!) Hungarian young ladies and young gentlemen - graduates or still students at art academies. Or Hungarians for the non-Hungarians in Hungary. Something like that?

There are many, many more possibilities here than paintings as frescoes – on walls outside and/or inside. But also; we are and never want to become someone's manager. We give ideas or proposals, but are neither actual managers for individual artists nor an art agency. Although we may of course, as in this example of the young and strong personality of Kálmán Borbála (2006), a lady who also speaks English perfectly (and understands – hahaha), recommend young Hungarian artists! It goes without saying and also given the rich Hungarian painting tradition known to us, that many more possibilities can fit pleasantly in the Western European eyes. We think first of all of … portraits of course! Portraits of the lady Dutch, German, …. hostess, and of her Dutch, German, … (meanwhile also Hungarian!) husband who lets the grass in his large garden be grazed by his patient herd of goats – or has it mowed by that relatively cheap Hungarian neighbor, hahaha. Since it mainly concerns older ladies and gentlemen, they usually have family who are not only younger but also like to visit during the holiday months. So that is still July and August and some other school holiday periods in between. Well, it means that the Hungarian young lady and young gentleman and especially hungry and driven artist can make portraits at all times of the year. And she/he can continue to do so for a while in a network. By the way; birds flock together. Or if you pull the thread of the trousers of, say, one Dutchman, you suddenly pull a whole bunch of Dutch, Germans, ... in one village. Frescoes with good flowers, portraits of ..., and so the very well-known and so on. So there can be painting, etching, drawing, ... Why not proposals for, say, the kitchen of the lady who would so much like some old Delft, pardon Hungarian and especially completely new ceramic tiles specially designed for her on site? What kind of rubbish tiles do people in kitchens and bathrooms, especially, go to get for their walls in the special supermarkets like … (we cannot advertise, not even negative or discouraging)!? If you can order all that or have it designed and executed by young artists – from the country itself! Why not cast or carve statues for the garden – of Mr. and Mrs. and also the grandchildren who …!? Anyway, dear young Hungarian, Romanian, Slovakian, Serbian … artist; learn to speak a little German, French, English or …. All beginnings are small. But in the beginning there was the word, the Logos - remember!!!??? Speak to one resident of the region in that language and then … That is how marketing works, if there is sufficient ambition and of course good (growing) professional knowledge and a correct price. Think of the eternal "*three P's: Price + Place + Product*". Roll up your sleeves and first let your tongue hang out of your mouth!

Of course, for at least thirty years now, a mainly Dutch real estate industry has been sown across the Hungarian land, and there are rarely Hungarian real estate agents who know German, sometimes even Dutch. These real estate agents not only like to sell – houses, of

course. But they also prefer to sell (as it were; what a wonderful thing that is, isn't it!?) the renovations to those houses; earning double. Although it is generally best to wait and get to know a house and neighbourhood better, a quick at least partial renovation may be urgently needed. By waiting, you will acquire more and better possibilities anyway. In this way, a renovation can at least partly go hand in hand with, so to speak, pure art creations, certainly with mosaics or ceramics in kitchens and bathrooms! Of course, the existing real estate agents provide all kinds of other useful services, through their – rather poor to somewhat better or excellent – knowledge of the Hungarian language and customs. But (so, always that but …). But so!? We are getting older or weaker, let's admit it, although that old age has great advantages such as the accumulation of - experience or something like more personal knowledge even .. wisdom!? But we remain curious or open ... We have never seen or heard of a single Western European broker who works professionally in Hungary, and who once recommends a - respectable and preferably young, call it promising - artist. At best, these brokers are inversely interested in the very old Hungarian farm tiles, wooden beams, doors and windows. Because, they can then be transported to ... the Netherlands or Austria or X to sell for a high price. Those items that are sold off abroad in Hungary are then used commercially there as very authentic .... Hungarian farm tiles and so on. Or (interesting) Hungarian items for (interested) non-Hungarians, now outside Hungary. It is almost laughable, but we (almost) have to cry about such a lack of, let us say, artistic and/or empathetic or artistic Hungarian-Western-European Brokerage-Plus.

Although we do not want to give an example of exhaustive, creative services by (young) Hungarian artists to Western European settlers in Hungary, we still have to point out a reverse, albeit analogous movement: on to the Netherlands, Germany and …! Of course (sic?) we have never heard of networking on an intra-European level, where young Hungarian artists in particular are stimulated by Dutch brokers and immigrants to give those young Hungarian artists in the Netherlands, Germany and so on, a chance to be featured in an exhibition. Hello EU, there is still a lot of work to be done, also or especially (liberal thinking, right?) informally or by the very ordinary people.

Epilogue.

Also don't forget, dear Dutchman, German and so on, that Hungarians think differently, grammatically and therefore also in terms of worldview. Much more Western European, they turn it around. For example, they pronounce and write the first name AFTER the family name! Or in concreto: Hungarians pronounce and write "*Kálmán Borbála*" and therefore not - according to Western European logic - "*Borbála Kálmán*". You got it!? Keep it!

For young Hungarian artists who now, as it were, (want to) think 'exclusively' of their own market; see our concept of "*APPART-ART*". SEE **Ľudova pieseň (A Folksong), Vlasta Flendrovská.** But we assume that as philosophers we always think in a general or principled way, so that purely heuristic ideas intended for one context are also more or less applicable to other more or less adjacent situations. Bonne chance and "*Sok szerencsét*"!

Jean-Marie De Dijn, EU, March 2025.

……..

Inger in Black and Violet, Evard Munch (1863 - 1944), oil, 1892, Nasjonalmuseet Oslo.

T.I.S..

.....

Januari Andere zijde, Daventra (pseudonym of Willy Deventer, 1944), mixed techniques, 2025, part of serial "*Koppen Kijken*", private collection.

SEE also:

Atelier 92/94 - pdf VIERENTACHTIG DEF gAZet 264 AUG A 2025 - Pagina 166-167 - Gemaakt met Publitas.com

Feel free to look left, left ... and right, right...: there are many surprises waiting for you at "*Heads*" ("*Koppen*")!

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1. Inleiding. Een weerlichtige voorstelling van de geschiedenis van het beeld.

Wij zijn van het jaar 1963 ofwel - om het dwangmatig te formuleren - van voor het bestaan van internet en vooral van voor het verschijnen van de Smartphone. Zelfs toen we wat probeerden te studeren aan de toenmalige Rijksuniversiteit te Gent, ondertussen de UG geworden naast één der diverse Vlaamse diplomafabriekjes, hebben wij nooit een 'gewone' computer gezien, een PC dus. Echt op de hoogte der ontwikkelingen zijn we niet maar nadien kwamen daar ook een draagbare PC bij - de laptop - en zelfs een zeer draagbare waar je ook kon tegen spreken; deze fameuze Smartphone. Dit gruwelijk ding - voor alle duidelijkheid hebben wij het spul genaamd Smartphone niet en gaan het ook nooit aanschaffen - wordt door ontelbare mensen over geheel de wereld gebruikt. Het wordt bij zeer velen onder hen, vooral jongeren en blijkbaar ook wat oudere dames, bij voorkeur zichtbaar gebruikt want bijna ostentatief gedragen in een opgeheven hand - een zeer slechte zaak voor de polsspieren, ten handere. Kunt U zich voorstellen dat U vroeger met de huistelefoon rondliep, thuis dus of in

de tuin met een zeer lange verlengdraad of zoiets erbij terwijl U *juist niet* aan het telefoneren was maar in afwachting van!? Dit 'moderne' ding moet blijkbaar steeds klaar in de aanslag staan want een gebruiker zou wel eens vers van de naald (een naald?) een nieuw bericht kunnen missen, en - stel je voor - daarbij moeten bemerken dat er zelfs meerdere voordien waren gepasseerd. Zelf zijn we sinds peutertijd nieuwsgierig als de peuterpest. Het gebruikelijke 'enige' woord "*pest*" zien we hier niet graag neergeschreven want nieuwsgierigheid vinden wij ver van een ziekte en dus eerder een geschenk zij het soms wel een opgave. Bijgevolg vermoeden wij deze menselijke eigenschap aanwezig te zijn bij alle andere mensen en zeker nu of sinds de intrede van de Smartphone en zeer primair bij al diegenen (bijna iedereen blijkbaar) die bij de minste beweging van dat ding, opkijken of gewoon neerkijken naar de reeds in aanslag zijnde hand, zelfs terwijl men op dat eigenste moment met een ander mens life in een zeer hartelijk gesprek bezig was; opnemen dat ding! Overigens kan een opmerkzaam socioloog wel eens een studie maken over het aantal linkerhanden dat de Smartphone zou ophouden. Naar ons gevoelen zijn die immers in hogere statistische mate aanwezig dan er 'echte' linkerhanden bij de bevolking aanwezig zijn. Dat is blijkbaar één interessant gevolg van dit modern tuig, al willen wij dat geen voordeel noemen. In feite is deze opmerking valabel - zogenaamde wetenschappers willen altijd en overal eender wat meten - maar vooral niet relevant of totale onzin.

In elk geval is één functie van de Smartphone dominant. Het spel produceert wereldwijd dagelijks ontelbare portretten en - kijk eens aan zeg hoe knap associatief bedacht door de uitvinder ervan - samen met allerlei sociale media die in een vingerknip of vingerverschuivende toets, onmiddellijk deze portretten laten 'delen' met het worldwideweb. Dat is voor diegenen die deze woorden niet kennen de betekenis van de bekende afkorting van het "*www*". Dat wordt uitgesproken als het weeweewee et pour les flamands het wéwéwé. En dat alles is en passant gezegd de Engelse vertaling van het Nederlandse wijwijwij. En noem het geheel gerust het 'internet' tout court. In zo verre duidelijkheid verlangd wordt van de schrijver dezes - wij - zitten wij ook niet op het internet, op één wetenschappelijk beoogde website na waar wij ook al één foto moeten tonen, zij het een gedeelde en dan nog gefabriceerde of gefotoshopte en overigens met dank aan het onderwerp van dit artikel, dhr. Willy Deventer alias toen hemzelf en nu zeer geregeld Daventra; wij hanteren voor ons eigen gemakzucht voortaan uitsluitend Willy Deventer. Die Willy Deventer is vlug aangekondigd een kunstenaar uit het boeiende stadje Ronse dat wat ons leven betreft eveneens boeiende kunstenaars heeft voortgebracht als speciaal glazenier Jan Leenknegt en de man die een neergedaalde of neergestorte engel is, de onnavolgbare zij het toch aanbevelenswaardig te volgen beeldhouwer en zo meer Stefaan Ponette. Mocht trouwens elke Belgische gemeente in een tijdsspanne van pakweg vijftig jaar drie dergelijke kunsttovenaars kennen dan "*awel amai merci*": het lijkt onwaarschijnlijk nog eens te gaan gebeuren maar U kent natuurlijk alle spitante gezegdes van James Bond. Alle namen zijn trouwens geboren lang voor het ontstaan van het wéwéwé en zijn er deels op aanwezig, in het geval van Willy Deventer extreem en uniek aktief want hij is een man met vele longen bijgevolg multi-vliegend of iets duivelskunstenaarachtigs. Zelf zijn we dus zeer aktief dus totaal afwezig op de relevante sociale media waarvan we niet eens kunnen zeggen welke momenteel de belangrijkste zijn, al blijken enkele vooral Amerikaanse redelijk standvastig blijvers te zijn en er ook al een Chinese en dan met een oer-Arabische naam een stevige pap aan het verbrokkelen is - of zoiets.

De Smartphone en de in voege zijnde populaire sociale media produceren in hoofdzaak 1) berichten of teksten en 2) beelden, stilstaande of bewegende en in dat geval meestal met bijhorende teksten of wat de bewogene aan iet of wat belangrijks aan het uitspreken is. In het

eerste geval gaat het dan steeds over mensen en in het tweede geval hoofdzakelijk al zijn er ongetwijfeld over de gehele wereld talloze sociologen die zeer uniek onderzoek hebben verricht en losgelaten hebben naar het aandeel van dieren. Let wel, die kunnen met absolute zekerheid nog steeds niks zelf opnemen en dan posten or whatever en zijn bijgevolg steeds het lijdend en meewerkend voorwerp van mensen. Afgezien van het dierlijk onderwerp, produceert de moderne communicatietechnologie met een extreem overwicht teksten en/of gezichten van mensen. Het gaat om gezichten van mensen die zichzelf afbeelden, die andere mensen afbeelden en dat ook samen doen, of over ruw geschetst portretten en groepsportretten. Over bewegende beelden gaan we het hier totaal niet hebben omdat zij enerzijds een verzameling van gewone beelden kunnen worden genoemd en vanzelfsprekend een zeer belangrijke andere verschijning is met speciale wetmatigheden. De filmpjes die men ook op sociale media aantreft, kan men voor het grootste deel gewoon zigzaggedoe noemen want hebben niks van meerdere of culturele waarde of op zijn best plezant of zelfs deels leerzaam. Overigens zijn wij in het ondertussen in fusies opgegane Heilige Maagdcollege van Derremonne nogal degelijk opgevoed in de kunst der films, zij het dat één vertoning aldaar wel eens in de mist is opgegaan omdat het een te moeilijke Bressonfilm was gebleken. Alleszins kregen wij daar een opleiding én werd reclame gemaakt voor het - vanzelfsprekend katholiek - filmblad "*Film en Televisie*". Dat blad hebben wij in de schoolbibliotheek geregeld doorsnuisterd al was het door het ontbreken van zeg maar een - haha - PC en dus vooral internet (Youtube, ...) niet voortdurend verder te bestuderen, of met andere waren de woorden (besprekingen) aan de daden (de films zelf) niet te koppelen. Nu slechts 40/50 jaar later lijkt dit de Middeleeuwen? Alleszins hebben wij zeer veel beelden van kunstwerken gezien doorheen twee jaar esthetica na een legendarisch "*Licht uit/spot aan*". De schoolbib had ook al een grote collectie kunstboeken al hebben we daar buiten ons nooit een andere scholier gezien, allicht toeval en allicht zitten al die anderen - in toen één der grootste humaniora's van het land - allemaal te beeldbikkelen op hun ... Smartphone!? Tot onze eeuwige vreugde gingen wij op sterk aanraden van onze leerkracht esthetica Guido Triest - "*Het zaad valt niet steeds op de stenen*" - rond 1980 naar een avondvoorstelling van ook al duivelskunstenaar Harold Van De Perre. Die bracht in het stadhuis een uitzonderlijke voorstelling - met drie diaprojectoren - rond beeldmaker Jan Van Eyck. En hij boeide ons met zijn begeesterende vormelijke analyses van (deze) kunst van sowieso een opmerkelijk kunstenaar. En die kennis opgedaan op die avond door die kunstenaar annex kunstkenner zou meer dan 20 jaar later leiden tot onze ontdekking ergens rond maart 2005 van de historische waarde van het wandtapijt dat de stad Ronse net had aangekocht (een werk van Gentenaar Gaston Woedstad en daterend uit 1943). En dat leidde in de Annalen van het jaar nadien tot ons artikel over dat wandtapijt als vorm van "*symbolische verzetskunst*", nadien tot onder meer een doctoraatsvoorstel in de kunstgeschiedenis zowaar enzovoort (alles door ons verworpen want 'verder denkend') en uiteindelijk tot een reusachtig onderzoek naar menselijk gedrag doorheen WO II. Of tot wat het fenomeen beeld en de manier van kijken ernaar en spreken erover leiden kan.

Wat nu met/via/door Willy Deventer? Naar wat gaat dat leiden, bij U, bij ... ?

2. De Beeldenstorm en het onbekende maar meer favoriete Omgekeerde.

Het land der Belgen, zijn het nu Nederlands- of Franstaligen (van de Duitstaligen weten wij niks maar die zijn er ook maar zeer laat en redelijk bevreemdend bijgekomen), is een zeer beeldrijke cultuur. Het was bijna anders geweest of liever bijna volledig verdwenen. Zoals U weet of toch hoort te weten was quasi iedereen tot de alom gekende Jaren Stillekes gelovig of christelijk. Dat was tot ruwweg Anno Domini 1500 katholiek want van de toen reeds lang

bestaande orthodoxen, Nestorianen en andere verder gelegen christelijke tutti varianti quanti was in onze Lage Landen geen sprake. Die zaten domweg veel verder - dikwijls zelfs tussen islamieten verspreid - en al reisden Vlaamse textielhandelaars reeds ettelijke honderden jaren over een enorm deel van bekend Europa om hun lakens en zo meer superdegelijks ten gelde te maken, pakweg orthodoxe iconen werden hierbij naar onze kennis nooit meegebracht. Anders dan die snode, geldbeluste maar zo kunstijdele Venetianen was er geen zedelijke laat staan geordonneerde plicht om vanuit den handelsvreemde bij terugkomst 'iets moois' mee te brengen: achteraf bekeken mogen we dat dikke pech noemen en ergens een analogie met wat wel eens sinds eeuwen wordt vernoemd als "*geen sant in eigen land*". Waar zou men het dan anders ook hebben moeten hangen want één centrale San Marcobasiliek, met name, hadden wij natuurlijk niet te meer omdat onze steden en zelfs kleinere gemeenten onderling elkaar graag de loef afstaken of de neus afbeten, dikwijls letterlijk want de boel op een ander kwamen kort en klein slaan en gedeeltelijk bestelen indien naar de smaak daar nu eens wat te veel geld werd verdiend - in ook al lakens. Zeer lang voor bijvoorbeeld een Schoolstrijd was er eeuwenlang op minstens Vlaams en Brabants grondgebied de mindere bekende Lakenstrijd, iets waar U wel geen afbeeldingen van moet zoeken want dat was niet goed voor de commerciële PR van de betrokken partijen.

In elk geval, in het gruwelijke jaar 1566 raasde iets als de Beeldenstorm door het oude Vlaanderen en Brabant waarbij de nieuwe strekking onder de aloude christenen, het protestantisme (met of zonder initiaal), afbeeldingen van mensen en dus (euh?) goden niet zag zitten. Deze beeldenstormers bestormden letterlijk beelden. Het waren *iconoclasten*. U weet uiteraard dat het woord "*algebra*" uit het Arabisch afkomstig is maar het is nog meer uiteraardelijk zo dat een pak woorden uit ons Nederlands, Frans, Duits, Engels en noem maar op, uit het Latijn en nog eerder uit het Grieks komen, een algemeen taalgegeven dat men aanduidt met het nogal eigenaardig begrip bastaardwoorden. Inderdaad, ook het woord "*iconoclasme*" is een bastaardje want komt uit het Grieks en is een samenstelling tussen het stamwoord *"icoon*", in dit geval "*εἰκών/eikôn*" dat "*beeld*" betekent. Eveneens is het bijvoegsel of de definitieve begripsdeterminatie "*clasme*" Grieks want stamt af van "κλάω/*klaô*". En dat betekende steeds voor deze Grieken "*(af)gebroken*". Nu hebben wij in ons leven ooit de grote zij het toch opbeurende fout gemaakt geen Latijn-Grieks te hebben gevolgd. Zo durven wij op kousenvoeten - door zomerachtige tijden zelfs zonder kousen maar U begrijpt de uitdrukking want aan liegen hebben wij een hekel - slechts stellen dat de Grieken en bijgevolg nu ook U en wij, niet het woord kennen voor beeld-makend, of beeld-opbouwend, beeld-bestierend of beeld- ...d; U bedenkt maar zelf in dezelfde categoriale of logische wijze. En bede, gelieve ons te corrigeren en derhalve het nodige Griekse woord te geven indien zij wel degelijk een dergelijk begrip hanteerden! Overigens noemt de kunst van het kunstig maken van beelden in deftig Nederlands beeldhouwen; het houwen van beelden. U begrijpt dat dit gezien het vorige toch iets ironisch heeft, zeker wanneer sinds lang beelden kunnen worden geproduceerd door hen te gieten, in metaal of plastiek. Die uitdrukking is ontstaan door één cruciaal onderdeel van het vormen van dat soort beeld. Men kan nu eenmaal niks anders dan het wegnemen van allerlei stukken hout of steen - nooit tesamen natuurlijk - om tot een 'echt' beeld te komen.

En dat gebeuren van het houwen of afbreken is vanzelfsprekend juist het omgekeerde van plastische kunstenaars zoals tekenaars en schilders, al gaan we hier gezellig ons best doen om U voor te stellen graveerders even beschouwing te laten want dat lijkt ons toch iets te ingewikkeld in ons binair denken rond het maken van beelden; houwen of niet houwen!? Als het ware uit het niets maken schilders en tekenaars met kleuren (ook zwart en wit zijn kleuren) en lijnen afbeeldingen, in dit geval van mensen. Dit soort afbeeldingen van mensen

noemt men dan wel eens portretten zelfs groepsportretten. En dat woord - portret - herbergt ook al een zeer oude afkomst, in dit geval van het Latijn via "*prōtrahō*" of "*ik trek (uit)/breng voort*". U bent een mens en als mens uit een mens geboren en denkt nu onwillekeurig aan Uw moeder uit wie U bent geboren, ergens nauwelijks voelend of iets mee duwend uitgetrokken, door hopelijk een vroedvrouw - terug al behoorlijke tijd in een eeuwige mode - of door een dokter en/of een verpleegster.

Samengevat mogen we zeggen dat de Grieken en de Romeinen, in tegenstelling tot nu ook eens de Joden of de tweede diepe wortel van het Westers denken en doen en die slechts één beeld hebben gemaakt (rarara), dol waren op het maken en bekijken zelfs verafgoden van of via beelden. We kunnen hen dan Grieks uitgedrukt "*iconocraten*" noemen, analoog aan hun woordelijke uitvinding der democratie. Het waren vroedvrouwen en zeer hoofdzakelijk vroedmannen van beelden die quasi hoofdzakelijk - maar daar zouden wij nu eens zelf historische informatie over willen lezen - professioneel as such optraden of m.a.w. dus gesponsord werden (op eender welke wijze dat het levensvatbaar was) als een kleine maar steeds beter opgeleide klasse binnen de maatschappij. Van de productie van die beelden kan men bijna nooit een volledig overzicht maken, want is zo buitengewoon gigantisch. Zelfs voor de antieke wereld zou dit oneindig veel werk bedragen. Alleszins mogen we zonder aarzelen stellen dat door de uitving van de PC en zijn opvolgers, dus vooral de Smartphone met zijn relevante 'nieuwe' applicaties dat historisch ook maar een fase in verdere ontwikkeling zal betekenen, met de zeer interessante tussentijd van de ontwikkeling van de gewone fotografie van kort na WO II, nooit voordien in de gehele mensengeschiedenis ooit iets is ontstaan als nu of de gigantisch verspreide productie door ook zgn. amateurs of de 'iedereen' van beelden, hoofdzakelijk of vooral portretten. En toch komt zekere Willy Deventer op beeldvlak met iets speciaals.

3. Fernand de bandwerker met een klein portret en Willy's bandproductie aan portretten.

En zo waren wij niet weinig verbaasd en tegelijk helemaal niet toen wij na het jaar 2.000 bij een ooit professionele levenslange bandwerker en ondertussen gezellig pensionerende mens als Fernand een klein portret zagen hangen. Tot onze eerlijke lichte schaamte hebben wij geen handtekening gezien dus onthouden van de schilder van dit portret; het was geverfd en in kleur en geen zelfportret. Maar het voortbrengsel was geslaagd te noemen. Wat wij als geslaagd vinden, kunnen wij door het ontbreken van het tonen van dit portret niet hard of zacht maken; dat is niet alleen iets te persoonlijk maar ook niet ter zake. Inderdaad, alle Vlamingen die als het ware de Beeldenstorm van 1566 hebben overleefd en dus katholiek zijn gebleven of het weer zijn geworden of ondertussen zoals de grote massa vooral naar ongeloof zijn geswitcht maar dus ergens gelovig zijn gebleven puur of diep existentieel cultureel gezien, weten bij andere kennissen en ook al bij zichzelf hoe het portret een immens belang heeft in de aankleding van muren. En die muren blijven nu eenmaal redelijk noodzakelijk voor wie een woning nodig heeft - ongeveer iedereen dus. Maar, zelfs de vluchteling en zwerver zal bij momenten in de uitgesleten zak tasten om een portret van een geliefde moeder of zus of zo te willen zien. En hoe groot - onmetelijk of bij geen mens te meten - is de eenzaamheid wanneer dit portret door wedervaardigheden is verdwenen. Het letterlijk niet zien van de geliefde door een afbeelding of een vorm van materiële dus niet lijfelijke vertegenwoordiging moet één der zwaarste existentiële pijnen betekenen. Men weet dat met name veel stervende soldaten nog net voor dat nakende einde, het portret van hun moeder of hun echtgenote willen zien. Alsof dat zien hun laatste bestaansdaad is en vooral de sprong

naar het leven met hen, voordien zo werkelijk en nu bijna fataal en futiel en binnenkort geheel verdwenen.

Nu weten we niet zo toevallig dat deze man Fernand een zeer vriendelijk en loyaal mens was. Dat hij zeker twee belangrijke dames in zijn lange leven heeft gehad die door de simpele wetten van het stervensvol bestaan letterlijk zijn verdwenen, weten we ook al hebben wij helemaal nooit gevraagd waarom wij dan niet ook ineens de beelden van beiden of zelfs toch reeds één van hen als 'echt' portret hebben kunnen zien, niet noodzakelijk maar ergens te verwachten dichtbij of simpelweg naast zijn eigen portret. Een mens moet altijd nieuwsgierig zijn maar best dat niet altijd verwoorden al stelt de gemiddelde Vlaming meestal te laat eindelijk die ene belangrijke vraag. Langs de andere kant zijn er dan wel de foto's of de - mogen we dat zeggen? - iets minder belangrijke afbeeldingen van de belangrijke derden, in dit geval dames. Ware of kunstzinnig gemaakte dubbelportretten zijn heden zeer zeldzaam; wij hebben er alvast nog nooit één ontmoet. Soms ontmoet men het op een betere foto die wezenlijk fotografisch wat minder kan zijn - hoewel in deze gevallen nagenoeg altijd een beroepsfotograaf is gebruikt - maar net door die veelvuldigheid én uiteraard zeer speciale samenhorigheid iets apart magisch heeft. Groepsportretten zijn historisch alleszins redelijk zeldzaam; iedereen denkt dan aan automatisch aan "*De Nachtwacht*" van Rembrandt die overigens massa's zelfportretten maakte, als schilderij, schets en grafisch. Hét groepsportret bij uitstek eeuwen lang was natuurlijk de afbeelding door een zelfde kunstenaar van een echtpaar, van man en vrouw en later ook met de kinderen. Het eerste ontmoet men relatief veel ook weer in kerken, zoals in het "*Lam Gods*" te G. waar mijnheer en mevrouw de schenkers/opdrachtgevers/betalers duidelijk dus perfect herkenbaar staan afgebeeld. Dat was in een eeuwenlang onwrikbaar denken een probaat geacht middel om voor binnenkort - dus vanaf de eigen dood - zielenheil af te smeken. Waar dat motief zeker niet aanwezig was, maar werkelijk gewoon de genegen liefde tussen twee mensen werd afgebeeld, is eveneens van Rembrandt bij het weergaloze "*Het Joodse Bruidje*", toen opvallend genoeg helemaal niet gesmaakt als een vorm van schandaalwerk en al zekere tijd en vermoedelijk eeuwig één der mooiste schilderijen ooit gemaakt. Het is ergens jammer en alleszins opvallend dat Willy Deventer in zijn onvoorstelbare aantallen speciale portretten werkelijk geen enkele dubbelafbeelding heeft getekend, met zwart potlood of kleurpotloden (wat een heerlijk woord is dat - "*kleur-pot-lo-den"* - , waar zoveel kinderherinneringen direct naar boven komen maar waarom is onder meer deze Willy Deventer alleen maar een groot klein kind gebleven?), gebict, geoliekrijt of al eens zeldzaam gestift. Dat is zijn natuurlijk zijn keuze of zijn vrijheid zoals het hem door de gekende Muze Rita Cee telkens weer kan zijn ingefluisterd. Toch mogen wij stellen dat wij dat een beetje betreuren omdat die belangrijke menselijke interactie tegenover de toeschouwer volledig ontbreekt; zij of hij (beleefd blijven of Ladies first) staan altijd vis à vis of zeer direct ten opzichte van één soort menselijke verschijning. Overigens is dat quasi altijd in profiel want we ontmoeten een afgebeelde met een kwart gedraaid slechts zeer, zeer zelden. Een moderne Egyptologische wending, dat vinden we bij Willy Deventer totaal niet en ergens ondeugdelijk gezien driewerf jammer want voor ons 'modernen' zo grappig! Overigens of niet overigens, dat is de opmerking over de afbeeldingen, herinneren wij ons niet eens mensen zonder ogen of anders uitgedrukt, stoemelings ruggelings afgebeeld. Men vindt ook geen andere afbeeldingen van mensen dan anders met hun meest opvallende menselijkheid; het hoofd - tenzij de geobsedeerden daar seksueel 'beter' voorhanden onderdelen voor willen behouden als borsten en zo weinig voort; die ziet men hier nooit, net als alle armen en benen (er zijn er normaal toch vier!) naast het gehele lichaam. Wij hebben zeker diverse menselijke portretachtigheden gezien of afbeeldingen van mensen, waar men niet eens het hoofd ziet of vooral de benen en zo niet oneindig voort (bijvoorbeeld Rinus Van De Velde). Op dat vlak is deze kunstenaar in al zijn quasi gewelddadigheid of

vervormingsgezindheid, gewoonweg conservatief te noemen wat men als een vorm van kunstironie mag zien. Op dezelfde manier hebben wij doorheen de vele afbeeldingen geen herinnering aan het gebruik van maskers. Nogal wiedes denkt dan iedereen aan de op dit maar ook andere schildervlakken uitbundige quasi overdonderende zelfs verpletterende James Ensor, maar ook bij een modern coryfee als Michaël Borremans ontmoet men dergelijke extra menselijke onderdelen. Daar gaan we dus verder niet op in maar het is overduidelijk dat nagenoeg telkens Willy Deventer mensen rechtstreeks op ons kijkers laat afkomen.

Terug naar alle Fernands der laat ons zeggen vooral Vlaamse of toch Europese wereld! Alle bandwerkers van vroeger die nauwelijks over voldoende geld beschikten om de meest wezenlijke behoeften te kunnen dekken of volledig verstorven waren van contacten, konden altijd de beeldverhalen gaan bekijken, zoals ze in honderdduizenden plaatsen in Europa en iets minder daarbuiten zijn neergeplaatst; de kerk, met de beeldengroepen in hout, steen, glas en verf. Voor ons land kunnen wij het koor van de kathedraal van Doornik - men zou het soms vergeten, het is vlakbij bij Ronse! - als één der meest indrukwekkende voorbeelden opgeven. Zonder de metalen banden stuikt het gehele koor binnen de kortste keren ineen want een rondgang is alsof men werkelijk doorheen aan elkaar geplaatste open stripboeken aan het wandelen is. Per definitie gaat het om verhalen uit de Bijbel dus om God (goden zo men de triniteitsgedachte op die manier wil uitdrukken) en mensen daarrond of daarvoor. Dat betekent dat dus dat miljoenen afbeeldingen van mensen zijn afgebeeld doorheen ruw gezegd tweeduizend jaar beeldcultuur, en dat daarbij slechts een relatief beperkt deel van God en ook Jezus louter symbolisch zijn afgebeeld hoewel de christelijke symboliek op zich bijzonder rijk is en veel ruimte voor kunstenaars toelaat. Naar onze eigen verbazing en dat doorheen ontmoetingen in een Centraal-Europees land, zouden we als Belgen bijna vergeten de werkingskracht der zgn. volkskunst. Daar is zeker veel gestandaardiseerd iconografisch materiaal dat nagenoeg hoofdzakelijk bestaat uit Bijbelse en volkse of legendarische verhalen. Voor Ronsenaars en ook deze Willy Deventer klinkt dit springlevend want denken we allen aan de duivel.

We hebben geen kennis van een beeldproductie van daadwerkelijke historische portretten van de ondertussen volledig anoniem geworden "*Fernands*". Anders uitgedrukt; beschikten schilders, beeldhouwers in hout en steen naast graveerders over "*beeldboeken*" waarin per soort emotie of soort christelijke voorstelling (die heilige figuur naast e.d.m.) heelder reeksen standaardportretten waren opgegeven - groot vraagteken maar we maken ons sterk een ultradik uitroepteken. Bijvoorbeeld voor de extreem belangrijke Vlaamse productie want enorme intra-Europese export van retabels tijdens de 15de en 16de eeuw, vermoeden we bijzonder sterk dat er minstens gedeeltelijke vormen van standaardgezichten waren, figuren als mijnheer Sie en mevrouw La die op - ongeveer - dezelfde of gestandaardiseerde wijze moesten worden weergegeven. Mogelijks had één en ander te maken met de materiële noodwendigheden van het materiaal hout, een drager veel minder plastisch behandelbaar dan puur schilderen op eender welke ondergrond. We hebben het natuurlijk niet over de bekende symbolieken (die heilige werd afgebeeld met die hond en zo oneindig verder) maar over de afbeelding van het gelaat of de meest belangrijke verschijning van die of die heilige. Vanzelfsprekend betekent één en ander dat men reeds voorbij een kunsthistorisch stadium was waarin men ergens nood had aan een gepersonaliseerde zeg visueel aflijnbaar of herkenbaar verschijnende gelaatsafbeelding en dus gedeeltelijk of definitief zelfs geheel voorbij wou gaan aan de standaardafbeelding via enkel en alleen de voldoende aanwezige symboliek. Wij hebben altijd het gevoel gehad dat toch bij veel Vlaamse Primitieven - schilders dus - een ander soort afgebeeld mens wordt vertoond dan een flinke tijd later op dezelfde gronden zoals bij Jacob Jordaens (wat een frisse mensen verschijnen bij hem toch!),

Antoon Van Dyck en andere Rubensen; minstens véél meer 'devoot kijkend'? We zouden graag eens dergelijke kunsthistorische vraag bij alle vormen van benaderingen willen besproken zien, maar alleszins was elk beeld, of het nu afkomstig was van een houtsnijwerker of een schilder, afkomstig uit de eigen leefwereld. De mensen die er afgebeeld staan, zijn duidelijk menselijk zichtbaar of herkenbaar voor ons immer historisch gesitueerde zelfdenkelijk 'moderne' kijker of zijn met absolute zekerheid ergens van afgekeken: op een Vlaams schilderij tot aan pakweg de 19de eeuw is het zo goed als onmogelijk pakweg een Siciliaan te ontmoeten of het ging natuurlijk om een maatschappelijke topfiguur, zeg met name de afbeelding van een aanstaande Midden-Europese of Portugese of ... bruid voor pakweg Filips De Schone. Uiteraard weet iederen dat nogal wat opdrachtgevers - dikwijls met hun kinderen, soms de meisjes achter de echtgenote of hun moeder en de zonen achter hun vader - op vooral de zijluiken van allerlei kerkstukken staan afgebeeld en dat die zeer vanzelfsprekend alleen maar wilden afdokken als zij zich deftig zeg levensecht zagen afgebeeld. Overigens herinneren wij ons jammer genoeg niet meer de naam - we vermoeden een 18de-eeuws Engels schilder als ... euh ... - maar met zekerheid was het gedurende nogal wat tijden een Europese gewoonte om de maatschappelijk hoger gesitueerden die helaas voor hen qua voorkomen wat minder waren bedeeld, op te smukken zodanig dat de geportretteerden na herhaalde opsmukking door de portretteerder eindelijk konden verzuchten dat zij 'eindelijk zichzelf begonnen te herkennen', waarna die portretten gewoon konden worden afgewerkt - haha.

Kunstenaar Willy Deventer is nog maar bijna 80 jaar jong en dus mijlen verwijderd van deze - vermoedelijke - historische doorgave van beelden, maar anderzijds opgevoed in zowel een informele als formele kunstopvoeding waarin hij werkelijk massa's historische kunstbeelden voorgeschoteld kreeg. Hij leerde die op allerlei mogelijke manieren kennen, zoals hij onder meer op eigen initiatief "*De Nachtwacht*" naschilderde, zoals reeds aangegeven nota bene net een 17de-eeuws schilderij met vrij veel beelden of een groepsportret en zoniet het bekendste alleszins het belangrijkste uit de Europese schilderkunst. Ook al vanuit een bij wijze van spreken brutaal zij het zich als natuurlijk opdringend statistisch standpunt, is het vanzelfsprekend te denken dat na meer dan achtduizend (8.000 ...) portretten van steeds diezelfde hand van Willy Deventer, een kijkend en nadenkend mens het woord stereotypen in zijn gedachten gaat nemen. En net hier stuiten we nu eens zuiver kwalitatief bekeken op iets al even raadselachtig als zeer concreet, namelijk het by all means zeer opvallend zeg eigenaardig gegeven dat deze Willy Deventer "*anders*" wil zijn want anders is of "*andere beelden toont*"!! Het gaat inderdaad niet om noem het de 'pure' afbeelding of een gewone portrettering waarin hij zoals algemeen bekend en gezien een uitblinker in was: denk steeds aan zijn unieke bijdragen gedurende zeer lange tijd in de gulden boeken der stad Ronse. Bovendien is de thematiek der andere vorm der portretten slim gedaan of moeilijker dan het al is want bijna nooit krijgt men in de titels - een studie als het ware op zich terwijl dat ergens ook weer niet kan; beide analyses zijn noodzakelijk door latere kunsthistorici!- een aanduiding dat het vormelijk speciaal afgebeelde mensachtige ook daadwerkelijk op een zeer concreet in tijd en plaats gesitueerde mens is gestoeld. Zo hebben wij recent als uitzondering op de bewust zelf gekozen of zich zelf doorheen het kunstig bezig zijnde kiezende regel als één der zéér weinige voorbeelden "*Meester Vindevogel*" ontmoet, een man die wij doorheen onze eigen nogal obsessieve interesse in de geschiedenis van het moderne Ronse net zoals velen onder U moeten kennen als Alfred Vindevogel en broer 'van'. Wij mogen met recht en redelijkheid zeggen dat wij deze "*Meester Vindevogel*" op geen enkele manier herkennen in de rits foto's die wij van Alfred Vindevogel kennen, zoals men die ten andere op internet voor een deel kan terugvinden met Uw vingermuisknip; vergelijk maar! Men zou dan kunnen zeggen dat kunstenaar of iconocraat Willy Deventer hier een "*vrije weergave*" van Alfred

Vindevogel heeft getekend, maar op één of andere manier moet hij dat - keihard beelden producerend per dag! - toch via het bekende 'ergens' kunnen motiveren - of niet soms? Willy Deventer heeft natuurlijk een gigantisch belangrijke relatief kort geleden overleden kunstenaar als stichtelijk voorganger, Francis Bacon - een man die met name zich wel eens liet inspireren - en hoe! - door een veel eerder geniaal collega en schilder Vélazquez, die op zijn voorgaande beurt trouwens zijn portretten doorheen zijn 17de eeuw op wel zeer bijzondere bijna bijtende toch voorname manier afwerkte (maar dat is - misschien? - een ander verhaal). Men zou als het ware slijmerig kunnen proberen beweren dat Willy Deventer zijn eigen stereotypen aan het creëren is, net omdat achtduizend en straks aub liefst tienduizend portretten nu eenmaal zonder herhaling onmogelijk zijn. Welke mens gaat dat tegenspreken!? In elk geval, kan dat wel, naast eeuwen zelfs enkele millennia afbeeldingen gaan staan? De vraag stellen is veel belangrijker dan haar beantwoorden, hebben wij als kind ervaren en als academisch wijsgeer geleerd - toch vooral van één wijsgeer. Toch menen wij hier te moeten wijzen op eenvoudige metafysica; net zoals de regen niet naar de wolken opstijgt en er zeker niet naar kan vallen, of het moeten zeer kleine, zeer lage wolkjes zijn, kan geen enkele kunstenaar binnen welke tijdelijke en plaatselijke gebondenheid ook daarvan relatief veel laat staan volstrekt afwijken in wat men dan toch een eigen stijl mag noemen. Er bestaat geen enkele kunstelijke bovenwereld zonder een vorm van afspiegeling (afbeelding - haha) van een onderbouw der gewone of leefwereldlijke wereld; ergens of zeg gewoon zeer veel, is elke kunstenaar gesitueerd, in het heden en door de geschiedenis en kan indien inderdaad extreem inzichtelijk iets ook gaan aanduiden van zekere toekomstmogelijkheden.

Het is - zucht - voor ons onmogelijk om alle ten andere nog steeds ontstane portretten van beeldbandwerker Willy Deventer te onderzoeken of analyseren; het is werkelijk niet bij te houden voor een gewoon mens en dus mogen we hem wat vermetel toch een beeldbandwerker noemen. De althans Westerse mens derhalve ook wij is een categoriaal wezen en groepeert bewust en onbewust alle vormen van informatie in een categorie, soort, groep, verzameling of hoe men ook wil noemen. Men is Ronsenaar of niet-Ronsenaar en dan bijvoorbeeld Oudenaardist, oud of jong, kaal of gelukkig nog niet en oneindig voort. Op een zelfde van jongsafaan aangeboren en door culturele overdracht meegekweekte manier kunnen wij niks anders dan het kunstfenomeen Willy Deventer en zijn dagelijkse pardon eeuwige portretten bekijken. Er is bijgevolg geen ontkennen aan om een zekere of trefzekere gesitueerdheid te herkennen in deze quasi vanzelf vloeiende kunstwerkelijkheid. We proberen niet uitputtend (exhaustief) op te noemen wat ten minste ons opviel en nodigen U uit zelf aan te vullen of te verbeteren. We zien of moeten zien in dit werk, waarvan nogmaals de enorme statistische hoeveelheid of kwantiteit wel moet aanleiding geven tot categorisering:

- inderdaad treffen wij ontzettend veel portretten of dus menselijke of mensachtige afbeeldingen aan maar blijkbaar geen (volwassen) vrouwen. Dat laat dus weinig alternatief over dan mannen en kinderen en ook voor die laatsten zien wij zelf toch geen aanwezigheid - of wel? Wie de Westerse traditie van het portret kent, een subgenre vanaf pakweg de 16de eeuw en volkomen onafgebroken tot heden en morgen, denkt vanzelfsprekend aan de ontzettend vele zelfportretten die met recht een genre binnen dit genre zijn te noemen. Er is nogal wat visuele zeg fotografische aanwezigheid van 'Willy D....' in gAZet maar een werkelijk overtuigend zeg niet verdoken zelfportret hebben wij binnen de reeds duizenden door steeds weer Willy Deventer gemaakte portretten niet opgemerkt. En deze vaststelling laat ons ineens de belangrijke of noodzakelijke sprong maken naar de blijkbaar volledige afwezigheid van symbolen, die ofwel de betekenis of identiteit der geportretteerde duidelijk maken of versterken. Sowieso is er ondanks de opvallende taalvaardigheid in het steeds

vergezeld gebruik van titels, nooit een aanduiding als bijvoorbeeld het bekende "*Als ic can*" van de nog bekendere schilder ... ;

- we herinneren ons dat de kunstenaar als auteur over zichzelf sprak van die "*typische Daventraogen*". Effectief ontmoeten we geregeld bijzonder priemende of aantrekkelijke ogen en schijnt het menselijk fenomeen "*oog of ogen*" in algemeen voor dit uitbundig werk een conditio sine qua non te zijn van elk portret of het wezen van een portret uit te maken: "*Kapitein Geenoog*" hebben wij blijkbaar nooit ontmoet. Puur technisch of analytisch bekeken is vermoedelijk de absolute voorwaarde of de bottom line om van portretten te mogen spreken in vooraanzicht het fenomeen ogen (of de bedekking en vorm van vervanging ervan door een soort masker) of anders door een opstelling van een geportretteerde uit een bredere gezichtshoek, waarbij onder meer (zo veel andere mogelijkheden zijn er toch niet?) op diens rug met dus geheel of deels zichtbaar hoofd. Die andere gezichtshoek schijnt ons eenvoudigweg niet voor te komen en doorheen later (sic) werk zien we wel eens een nieuwer profiel of het schuchter gebruik van het zijprofiel opduiken;

- we kunnen vanzelfsprekend geen cursus hermeneutiek of interpretatieleer geven hier, ook omdat wij dat zelf voor ons eens zouden moeten expliciteren, hoe we dus zelf al jaren interpreteren. We zijn nochtans al lang getraind om ook het niet zichtbare maar normaal te verwachten op te merken en dus te vermelden, een gegeven dat ons bij onze bijna twintig jaar lange geschiedenisstudies heeft geleid tot de zekere vaststelling van zeer veel ook op hogere denkniveaus aanwezige ... verzwijging noem geschiedenisvervalsing: taboes, weet-U-wel. We zien - of proberen het - wat te zien is dus ook wat niet te zien is zoals nooit handen, laat staan voeten en al wat daar menselijk tussen of bij te bedenken is en al zeker geen attributen. Niet zo maar overigens kan iedereen ook binnen deze blijkbaar zelf opgelegde beperkingen annex mogelijkheden zeker attributen bedenken, vooral maar niet noodzakelijk vrouwelijk, zoals hoeden, dassen, strikjes, snorren of baarden (kan men als attributen beschouwen), kleurschakeringen door pommades, allerlei meer gesofisticeerde schmink, tatoeages, piercings aan neus en ???; om van oorbellen en brillen niet te spreken. *Alles niet aanwezig en dat doorheen dui-zen-den portretten*! Het is bijna niet de vraag waarom dat alles zo gewoons doorheen de ontelbare Europese portrettengalerij hier in het werk van deze Willy Deventer niet aanwezig is maar hoe hij als kunstenaar werkelijk in staat is geweest (en zal zijn allicht want nog even wachten op einde reeks) om dat te verwezenlijken, dat niet-tekenen: we vinden dit bijna ene grap maar die afwezigheid achten wij weliswaar minder maar toch zeer interessant als de hoofdprestatie der portretten 'zelf'!? We krijgen op die formeel tegelijk inhoudelijke manier een vorm van oerportretten, wat, het weze herhaald, kunsthistorisch gezien niks anders dan merkwaardig of ene prestatie is;

- eerder schreven we Willy Deventer hemzelvelijk reeds aan met de opmerking dat in zijn werk "*landschapsneuzen*" voorkomen. Dat is een eigen neologisme dat misschien iets zegt over onze eigen taalgevoeligheid maar niks anders is genoodzaakt dan door de evidentie ervan, de redelijk grote voorkomendheid ervan in dit werk - met de absolute nadruk op "*dit*"! Ook al omdat Willy Deventer zelf zijn interesse in Pablo Picasso uitschreeuwt en deze kunstenaar zoals algemeen bekend ontzettend veel beelden op allerlei kunstzinnige manieren heeft geproduceerd (enkele tienduizenden aub) hebben wij de proef op de som genomen en een aantal boeken omtrent Picasso geraadpleegd. En inderdaad is dit soort neus - als tegelijk onmisbaar onderdeel van de gelaatachtige verschijning of aanduiding van iets als mens en tegelijk een zeer prominent voorkomen als is het een tekening in de tekening van de Gestalt mens - iets typisch Willy Deventer. Vergelijk gerust onder meer met het bekende "*Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*" van Picasso waarin toen een revolutionaire voorstelling der mens werd gegeven (met zekerheid gebaseerd op toen relatief nieuw gekende Afrikaanse maskerkunst of vormelijk niks anders dan .. afgekeken!) maar waar helemaal niet vergelijkbaar sprake is van een landschapsneus. En daarmee moeten wij zonder blikken of

blozen stellen dat wij op onze Tram 6 nog nooit eerder een neus kunsthistorisch hebben gezien dan voortaan via of doorheen deze bijna orkaan aan kunstbeelden van - Willy Deventer. Bovendien zonder dieper op deze zaak te willen ingaan want veel meer een kennisopdracht voor een kunsthistoricus, doet die opvallendheid van het element neus totaal geen afbreuk aan het geheel van het portret in kwestie.

We moeten nog iets zeggen omtrent het element psychologie rondom het fenomeen portret waaraan Willy Deventer een historisch niks anders dan belangrijke bijdrage aan het leveren is (het is dus nog niet gedaan maar veel, zeer veel is te zien! - en te .. begrijpen?). Traditioneel want sinds enkele eeuwen worden twee waarden herkend of verwacht van een portret: de afgebeelde moet redelijk herkenbaar zijn en er wordt een zekere psychologie verwacht die de kunstenaar mag ontdekken of vooral onthullen. Dat laatste is niks anders dan een vorm van tweede of eerder 'echte' herkenbaarheid of de innerlijke uitbeelding van de geportretteerde, en, U begrijpt, ergens een eerder delicate zaak. In het beroemde zelfs beruchte portret van Vélazquez van paus Innocentius X zien we toch niks anders dan een machtsgeile mogelijks geilzuchtige man die het belangrijkste habijt draagt van de grootste religieuze beweging van die tijd en nagenoeg alle tijden maar even goed de koning of hertog van Dingelandië had kunnen zijn of een succesvolle Italiaanse condottiero. Hoe Vélazquez daarmee weg kwam, is dezelfde vraag als de demaskerende portretten die hij maakte van voornamelijk zijn koning en soeverein en betaalheer Filips IV, een vraag die nog meer geldt voor die latere en andere unieke Spaanse schilder Goya, die samen met de nooit een portret gemaakt hebbende Pieter Brueghel mogelijks de beste schilders ooit waren - met ook al diens koninklijke portretten. Wie iets van de soms waanzinnige uitstraling of macht van een portret wil begrijpen, kan gewoon zelf kijken en denken, en ondertussen eens te raden gaan bij de lezing van de beklemmende novelle "*La Veneziana*" van Vladimir Nabokov. Zo mogelijk nog straffer is de veel te weinig bekende Leo Perutz in zijn roman "*De Judas van Leonardo*". U kan denken wie daarin wat of wie zoekt - en vindt - en hoe! Ergens vond dus Leonardo da Vinci het perfecte levend model voor zijn Judas in zijn minstens intrigerend "*Het Laatste Avondmaal*" (waarbij we ons en passant maar toch verplicht zien U te wijzen op het apocriefe evangelie van ... Judas waarin een totaal andere Judas wordt voorgesteld). Willy Deventer is zonder meer en zonder blikken en blozen geen normale te noemen, al is hij op nogal wat manieren ook een gewoon deftig of burgerlijk mens: gezellig en lang gehuwd, mooie baan gehad naast .... - en zo voort. Eigenlijk rustig te vergelijken met hofschilder dus als het ware bandwerker Vélazquez en voordien een Jan Van Eyck en ontelbare anderen, maar hemelsbreed afstandelijk van minstens een Francis Bacon en - waarom hem vergeten!? - Pablo Picasso. Geen normale, zeker, maar het is volkomen onmogelijk om van elk van zijn - duizenden! - speciale of abnormaal voortgebrachte portretten de grote psychologische toverkunst te verwachten. Dat is statistisch of menselijk onmogelijk. We zijn nu weliswaar in veel geïnteresseerd maar noch gediplomeerd kunsthistoricus noch afgestudeerd psycholoog noch psychiater. We moeten derhalve behoedzaam en 'veel' open laten. Terwijl we als weliswaar vooral filosoof absoluut zeker zijn dat een wereld- annex mensbeeld is te herkennen in de vele ook kunstzinnig abnormale of moderne portretten van Willy Deventer, vermoeden we U deze veronderstelling of hypothese te mogen voorstellen. Mogelijke is de essentie van het portretwerk van beeldhouwer of beeldproduceerder Willy Deventer en dat bijgevolg veel en veel meer studiewerk verdient dan ons al bij al te schameler schrijfpogingen, dat het als een vorm van "*peinture automatique*" plaats vindt, als analogie aan het gebruikte begrip "*écriture automatique*" - uit toch de middens van het surrealisme. Die werkelijk ongelooflijke maar tastbare want zienbare - op internet en straks op ??? - stroom aan kunstwerken en meer bepaald of ergens letterlijk eenzijdig portretten, zijn dan een uiting van vormelijke uitbarsting als rustige kunstvastheid. Zoals in het structuralisme en aanverwanten (zeker de ietwat

vreemde Jacques Derrida laat staan de voor velen goeroe en voor ons na bepaalde inspanningen volslagen onbegrijpbare Jacques Lacan) nagedacht werd hoe het brein de mens voorstructureert en laat beter doet denken, alsof het menselijk gebeurende allemaal door dat brein zelf is gepland en men nauwelijks van de eigen denkinspanningen kan spreken, is nu een bepaalde tijd gestructureerd en enkel of vooral gelimiteerd door de wens de kaap te ronden want definitief te bezetten der 10.000 portretten rond mei 2024, dhr. Willy D. uit het plaatsje R. uit het land B. zo dicht aan de Noordzee - UITROEPTEKEN en/of VRAAGTEKEN - bezig, bezig, en bezig. Willy Deventer was voordien en bijna levenslang superdegelijk als het ware een burgerlijk kunstenaar. Hij was dat onder meer en ergens vooral op zogenaamd lokaal maar zeer concreet vlak zeer goed en zelfs officieel als bevruchter der gulden boeken van het stadsbestuur van Ronse. Maar wil dat niet meer. Wat wil hij niet meer? Hij wil nog beelden produceren, en hoe: verwoed en vervormend! Op naar de 80 jaar en dus letterlijk een schoolvoorbeeld voor gedrevenheid, positieve koppigheid of de durf en niet te vergeten natuurlijk de kunde om uitdagingen aan te gaan en volstrekt nieuwe wegen in te slaan. Een nieuwe weg - want het meervoud wegen is vanzelfsprekend een stijlfiguur!? Dit kunstgebeuren heeft iets zeer intellectueel Frans en daardoor ook die verwijzing naar het Frans structuralisme, waar we zelf eerlijk gezegd niet zo mee in - willen - zijn want wij lezen of begrijpen liever of beter een Frans meer vatbaar denken als bij een Pascal en aanverwanten. Maar welke Europese kunstscholen kan men met het gebeuren der nieuwe Willy Deventer verbinden; eerlijk, ondanks lang nadenken en decennia lang kunst bekijken; we durven want kunnen het waarlijk niet zeggen.

4. De wekige trekkracht der beelden op sociale media versus Willy's beeldgeweld.

Zoals aangegeven zijn portretten te beschouwen als dingen die zijn uitgetrokken of voortgebracht, voortgebracht op meer of iets minder blijvende materiële zaken als fotopapier, echt papier, textiel en zo verder. De moderne grafische technieken laten enorm veel mogelijkheden toe. Er is vanzelfsprekend een gigantisch kwaliteitsverschil tussen een T-shirt met de afbeelding van bijvoorbeeld Madonna erop en een foto van haar door een topfotograaf als Dirk Braeckman - waarbij we en passant niet weten of hij daadwerkelijk van haar een foto reeds heeft gemaakt of dit terzijde. Zelfs na lange fotografische of ter zake kunstzinnige scholing spreekt het nogal voor zich dat niet iederen Dirk Braeckman kan zijn, of één der vrij veel prima fotografen die we doorheen minstens Vlaanderen geregeld leerden kennen doorheen ruwweg de laatste 50 jaar (overigens kent de aloude gewone dus niet digitale fotografie weer een heropleving - zo ziet men maar). Zo scherp gesteld maken we ineens alle foto's van de via Smartphones producerende wereld gewoon belachelijk, wat moreel niet echt galant laat staan diplomatisch is te noemen. Het is zelf bijna totaal belachelijk want hoe en vooral waarom een gelegenheidsjogger vergelijken met een Olympisch kampioen marathon, zoals 'een' Dirk Braeckman mag genoemd worden!? Toch is die vergelijking op twee vlakken noodzakelijk te maken. Er is enerzijds een aloude, ijzersterke of duurzame traditie om op alle vlakken naar het beste te streven. Waarom zou immers niet op de allerbeste manier mogen worden gezorgd om de allerbeste condities te verkrijgen (qua belichting en kadrering en ?) van ook een 'eenvoudige' foto via Smartphone, ook al of vooral omdat men meestal of quasi uitsluitend de afgebeelde zelf of op zijn Paas- en ander best wil tonen? Tegelijk openbaart anderzijds deze vergelijking tussen de hoge en kleine top en de superbrede wereld der gelegenheidsportrettisten die universele drang naar het - zelf of via vrienden/familie - geproduceerde beeld net de macht van het of dat beeld van een mens - bijwijlen een dier en daarbij met voorkeur een huisdier of bijna menselijk dier.

Mensen beseffen het helemaal niet of toch niet voldoende maar de cruciale aantrekkingskracht achter sociale media als Facebook, Instagram, TikTok en zo meer, is gebaseerd op denksystemen genaamd algoritmes die uitsluitend en alleen de kijker(s) ervan willen bevredigen of psychologisch belonen. Die algoritmes of denkpatronen zijn voor alle gebruikers volstrekt geheim wat voor de eigenaars der bedrijven erachter te begrijpen valt - het gratis is vanzelfsprekend niet gratis wegens-wegens - maar democratisch volkomen onverantwoord is. Het is zelfs zo dat een getraind analist na enkele tientallen hits van eender welke persoon op internet zeer nauwkeurig een psychologisch profiel kan opstellen van deze aanklikker alias mens en eveneens diens sociale wereld of diens netwerk, vanzelfsprekend een enorme bron van gretig aangekochte informatie door de massale reclamewereld. Wat geliket wordt of geregeld bezocht, de beelden en informatie die daar worden als relevant bevonden, het ene beeld verlangt reeds puur behavioristisch want psychologisch dwangmatig naar een volgend verwante en dat wordt tot in gruwelijke perfectie door de algoritmes van manipuleerdienst onthouden en gevoed. Een belangrijk gevolg is een onstuitbare stroom aan quasi vanzelf aangeboden 'beelden' en ernaast duurt het kijken ernaar even lang als de glimlach zo niet jaloezie zelfs of afkeer die het opbrengt, en gaat het scrollen als nieuwe en lege écriture automatique vanzelf verder. Sarcastisch genoeg heeft geen enkel geproduceerd beeld nog enige waarde want verlangt direct naar het volgende terwijl een reeks beelden as such niet is gewenst want wordt nooit door het algoritme geopenbaard: men leert daardoor zichzelf gek genoeg niet eens kennen. Bovendien is de factor tijd gruwelijk belangrijk afwezig want van echte normaal menselijke veroudering mag geen sprake zijn: wie bezoekt of wie nog maar het geduld of doodgewoon de goesting om de oudere edities op iemands Instagram te gaan doornemen en dus te vergelijken? Men heeft door de massale aanwezigheid van vriendelijke opgedrongen beelden van geliefden zelfs, oudere kennissen en allerlei rolmodellen of zogenaamde interessante beroemdheden - er is sprake zelfs van het deerniswekkende 'influencers' - geen tijd meer voor een aandachtige bekijking van een beeld, een menselijk beeld. Nemen we de proef op de som; welk van de talloze beelden aldus op sociale media aangeboden bereikt het stadium van de inpassing in een kader thuis, in de keuken, het bureel of de slaapkamer?

Wil U eens een echte "*Rubens*" kopen wanneer U bijvoorbeeld van Pietro Paolo Rubens zou houden en vooral dik in de geldpuree zit als gedimensioneerd succesvol ondernemer of wat dan ook, dan moet U zich ten allerbeste richten op een zeer kleine studie van zijn magische hand; alles van waarde van de productieve man is zo goed als onbetaalbaar dan slechts voor de unhappy few extreem rijken der aarde. Gelukkig zijn er nogal wat schetsen of voorstudies te vinden van de man of anders toch minstens zeer degelijke vervalsingen, waarvan het laatste net het tegendeel is van de waarde der onstuitbare beelden op het internet of vooral sociale media. Op een ander kunsthistorisch niveau zijn er werkelijk ontelbare kunstenaars die weliswaar schitterende, unieke bijgevolg steeds duurdere olieverfwerken hebben voortgebracht maar dus gelukkig ook prima etsen hebben afgeleverd, die per definitie veel goedkoper of haalbaarder zijn voor ook gewone en ware beeldliefhebbers al kan men er op aan dat een geniaal schilder zowel als geniaal etser als Rembrandt tot een massa aan vervalsingen op net het 'makkelijker etsgebied heeft geleid. Ten andere zijn wij door ervaring ervan overtuigd dat nogal wat grafisch werk van kunstenaars tot betere kwaliteit heeft geleid dan hun nochtans veel duurder oliewerk. Overigens was de idee van voorstudies voor olieschilderijen voor de meerderheid der betrokken kunstenaars hoofdzakelijk van eigen vergelijkingsbelang, of voor dichte familie of nauwe vrienden, maar had geen enkele commerciële waarde. Tot ...

Alleszins kan men naar zo'n Rubens, is het 'maar' een schets of een schilderij of oprecht doodgewoon zeer interessant een prima reproductie (wij hebben ergens ooit een mooie quasi olieverfachtige reproductie gevonden van een Rubens als van Jean Fouquet, waarvan we de dragers of ondergronden niet kennen - best interessant voor wie niet alleen over zelfs de meest geavanceerd gedrukte kunstboeken wil beschikken), kijken en blijven kijken. Kent U iemand (we spreken U dus nu niet eens rechtstreeks aan) die één keer na pakweg drie weken een foto te hebben zeer gemeenschappelijk gedeeld op welke sociaal medium ook, die daar nog naar omziet? Dat zal dus eerder zeldzaam zijn en vooral gebeuren ten opzichte van een gekende derde die blijkbaar die foto niet eerder heeft gezien wegens - hoe bestaat het? - geen interesse in derhalve geen toegang tot die sociale media. Toegegeven dat de stroom aan portretten van Willy Deventer menselijk nauwelijks is bij te houden; persoonlijk kunnen wij dit met ons huidig breinvermogen in zijn geheel onmogelijk aan ook al omdat we nauwelijks op het internet aanwezig zijn. Maar er zijn tal van zeer aantrekkelijke of aangrijpende of charmante koppen zeg portretten, waar men - dus - wel geregeld naar kan kijken, zelfs - mogen we even? - als vorm van zgn. achtergrond indien natuurlijk materieel ingekaderd en aan de man of vrouw of organisatie gebracht door de kunstenaar zelf en dan thuis netjes op ooghoogte opgehangen. Toen onze grootmoeder dement werd, maakte ze - eindelijk - wat pogingen tot grapjes waarbij ze steevast herhaalde: "*We mogen toch ne keer lachen*." We hebben geen enkel deel van dat beroemd flauw vermoeden of we nu moeten spreken van ironie maar ergens is het wel grappig te noemen dat Willy Deventer, die zoals bekend zo veel van het medium weekblad en tevens de vorm ervan op internet houdt dat hij er zelfs al op jonge leeftijd zowel artistiek als commercieel mee bezig was, ons zijn enorm modern arsenaal aan portretten net via internet en alleen zo kan tonen. We weten vanzelfsprekend reeds dat het een luide droom en terechte optie of zelfs een gemeenschapsplicht om een selectie van deze portretten in real time of licht hand- en vooral oogtastelijk want in echte papierlijke en kaderaanwezigheid te tonen, straks in zijn thuisstad Ronse en wie waar nog. Dat Willy Deventer dan recent ook kleinere dus kwantitatief meer te vatten overzichten maakte ook op dat zelfde medium internet, is vanzelfsprekend maar ergens een tussenstap. Hoe de optimale kijkervaring zou moeten zijn; we weten het niet en gaan dus niks voorstellen. Hen allemaal afbeelden wordt geen kattenpis vermits die portretten bestaan met andere of meest concrete woorden ook ECHT daar ergens ten huize Willy en Rita: dat krijg je niet in de schuif van het te laat geboren genie. We lazen recent dat Permeke (zo bij voortduring genoemd maar tevens Constant voor de niet kenners) eens op een tentoonstelling van zichzelf kwam aandraven met meer dan zeshonderd (600) werken. Geen mens kon dat op een dag aandragen maar vooral; geen mens kon dat bevatten of minstens op één tentoonstellingsronde bekijken. Hoe dat alles te catalogeren of te benoemen, hoe te catalogeren in de zin van stockeren voor de liefhebbers en zeker ook voor kunsthistorici en andere onderzoekers die iets rond kunst willen begrijpen en daar iets buiten het bij wijze van spreken te enge kader der kunstgeschiedenis alleen willen bekijken en vorsen? Is een verzameling hoe nuttig uit diverse perspectieven soms geen eerste klas doodskist? Alleszins is er ook de voor minstens kunstenaars niet steeds opbeurende zekerheid dat op uitzonderingen na, kunstenaars doorheen tijden en plaatsen aan populariteit winnen of dus (....) verliezen, als gaat het met kunstwerk als met seizoensregens: U kent ondertussen zelf reeds alles over klimaatwisselingen en weet dat uit de stadsrekeningen van bijvoorbeeld de stad Leuven bleek dat er in de Middeleeuwen meer wijn dan bier werd gebrouwen omdat het er zo warm was, nadien een soort mini-ijstijd aanbrak - te zien op nogal wat .. schilderwerk! - en dan weer ..... Het is alles niet eens een kwestie van zgn. smaakevoluties en gewoon het teveel of 'overload' aan beelden doorheen die geregeld ook nuttige of leerzame sociale media en andere media zelfs boeken, kunstboeken. Soms is de tijd genadig en bijgevolg nog meer ongenadig.

Kent U de Amerikaanse van Europese afkomst zijnde schilder Mark Rothko? Enorm populair - en duur - maar wij begrijpen er niks van en vooral vinden er totaal niks aan of weliswaar een voorbeeld van oprecht heerlijke saaiheid of zouden er toch bijna zelfs door kunnen worden gegrepen met een depressieve reactie in navolging van de man zelf blijkbaar geheel zijn leven; hij zou jammer genoeg zelfmoord plegen, altijd een verschrikkelijk drama, voor de nabestaanden en als menselijke ervaring 'op zich'. We geven wel toe er nog nooit een werk life van te hebben gezien; zou dat een verschil uitmaken en het tot het betere .. behangpapier maken, want ergens kunstig, aantrekkelijk, interessant? Toch geloven wij niet dat dit werk de tijden of de tijd gaat overleven, en bijgevolg op een dag gaat belanden in het magazijn der musea of snel nog zal worden verpatst door de individuele verzamelaars ervan. Het "*Memonti mori*" is niet alleen een universeel en blijvend belangrijke lichtjes relativerende zij het ook aansporende levensgedachte, voor kunstenaars is het een vermoedelijk vrij breed verspreide bijkomende dwanggedachte rond de waarde van het eigen werk. Wat of liever hoeveel van dit nieuwe en uitbundig werk van kunstenaar Willy Deventer de tijden of de tijd gaat trotseren, naast de absoluut zekere waarde van met name zijn geweldige bijdrage aan de gulden boeken der stad Ronse - die minstens tot aan de Volgende Zondvloed op het stadhuis gaan bewaard en al eens bekeken worden terwijl ze op zich een cataloog voor de Ronsenaars en derden verdienen, is koffiedik kijken - of toch niet!? Romeinen keken naar de toekomst in as, druïdes in ingewanden, de Grieken via een orakel en vult U gerust aan uit Uw eigen antropologische kennisvoorraad: wat is daar allemaal van bewaard gebleven dan toch de verwoording van iets als sterke intuïties of een gemeenschappelijk aanvoelen van wat waardevol was en moest worden behouden of meer bepaald beschermd? We zijn dus sterk benieuwd, hopen voor de oneindige miljarden aan beelden der sociale media dat ze toch een volgende generatie minstens kunnen meegaan en zijn zeer optimistisch voor wat deze nieuwe Willy Deventer zijn beelden betreft; wel interessant werk aan de kijkwinkel want hoe kan een mens zoveel beelden voortbrengen - en beoordelen?

5. De overstijgende trekkracht der dagelijkse portretten van Willy Deventer. Een welkome bevreemding of zo menselijk als het bekende 'iets'!?

Plato. Aristoteles. Twee Griekse filosofen of wijsgeren. Twee opeenvolgende filosofen. Twee volkomen tegengestelde filosofen. Twee filosofen indien in hun eigen tijd - zeer lang geleden zij het lezend springlevend - uitgebeeld, uitgebeeld met kleuren. Dat laatste kan U momenteel met Uw eigen ogen zien in het Gallo-Romeins Museum van Tongeren tijdens de weeral interessante tentoonstelling "*De Oudheid in Kleur*" (2023 - 2024).

SEE: **De Oudheid in kleur - Mainzer Beobachter**

Grappig tot ontstellend ergens dat de werkelijk ontelbare Griekse en Romeinse beelden die U ooit hebt ontmoet van kop tot teen waren beschilderd. Zelfs als er geen tenen bij waren waar het om een buste ging en er waren veel Griekse en Romeinse bustes! Dat verdwijningseffect zal nu eens door de wonderen der moderne techniek waarover Willy Deventer speelse bezieling en bezit heeft, nooit gebeuren. Er is echter een ander aspect van deze wijsgeren dat hier bij de portrettenextase van Willy Deventer zonder twijfel van belang is maar waar wij als ooit lang geleden reeds afgestudeerd filosoofje veel eerder hadden moeten opkomen: ante res (voor de zaken) of post res (na de zaken). Al begrijpt U dat dit geen Griekse termen zijn. Vooral tijdens de vaardige Middeleeuwen maar gewoon altijd vanaf zeker denken in Europa of wat het Oude Avondland wordt genoemd of dus tot nu en morgen in het Altijd Nieuwer Dagland, is er de vraag naar de werkelijkheidswaarde van universele of algemene begrippen. U kent een tijdsfenomeen als maandag, dinsdag en zo voort en denkt dat er maar zeven dagen

in een week zijn - wat juist is alhoewel er veel weken zijn, 52 in een jaar en er vooral oneindig veel jaren zijn of bijgevolg oneindig veel dagen. Maar er is vanzelfsprekend die ene unieke dag - de Dag, "*dag*" als Oordeel of Begrip. Tijdens de helemaal niet donkere maar uiterst wriemelende Middeleeuwen noemde men deze discussie de univeraliënstrijd, de strijd tussen universaliën of begrippen, tussen de scholen ruwweg genoemd "*realisme*" (algemene begrippen zoals de stoel, de tafel, de .... bestaan op zichzelf) versus "*nominalisme*" (algemene begrippen bestaan pas na de feiten als de tastbare stoel e.d.m.). Of is het omgekeerd want wij slaan tot heden die begrippen steeds door elkaar; ach, what's in an name? En door deze hedendaags levende kunstenaar moeten we dit aloude denken herontmoeten - vermoedelijk.

Willy Deventer, ja, die ene Willy Deventer die al bijna 80 jaar elke dag dezelfde naam draagt al durft hij wel eens iets als pseudoniem te gebruiken, en tegelijk elke dag vervelt van opperhuid en daaronder alle soorten processen weet of vooral niet weet te gebeuren - fysiologisch en psychologisch - is zelf een voorbeeld van deze strijd der begrippen, in dit geval als geen ander over het begrip 'portret' of kunstzinnig gemaakte menselijke voorstelling. Waar deze beeldenmaker reeds op middelbare schoolleeftijd of zeer vroeg naar het Sint-Lucasinstituut in Gent is getrokken om daar technieken rond onder meer en vooral ook afbeeldingen van mensen te gaan aanleren, heeft hij zeker pittige monden Latijn en wat gestamel Grieks aangeleerd in Ronse. Minstens kende hij via de paters aan de Barrière de Fer zijn gewone mis naast de hoogmis in het Latijn. En wat Grieks leerde men dan stoemelings zoals bij het woord "*algebra*"; dom grapje wat dat is zoals eerder gezegd Arabisch maar zoals te weinig bekend hebben die historisch de onvoorstelbare belangrijke waarde gehad tonnen Griekse kennis te vinden, vertalen en doorgeven aan het Westen via vooral de wijsgerige school van Parijs zodat verder dit Avondland kon bloeien, niet in het minst en grandioos uitlopend in de Renaissance! Het zou wat te weinig beleefd zijn om in het portrettenwerk van Willy Deventer een renaissance - met kleine zij het potentieel groeiende letter - te zien. Of toch wel?

Om aan U te proberen aantonen dat dit titanen- tegelijk elke dag speels beeldend werk van Willy Deventer effectief thuishoort in de rij van twee wijsgeren, en net deze twee, kunnen we misschien een opmerkelijk ommetje gaan maken bij een ... Noord-Amerikaanse indianenstam. "*Spreek, geheugen*.", noemde zekere intrigerende Vladimir Nabokov iets als zijn memoires of geheugenspinsels, maar ons geheugen schiet sinds tijden eeuwig te kort want wij zijn compleet vergeten én de naam van deze stam én de bron waar wij deze informatie hebben geleerd. Alleszins ging het om deze zaak van begrip (ante res) en ervaring (post res) omtrent één soort - Amerikaanse - boom. Absoluut zeker was dit omgaan met deze ene boomwerkelijkheid dezelfde voor een hele reeks binnen hun cultuur annex natuur, zoals een hele reeks andere bomen, diverse grassoorten en zo verder: gelukkig kenden zij geen diverse soorten plastiek. Laten we voor een Westers meer bepaald Nederlandstalig begrip even het woord boom meer bepalend of concreter vervangen door het begrip "*eik*", een in onze contreien vrij belangrijke boom al was het maar omdat hij bij tijden werd vereerd en nadien daar graag kapellen aan werden opgehangen, zoals sterk vermoedelijk ook te Ronse bij Wittentak. Laten we daarbij even niet beginnen zeuren over winter- of zomereik, of welk ondertussen eveneens eikachtigs dat ondertussen door plantkundigen is ontwikkeld. De indiaan zag nooit of nooit een eik, ook dus wanneer U tegelijkertijd met hem naar iets 'eikachtigs' zou staan kijken. Per seizoen, en ook bij hen waren er vier seizoenen of ietwat gebonden, definieerbare tijden die op zeker moment met elkaar afwisselende in steeds dezelfde volgorde als lente, zomer, herfst en winter (maak een andere start wanneer U een favoriet seizoen hebt want ook die indiaan moest via zijn ouders of andere cultuuroverdrager op een gegeven jaarmoment eerst die boom beginnen zien als eikachtige), per dit seizoen dus

zag die indiaan en bijgevolg met haar of hem de gehele stam, een .. andere toch immer weer eenzelfde eik. Deze indiaan en met haar of hem gebruikten ook een ander woord of begrip want hadden in vergelijking met U en alle andere Europeanen 4 (vier) woorden of begrippen, die op die manier kijkend-ervarend perfect samen gingen met vier werkelijkheden. Het is vreselijk jammer dat wij die bron en het geheel niet hebben onthouden want stel je voor dat die vier begrippen volkomen andere woorden inhielden, want U denkt Westers analytisch aan lente-eik, zomereik, wintereik en herfsteik; we vermoeden dat dit voor die indianen vier totaal verschillende woorden inhield of begrippen voorstelde. Gelukkig, als we ons zo mogen uitdrukken, kenden ook zij geen enkele boom die kon bewegen want William Shakespeare of Akira Kurosawa bijvoorbeeld, kenden zij niet. Het was dus 'ergens' steeds of krek dezelfde of op steeds deze ene plaats staande boom die van een gedaante veranderende (blad verliezend, , blad krijgende blad ... en blad .... - naast ...) die werd als dusdanig ervaren. Dat kan allemaal wel best ergens begrijpbaar overkomen voor een zeg Westerse mens want die kent een in bloei staande eik, een gewoon groene eik, een blad verliezende en een blad verloren of kale eik of altijd maar die ene en tweede en derde en ... naast het begrip eik dat die concrete eiken als soort en als samen behorend overkoepelde en benoemde. Intrigerend is toch hoe die indiaan en zijn volk en dat gedurende generaties dus cultureel steeds weer netjes identiek doorgegeven of aangeleerd, het wanneer en dus kennistheoretisch het hoe naar het andere woord of het anders per seizoen gebruikte begrip van die eik overschakelden terwijl ondertussen die eikachtige gewoon toch weer dezelfde bleef - als het ware zonder seizoensbepaling. Ook U kent ergens die ervaring want zal zeker moment vaststellen dat de eik in de tuin nu echt wel al zijn bladeren heeft verloren, en dat ondertussen winter is geworden - al is geheel dit voorbeeld redelijk vervelend gezien zekere klimaatveranderingen?

De vraag of gewoon de vaststelling is of elke geportretteerde van Willy Deventer herkenbaar is als mens en bevestigt elke geportretteerde op zich telkens weer de voorstelling van wat wij als een mens kennen, of toch een grotendeelse selectie ervan (vrouwen zien we ons inziens onder meer totaal niet en dat is toch iets meer dan de helft der mensheid). Aan U de eer of opdracht die vraag te beantwoorden en antwoordt de kunstenaar zelf per gele briefkaart zo mogelijk vergezeld van een ingevulde bestelbon: zie verder. Of ernaast of complementair, hoe wijkt zelfs duivelskunstenaar en altijd zelf mens gebleven Willy Deventer daarvan wel eens zo sterk af dat het nu echt voor U niet meer als mens is in te zien, met de niet stille hoop dat U eens duidelijk zelfs licht stamelend kan zeggen hoe een mens er dan volgens U uitziet - moet uitzien? Of, ergens daartussen, is Willy Deventer in staat Uw en ons beeld van 'de' mens aan te passen want vergis U niet; voor de Grieken die we wel eens aanhalen als belangrijk in onze cultuur waren alle niet-Grieken barbaren, geen mensen of .. onmensen! En nog niet zo lang geleden noemden nazi's en stalinisten diverse 'soorten mensachtigen' doodgewoon geen echte mensen en derhalve meenden die te mogen overgaan tot de daadwerkelijke vernietiging van hen op gekende manieren puntje puntje puntje. Honderd (100) % zeker is dit: Willy Deventer wil, bovendien om redenen die wij blijkbaar niet kennen of toch nergens lezen, anders mensen uitbeelden. En dat is overduidelijk binnen de context van zijn eigen leven, met name waarin hij enerzijds lang dus gerespecteerd een docent grafiek binnen een normale kunstenaarsschool was terwijl hij bij zeer bekend voorbeeld ook lang zeer veel 'koppen' van allerlei te Ronse op het stadhuis verwelkomde figuren heeft getekend in die fameuze gulden boeken, aantrekkelijke of 'mooie' koppen. Zou men met name deze soort blijkbaar vervormde portretten van eender welk 'echt' bestaand persoon door steeds dezelfde mens Willy Deventer aanvaarden, op steeds hetzelfde stadhuis? Overigens is hier kunsthistorisch bijgevolg gewoon kennistheoretisch zeker een interessante vergelijking te treffen met de redelijk recent overleden belangrijke schilder Francis Bacon. Die heeft namelijk niet zeer herkenbare maar aantrekkelijke portretten geproduceerd. Daar gebruikte hij wel twee truken van de

kunstenaarsfoor voor door ofwel echte foto's van de afgebeelde ernaast (op de achtergrond bijvoorbeeld) te verwerken en/of gewoon de naam der geportretteerde in de titel van het kunstwerk te verwerken. Francis Bacon was als beroepsschilder een bepaalde tijd een marginaal maar werd tijdens zijn leven voldoende opgepikt tot naar boven gekatapulteerd alleszins door de rijken der aarde betreft want die gingen en gaan verder er graag diep in hun kluisbuidel voor tasten. U koopt dus nu al Uw Willy Deventer want ....! En vergis U niet: Willy Deventer maakt hoofdzakelijk portretten van totaal onbekende mensen of meer specifiek, doodgewoontjes van onbestaande mensen!

Daarnaast weet U ongetwijfeld dat geen enkele boom op de gehele planeet perfect recht groeit, ook al omdat er ongetwijfeld veel culturen bestaan die niet eens weten wat "*een rechte*" is, een uitvinding die we waarschijnlijk danken aan de Oude Grieken, of was het geboren bij de Oude Chinezen die het dan via-via aan ons ...? Er zijn dus evenveel 'echte' of verschijnende eiken als we kunnen zien die allemaal eikachtig zijn en toch net dat tikkeltje anders, zelfs vier maal meer in het geval van deze vervelende want door ons qua naam vergeten Noord-Amerikaanse indianen. Overigens is dat vier maal meer een interessant getal want is net één cijfer meer dan het in onze weloude traditie oercruciale drie, of is anders gezegd vermoedelijk een daadwerkelijke want metafysische begrenzing aan de creativiteit van met name boom- pardon mensbeeldvoortbrenger Willy Deventer, al heeft die al eeuwen een intiem hem immer beke-rende vriend annex kunstenaar die per computer blijkbaar andere dimensies kan toveren. Inderdaad, vervangt U als lezer en dus denker het begrip "*boom*" door het begrip "*mens*" en U weet ineens dat geen enkele boom noch mens 'recht groeit' - geen enkele. Probeert U zich dat nu eens concreet of vanuit Uw eigen zeer tastbare leefwereld voor te stellen, aan de hand van foto's of zelfs - haha - geschilderde of getekende portretten - en vanzelfsprekend via Uw oneindig zij het altijd deels vergetend geheugen. U ziet dan geen enkele rechte mens zoals wij tot onze stomme verbazing en snelle verontwaardiging eens een handboek godsdienst hebben ontmoet waarin twee bladzijden aan de perfecte of heilige Pater Damiaan waren gewijd maar waar zeer schijnheilig onderaan op de rechterbladzijde twee .. tekortkomingen van deze man waren voorgesteld, dus in een 'aparte kotteke'. De lesreeks die we dan hebben ontwikkeld was met name rond een zgn. nieuw zij het na de les volkomen begrijpbaar begrip van net één der twee zgn. tekortkomingen - dit niet ter zijde. Maar dus Willy Deventer die niet zozeer bezig is als psycholoog of mensdeskundige maar als toch zeer belangrijk, als mensenafbeelder; als beeldvoortbrenger. Hebt U al eens een perfect of recht naar elke dimensie perfect uitgroeiend mens gezien of met zoveel woorden dat ene portret dat dus "*dé*" mens moet voorstellen; "*Ecce Homo*", afgebeeld!? Laat het ons per direct weten want wij blijkbaar nog steeds niet - al hebben wij niet eens nooit de moed ter zake opgegeven in die zin dat van alle schrijfsels die wij ooit produceerden en nog hopelijk mogen produceren wij uiteindelijk slechts die ene droom hebben: één bladzijde wijden aan wat God is (of Christus)? Of Willy Deventer dat gaat willen illusteren in zo verre? Wij gaan dat zeker niet vragen want doorheen wat hij als menselijk wil afbeelden als "*MENS*" doorheen wat men kunsthistorisch "*portretten*" noemt en hoofdzakelijk geschilderde, getekende bustes, kunnen we werkelijk tellen dat het hem helemaal niet wil ... lukken; haha!

Het afbeelden van menselijke verschijningen kan hem natuurlijk ook nooit lukken, net zoals het bij U lezer en hebber van mentale of concrete afbeeldingen van mensen onmogelijk is om hen allemaal te onthouden. Zelfs waar U bij wijze van spreken en lijden - of juist niet -? - steeds enkel en alleen werd geconfronteerd met de verschijning van één en steeds dezelfde mens, is het volkomen onmogelijk om elke verschijning en probeer gewoon dagelijks of wekelijks of maandelijks, jaarlijks, deftig afgebeeld voor Uw ogen voor te stellen: geen Rembrandt of wie dan ook is die mogelijkheid te beurt gevallen in wat men "*zelfportretten*"

noemt. In die zin is de naar het schijnt vermetele tegelijk dartele wens of poging van Willy Deventer om bij die zekere chronologische leeftijdservaring de kaap van tienduizend (10.000) portretten *niet te ronden maar af te ronden* een bevestiging van de "*IJdelheid der ijdelheden*" van omzeggens elk menselijk pogen tot een begrip van het fenomeen mens, al mag men zeker Bijbelboek zo niet meer citeren want naar verluidt andere of nieuwe vertaling zeg interpretatie. In die nogal ernstige tegelijk lachende zin staat zekere Willy Deventer in net dezelfde rij als oude wijsgeren als Plato en Aristoteles en - we nemen aan - in een veel langere rij van denkers of doeners of beiden tegelijk over het fenomeen mens en - we voegen her er maar met stellige zij het historisch verantwoordde tegenzin bij - absoluut niet in een rij van nazi's, stalinisten of andere toekomstige ideologische gelijkhebbers. Doorheen een voor ons aantrekkelijke maar werkelijk niet meer door ons ouder brein letterlijk te vatten zeg te onthouden stroom van portretten of afbeeldingen van menselijke vormen of gedaantes, is Willy Deventer dus ook een Noord-Amerikaanse indiaan die telkens weer hetzelfde en tegelijk veranderende eik of .... of ... of ... ziet. Voor die indiaan was het een vorm van enerzijds leven en dood want zij en hij moesten allerlei zaken der natuur van deze eik (looistof?) gebruiken naast de alomvattende ervaring door dit onderdeel der verering van pakweg de God Natuur. Wat de existentiële behoeften van mens Willy Deventer doorheen dit voortbrengen en aan ons toen en ook bespreken van het fenomeen mens doorheen ontelbare menselijke gedaantes gemeen hebben met deze en veel andere Noord-Amerikaanse indianen, laten wij over aan Uw creatieve verbeelding. Zeker kunnen nogal wat van Uw lezers wetend beseffen dat hij toch ietwat 'indiaans' is in die zin dat hij al een tweede maal in zijn leven pakkende afbeeldingen van mensen maakt daar waar hij zoals wij mochten ervaren en bespreken, geweldige afbeeldingen maakte van formeel aantrekkelijke bezoekers aan het stadhuis van zijn en ons Ronse, doorheen vele bladzijden der gulden boeken.

6. Willy is citius, altius en fortius of op zijn Vlaams gezegd straffer dan Pablo.

We moeten iets redelijks persoonlijks toegeven. Hoewel we nu dit jaar op Tram Zes zijn gesprongen zijn er tot heden twee kunstenaars die we met schroom of omzichtigheid moeten benaderen; 't is echt van moetes! Een klein beetje hadden we dat ooit met Vladimir Nabokov maar daar zijn we gelukkig al een hele tijd te boven gekomen want die lazen en lezen we lustig (diens werk is sterk aangeraden, boeken en novellen, hoewel die laatste wel eens uit de stilistische hand willen lopen alsof Jimmy Hendrix ineens rococogitaar begint te spelen maar op papier). Maar. Het gaat om de Hongaarse componist Bela Bartok (aldaar hanteren zij namen omgekeerd en spreken van Bartok Bela) en de Engelse schrijver William Shakespeare. Om één of andere reden hebben zij voor ons een vorm van verschijnen die we effectief enorm waarderen, en die we bijgevolg in ons leven verwelkomen maar beiden blijven ons eveneens sterk bevreemden of bijna afstoten want ergens bang maken. Want: kan een mens zoveel andere menselijke diepgang en wijdte wel aan? Deze dubbele ervaring is een welkome bevreemding of bevreemdende verwelkoming blijkbaar. Het lijkt wel een tegenstelling terwijl wij net deze kunstenaars weten en soms aktief ervaren als zeer belangrijk, aantrekkelijk, overtuigend, meeslepend.

Hij zal er allicht niet echt mee zijn opgezet - en wij eigenlijk ook niet maar het is hier van moreel en/of esthetisch ervarend moeten of anders hebben wij doodeenvoudig niks te zeggen - - maar diezelfde ervaring hebben wij totaal niet bij die enorme cultuurhistorische beeldhouwende, boetserende, etsende, snijdende, tekenende en schilderende kanjer van een Pablo Picasso - wat zijn we nog vergeten want schrijven kon hij klaarblijkelijk totaal niet? - een man door deze Willy Deventer nogal verwelkomd. Interessant is alleszins dat de oude Picasso - het was zelfs letterlijk zijn zwanenzang - *enkele honderden* portretten heeft gemaakt

van Jacqueline Roque, zijn laatste muze als we haar zo mogen noemen, zowel als "*muze*" alsook als "*laatste*". Picasso kon als kunstenmaker inderdaad alles en ook op vlak van portretten. "*Ne Picasso*" - we herinneren ons als kind uit de late jaren '60 begin jaren '70 nog haarscherp de uitdrukking voor een raar kunstwerkje, een tekening, iets geschilderd, ... Maar of inderdaad, hij zal het niet graag lezen, nochtans of inderdaad gaat Willy Deventer zijn geliefde Picasso in deze fase van zijn kunstig kleven doodgewoon dus hoogst levensongewoon voorbij!

U kent uiteraard het motto van de Olympische spelen; straffer bier drinken en aan sneller tempo en met langere uithouding, en zo veel machismo meer en vooral; meer, veel meer interessante portretten maken. Al even uiteraardelijk kent U de Pablo al was het maar van het bijna eeuwige vergelijk ermee door zekere Willy hismastersvoiceself. Inderdaad, wie Pablo zegt, denkt quasi automatisch aan Pablo Picasso al vinden wij persoonlijk Pablo Neruda veel interessanter want ... Stop; niet afwijken al raden wij minstens de aanhef van diens "*Canto General*" aan en bekijkt U ook eens de film der ontroerendste filmen, "*Il Postino*" met duivelsacteur Philippe Noiret - wat een meester in cynische rollen - hier samen met de zowaar zijn definitieve eindrol spelende hartsmeltende Massimo Troisi. Aan die film, dat optreden aldaar van Pablito kon die Pablo Picasso met zijn zeg nu zelf overdonderend vervelend machismo dus een puntje zuigen, pointillistisch of niet want die kunstuiting heeft hij blijkbaar als enige niet geïmiteerd - maar dus stoppen met afwijken. En het gaat verder over Willy Deventer die ondanks een aantal pseudoloogniemen als recentelijk "*Daventra*" nog altijd want sinds kleinsaf aan over The Force beschikt. En die gave gaat niet over veel en snel bier drinken maar over - TEKENEN! Portretten tekenen. Het staat als een vlam boven Olympisch vuur vast dat Willy beter, veel beter is dan zijn bewonderde Pablo. Of Willy Deventer en co zijn beter dan Picas en co: het is maar zoals men het zeggen wil. En wel op twee manieren die samen chronometrisch dus objectief - slechts millimillieafwijkingen mogelijk en naar onder afgerond - kunnen worden vastgesteld met andere en de belangrijke woorden; vergeleken.

Zo hebben wij er in een vorige en alleszins minstens door hismastersvoice en onszelf ferm gesmaakte bijdrage aan alvast toen ook al gAZet - een medium dat later voor de verzamelaars veel geld gaat opbrengen, als ze alles ten minste deftig op tijd downloaden want papier is daar virtueel hoewel echt papier bij veel tijd en wijle uitnodigend - quasi wiskundig aangetoond dat Willy Daventra of toen nog Willy Deventer, uitmuntend formidabel kan tekenen in de gulden boeken der stad Ronse. En - neen, zingen niet! - hij kon er nog mooie teksten bij schrijven. Immer ongetwijfeld hebt U gezucht en tevergeefs verzucht om voor Uw kleinkind, dochterlief of - iets stiller of zelfs in alle stilte en dat is zoals men kan voorstellen de stilste stilte - aan Uzelf - waarom toch niet in de allereerste plaats aan Uw partner, foei toch? - zo eens een werkelijk originele "*Deventer*" te hebben, liefst tijdens leven en steeds Willy's welzijn mooi betaalbaar want straks na alle betrokken doden zijn die stukken van mensenlevens waard, of dé ironie van het fenomeen kunst en nu zeker wanneer Chinezen, Araben en zo meer Westerse kunst graag verzamelen met inderdaad ook 'een Picasso of twintig' erbij'! Het is jammer dat er voor die gulden tekeningen geen cataloog is uitgegeven maar we wachten nog op de schenkingen voor erfenis van de kunstminnende, zeer rijke Ronsenaars of werkelijk doodgewoon een fundraising of ?? Maar die performante want jarenlang volgehouden kwaliteit verbleekt bijna bij de prestatie die nochtans dezelfde mens nu onder het pseudoniem Daventra uitwerkt. Wij hebben al een tijd de kleuterklas verlaten dus kunnen we nog nauwelijks tellen want waar heeft ons ma zaliger die rekenblokskes toch gelegd? Vijfduizend, zevenduizend, ondertussen op naar de tienduizend want dat gaat zo door want telt nooit af! Immers, werk vernietigen doet Willy Deventer niet en maar goed ook want

als hij zo doorgaat - genetisch zit het alvast dik in orde met een 'pa' die de Kaap der Goede Slaap der 100 overschreed - kan elke Ronsenaar zijn persoonlijke Deventerportret reserveren!

Van de laatste dame die Pablo Picasso tot de zijne mocht rekenen, heeft hij toch een slordige vierhonderd stuks portretten gemaakt, op diverse dragers als vooral schilderijen; lees maar een zelf na op wikidinges want we moeten U ook niet steeds de kunstpap in de mond geven ook al omdat we geen gedacht hebben hoe breed en diep Uw mond wel is en of die sowieso pap lust. Dat is een kwantitatieve vergelijking en dus ergens flauwer als argument. Nemen we de kwalitatieve vergelijking doorheen het opvallend aspect van Willy Deventers' recente (sic) werk waar wij de zgn. "*landschapsneuzen*" hebben opgemerkt en zo benoemd. Hier zijn we stellig of zeer nauwgezet want we hebben in onze persoonlijk vrij omvangrijke persoonlijke kunstbibliotheek mét vanzelfsprekend een reeks boeken omtrent Pablo Picasso correct doorgekeken en met wiskundige zekerheid of statistisch vastgesteld dat een neus als nochtans 'achteraf' essentieel onderdeel van elk portret bij Picasso nauwelijks, slechts een deel van het geheel is. Bovendien kan geen enkele kneuzer uit slaapontwakenende dienst tegenwerpen dat die landschapsneuzen te 'té' zijn of de facto het portret onportretteren of vernietigen; het blijft onderdeel van "*het geheel portret*"! Dat is één en zo kunnen we zij het iets minder spectaculair nog doorgaan met om er maar één te noemen omdat nu eenmaal Willy Deventer er zelfs eens over heeft geschreven; die ogen of "*die typische Daventraogen*". Wij garanderen dat na ruwweg vijfenveertig jaar lezen over kunst en veel kijken en tot zekere trots zelfs wat tentoonstellingen uit de morzels Ronsese gronden te hebben gestampt of getrokken, wij ons niet herinneren één kunstenaar te kunnen aanduiden die nu eens typische ogen heeft voortgebracht. Neem de proef op de som en ga geheel de kunstgeschiedenis uit Uw bibliotheek bekijken en ga dan gerust naar de stadsbibliotheek en neem een thermos of twee met verse koffie mee maar slurp wel zacht.

Er is uiteindelijk het zeer bekende 'meer' want het is er ook! Inderdadig in de daad der Deventer zijn er de begeleidende teksten of titels die samen met hun werken een atoniserende ervaring voortbrengen. Eerlijk gezegd begrijpen we van deze uitdrukking zelf niks maar het klinkt wel goed om aan te duiden dat Willy Deventer taalkundig zeer straffe dingen uitsteekt bij de reeds merkwaardige beelden, dus een dubbele of daarbovenop een eigenaardige harmonie in disharmonie brengt - of zoiets of dus straks beter uit te drukken door geleerdere mensen. Zelf hebben wij ondertussen in een stilaan wat verder verleden een hele reeks titels voor een Belgisch kunstenaar gemaakt, en dat tot ieders aangenaamheid tot het ons zelf onder meer de keel begon uit te hangen wij de kap over diens kunsthaag gooiden. U kent uiteraardigst natuurlijk onze andere merkwaardige Belg van relatief korte tijd geleden, René Magritte die overigens niet zo ver van Willy Deventer was geboren want in Lessen. Maar in tegenstelling tot het stichtelijke gezin van Willy Deventer moest diens moeder blijkbaar zelfmoord plegen, door verdrinking. Tragisch vanzelfsprekend en was het daarom dat we zoveel zogenaamd suggestieve of bol staand van diepe stil gezegd lege bodems titels van haar zoon - burgerman René - moeten aanvaarden? U weet uitaardig dat onze Willy Deventer eveneens een deftige arbeiderszoon was die zich wat men dan noemt aardig heeft opgewerkt. Die tegenstelling in geborgenheid heeft er wel misschien toe geleid dat de nu eens zeer vormkundig afwijkende kunstenaar maar zich eeuwig geborgen mens dus taalman titels produceert die taalkundig hun weergave niet hebben en dus aan dezelfde lopende band als de x portretten per dag! Ze zijn zo weergavig uniek en vlamtintelend dat we er nu geen enkele weergave van gaan geven - net zoals bij de ter taalzake wel echt vervelende René Magritte - maar dat we denken aan een bespreking ervan door 's lands betere dichters zoals tegenwoordig - even nadenken? - en vooral misschien door 's lands beste taalvirtuoos annex

emeritus professor Paul Claes, zonder meer zowat de slimste Belg der pakweg laatste 50 jaar. Maar niet de beste ... tekenaar!

We hebben zeer kort en krachtig geschetst hoe zowel kwantitatief als zelfs dubbel kwalitatief Willy Deventer zijn klaarblijkelijke geliefde bijna verafgode Pablo Picasso in laat ons zeggen "*lengten klopt*". Mogen we dit stukje afsluiten met een eigen ervaring?

Zoals redelijk bekend bij zelfs voor ons onbekenden, zijn we vanaf ergens 2005 bezig na te denken rond het politieke fenomeen WO II. Op een dag ergens een jaar later en toen we in vergelijking met nu - 2023 - nog geen millipercent werk hadden verricht - zegden we tegen een zgn. specialiste in het vak (Karolien Steen, een betaald laatstejaars doctoraatsstudente omtrent verzet) dat "*Als wij ooit klaar zijn, moet iedereen opnieuw beginnen*". Dat is zoals het er nu voorstaat en nog maar deels wordt vrij gegeven ter lezing geen grootspraak gebleken, maar we zijn nog verder gegaan. Dat wil niks anders zeggen dan dat wij - niet eens opgeleid als historicus - meer soorten en meer diepere inzichten hebben ontwikkeld dan vooral professoren of betaalde specialisten. Hier ligt een enigszins verschillend en toch zeer gelijkaardig fenomeen. Uiteraard was of is Willy Deventer (gepensioneerd) docent grafiek of kende er dus verdomme zeer, zeer veel van - daar hij het zelfs mocht of moest doorgeven aan jonge mensen, studenten in kunstrichtingen. Anderzijds werkt het werkelijk op onze zenuwen dat Willy Deventer zichzelf en dat allicht de bekende sommigen ook al - zelfs onafhankelijk van elkaar - bijvoorbeeld het werk van zichzelf menen te moeten vergelijken met wat zij als een genie of komeet of fenomeen beschouwen, dhr. Pablo Picasso. Overigens hebben wij ooit eens in een boek - een boek, mevrouw, mijnheer, een boek; dat liegt toch nooit?! - gelezen dat vader, kunstenaar en kunstleerkracht Picasso met alles aan eigen werk is gestopt toen hij een eerste topwerk van zijn kleine Pablito zag. Dat schijnt fout want is nooit voorgevallen maar het is een veelzeggende anekdote qua onderling vergelijken binnen eenzelfde domein; het produceren van beelden.

Hetzelfde ons inziens kunsthistorisch enigszins begrijpelijk maar existentieel of kunstenaarnaarstig onnodig speelt zich hier af. Waarom zou een laat ons zeggen al ietwat ouder man van bijna 80 uit het stadje Ronse maar tevens de wereldstad Gent want allen uit het barstendskunstrijke Vlaanderen niet ook een evenknie, niet zelfs een betere knie of - hop maar - twee betere knieën vertonen dan .....? Wij moeten hier als streng pedagoog en dus klein beetje demagoog optreden en Willy Deventer zachtjes op de kunstvingers tikken - met een pluim natuurlijk, hihi - om asjeblieft zeg eens wat meer zelfvertrouwen te tonen. Overigens past dat naadloos met wat wij - ooit ook geboren en wel in 1963 en niet zo ver van Ronse want toch in de Lage Landen - als kind wel eens hoorden, allicht tot ergens begin jaren '70, en het was zo sterk dat we het moeten herhalen; dat "*het een echte Picasso was*". Effectief, nogal wat kunstige zaken van welk niveau ook kregen uit de volksmond de benaming "*een Picasso*" toegemeten net als zeer overigens eender zeer knappe meid een halve Brigitte Bardot was; wij althans hebben op de wereldzeeën en landengten al véél meer zeer knappere meiden gezien en daarbij nooit aan BB gedacht - als we tenminste nog konden nadenken. Hij - Pablo Picasso - had het eens moeten weten al verstond hij waarschijnlijk veel te weinig Deirremons of Ronsies daarvoor. Maar dat is het punt of "*Willy is straffer dan Pablo."* Wie ogen heeft die ziet. Die ziet bijvoorbeeld zoals eerder opgemerkt geen portretten van gesluierde dames. Willy Deventer a is duidelijk geen oriëntalist, een ten andere bijzonder merkwaardige en bijzonder rijke stroming in de 19de eeuw, niet alleen in weliswaar vooral Frankrijk maar absoluut zeker ook in België. Men kan domweg en tegelijk simpelweg overtuigend opmerken dat Willy Deventer ook niet alles kan tekenen, maar dan zijn wij met behoorlijk wat liefde voor Ronse in de wiek geschoten want waarom zou hij nu eens niet minder dan 25.000

Ronsese koppen maken? Okay, laten we even realistisch zijn en begrijpen dat zelfs indien Willy Deventer zoals zijn pa de 100 haalt, hij niet kan 'bezig' blijven. Maar, hij kan wel kleine Picasso's pardon nondedju kleine Deventertjes voortbrengen en uiteraard niet gebaard door zijn eeuwige geliefde Rita.

We kijken om te leren al voegen we er toch maar graag pardon ongraag triestig bij, ook om te verleren; veel van wat we ooit hebben aangeleerd en dus ook visueel, zouden we 'ergens' beter nooit hebben geweten, willen we dus ergens zo snel mogelijk vergeten. Hier zeker niet. Hier gebeurt iets zeer merkwaardig en wel op een dubbel niveau, bij wijze van spreken vooral kunsthistorisch intrigerend experimenterend maar toch zeker eveneens des mensen voorbeeldig of didactisch. We kunnen één en ander echt ervaren of zien zij het wat moeilijk want op een wat visueel terugtrekkend medium als internet. Daarom het belang van het ten toon stellen, eerst als appetizer aansnijdend op internet en op andere dragers of zeker eens met volle teugen genietend of zeer life and eyekicking. U zal het zien; in de lente van 2024 gaat ouwe gouwe en bijna eeuwige gulden beeldmaker Willy Deventer zich kronen met een lauwerkrans, in Ronse. We hopen van harte dat het zeer veel reclame elders krijgt. Het gebeuren heeft immers alles van Olympische dimensies: de leeftijd der deelnemer en de uniciteit en intensiteit der prestatie. Tedju, dat we daar niet al die tijd aan hebben gedacht: de Olympische Spelen te Parijs in - 2024! Moge dus - dus, dus, dus ... - de expo van de portretten van Willy Deventer eveneens in een Belgisch huis of in pakweg Centre Pompidou doorgaan:

"*En avant Renaisiens, passons la frontière française,*
on va réduire en poussière à nos aise,
la barbe d'art de Pi Casso, l'on va raser,
car le jour de Wil' Du Ventre'est arrivé.
.... "

En zo nog enkele minuten verder; U kent tekst en melodie van buiten.

7. Het laatste beeld. Ook het belangrijkste? U aangeboden door Willy Deventer.

We breken hier niet echt een geheim uit een kerker van een krochtig zelfs reeds volkomen ruïneus kasteel open dat vroedvrouw of beeldenman Willy Deventer een zekere - in de betekenis van zekerheid en ook al als een geregelde - liefde heeft voor het bespreken en natuurlijk illustrerend afbeelden van diverse familieleden, inzonder zijnde overledenen, inzonder zijn ma en pa - via foto's en wie weet - shtttt - via zelfs talloze van de duizenden portretten ondertussen en tot een maand in volgend jaar. Als kijkend zeg ander of ergens eeuwig afstandelijk mens kan men zich daar wel eens over verwonderen en ook gelukkig zijn omwille van de authentieke ervaring van graag gedeeld familiaal geluk en het bijna moraliserend 'stichtelijk' noemen, iets wat dus ook duidelijk in de oceanen van op internet losgelaten foto's te zien is bij talloze posters; zie alleen al de naam "*Facebook*". Wij kunnen hier uiteraard omwille van de gekende tijd-, ruimte- en redactieproblemen niet alle foto's van pakweg pa Deventer analyseren. Maar alleszins weten de Ronsenaars en andere lezers van gAZet dat zijn pa een nogal springlevende heer is geworden van niet minder dan meer dan honderd jaar. Met zekerheid is er dus een foto bij die gelegenheid opgedoken of gebeeldhouwd - hihi - en door zoonlief Willy-met-dezelfde-familienaam uitgewroet zodat dit afgebeeld beeld haarfijn kan worden gedateerd. Al mogen of moeten we opperen dat wie deze eigenaardige mens en zoon Willy Deventer wat kent - wij allemaal natuurlijk na ettelijke duizenden bladzijden gAZet - weet dat het een enigszins gewiekste kerel is te noemen. Met

andere woorden dat de foto van de vader als honderdjarige niet als het ware gena-dateerd is met zelfs één dag meer of dus als 100- jarige komma 01-dagige! Want!!! Wegens teveel trac was zelfs een geboren, getogen en professioneel en semi-driedubbel-professioneel of verwoed gebleven beeldenmaker als Willy Deventer vergeten *die ene foto* te maken - haha, woehaa, Komt U bij van het lachen; te laat een beeld maken op iemand honderdste verjaardag? Haha, woehaa. We kunnen dan eens lekker en met ons allen gezamenlijk zij het stiekem lachen om deze redelijk domme opmerking die met de gedachte van waarheid zeg omgekeerd vergissing en uiteraard niet misleiding slechts iets zuiver objectiefs dus onmenselijks te maken heeft en sowieso duurt "*honderd jaar*" gewoon één jaar lang! Maar U begrijpt ons: de kern der zaak is natuurlijk één vraagstuk waarvoor U op een dag met de grootste prangendheid gesteld werd; *welk beeld? Welk beeld is het laatste? Welk beeld is het belangrijkste*? Zoals voor zoon en kunstenaar Willy; welk beeld *moet* hij bevroeden of uitbeelden van pa, welk beeld *moet* hij bevroeden of uitbeelden van ma, en ietsje minder van moetes van tante Zwarte Lola en nonkel Freddy en ...?

De Lage Landen zijn voor de levenden al lang overbevolkt en bijgevolg zijn er voor de doden alsmaar minder plaatsen beschikbaar, zowel in de feitelijkheid zelf (verbranden dus lichamelijk-ruimtelijk 'reduceren' in een urne bijvoorbeeld) als in de tijd; wie mag nog 'eeuwig' blijven liggen? Over die belangrijke, onstellende en tegelijk wijsgerig-pragmatische problematiek gaan wij het hier niet hebben want het is toch roeien met als in suiker oplosbare riemen of tegen de stroom roeien. Sterk vermoedelijk zal één zaak onafscheidelijk of blijvend worden verbonden aan het moeten afscheid nemen van zekere intens geliefde, zelfs als men pakweg zeer toevallig (...) vooral of totaal volstrekt alleen in diens erfenis is geïnteresseerd; de keuze van het beeld van die geliefde, van diens allerlaatste beeld, van pa, van ma, van .....! Allerlei mensen hebben zekere lokale of veel hogere bekendheid en zullen bijgevolg de bron zijn van allerlei 'nieuwe' beelden na hun dood - ook al wanneer het voordien letterlijk onbekend beeldmateriaal is dat nu opduikt en daardoor alleen al nieuwwaarde heeft. Dat zijn dan per definitie oude of bestaande beelden; herinneren wij ons natuurlijk de gulden boeken van de stad Ronse net door Willy Deventer geweldig geïllustreerd en daardoor ook of juist meer een maatschappelijke relevantie hebben gekregen! Maar voor de overgrote deel der lage landelijke mensheid geldt dat één beeld moet worden gekozen; voor het doodsprentje, voor de afbeelding bij welke vorm van graf ook, voor de berichtgeving aan te ver wonende verwanten en vrienden, als nu eens zeer gekoesterde 'bijlage' - wat is dat voor een woord, een beeld als bijlage terwijl het anderzijds-enerzijds-opwaarts of zeg ergens ook de hoofdlage is!? We laten onderwijzend opvoedend en publiek politiek of in het algemeen graag vragen open, zoals nu voor U welk beeld van welke geliefde U alleen of samen met Uw andere geliefden zal worden gekozen; of toch opteren voor een symbool, als dan eenzelfde soort vraagstelling en discussie niet ook de kop gaat opsteken!? Helaas is het zeer te bekend en allicht sinds oudsher, dat veel doden aanleidingen geven tot zelfs oneindige discussies - rond die *** erfenis. Wij gaan daar ooit eens 'iets' over schrijven, ook al omdat wij als niet-jurist al sinds jeugdige tijd bevreemdend opkijken naar de manier van denken dus handelen van academisch gevormde juristen al zijn we sinds meerdere jaren ook al verwonderd over de manier van denken van academische historici; filosofie bestuderen of iets meer dan gewoon grondig - proberen - nadenken over de vragen des levens, het is niet bevorderlijk voor de zielerust? Wij hebben er alvast nog nooit iets gehoord maar sluiten het dus helemaal niet uit dat er effectief discussies ontstaan omtrent het laatste beeld. Stel je voor, via snelrecht wan tijdens de koellijktijd daarvoor naar de vrederechter!? Het zou wat zijn zelfs over dergelijke keuze - het laatste beeld - verhitte discussies te voeren terwijl het lijk zijn definitieve afkoeling aan het inzetten is. Wij hebben nogal wat begrafenissen meegemaakt en herinneren ons zelfs geen enkel geval waarin de keuze van de aanwezige foto nadien dus een onderwerp van stil gesprek was, ook al

omdat één en ander in onze jeugd gebeurde, kinderen toen van de volwassenen moesten zwijgen en diezelfde volwassenen niks interessants te zeggen hadden - althans tegen ons. We vermoeden ten allersterkste dat nagenoeg elke verantwoordelijke voor eender welke afbeelding van een juist gestorvene zijn uiterste best doet om net het beste beeld weer te geven en te vermenigvuldigen. Alleszins weet iedereen dat elke begrafenisondernemer - ze worden ook astronomisch betaald - er een eer van maakt de overledene zo goed mogelijk toonbaar te maken. Al is het tonen van de overledene in zijn grootste existentie blijkbaar definitief voorbij in de Lage Landen, namelijk zoals het eeuwen of altijd gewoon was in de betere plaats in het eigen huis met het openbaar tonen of zichtbaar baren van het opgesmukt lijk. En dan zo stapvoets naar de kerk. En dan naar de begraafplaats, de laatste verblijfplaats, alles vergezeld van de dierbaren en bijgevolg uiterst traag en publiek. Dat in wezen onwaarschijnlijk schandelijk 'modern' gedrag - U moet maar eens proberen door een verkeersopstopping te geraken met een lijkstoet - maakt de waarde van het laatste beeld als letterlijk afgebeelde - op een doodsprentje en op andere gebeurlijke dragers - nog veel belangrijker, mogen we ergens ironisch niet sarcastisch zeggen.

De uiteindelijke selectie van het laatste afgebeeld beeld van de overledene - hopelijk maar dus niet altijd een dierbare - kan voer zijn voor sociologen en allerhande, en misschien terug te vinden bij romanschrijvers als een immer nieuwsgierige Hugo Claus. Maar voor de Ronsenaars heeft duivelskunstenaar Willy Deventer het nu wel helemaal te bont gemaakt, nu eens letterlijk genomen. Weliswaar heeft hij af en toe in de titels van de duizenden beelden namen - deels - gebruikt, waarmee we - blijkbaar toch? - mogen weten dat het om een portret gaat dat niet alleen een product van formeel kunstzinnige verbeelding is, maar tevens of vooral van een 'echte' bron; een bestaand mens. Hoe dan ook en wat het specifieke al het ware numeriek gedreven grondmotief van Willy Deventer moge zijn - we gaan het hem zeker niet vragen ook al omdat we hem niet in verlegenheid willen brengen; weet hij het immers zelf wel want hij is nog zo jong en kan nog veel rijpen want nog lang geen ... honderd jaar!? - zijn we als kijkers ergens aan het verzwelgen in een aanbod van beelden van mensen of menselijke verschijningen. Als kunstenaar heeft grafisch fenomeen Willy Deventer iets kunstzinnigs verricht - het is nogmaals herhaald nog niet gedaan, toch - dat wij met nogal wat kennis der algemene kunstgeschiedenis nooit hebben ontmoet - nooit. Hoe één en ander 'louter' kunstzinnig moet (ja, moet of toch mag - aub) worden besproken of geanalyseerd, dat laten wij aan anderen over; studenten kunstgeschiedenis en aanverwanten genoeg!

Maar U en ik, wij, de bijna elke maal uitgeputte kijkers, zijn bijna gebombaardeerd met beelden - van mensen. We nemen aan dat wanneer mensen beelden willen opslaan op welke drager ook en voor welke gelegenheid ook, zij een belangrijk beeld willen kiezen en alzo bewaren - voor een volgende gelegenheid en ook voor het delen op allerlei manieren met anderen. Deze ene mens, deze ene voortbrenger of produceerder van een onophoudelijke lavastroom van beelden van mensen - portretten - heeft dit nu eens veel moeilijker gemaakt. En toch inderdaad niet alleen door de puur rekenkundig gezien overdonderende massa aan beelden maar toch - een tip voor de verdere onderzoekers - voor de voortdurend inspirerende of 'ergens' - inhoudelijke - aantrekkelijke beelden. Laten we dit kwalitatief gezien en kwantitatief uitzonderlijk eens zo bekijken, met die immer en universeel prangende vraag naar het laatste beeld.

Soms werd wel eens een dodenmasker gemaakt; denk aan Ludwig van Beethoven. Maar dat is naast macaber gewoon oerdom want wat ontbreekt anders dan het licht, het licht uit die ogen. Voor altijd gesloten want alleszins zou het al technisch moeilijk zijn om een dodenmasker af te gieten met nog open ogen - een vorm van sadisme? Het zou werkelijk onzinnig zijn; hoe

kunnen verstarde ogen nog iets aan esprit, aan leven tonen? En deze associatie heeft ook niks te zien met de ondertussen door ons niet meer te tellen portretten door Willy Deventer; of toon ons één voorbeeld der afgebeelden - beter toch dit woord te gebruik dan de geportretteerden? - die leven dus! We gaan natuurlijk niet flauw doen en beweren dat alle portretten van ene zelfde formeel of levenskrachtig zinderend niveau zijn maar hoeveel zindering doorheen deze reeks! Veel, zeer veel van die werken leven: LEVEN! Willy Deventer zal allicht wel wat negatieve menselijke eigenschappen hebben maar van een ons oog doorwekend cynisme is geen sprake. En dat is nu eens ietwat moraliserend gezegd geen slechte zaak op zijn enigszins eerbiedwaardige want toch veulensgebleven leef-tijd. Willy Deventer is nu eens in een totaal andere stijl dan we van hem kennen - of net daardoor? - een vroedvrouw of vroedman, een beeldenmaker of zoals het Nederlands het zo mooi kan zeggen; een schepper - gebleven.

We hebben nu iets wonderlijks en vreemds gezien. Mensen, zeer of vooral of werkelijk uitsluitend onbekende mensen maar mensen, allemaal ergens bestaand. Allemaal "*Elcerlicken*"'. Bij duizenden voortgekomen en bijna gesprongen op een blad papier uit een pen en een penseel en dan op het wijde web dat zo eens zijn de facto nog steeds zeer jong bestaan verantwoordt. Inderdaad, U kan onbeperkt kiezen welk beeld onder hen het beste past bij nonkel, tante, je eigen moeder en vader, je ...! Wat een schavuit, wat een macho, wat een grapjas, wat een technische knobbel. Want nogmaals en herhaal het aan je buur te Ronse en elders: een voortbrenger - kunstenaar - iconocraat - vroedman van bijna 80 jaar jong. Die hiermee voor zichzelf een werkelijk nieuw kunstleven begint, een eigen en ons schenkende renaissance. Het is wat, het is eigenlijk "*Incroyable mais vrai*" - zoals het geliefde programma van onze dierbare Madame Six; naar het programma hebben we geen seconde met interesse gekeken maar wat heeft die vrouw ons veel bijgebracht! Zoals Willy Deventer, Daventra alias van - haha! Naar dikwijls verluidt is een slechte, triestige, vervelende, ondankbare, grauwe, toekomstloze jeugd een goudmijn voor romanschrijvers en andere vormen van literatuurbedrijvers, en allerlei andere vormen van kunstenaars. Me dunkt dat voor Willy Deventer daar ergens op 'zijn' gehucht Marmezoek de lucht en de grond en de mensen bronnen van lang leven en geven waren. En van iconocratie.

Jean-Marie De Dijn

Jenny Montigny (1875 - 1937), Emile Claus (1849 - 1924), oil, 1902, Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Brussel.

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9. Jenny and Emile and who knows, maybe even Charlotte at our house! At your house?

1. A mmonummental mmonumment.

Through deep or long experience we have become rather suspicious, not to say cynical, concerning social or public veneration of so-called greats of the earth, more specifically the Belgian, Flemish or very local earth. In particular, thousands of Belgian compatriots - and in the EU it will probably be more or less the same social movement everywhere - received at least a street name, after that life and sometimes already during. That last recognition phenomenon is in itself hardly believable - but true, at least in our much-loved Belgian city of Ronse. And that while after sufficient study of these lives it appears that they were very ambivalent to socially destructive persons. Real political criminals or scoundrels then do/did not receive a street name or other public permanent mention by apparent definition. In a rare historical event, these even disappeared because new and apparently courageously impressive historical insight led to this. This happened, as is known, with many street names dedicated to the USSR and more precisely Stalin and recently in the case of the Antwerp war mayor Leo Delwaide (1897 - 1978 + see the groundbreaking, say honest and thorough studies by the Belgian historians Lieven Saerens and Herman Van Goethem, with which they are literally - and uh... together with us - the exceptions in the rigid, Stalinist world of modern historians regarding WWII in the Low Countries). That is nevertheless a delicate matter in itself because - to put it mildly - a person like this old Belgian politician has, in addition to historically very precisely situated missteps, tried to lay out and walk many human paths, as a person among the people or a politician among and for his voters and fellow citizens. At the same time, it is not only pragmatically impossible but simply nonsensical in principle to have these kinds of discussions in depth, say in their entirety. The Belgian colonial past is an example of this and in an important democratic country like France, for example, one is certainly not going to

appreciate Napoleon at his true political value, namely as an Adlerian power-hungry man with countless crimes on his record, and consequently remove him from the countless squares and other strong drinks dedicated to him. Even on a local level, every product of social veneration cannot also become the subject of critical investigation, let alone correction; more general or principled positions can be taken.

Emile Claus (1849 - 1924) can be seen in an Olympic year like now (2024) as an excellent second-rate painter from an international level; a series of almost final places, besides being a regular winner of the bronze medal with an occasional silver! He also knew that he was not a second Rembrandt or Jan Van Eyck. As if every writer is no longer allowed to write and especially publish because there was once a phenomenon like Shakespeare (circa 1564 - 1616). It is always about other times and other places, but about the same need to read and/or look - at works of the visual arts. At the same time, the visual arts and painting in particular are that obvious art that likes to question itself in principle and then even only wants to be concerned with itself. That is understandable from a purely art historical point of view, at least for a very small group of insiders - of reviewers, curators, museum directors, top collectors and here and there even (...) an extremely modern artist. On the other hand, it is existentially historically tiring to annoying for the vast majority of people, alias art lovers, such as us, unfortunately: ..... **LINK Luc Tuymans**..... Moreover, compared to a painting - the following applies somewhat less to graphics - you can borrow or even buy a book, but it is never unique in its materiality. You can even translate it, although there is the proverb "traduttori traditori". That means, at its crudest, that every translation is a betrayal or simply that it is best to try to read works in an original version because that is where most - not all!? - nuances for that reader are present. Books are therefore super easy to distribute, although you do have to make a fair amount of effort to use them - to read them. Works of visual arts are unique to such an extent, except for graphics, that they can only be encountered very precisely situated. And that is usually in public museums and meanwhile in the remarkable partly understandable largely regrettable fuss of collections of private read filthy rich collectors who now want their own (sic) museum. And who are buying their bliss of eternity with it - except for those few real special cases or idealists who at least do not lend their name to their foundation but for example name it as ... **Home - The Phoebus Foundation** ..... Fortunately, there is a kind of compromise between the book and the visual work possible that makes the latter very real, namely by publishing it in art books. The value of art books can never be overestimated and there can never be enough of them published at preferably democratically affordable prices. In a sense standing next to it but of - for the time being? - even less access - and therefore lasting knowledge value, is the PC and the internet. This allows one to find many works of art at very high resolution or excellent visibility, although no depth or actual colour elaboration can be displayed - which also applies to the art book. One must then use a real or decent screen which is not possible with the technical scum of the Smartphone, a monstrosity that, due to its all too compelling algorithms, makes its viewer not look anyway but scroll.

Anyone who looks through the work of Emile Claus, in a book or of course preferably live in the various European museums that have his work (mainly but not only in Belgium) or through a retrospective exhibition such as in 2024 in Belgium (see below), sees somewhat unbalanced work but quite a lot of beautiful works up to masterpieces. Above all, he is recognized as a grabber, recorder and translator of light. Emile Claus is not seen as a luminist for nothing, even called the "*Prince of luminism*". That is certainly no small compliment, especially for a painter who essentially always works with colour, shape and light. Just think of such a comparable compliment for a writer! Incidentally, he made graphics very regularly, often but not necessarily as a 'reproduction' of a painting made by him and therefore

considered important by at least himself. A very successful double example of this is the painting next to the lithograph of "*Cows crossing the Leie*." ("*Koeien die de Leie oversteken.*", 1899, Museum of Fine Arts, Brussels). To our knowledge, those graphic works by Emile Claus were always black and white, but graphically very strong and formally just that little bit different from the referenced paintings. The very striking scratching in linear patterns in those lithographs makes these works exceptionally mobile, as if they are on the edge of the silent but effectively moving film (we would like to make a silent appeal so that the entire world finally starts to make the distinction between effective and efficiency - please!!!). We have been able to establish this several times, such as unfortunately only via the internet for the phenomenal lithograph of this 'in itself' important painting from 1899. And that was somewhere even more a valuable lithograph because it was dedicated "*to my good friend*", student and painter Anna De Weert (see further and this lithograph is dated 21 December 1899). That printed work is a very beautiful part of his work, but it is unclear to us whether that can also be labelled as luminism? In any case, it seems to us very important for future overview exhibitions to hang paintings and 'their' graphic expression through lithographs and so on, next to each other, to allow the viewer to compare. It is also striking that we ourselves have never seen this approach in a permanent collection of a museum - until now. It is incomprehensible how such interesting grounds for comparison are ignored in museums, until now. One of the co-objectives of our study of portraits is in any case to restore the value of graphics.

Shortly after his death in 1924, because already in 1926, a huge, partly normal, partly pompous monument was erected for him. That did not happen in his village Astene but in the nearby city, a city of European and world importance, especially in the field of art. That monument still shines in bronze and a lot of blue stone in the Citadel Park of proud Ghent... **K. SEE Photo monument in Ghent, 1926**.... It is from his former student Yvonne Serruys (1873 - 1953), who undoubtedly needed a lot of assistance for it. This very fascinating lady, who would eventually spend most of her life in Paris, was given a great retrospective exhibition in the autumn of 2023. Logically, it took place in her hometown, the provincial town of Menen near the French border, where she also left her legacy. To our great regret we missed this exhibition, but there is a catalogue and we passed her monument by Emile Claus countless times during our student days. That work itself never interested us at all then and it doesn't interest us now either. That large sculpture certainly never inspired us to study the (painter) depicted. In that respect it has already missed its target once (we were interested in the painting of our youth before that). Art-historically that monument has no value whatsoever. It is not innovative, it simply does not move us and above all: it is much too big to the point of being laughable. But it serves its purpose because - go and see for yourself - it forms an enormous bench for the birds in the park who are just as tired of the branches of the always too few trees as they are too much to shake in the wind. Yet there is something that we see now at that moment or that made us shake. We see ... NOTHING.

2. Mmonummental but with the striking Nothing.

We were mainly trained as philosophers at the University of Ghent in the 80s, at a place that is somewhat further away than this moment. We had a lot of luck studying there with mainly interesting to very inspiring professors - while unfortunately the old-fashioned philosophical genius Leo Apostel (1925 - 1995) had just gone on mandatory health retirement. Could he have at least given us some private lessons!? Without a doubt - including him - this philosophical department in Ghent had one of the most fascinating academic philosophical educations in the world at the time, although everything can be better because ... blah blah

blah. The smartest of them all was without the same doubt the German Rudolf Boehm (1927 - 2019); the man had previously refused proposals from Washington, among other places. Together with a certain Spinoza (1632 - 1677) and the modern Dutchman Cornelis Verhoeven (1928 - 2001), he belongs to the probably greatest thinkers who ever wandered around in the Low Countries - but there is still time to come. Rudolf Boehm is a philosopher who has apparently been forgotten at that faculty itself (to our slight astonishment, he once complained to us personally about "*Who reads me*?" + You can mainly read along in Dutch on **Fenomenologie | Rudolf Boehm**). This deep thinker, this researcher into the guiding principles of Western thought, has been partly forgotten, not least because of the power of the personality of that other philosopher at the time, Etienne Vermeersch (1934 - 2019). And this professor was essentially the better or simply superior village philosopher because he was a great 'explainer'. But not a great philosopher himself, as he once admitted himself. This is not the place to write the history of that department. But one could learn to think, very much - and very independently. Without that education, in which special attention was paid to the history of science and paradigms or overarching changes in perspective of scientific thinking, we would certainly never have been able to invent our internationally groundbreaking historical-political work on a crisis like WWII much later. On the other hand, it is also not clear to us whether our groundbreaking work in this cultural field also yields important insights, now around painters - such as around an Emile Claus and ....? Are you going to judge?

More specifically, one could learn there how "*nothingness*" can be of essential importance. What a so-called thinker does NOT say is in some cases just as important, if not more important, than what he has said or written. Of course, everyone is situated and completely objective thinking is a complete impossibility, insofar as this is an ideal (partly it certainly is, but ...). Once a thinker has been studied reasonably thoroughly, one should more or less understand him/her (or one starts over or one sighs resignedly and might as well become a gardener), as far as his/her principles are concerned, of course. And in doing so, one should investigate what this thinker has failed to write that, based on these principles, makes these principles even more ... uncertain. From cognitive psychology we know that this is difficult, if not terribly, to almost impossible. But it is the core of democracy and of everything that calls itself science. We remember reading that the Dutch legal philosopher Paul Cliteur (1955) somewhere noted that he wanted to study what the courageous though cautious Spinoza never wanted/dared to write but had ... Try that out on your aging day, Mr. Cliteur! And continue with all the so-called accepted great thinkers, in all directions of thought!

These considerations about the importance of the principle and - therefore - the importance of nothingness can be made absolutely certain about the monument of Emile Claus by the woman Ivonne Serruys. In her twenties she reportedly received four years of lessons at the home of Emile Claus. It must have been pleasant there because that is how she knew, among others, the recently met, important Belgian and female artist Anna De Weert (1867 - 1950). And above all: that is how she knew Jenny Montigny (1875 - 1937) very well, about whom directly and finally and continuously further! Of course Ivonne Serruys 'also' knew the lady of the house or the wife of Emile Claus who not only brought around the biscuits and coffee at all these pleasant moments for a few years but also taught her to sniff the scent of oil paint for decades, as if it were lavender. That went so well that lady Claus had a personal grave monument made on the grave of her beloved husband by the phenomenon Georges Minne (1866 - 1951), And he was probably the only real world-class sculptor from the Low Countries since Claus (sic) Sluter (circa 1340 - 1405/1406) and fortunately a lot more productive. That grave monument, unlike the mentioned monument for her husband, can only be admired in the garden of Emile Claus' former home, "*Villa Zonneschijn*" - "*Villa*

Sunshine". Unfortunately, we have never encountered that work in person because the domain seems to be private and so is that work; can't that sculpture, together with the grave underneath, be donated to the city of Deinze to be placed in the municipal cemetery there? It can be seen in any case via the Dutch Wikipedia page dedicated to Emile Claus. It would be called "*Opstanding*" ("*Resurrection*"), a bit strange since we assume that the couple Claus - Dufaux were liberal - besides mainly monolingual or by social preference French-speaking? Emile Claus 100% certainly used Dutch, possibly - of course spoken - with a West Flemish accent.

We have previously been somewhat dismissive of his enormous monument from 1926. On the bluestone sides of it there are certainly bilingual messages concerning the essence of his life! On one side it says in Dutch "*AAN KUNSTSCHILDER EMIEL ...*" and on the other side in French "*AU PEINTRE EMILE ....*" ("*To painter ...*"); each time neatly carved in that rock-hard bluestone or permanent. That was now nicely linguistically divided through a personal, Flemish-Belgian reality, even as "*Emile*" next to "*Emiel*". Incidentally, that specific language problem - for a Flanders that was gradually growing (again) towards its own language as a cultural language - would be cleverly camouflaged at the also public grave monument of his contemporary James Ensor. There in Mariekerke near Ostend only his name was mentioned or mentioned so-called neutrally. That was doing violence to the linguistic or existential truth because on the one hand it was certain that James Ensor expressed himself publicly and literary privately almost exclusively in French. While he could express himself perfectly in his mother tongue, which was the Ostend ergo Flemish dialect! Apart from this simple ambiguity, the only grave mention is the double-language word "*BARON*", right above his own name. And this is purely objectively true because it happened but actually pure falsification of history. In the first or predominantly de facto only place James Ensor was a painter or 'even' "*art painter*" - as the Dutch so beautifully says with "*kunstschilder*" and thus makes the distinction clear with a professional "*painte*r" or "*house painter*" ("*huisschilder*") who comes at home to paint the walls and window frames. And last but not least, James Ensor was anything but and throughout the first half of his life with his absolute heyday until around 1890 he was anything but a man of nobility, who, mind you, shot at everything and everyone of the higher powers - with his sublime, unique paintballs.

Very important is that Madame Claus made a significant donation in 1942 from the artistic legacy of her husband to the small town of Deinze from which a museum would later grow; see further. She gave much more - the couple would apparently never have children of their own - because in that museum in Deinze there are altogether about 20 paintings and more than 100 drawings by Emile Claus. Moreover, this regional museum is 'further' particularly richly developed, especially because this region around Ghent was very rich in modern painters. In principle and ultimately practically seen, it could merge with the three local museums that are located in nearby Sint-Martens-Latem. The time will come, the deed will follow, because four extremely related and relatively small museums will be unaffordable for society in the long term, even though there are many strikingly rich people living there who would be ...

On that gigantic public monument dedicated to Emile Claus in the city park of Ghent, several works from his oeuvre are depicted. But - we are where we should be in principle because what is intellectually more important than "*the but*"? So but; what or rather who is not there!? Not the woman of his life! His breath of life. His source in the morning and destination in the evening. And, it was about an artist, a visual artist, she must have been his inspiration or muse. But - we are back and more precisely or come to a principle. Who was this one

woman!? Or did sculptor Ivonne Serruys once shared the bed with her teacher Emile Claus? We do not rule that out because they came from liberal, open circles. The 19th century from which they emerged was a century of many morals par excellence. And blood explodes where the veins are too hot; where was and is it otherwise? In any case, and without being a wimpie wokie or anything 'modern' about it, it is quite astonishing that in this materially gigantic statue, zero attention has been paid to that one wife of Emile Claus - who was therefore de facto ... double. Neither his legal wife of many years nor his girlfriend or mistress of also many years Jenny Montigny are to be found here. What is not said but which is of great importance, may point to a form of forgetfulness, of incredible stupidity or above all of cunning deceit. Our experience teaches us that the Soviet techniques for retouching photos directly from the moment an important leader has fallen from grace, are very, very human. And among those people that we experienced ourselves as Stalinistically human, we very concretely also consider so-called artists known as open. Next to frequently known in the press as so-called specialist professors who call themselves progressive, while one would not expect that attitude there. We experienced those surprises when we were still delightfully naive, an attitude that we nevertheless try to maintain despite the cynicism that was caused through those surprises. Of course we are not asking anything about certain missing representations or 'corrections' around this monument, which is however gigantic. This has already been done literally.

However, there is still something to be corrected in the meantime. There will be an obviously important exhibition about Emile Claus in the regional "*Mudel*" this autumn 2024. Mudel is the gruesome abbreviation of the attractive "*Museum of Deinze and the Leiestreek*" in Deinze near Ghent. Quite a few Flemish museums have made their new name intended as euphonious out of this kind of gruesome name finds. Or one of the many stupid fashions from history. And that for a museum or place of certain eternity.

Just read the ad hoc relatively short biography of this man:

Biography | Emile Claus (emile-claus.be)

His wife, the later grieving widow, is clearly mentioned on this website. She was married to her Emile in 1886 and apparently lived with him before that in Astene near Ghent. That is now a sub-municipality of Deinze and they lived there in "*Villa Zonneschijn*" or "*Villa Sunshine*". That house name speaks for itself because Emile Claus would absorb the light and the local, still very untouched landscape there and immortalize it for us, art-historically certainly and historically even more than certainly. Because. So that we can now see, purely by comparison with archive work such as these .. paintings by Emile Claus, among other great painters working here, next to the worldly or the present, that the conspicuously rich with their mainly hideous villas have destroyed almost all beauty next to the rural tranquility. Ironic, sarcastic ... They were/are attracted to it because it was so beautiful and rurally quiet so that all kinds of rurally oriented artists came there who then became successful and especially expensive so that ... so that ... so ... That is a well-known song worldwide - all kinds of birds flock together - while now the 'really' rich are barricading themselves in totally unattainable compounds - with all kinds of top works by the revered painters à la ... This couple would remain married uninterruptedly (sic) until his death in 1924 or for almost forty years; a human eternity! She - Charlotte Dufaux - is herself mentioned with some extra personal information on this bio fragment as "*a daughter from a prominent dynasty of notaries from Waregem and Deinze*". That was and is to this day a privileged class that only came from the liberal and Christian upper middle class and had a lot of local power for a very

long time; "*Mr. Notary*"! And in addition and to this day, as a civil servant, it made an excessive amount of money, not least because of its unique function in the handling of real estate. And is/was partly responsible for the terrible and metaphysically irreversible parcelization and therefore the destruction of the landscape of Flanders, including here and also in the rare, unique dune areas. In addition, notary is/was not a profession that an intelligent, diligently studying and above all truly community-minded young person could dream of. But let us not deviate too much and see - see! - the remarkable presence of this wife ergo absence of her rival - what to call it? - Jenny Montigny. And the latter came from the same upper class or could communicate with each other, not least about the man of both their lives: Emile Claus. But this Jenny Montigny is not mentioned at all in the biography of this retrospective exhibition about the same Emile Claus; lack of space on the world wide web?

3. Always present yet absent.

Who was this lady, also from the upper middle class of that time? She was certainly a subject and at least a temporary model for painter Emile Claus, a man with a strong will and drive because of lower origins but since early on with an enormous will to succeed - as an artist. After all, you see her here with a portrait of her made by his hand in 1902. We know that he was her portrait painter because, just to be sure - who would have doubted it? - he placed his signature at the bottom right of the painting. That has apparently been a matter of course for painters since the Renaissance and for centuries to come. Sometimes they made all kinds of jokes by placing that signature on half-hidden or less important parts, such as a table leg or even on a ..., as contemporary James Ensor (1860 - 1949) sometimes did. But we do know of one excellent and amiable contemporary Belgian painter who signs the back of her paintings .. **LINK Luce Caponegro ...** Back or front, bottom or top, Jenny and Emile knew each other for a while in that year 1902 or from front to back and from left to right. Just like the more relevant Yvonne Serruys, Jenny Montigny had taken lessons from Emile Claus, starting in 1893. In contrast to the very lively lady Serruys, who would mainly focus on sculpture and achieved success with it throughout her life and especially in Paris et la province, Jenny Montigny's life and artworks continued relatively calmly. But it always continued. While something around her was almost certainly in the first and most urgent place; Emile and his work!? A little later than this start as a student because probably from 1895 Jenny would be intoxicated by the smell of paint from the squeezed paint tubes of her teacher; she became the concubine of her teacher Emile Claus. And that relationship was something that is generally known in education as a very serious professional error or violation. Normally the sanction was; out of education! Here; out of my house and out of my husband's studio! Expressed differently and somewhat more romantically: Jenny became - how traditional, right? - the mistress of Mr. the older painter, in this case 1875 minus 1849 years old or exactly 26 (twenty-six) years older: the horny bastard! How horny this specific couple was; we have to wait for their confessions, undoubtedly in beautiful French but just as undoubtedly cleaned up by the competitor annex wife 'of'. We will probably never see those memoirs or confessional letters, if they ever exist anywhere. Jenny would remain the mistress of Père Emile until his death in 1924 or for almost thirty years! Their bond was certainly stable: see their photo from as late as 1920. By the way, who held this camera, exposed this scene sufficiently? ... **K. SEE photo Emile Claus and Jenny Montigny, 1920, source website Jenny Montigny**..... That his wife Charlotte agreed with these facts - for thirty years ... - or at least had to agree, is a certainty given all the simple deductions from the known facts. That is shown not in a detail because when Die Verdammte Teutons invaded Belgium and later Ghent and surroundings in the summer of 1914, the family Emile Claus - Charlotte Dufaux - Jenny Montigny fled to Merry Old England. And of course they stayed there (?) until the end of 1918. Excuse me,

now tell me yourself whether you would want to experience all that yourself, even if you cannot hold a paintbrush then still very clumsily to paint your doors and windows assuming that they are not made of that filthy plastic.

Unless stung by a wasp or tickled by the personal hormones going too jubilantly their selfish way, people are motivated or driven by goals. That does not mean at all that people themselves are aware of all their goals, or that on the other hand they want to reveal these personally very important goals to others. Just when the trio Claus - Dufaux - Montigny had started their strange triangular relationship somewhere from 1893, the aforementioned contemporary James Ensor had already been storming the world with his masks for a few years - and how! Apart from the fact that both painters loved light immensely, we can find no evidence of any mutual artistic influence. James Ensor was both too grand and too anti-bourgeois for that, at least until he became generally successful. The loser would even accept the title of baron in old age, something that Emile Claus was fortunately spared, although Emile had contacts with the Belgian royal family and was as bourgeois as the name of his villa: always sunshine - really never rain? In Dutch language, the internationally known word "*motief/motieven*" can be expressed perfectly or, to be honest, much better with the non-bastard word "*beweegredenen*". Nuclear energy is not needed to split this compound word; it is about "*redenen om door te bewegen*" or "*reasons why one is moved to*". Those stupid Englishmen would have been better off retaining their thorough knowledge of Dutch from the 16th and 17th centuries and developing it further! So that we would not have to use poor English here but fluent and convivial Dutch, a language (...) of which we would like to know whether Emile and Jenny, Emile and Charlotte whispered sweet nothings in each other's ears. Or did they only speak through his two brushes, the wet one in front of his easel and the other wet one in front of their bodies? But let us leave those stupid brushes and especially that stupid penis behind us because we have to talk about art here. And not about something as stupid as sex. People are sometimes driven by their hormones but also by more understandable motives that are positive. In this way they are driven - we think of the last words of Spinoza in his interesting work "*Ethica, Ordine Geometrico Demonstrata*" (1678) - by reason or, in the absence thereof, even (unfortunately) by money, power and ambition. Driven by idealism is a form of moral satisfaction that can be seen as reasonable. Anyone who has never thoroughly read that book by Spinoza, pardon studied it (take a year around your 20th or what does that time mean as existential training for a whole further life if you later only waste 3 - 4 years of your life by scrolling?) - unless forgivably not part 1 of it because that is in our opinion reasonably eternally incomprehensible -, he may actually ... Well, this Ethical-less person may not actually talk about anything anymore, in a café for example, let alone on all his social media, but especially about the being human like himself! Because here - in that book, on that paper to turn around the pages which are first frequently annotated - there is an awful lot to learn. And believe us, in relatively simple, say, by the mass understandable words - although part 1 is only for specialists.

Positively driven, for money, power ...? Oh, oh, oh. In any case, the human being is very often driven by motives that are very negative and undermining, for the person concerned and those affected by it. Indeed, the human factor of resentment is generally known as crucial for, say, Greek mythological wars and millions of others more, also big to bigger and incredibly many small ones. Let us not forget this negative second motive; jealousy. Although we must remain brief here as both negative motives can have their form of rationality or at least excuse (in Dutch also to be indicated as "*verschoning*", or "*making better, prettier*" - "*schoon*" meaning pretty) in existential reasons, these main motives remain somewhere too much taboo in all kinds of culturally oriented research. Especially jealousy is in our opinion still a terribly

underestimated because essential experience in the human condition. It is a very, very widespread humanly destructive poison. Not least among women, among them and/or against men. The terrible and very common denunciations throughout WWII must be situated here, almost never because of so-called ideological reasons, say political collaboration. Although we would love to find some anthropological studies and then study them, to know whether or not there are really cultures outside of Europe, so elsewhere on earth, that really do not know the experience of jealousy - in addition to preferably no other destructive human motivations. If such cultures do indeed exist, we should certainly welcome the representatives or embodiments as immigrants, right?! Or send our dear children there, to be educated. Here is a possible new European immigration policy.

The absence of Jenny Montigny from that gigantic monument in honour of painter, husband and lover Emile barely two years after his death, an event that must have been terrible for her too, is a great pity. Although Charlotte Dufaux as his officially connected wife - Belgium of course did not have polygamy under civil law - is also not depicted anywhere; or were we missing 'something'? But as we said, not a soul is interested in that monument, except for the birds in the park ... In addition to the countless spectators who were present at the inauguration in 1926; what must they have gossiped about? But, always that but, always a but as if a theory, a proposition, a remark, a sigh. What human achievement (except all the work of father Bach of course) could ever have been made without falsifications, even if it is apparently endlessly corroborated! Jenny's absence from that prestigious overview exhibition of her painter and friend Emile Claus, supported by several Flemish ministers, is still unbelievable, let alone acceptable. It is nothing less than "*un faux pas*". It is "*not done*". Of course we cannot make a ponderance, estimate her weight in relation to her teacher and lover Emile Claus, in comparison with that of his only, real or legal wife Charlotte Dufaux. This lady is sometimes wrongly presented as "*Du Faux*", although according to the all-knowing Jacques Lacan - we just had a telephone conversation with his soul - it was the proverbial because telling "*lapsus calami*". In any case, this last woman would have a grave monument made for her husband by sculptor Georges Minne; she was clearly not spiteful. Or was she in turn cunning? Or was she simply crazy? Because the bones or the remains of her husband were kept under that grave monument, something that was not possible according to the same civil law of that time because in death everyone was equal - or off to the municipal cemetery!

The same considerations of absence and lack of understanding cannot be said, in our opinion, of the female artists associated with Claus, Anna De Weert and Ivonne Serruys, who are also absent from this exhibition. Although showing four artists - 1 man and 3 women - is probably not feasible for practical reasons. Besides, there must have been other female students of Emile Claus who later or independently formed an art career. And in that special perspective, a subsequent retrospective exhibition on Emile Claus can certainly be made. Just pick another symbolic year for that! We do not need to provide mathematical proof that the bond between Jenny Montigny and Emile Claus was of infinitely more intense value, not only because of the very long time they had known each other. In a remarkable but rationally and humanly regrettable way, this retrospective exhibition on Emile Claus - on the occasion of the centenary (sic) of his death - shows the absence of one of the most important figures from his life. The exhibition about Emile Claus could have been a double exhibition, about him (of course) and about Jenny Montigny (or intercourse). That would have been a lot more work, including taking out more insurance policies. Unless? Unless Jenny Montigny's work was so much in 'his' shadow - as was not even simply verbally motivated here. And it was/is so much less valuable materially or artistically. And much less insurable. Or hardly an additional cost compared to now.

As a necessary conclusion to this part of the discussion of this portrait, we indicate that our text was written for the opening - on September 27, 2024 - of the mentioned exhibition about Emile Claus. This also means that we were unable to view the accompanying new book "*Emile Claus. Prins van het luminisme*." (dr. Johan De Smet, Veurne, 2024), also some time in advance because we sleep abroad a lot due to personal circumstances. We are curious about those writings and/but given our bad character we are already hoping for a successor around ... - yes.

4. Her shyness. Or the opposite of all mmonummentality.

This portrait is a wonder and undoubtedly deserves a place of honour at that retrospective, with an old-fashioned ... halo around it: .. **LINK Ondrej Richter** ... I beg your pardon, a halo around a painting? It deserves a human place of honour. Because (always trying to motivate, like every little child constantly asks: "*Mama/dad, why are* ..."; have you remained that little child?). That we can discuss the content of this fragile, beautiful, albeit not totally world-shattering portrait, is indeed not a miracle from an art-historical point of view, but from a human point of view. After all, it was not destroyed by a jealous wife who later became a widow, and she had every human reason to do so. Artists sometimes destroy their own work because they no longer ... - which they usually deeply regret later for all kinds of reasons, not only because of the lost money. But descendants, a wife, a mistress, friends, gallery owners (hihihi) ... ? This liberal milieu could not have been further removed in terms of philosophy or human and world view from the barbarism of the Nazis, who barely ten years later - in 1937 - held a resounding exhibition of the so-called "*Entartete Kunst*", where every stupid German (and there were many) was invited to come and laugh and scoff. The Nazis would soon afterwards sell a large part of this reviled art for a pretty penny. And would shortly afterwards burn the 'remaining' pieces, just as they would in the meantime murder their own German mentally ill, just as the well-known "*and so on*" a little later. Incidentally or not, it is unimaginable that just a few kilometres from the personal grave monument of Emile Claus by Georges Minne, the painter Albert Servaes (1883 - 1966) lived in his famous Servaestoren in Sint-Martens-Latem, a municipality where Georges Minne also lived. Albert Servaes was a so-called very well-known Catholic religious artist and became a fervent or 'religious' Nazi collaborator during WWII together with part of his family. Who in 2066, as now with Emile Claus - a country escapee in 1914 or in a way not too brave because he could at least have committed alternative resistance, or helped the countless directly impoverished sad people of Astene and surroundings, or ... but the man was already really old and had two wives to support ... Who is going to organize a retrospective exhibition of Albert Servaes? We wish you much courage in advance! Although we have had to conclude in detail through our own rather in-depth research into politics during a crisis such as WWII that liberals happily participated in the infamous black market and also collaborated economically, always for the little money, and that this conclusion is apparently taboo for normal historians, we must say something politically relevant. The liberals almost certainly belonged to the only Belgian philosophical pillar that never collaborated politically with the German occupier in WWII. In that political or more explicitly existential sense, the trio Emile Claus - Charlotte Dufaux - Jenny Montigny shared a lot intensely, built up a lot during their long form of coexistence and perhaps still a little after Emile's death. However, be careful: we do not know the precise provenance of this portrait. And we must not venture into any moralizing here. The relationships between the three intensely involved people are or were simply none of our business, which does not contradict the previous final consideration at all. In any case, we can be happy that it yielded some interesting paintings by Emile Claus: of his wife (at least three)

and of this mistress Jenny (at least one). And? Or was there? Were there other portraits or of other mistresses?

We will not go into what one might call the psychology of a portrait or of almost any painting. Besides the wall on which it hangs, there is always 'something' to be found behind it, unless one starts thinking of floating paintings? No to psychology, then? Not because we don't feel like it today. But because we can't, even though everyone does: if one were to psychologize about any musical work as much as about works of the visual arts, then ... - hahaha! Even the otherwise internationally highly valued because - hahaha (again?) - expensive clumsiness of a Karel Appel has fallen from a tree, in this case from the Charles Apple Tree. Incidentally, a particularly large or dramatic to almost insurmountable problem of knowledge applies here, at least for us. We assume that most people who are interested in the visual arts, when they stop to think about things for a moment after the first, purely visual or viewing experience ("*beautiful*", "*interesting*", "*junk*", and the terrible "*I can do that too!*", by the way a fairly popular reproach that we have never experienced with music), experience something special and very human: doubt! Once they go a little further than the first experience or start to consider something certain, this initial movement of thought almost always goes hand in hand with a feeling of inadequacy with respect to a targeted, viewed work. In our opinion, that is an experience that is in stark contrast to music that one can listen to 'more', that one can also dance to and enjoy: is dancing even possible without it!? We have seen the latter dancing a great deal, but we have never seen dancing through a sculpture, a painting, a drawing. Perhaps through a performance by Marina Abramović (1946)? Let's give her a call! Many musical works move people with pleasure and joy (they also last a certain time, have a beginning, middle and end, sometimes even a real climax) without any additional explanation or knowledge of, even if they were only general notions about the musicological importance of this musical work in question. There is so much to know in pure knowledge and to interpret in meanings surrounding any successful visual work of art. But what is successful, because elsewhere we will have to admit that we do not understand a thing about the internationally adored painter Luc Tuymans (1958) and find his work genuinely horrifying when viewed purely contemplatively? As if one is even allowed to start stammering (the French "*balbutier*" expresses this onomatopoeically, as it were) even when one has studied all kinds of relevant sciences. And there are so many that are effectively applicable around the visual arts. Not least of which is the study of art history, a branch of scientific endeavour that we rate fairly highly because of its very strong interpretative capacity; see among others the work of the great Belgian art expert Bart Verschaffel (1956), erudite, stimulating and (or 'only') understandable, although we have only read a selection of the man; it can still be very disappointing. Of course we quietly admit to having read quite a few art historical studies, of which we do not understand a thing. For example, we once had to help a young art history student at the request of her friendly parents; how we ourselves toiled and honestly learned absolutely nothing from it! She had passed anyway ... Without going into detail in terms of study, we have from a very young age and then throughout our lives, albeit with more or less time, done our best reasonably broadly and deeply to occasionally understand something about the essence of man. While we always had more that feeling of "*not knowing knowing*" (although we are not sure whether we have summarized the thinking of Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908 - 1961) with that). But especially in the field of psychology and psychiatry we have always remained reserved. Much of what we read there was/is completely beyond our comprehension, although the most incomprehensible was/is certainly Jacques Lacan (1901 - 1981), a psychiatrist greatly admired by many and regarded by us as a producer of rattle of words. Give us social psychology, while that is a relative of general psychology that we probably can't do much with here around Jenny and her Emile and his Charlotte? We can say

that we simply (...) like to look at this portrait - and would even like to have it, as if Emile Claus could have grown a bit older and produced more - also for us who were born ultimately four decades after his death. Hasn't every good painter produced too little? Although we therefore make a fundamental exception elsewhere for the work of the purely objectively very successful but almost perfect deprimate Luc Tuymans - the perfect patient of/for Jacques ...?

The portrait of Jenny Montigny can safely be called a classic. It is as if it is not situated in time and space but has come to us as successful, convincing, human or 'correct' in content and form. It is clearly but subtly worked out from a bird's-eye view, without any male dominance. Do not forget: the painter was a man, and the same painter was her lover. She is depicted just as she is painted because just as she must have sat opposite the upright or at least slightly higher seated painter - who was there at the time; please give the correct perspective! This portrait is made according to the seemingly eternal standards. The face dominates everything in soft tones. Although Claus leaves out the lower legs and therefore feet, he has only made two types of portraits - of women. That is either frontal or where the person, himself or another person, looks straight at the painter. Or, so to speak, non-frontal or unfrontal and therefore the head turned away. In contemporary artists such as Michaël Borremans (1963) or Rinus Van de Velde (1983) we encounter representations of people - portraits or portrait-like images - with the perspective on the back or even headless. Such perspectives are not imaginable in the ultimate classical painting of Emile Claus.

We only know this portrait of Jenny. The exhibition in the autumn of 2024 is very interesting, among other things, because of a series of portraits by Emile Claus that are presented there. Among them is the beautiful and remarkable portrait of the already mentioned Anna De Weert. See

Oeuvrecatalogus | Emile Claus (emile-claus.be)

Anna De Weert also looks at us as a spectator, also like Jenny shows a sketchbook with which something essential of her identity - her artistry - is revealed. At the same time, she stands in the middle of a certain action on the usually calm water of the central river Leie, then a unique stream in this region and once at its confluence with the larger river Scheldt the origin of the city of Ghent, very important in many ways in Europe. It is striking that la Anna is literally counterbalanced by the reflection of the sail of a partly visible sailboat. This is itself formally counterbalanced by the shadow of trees, which makes Anna seem slightly hugged. That mirrored sail is purely technically too big so that it must mean 'something' but we are not going to find out what, because we are focused on Jenny Montigny. Jenny is not sitting on a boat but on a normal, bourgeois chair, certainly not a plastic garden chair or horror of horrors (which barbarians invented all that ***?). She is sitting in the middle of a garden that - dare we say - is typically Clausian in design. In addition, the colour of her neck (light yellow) flows noticeably into the adjacent garden colour (a stronger yellow).

You may find the following two remarks concerning this "*woman's portrait*" interesting, with which we indicate only one of the two possible definitions of a woman's portrait. So it is a portrait about but not made by a woman. Now okay, who talks about a man's portrait anyway?

a) Because of that slight bird's-eye view it almost - almost - seems as if Jenny is sitting on the toilet, slightly bent forward because she is necessarily pushing along somewhat peristaltically; you know that feeling too. Of course that is not the case but painter Claus could have finished this formally a little better by having her - we are not painters so we will just imagine

'something' - lean back very slightly. What needs no interpretation is the presence of the sketchbook on her book. A pen, let alone a brush, is not visible there, as in the portrait of Anna De Weert. In any case, Anna's posture is much more active or freer. Her sketchbook is literally raised on one leg. While Jenny holds it almost convulsively - with her arms lightly on it but mainly around each other or in front of her body. That posture of arms and hands is one of the most remarkable elements of this painting. You do not need a small degree in psychology to know that closed arms/hands signify a certain feeling of fear towards the other, in this case her well-known painter and also lover. Normally someone who feels completely at ease, open or at least not waiting, is certainly not ready to defend herself at the first alarm. There is no sign of alarm here, while that is actually not possible since she is clearly posing as the subject of a painting. Was their relationship perhaps all that time - or only this year 1902 - purely platonic, that is to say, not consummated or not of flesh and blood but only of connected souls? In the photo of Emile Claus and Jenny Montigny from 1920 or 18 years later, they are clearly much closer to each other. First of all - it almost escaped us even after looking at it repeatedly - they are sitting together on a double seat. In itself, this does not seem to us to be an erotic image at all in this bourgeois environment and for an ordinary house photo. It does indicate a maximum form of intimacy between man and woman, apart from an embrace of course or, in the event, a coikiss or even coitus. Her left hand seems to want to start caressing his left hand. Her left leg enters his free or open legroom: this could not have escaped the notice of any human being or this photographer - for whom there was no more room on this seat.

On the other hand, back to those arms in that painted portrait. It is a portrait, so something reasonably lifelike and preferably as little kicking as possible, or no kicking at all because sitting in the German way or completely motionless. There are many stories of people - women, men or children - who almost or completely faint from standing or sitting for very long periods of time (also a tiring activity if there is nothing to do but be stared at by an artist) as a model target for a painter. How long an experienced painter like Emile Claus, who, mind you, started with a very classical, almost gloomy, in any case completely colourless painting of his own mother in 1872 - Jenny had still not been born for three years! -, worked on an average portrait at the cruising speed of his oeuvre; we do not know. We were not even there, damn it, because we were not born and even our own mother would see life after his date of death so that we would ... If we do not know, we may start hypothesizing or within the internal logic of the domain involved: visual arts. Perhaps the portrait of Jenny was even made solely on the basis of sketches? Which by definition were made in advance, even indoors. That would then be an image of an image, or something like that (experienced art historians can formulate that better). In any case, arms and perhaps even more hands are not easy to paint. Even the smallest child knows that and so Karel Appel can posthumously assure you of that. And just hold them still as a model if the painter has finally decided how he wants to paint them, how he wants to paint them more or less 1 on 1. Or does he not want to depict them 1 on 1 at all but somewhere symbolically, with a "*layering*" or a "*layer of meaning*". You know what visual artists have in common with speleologists, and what makes them different from each other? Speleologists also descend as deep as possible. But then they always come back. And do you also know what the similarity and the difference is with mountain climbers, somewhat mirrored the same as speleologists? Then let us know, for which thanks. And of course that is such a deeper artistic layer that in turn invites the ladies and gentlemen depth psychologists to explain one thing or another. And that in turn is - follow the arrows or the guide with his megaphone please - one of the reasons why a normal sober person should actually buy art books en masse. But! With the very well-rendered reproductions and therefore not - especially not!? - with the texts that explain the supposedly

present deep layers. In any case, our dear Emile Claus was an aristocrat; knight, baron, viscount, count, marquis, duke, prince, king or emperor and the same for women and Flemish people et la même chose pour les femmes et les Flamands and madame Dufaux and maîtresse Montigny. After all, he was an aristocrat of light but not an expressionist, surrealist or what-the-heck-ist? That person was moved by all sorts of things, with absolute existential certainty by the light and by women. And with this juxtaposition we do not conceal or rather reveal any intentions. That light. That incomprehensible yet all-pervading, nourishing light. We have not seen anywhere whether Le Emile made it to at least baron and therefore actually had to invent a motto. The divine owlet and for a long time very recalcitrant painter of a James Ensor would be so incredibly stupid and hilariously opportunistic to accept that title in 1929. Oh, also the modern political joke of the Flemish Community - "*What we do ourselves (NB then that detested Belgian state), we do even worse.*" - has now instituted all kinds of official tributes. And honors painter and French-speaking albeit Ostend dialect-proficient James Ensor in this same 2024 really incessantly or above all self-evidently a great marketing gimmick: the Flemish ports and Flemish painters - of course silently concealing their special bilingualism - or see the resemblance! For that, sneaky James had waited just long enough so that he could undisturbed by the now sufficiently deceased Emile de facto take up his motto: "*Pro luce nobilis sum*." or "*Ennobled by the light*." Whatever. But he was not the only one: do you know a painter for whom that motto does not apply? Call us - but know we are never on line.

b) Jenny is indeed not headless or depicted from behind. We should take a year or so to go through the rich history of Western art when an artist dared to depict a human being - without their eyes. And then of course compare it with (Indian) American, Asian and African art. However, pay attention to this excellent, albeit very classical painter Emile Claus. We do not know whether he made any more portraits of his Jenny. After all, she must have been his favourite model, his muse! We assume that of the hundred drawings that Claus' widow donated to the milk mouth city of Deinze around WWII (why not to Ghent!!!??? she probably got more benefits from city taxes in Deinze because there was no more new work coming in so she had to search for and lick up all the crumbs), there were at least a few that had her competitor Jenny as their subject. And where are the other drawings because 100 is also quite few - besides the very striking even number and which one!? The latter is just an innocent joke of course because we do not believe in conspiracy theories, unless we experience them ourselves (and we have experienced them, among other things with our historical research on WWII but that is okay because it will end as the truth, albeit of course a start for further critical research). Moreover, it is more than obvious - it is certain - that Emile Claus gave all kinds of sweet words together with drawings to his beloved Jenny, especially "*in the beginning*" when things were a bit more crackling. And that was, as you know, a start that was so solid that it lasted almost thirty years. And where is the art archive of her work? It is practically understandable that no serious place was made for Jenny Montigny in the retrospective exhibition on Emile Claus during the autumn of 2024. We regret that for several reasons but in the meantime we are on our guard against 'more' censorship on her level and with regard to her mentor and mistress, of whom she must have been the muse or source of inspiration at many moments with apodictic certainty. Throughout our own gradually 50-year more or less conscious life experience we have experienced several to very thorough times how pure historical deception works. And that between about 1975 and now, 2024. And that, ladies and gentlemen, in the country of the Belgians or a modern democratic country. And that by liberals, catholics, socialists, Flemish nationalists, and probably greens; or the whole bunch of political colours of the last fifty years in Flanders/Belgium. Democracy is a powerful at the same time very fragile tree. We use that metaphor because we love trees as much as we love visual arts. And we are also democratically happy about trees because we have never

seen a single straight one between them! So what happened, by natural (logic?) the eternal wife but also eternally in his life's shadow Charlotte Dufaux, with her name as "*omen est nomen*" (we apologize a little to her but we had to score this goal kick), to images with (directly) or even by (indirectly) Jenny Montigny? Did she 'objectively' hand over everything, to a city, then to family and so on? Money was earned gladly or necessarily by widows of in this case very famous painters and that was understandable. Pensions were not much in Belgium before 1945. And that certainly did not apply to the self-employed, a profession to which painters may be included although one could just as well call them workers of the palette (and so on). Visual artists are not that much more important or not at all, compared to other craftsmen such as masons, roofers and so on. Or would Charlotte have exchanged work and especially the cheaper ones such as sketches of her Emile with the local wheelwright, farrier, garage owner, baker, butcher? With her own, new lover alias sponsor as "*do ut des*"? According to reports, Jenny Montigny would increasingly go downhill financially after the death of lover Emile, or go up in poverty. And would only have been helped by her family. Charlotte Dufaux, henceforth widow Emile Claus, was not family in civil law! Apparently not existentially or morally either. What is there to understand inexorably, the logic behind that Jenny Montigny herself was reportedly less in the art market, or was seen as old-fashioned? After all, had she been able to (survive) from the sale of her work before the death of Emile Claus? You understand that this question is suggestive.

In any case, she is depicted here very beautifully and somewhat still, as if realistically, as in a photo that was then strongly coloured. That procedure existed at the time, the colouring of photos, also an art technique that we have never encountered again, since WWII. You notice her very blue eyes, on the lips firmly red. Only that strange colour of the neck, we cannot explain. And the colour of the eyes and mouth is hardly noticeable in the two portraits that Emile made of his wife Charlotte, respectively in 1881 and 1900: see

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That first dating is absolutely important because it is certain that Emile Claus did not yet know his later great love Jenny Montigny. That was quite difficult or at least as it were male uninteresting because Jenny was born in 1875 or in this woman's portrait only six years old. It is completely illogical to infer anything from these two portraits of Charlotte - always with a side profile - of this looking away as exemplary for the relationship of model Charlotte with her painter and husband. She looks away from the painter twice or her gaze deviates from the one looking at her, the painter, while we know several portraits of him such as self-portraits in which he has his subjects look at her frontally. And then? One cannot even say that painter and model were consistent or in other words that they only wanted to depict her or be depicted by him in this way. Two dates are rather little for an (enumerative) induction, n'est-pas? To form a proposition, there is nothing else to do than further research. It goes without saying that we should look up other possible portraits of her by him. And above all; how is she revealed by Claus through his drawings? Drawings usually have something spontaneous, at least in comparison with painting as done by traditional artists. Perhaps, from the same suspicion - almost distrust - an investigation of the underdrawings in all the female portraits of Emile Claus is revealing? Go ahead! Another possibility is to investigate whether wife Claus - Dufaux was depicted by other Belgian, even foreign painters, graphic artists or draughtsmen through what one can consider a portrait, individually or in group portraits. Then one automatically and first thinks of contemporary and Ghent native but mainly French resident Théo Van Rysselberghe (1862 - 1926), an exceptionally gifted painter and very popular as a portraitist. As a portraitist he worked both frontally and sideways with the same model, as in

the well-known portrait of the left-looking "*Maria Sèthe*" (1891, Museum of Fine Arts, Brussels), the later wife of all-rounder Henry Van de Velde (1863 - 1957). That portrait was probably known to Emile Claus and may certainly have had an influence when he depicted his own wife ten years later in 1900. The question of the portrait representation of Emile Claus's own living environment - first and foremost of his wife - is certainly an important question because we now know sufficiently that at least three female artists took lessons at Villa Zonneschijn or with the - eternally childless - couple Claus - Dufaux. In alphabetical order: Anna De Weert, Jenny Montigny and Yvonne Serruys - and tell us which other ladies! We know exactly that the middle one spent three decades around this couple. And we know that this was to be taken literally because she would never disappear from Emile Claus's geographical side during his life, not even during WWI when the three of them fled to England. We know the enormous grave monument of Victorine Serruys that she made by definition after the death of Emile Claus. She would spend most of her active artistic life in Paris. Of course, as a sensitive person, she had the image of Emile et les autres in her beautiful head so that she did not have to or could not make portraits of them live, already or even gladly as sketches. And we know almost nothing about Anna De Weert and therefore almost nothing in relation to the couple Claus - Dufaux next to the trio Claus - Dufaux - Montigny.

Between the first portrait of Charlotte by Emile in 1881 and that second one from as many years later as 1900, there is effectively a third known portrait of her by him. And which one! It is the wedding portrait of her from 1886 or the year in which they married. She stands there alone; is there not a double or real wedding portrait made for and by a painter who, after all, also made a few self-portraits? Come on, Emile or Emiel: paint and canvas not enough on the best day of your life too!? She stands there in almost full regalia because with her exuberant and official wedding dress. Who can explain the striking position of her hands, in which her right hand seems to do 'something' on her left arm? In any case, there is something much more striking. She stands there on the most important day of her life, after her birth - an objectively certain event that she was at the same time subjectively not there at all. But! She stands there partly absent but with an inquisitive look. She is not standing there at all as one would expect, with a beautiful, big smile, with shining eyes, let alone with what expressions of exuberance! What is going on here?

5. The prince of luminism and his successor, the executioner of nihilism.

About that second portrait of Charlotte by Emile almost twenty years later, we hardly want to say anything substantive, that is to say in relation to the now with absolute certainty firmly intimately present Jenny Montigny. We do see two things that could be relevant. It seems to us that Charlotte's gaze is staring, that this woman does not look happy. On the left we see one painting on the house wall; it possibly represents two swans, traditionally a symbol for marital fidelity. That was irony of the thinking and symbolic human because a sign with a swan on it that was attached to a house also traditionally meant that one could buy a woman there for sufficient money. We also know throughout history how power and success are eroticized, on both sides or from or through the successful artist. And certainly also in relation to that successful artist. And this house was a house of financial trust or an environment of liberals or independents and industrialists. Such a lady of these times, we are always talking before WWII, was extremely rare independent, consequently received her status, money and a form of happiness through the hands and genitals of 'her' husband. In this way, the first portrait in profile of Charlotte by Emile cannot be interpreted as the second; with a certain looking away due to a form of shame. Shame then not because of the financial and existential dependency,

because in that second portrait one sees the plate of soup. Or did the housemaid take care of that food - and she alone? And always? But shame because Emile was busy with "*a young woman*"; can a woman, even from a liberal or most liberated environment of that time and even from such a socially successful husband as Emile Claus hardly do anything else than partly look away - from himself and therefore from you now, as every viewer - who first looks, then reads, then thinks - or only looks? And that second portrait of Charlotte from 1900 barely preceded the first or only portrait of Jenny from 1902 by two years; the same painter, the same passionate man - with two connected women, one of whom was civilly and of course existentially connected, and one who was free, solely and only (please!) by the love for this man and the love for art by and around the same man.

In the meantime or almost finally we must apologize to you for the partial deception. From a viewing distance, a duo of swans can certainly be seen in that last portrait from 1900. However, they were definitely two ... ducks. At least that is the case when one consults the public catalogue concerning this exhibition where the painting can be found under the title "*Two ducklings*". That work would date from 1900 or in other words from the same year as that second portrait of Madame Claus - Dufaux. It would have been painted shortly before that portrait - and hung up and in the most beautiful room. Two ducklings you say? There must have been thousands of them at the time, hundreds of which were shot for the local lovers of the famous Peking-Ghent duck; enjoy your meal. We may be very personal for a moment and admit that we love a white duck very much. The animal seems so cute, so beautiful, and is rather rare to find and therefore special by definition. But two white ducks? And all alone with each other or with no other more or less brown or differently coloured ducks in the vicinity? We have never seen that in a country or place in our entire lives. Have you? We repeat, now as a more strengthened hypothesis; that painting actually represents two swans and so ... blah blah blah ... And change the title of that work, please. Quod erat demonstrandum, sed adhuc incertum.

We find Jenny Montigny shy throughout her portrait from 1902 and perhaps a little less shy in her photo with her lover Emile from 1920. By the way, in that beautiful almost official photo from 1920 she does not look at us. But she looks through him, who does look at us! Shyness is perhaps less appropriate here. Servility then? There are quite a few artists who sell depth, or their work would have depth, say 'layers'. In quite a few cases we gladly agree with that, even if we do not so much see it but may read it through more scholars of art history. In cases - we must refer to poor Luc Tuymans again - we simply see nothing (other than painted misery or pure waste of paint and canvas and preferably as little as possible of our precious life time) then the inflated words of the great art connoisseurs - and of course and of the horrors of modern horrors, the great collectors who - just figure it out - are almost always "*geweldige*" or great business people. Whereby in Dutch the adjective in question "*geweldig*" refers to "*geweld*" or ..."*violence*". Or it means both fantastic and either destructive. You will probably not read or hear anything about this in this anyway very important and prestigious overview exhibition: glory to Ukraine and to the organizers of this important exhibition! That is certainly at least ironic, if not a form of historical deception, because that region of the Leie above Ghent on the one hand once produced, through its unique, rural beauty, a remarkable number of good to excellent visual artists. We see artists here such as Emile Claus and at least some female artists such as Jenny Montigny. The unsurpassed artist next to local resident Georges Minne already showed up here. We are also thinking of many important others, including the internationally probably most important, albeit most undervalued, Fritz Van den Berghe (1883 - 1939). In our opinion, he is the greatest Belgian painter of the entire twentieth century and - for example - ten, no a hundred times more interesting than, say, the fairly well-

known René Magritte (1898 - 1967): at the recent surrealist exhibition in Brussels 2024, one could see that only Paul Delvaux (1897 - 1994) could paint fully-fledged and the others were above all producers of ideas on material surfaces. Except, of course, for "*la période vache*" by Magritte, very coincidentally of which he did not sell a single work during the relevant exhibition: we would have liked to buy them all then and certainly with a nice discount, but born in 1963 or therefore a little too late: You see how the most personal metaphysics plays a role in the general history of art. And on the one hand follows on the other; the Leie region, with the largest concentration in the village of Sint-Martens-Latem, is chock full of snobs and the concrete destroyers with their mostly ridiculously ugly villas with the very personal gardens and of course a place for golf, about the most ridiculous 'sport' in history. We do not reason here at all out of any jealousy and people think of us either with the upper part - the brains - or with the bottom - the lowest instincts as jealousy. What is there, they can have it, although we did-do want the land: to let trees grow there naturally of course (you can start talking about a real forest after about five hundred years of untouched, that is to say without human messing around in it). But it should not have been there only very barely, or otherwise from an urban planning perspective: it is an attack or destruction of whatever was there and could have been. That the three interesting museums in the village of Sint-Martens-Latem will one day have to merge with the Mudel, where the overview exhibition about Emile Claus will take place in the autumn of 2024, is evident. It is written in the financial stars, especially if most of the local snobs who support it lose that attention: to the government then! That terrible attack on the beauty or actual rape of the Flemish country above the centuries-old urbanized Ghent can never be made up for. Even more. Almost all of Flanders has been turned into a patchwork of domestic stones. If only it had been at least/at most a Paul Klee every time, with that endless, unmanageable patchwork of house-garden-garage. What remains is now being saved or save what can be saved - and then let the trumpets sound and go with hordes of tourists or non-green enthusiasts to find where it presents itself as monumental or to be preserved! In that sense, this exhibition is not only a mirror of the conspicuous absence and importance of one or possibly two important women in the oeuvre of an important Belgian/Flemish artist. It is the very concrete and almost blinding mirror of the post-war destruction of the Flemish landscape, of the parcelization that was carried out by all the parties of the time - socialists, liberals, catholics and what about the few Flemish nationalists at the time?

We know and ask your forgiveness for a lack of originality but "*luminism*" really rhymes compulsively for us too - one, two and ... jump: "*nihilism*"! One can always philosophize (sigh) about the question whether Flanders/Belgium is the ugliest country in the world, architecturally speaking. The diversity, say anarchy throughout the country and even often within one and the same street effectively produces pleasant read entertaining pictures as well as purely architectural gems. All well and good - or bad. But. However, this is about urban development - or rather or not rather, the historically fundamental lack of it, which can be historically interpreted from around 1945. Incidentally, we ourselves see a clear connection with the extreme lack of civic spirit in Belgium from 1939 - 1946 or during WWII. During our political-historical research we established an unimaginably broad, intense and almost completely disruptive black market - about which we want to complete our reasonably intense study this or next year. People just did their own thing or for pure self-interest. People loved 'their' painters and so on. But also or especially in the first place they loved themselves next to at best their own family, possibly their own pillar - and Mother Church to renounce disaster and obtain salvation. There is nevertheless a huge difference with our northern neighbours who also had an intense black market, although it had not yet been sufficiently historically researched. But the Dutch have developed an exemplary urban development. With for

example or especially very concrete very beautiful or literally exemplary place for and cyclists (vulnerable road users) and the open space (also very weak).

In various media or ways Emile Claus is called the "*Prince of Luminism*". Add to that almost everyone from the so-called schools of Sint-Martens-Latem, except for an intimist like Gust De Smet (1877 - 1943)? Purely artistically and of course also on a human level we can particularly appreciate that intimism. At the same time we have an almost fear or a certain aversion to it. Once we have left aside that every person has the supreme right to be what his depth demands for him, we find the closure of humanity a very regrettable matter, except for the very important and meanwhile almost underestimated even forgotten hermitage. Besides, that hermitage individually or in a group like for example the Cistercian fathers with their simple but oh so penetrating and viable "*Ora et labora*", is only possible through silence. Try finding that in the so-called modern world, certainly in a completely overpopulated ergo de-greened country like Flanders/Belgium. We have to use intimism here a little unfairly as a coat rack for the filthy intimists, the people and residents who lock themselves up in their house-garden-garage. As it were, the internet and especially social media, next to the very interesting medium of e-mail, have come here as a support or existential alternative - although we have a fairly big shudder and disinterest in those social media and in that respect we are perhaps too willfully conservative: give us silence, the book, the .... Certainly also give us eye contact, the eyes, the eyes of Bette Davis (1908 - 1989) - or closer by because in this geographically and temporally susceptible world, the eyes of Luce Caponegro. ... **See Luce Caponegro** .....But please, do not all go to this eye-wearer at once, or find your won eye-holder.

By the filthy intimists we mean of course that extreme individualism and the accompanying deep personal or family loneliness besides of course a fundamental lack of moral and political passive and active engagement, as a citizen of the POLIS. Whoever doubts it even a little bit or much more; something like democracy is the very best form of organized society that humanity has ever experienced. It is so at least on the scale of society since we cannot return to so-called ideal small communities like with the tribe of the ??? in ... ia! The extreme individualism of society as that which has been in the same region for a relatively short time that a painter like Emile Claus and so many more others and talented people have sung about, expresses itself in a terrible, in itself unliveable society. Indeed, where we may speak with complete confidence of various painters like Emile Claus as "*Princes or princesses of luminism*" we must speak much more quantitatively but just as qualitatively (sic) of the chronological physical successors as "*Executioners of nihilism*".

In the provincial towns of Deinze and Waregem involved in the overview exhibition, several cycle routes have been set up in honour of this Emile Claus year; see

Op de fiets met Emile | Emile Claus (emile-claus.be)

It is almost laughable for those who know these regions. Fasten your seat belts, put on ten bicycle helmets at the same time and so on. Whoever tries to take the bends of the countless once so rural, winding roads there at even low speed, risks everything. Bicycle paths have improved somewhat in Flanders in the meantime but are non-existent compared to the king car and the queen residential street. We will not list them. The Netherlands - again - has had an infinite lead in this respect for half a century in terms of quality of life. What is gone (as a monument in particular) is gone. But what is in the way (as a house, ...) is in the way, is in the way. Jenny's small garden was absolutely certain then in 1902 and always before that and

only for a few meager decades, a very, very large, extensive garden, their broad and everyone's shared rural living environment. And that was the reason why those artists liked to come there to absorb the light, the space, the air - and sing about it, in verses, sculptures, paintings ... It has been gone since 1945 at a furious pace because it has disappeared, built up - in-di-vi-dual and with the bringers of prosperity, an infinite number of factories and industrial estates. You know the expression: "*The last one turns off the light*.". In a certain way because in a quasi-literal way Emile, together with Charlotte, together with Jenny, ... Anna, ... - all of them luminists - have used the light again and again because it was borrowed for free because it was overwhelmingly present - and after him it was turned off. So came the executioners of the light, followed by the executors of a historically unprecedented nihilism. With the purely materially unprecedented wealth. Wealth next to poverty - in the same, causal line. And of course immigrants are drawn to that self-evident historically unique wealth - or out of sheer necessity. Do they know anything about Emile Claus and his ...?

6. Le jardin secrèt.

We assume that the portrait of Jenny was painted by her goldie oldie Emile in the garden of Villa Zonneschijn - during sunshine. Or was it at her home, in her garden - during sunshine? That is not to be assumed. Strongly likely because only two years later she would leave her parental house-garden in Ghent for her own home in the village of Deurle, near Emile and Charlotte, later part of Sint-Martens-Latem. In that first and most likely case, Emile - or she - had to do something that was practical but emotionally very charged. Because she was sitting down, they needed a chair and this bourgeois type certainly did not stand outside - in the rain next to the many sunshine of the garden of Villa Zonneschijn. In that first case, he and/or she must have taken the chair from his house and from her pardon of Charlotte as well. Flying saucers had to wait a few more decades, but flying chairs have not yet been found to this day (2024). That practical happening must not have been a pretty experience for the lady of the house Charlotte who must have had the very feminine hormonally fueled 'wish' now and then to ... that shrew of a Jenny. Fill in according to the measure of your imagination and hardest feelings. One can also see it differently or more friendly, more sweet, more poetic - although there is very hard poetry by for example Pietro Aretino (1492 - 1556), about the only Italian who ever dared to become a protestant in this by definition solid land of the papists. Although we do not know of any poet who read his or her poems publicly while farting, or even someone else's, then it is recorded because doing that on request must not be easy considering how many green beans and other legumes one eats ad hoc beforehand. But let us not deviate again, although that seems a necessity with infinite art connoisseurs and not to forget the central artists themselves who so like to 'see', to discover layer by layer in their deep, deeper and most profound work as if they themselves have put it in with the most premeditated deliberation. As if they are not busy with art but with vivisections on, mind you, lavender-smeared or at least not yet stinking corpses.

Let us now concentrate not so much on the pure portrait itself but on the background that we make foreground: the garden. Yet we cannot help but discover layer by layer and thus have to suggest that this background garden could also be a metaphor for the foreground of the portrayed lady. Wasn't she somewhere the playground of the painter, the horny, always much older stupid ass of a man who had indeed also been her teacher in a functional sense? And that teacher possibly always remained partly to be able to tinker with her body? Or at least drew a lot of inspiration from her youth and beautiful eyes, as if he were a mosquito that sucked her blood daily - a blood-sucking vampire bat. But let us now concentrate and with joy or positivity on that background. Also because it actually looks more joyful than the

foreground; the garden gives joy through its colours while Jenny does not even conjure up the beginning of a smile on her face. Which she also does not do, and the same goes for Emile, in their joint photo portrait from 1920.

Through the incorrigible, eternally sociable all-round thinker Herman De Croo (1937) who we met as such somewhere on YouTube and who was asked there to what extent power eroticizes and so on, we learned the concept of "*jardin secrèt*" from his answer. Apparently this liberal had not forgotten his deep Jesuit education because he had learned the following concept at this remarkable religious organization. Also remarkable because it was about sexuality and a bit more secrecy around it, in any case the part of almost every person that is very private, such as for example or especially around one's own partner. That is objectively remarkable because with all the interesting characteristics that can be said about the education of the Jesuits, everyone who has passed by there - their novices themselves in the first place - knows that in addition to so-called very critical or independent learning to think, snitching is nevertheless one of the fundamental characteristics of their view of humanity, i.e. pedagogy. That is now the complete opposite of this presentation of the concept "*jardin secrèt*", according to the teachers of the Jesuits of Herman De Croo a secret part for every human being. No one seems to know anything about the decades-long triangular relationship Emile - Charlotte - Jenny. We do not even know but can surmise that after Emile's death in 1924, his very legal wife Charlotte closed the door and therefore also the gate of her garden to his now widowed mistress. It should be noted that the concept widow exists as only the civil translation of the female partner - the wife - of a deceased man. But that therefore (sic) no word exists for approximately the same, existentially anyway, although not according to certain laws, for the - er - kind of widow as mistress of a also deceased man - in this case clearly always the same man and painter Emile Claus. From then on Jenny had no rights whatsoever, to the extent that she would have had them for even one moment according to earthly laws. Moreover, had le Emile left something like a written or actually filed will? He was after all a son-in-law of "*a prominent dynasty of notaries from Waregem and Deinze*"? In that testament with other but equally clearly written words, probably in beautiful French: "*And for my dear Jenny, ... brushes next to ... next to ... frank ....*". We quote completely hypothetically, we say, but for those who want to discover layers in our thinking, which, strongly against our twenty-year historical-political research into human behaviour around WWII, are not based on rock-solid facts, be it only human paper.

But this jardin secrèt or secret garden. In the context of this beautiful portrait of a woman and all that it brings to mind, that can have two meanings. And no, may we elaborate for a moment, it has nothing to do with the place where Emile and Jenny might have exchanged sweet words, supported by the ever softly singing birds and the flowers, whether or not according to the season, both multi-coloured and deeply fragrant, not forgetting the blossoms of the apple trees and acacias! For such somewhere always secret lovers, the matthiola bicornis or the "*night-scented stock*" must have been planted in that garden with preference, because as its English name indicates, it only smells very pleasantly - at night. And yes, this idea - this ideal? - of the secret garden has at the same time something insanely ridiculous for almost all modern creatures on the entire earth and (on the one hand, therefore on the other hand) at the same time something very questioning or useful. To be clear, we are not on social media, not now and hopefully never. We have no time for that because of our advancing age and eternal curiosity, hampered by structurally weaker health: our carpe diem does not allow sociali die. If you are a little older, you will of course know the event "*Lady Di*" (1961 - 1997). You remember her extreme persecution by what already earlier developed against film stars as "*paparazzi*". Now - 2024 - hundreds of millions of men and women are their own

paparazzi because they produce daily a truly endless, incomprehensible by no - other - person manageable stream of informative and image shit pardon messages and photos. You can even "*like*" them - to the extent possible say selectively. They have "*followers*". And we who thought from a young age that only dictators - big and small, national and local - had followers? Given that it actually happens, that answers a fundamental human need. But is it so fundamental or existentially inevitable, say irreversible, that one throws open one's secret garden - and makes it a public garden? We do not think so and of course understand that in certain circumstances some people want to inform other some people, to keep them informed, via the wonderfully interesting medium of the Internet.

Let us discuss the two relevant meanings of this jardin secrèt or secret garden.

a) The idea - ideal? - of a or the secret garden must be applied rather naturally to or rather derived from the situation of the painter and his muse, his mistress. What we certainly see as a garden in which the portrait takes place, during the actual painting or simply afterwards in the studio as an apparently necessary element of this painting of a human being. is significant. Without the slightest doubt, the special relationship between the married and much older Emile Claus and the (consequently) unmarried and much younger Jenny Montigny must have been a talk of the town and the region not so much on an artistic level but generally humanly. Everyone from art lovers to all kinds of professions such as the postman of both municipalities and so on, knew 'what it was about'. Emile Claus was undoubtedly the subject of the press of the time many times, which was only written. There was also and always "*Fama*", or the goddess or perhaps the monster of gossip - at the same time also the goddess of fame. In other words, there must certainly be all kinds of documents from archives that suggest something or simply declare openly about the special bond between le Emile and la Jenny. Did le/la Charlotte carefully keep all the press clippings about her Emile, including these special cases?

We have already said that we have absolutely no business with this remarkable and at the same time probably in art circles and in the environments of the higher, wealthy classes rather common triangular relationship. More precisely, the motivation for such a relationship is nevertheless important throughout the creative process of the artist involved. And in this case - it is absolutely undeniable, apparently by the builders of the retrospective exhibition at the end of 2024 - it concerned two artists; Emile and Jenny! The first was clearly consecrated, already sufficiently early in his life. The second must have had a certain success during her life, although things apparently went much less well for her after the death of her mentor and lover. Those reasons are of no importance here. The question is what art historical importance she and not to forget the other female students around Emile Claus still have. But the most important question here is the intensity of her being a muse for Emile Claus. In today's eyes, that question has something ridiculous to very provocative. It is an obvious question from the perspective of the time of then, certainly from a long analog tradition. It is also an important question from a possible then quietly changing position of the woman as 'only' muse.

However strongly we are interested in the many scientific ways in which people like these artists are motivated by other people, now by an intimate though not official bond with a woman, we have decided after deliberation (with ourselves ...) not to go into that any further. We decided that by virtually meeting an interesting woman from the present. It concerns the Belgian Petra Thijs. One would suspect that she is an art historian or at least a historian, but she turns out to be a master in Romance languages. That is a study that we know is very difficult. Moreover, we have long been convinced of the enormous, truly scientific

fundamental importance of all very thorough language studies at an academic level. Unfortunately, we met quite a few crudely put second-hand professors in sociology and history in particular. In addition, we recently had to establish once again within the sub-field of modern history that so-called publicly known specialists are pure history falsifiers, especially around a theme that is so important for their own society and internationally as WWII - with what we may ad hoc call the Ghent history mafia around WWII. In addition, the publisher Pelckmans speaks of Petra Thijs' book (see directly below) that her work is about feminism (we as macho and generally scientifically minded people are not interested in that). And also about ... falsification of history! In any case, in any academic language studies, a lack of scientific level is completely impossible. Moreover, one always learns to think very, very thoroughly logically through the pure study of language, including or not in the least through the necessary component of morphology.

That being said, we encounter via the internet the interest of lady Petra Thijs in two painters. Let us first say something about her attention for the important 'classical' painter Alfred Stevens (1823 - 1906). On the internet we can find a very interesting and somewhere remarkable, though truly exemplary, lecture about this painter. And quite generous: take your time and a box of cookies with it. The title speaks for itself:

MSK : Lezing: Alfred Stevens, schilder en leraar van vrouwen (Petra Thijs) (youtube.com)

("*Lecture: Alfred Stevens, painter and teacher of women*")

It is almost touching how she mentions several people in her introduction without whom she would not have been able to make this study. We ourselves have experienced something different in our life experience. And we know very well how one of our most important friends - also a Romanist - had to sign as a student to the assistant of the 'supervisory' service how her own results of the final work 'may' be used by this assistant - for her scientific publications. Or pure theft. It was, moreover, or even more, in our opinion a very interesting scientifically intriguing linguistic subject because it was about ... blah blah blah ... And we hope never to meet that assistant which in the meantime has become ??? because it will be then thunder and lightning. Now about Petra Thijs' second or greatest art love, a choice that will certainly be very much applauded by everyone: Edouard Manet (1832 - 1883), We wanted to include that painter from the beginning of our portrait project: ... **see Édouard Manet**... Because we only have one body at a time and have spent a lot of time outside our homeland in recent years, and have relatively little time for others anyway because we have to write thoroughly ourselves, we have to wait before we have the physical opportunity to read the rather voluminous book - so-called novel - that Petra Thijs has dedicated to Manet: "*Schaduwlicht*" (Kalmthout, 2022). She has made a great effort for this because she has done about ten years of research in archives: why call it a novel then? The essence is the relationship between painter Edouard Manet and one woman, Victorine-Louise Meurent (1844 - 1927). This lady was not only his muse but also of several other artists and contemporaries, such as Alfred Stevens. The woman also painted herself, and as was customary at the time with much less social success. You see certain similarities with our subject. And so we keep our reservations about Jenny Montigny being a mistress and muse and artist compared to the - neatly married - painter Emile Claus in our back pocket. And refer to the book with the rather apt title: "*Schaduwlicht*" ("*Shadowlight*"). But still this. Throughout this retrospective exhibition at the end of 2024, Emile Claus is called the baron or count or prince or emperor of luminism: feel free to look up the correct formulation yourself, including in this ... text. So!? Who was Jenny Montigny, very much according to the rules of

classical deduction (major + minor + concluans)? We suspect (now and then we think quietly): "*the baroness or countess or princess or empress of luminism*"? Or as a presumed liberal and officially quite loose, rather this 'kind' of lady: " *And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word.*" (Luke, 1, 38). And the rest was the rest until long afterwards - as in the referred exhibition. So far we have come: Jenny Montigny was the handmaid of the Lord - Emile Claus.

b) Flanders has been responsible for quite a few things for some time now and one thing that can certainly be called a success is the Sigma Plan, a plan that dates back to 1976 or before the thorough regionalisation of this Belgian country. By constructing stronger dikes in particular, possible flooding is being prevented for the main river Scheldt together with its tributaries - of which the Leie is an important one - not least in view of the rising sea level due to global warming. This is first and foremost a good thing politically, in addition to being very well executed technically. The latter can be considered rather easy work because it concerns relatively simple engineering and construction work. In any case, one must honestly admit that this policy is a success, of the utmost social importance. One must also say it when it is so, although no Belgian Dutch or Franch speaking resident will doubt it due to all the historical knowledge about flooding. Moreover, the option, both politically and technically well executed, has also been taken to not only build strong or high dikes but also very low or ... floodable ones! After all, the ecological idea was to give the rivers their natural flood plains. Because we grew up in Dendermonde and know the area quite well, we can conclude that this has been very successful there.

For a tributary like the Dender we have no idea where this has been achieved in the region; probably very upstream. For the tributary Leie this is of no consequence to our knowledge. An old river arm is sometimes tackled but there simply appears to be no room left for something like flood plains. This of course has to do with the joyful fact that the "*Golden River*", which was once given that name because of centuries of intensive use for flax (retting), experienced a spectacular industrial development after WWII. How many West Flemish farmers' children became medium-sized industrialists in one generation, with, reportedly, often a great interest in modern art: hurray! It is very regrettable, however, that this has never led to the formation of actual Belgian multinationals, and that even in the case of 'too much growth' the things are sold off to foreign groups. People want international art but do not think in the same way within the economic area itself; strange and painful. This industrialization naturally brought much wealth to the toiling laborers and employees who, according to an ineradicable habit, parceled out their land, the bigger the better. As a result ...

One additional river issue must also be reported as very positive because the quality of these tributaries has improved enormously together with that of the Scheldt. During our youth, the tributary Dender in Dendermonde was unbearable on especially warm days because of the stench and the 'water' looked completely black; incroyable mais vrai. That a teacher in primary school told that he had swum in the Scheldt as a child and sat there fishing; that was like something out of a fairy tale. We ourselves would certainly have liked to kayak a lot, for example; but that was out of the question until now. That fairy tale has indeed been almost completely restored to normal reality. The community as well as the industry have made their contribution to that and everyone can enjoy that, including by kayaking.

We will of course not discuss the entire Belgian Leie and its surroundings. We will look again at the upper reaches of the Leie, or the region of Emile Claus. We have had to report with infinite regret but with hard scientific observation that of all the landscapes that one finds in

the highly praised work of Emile Claus, very little remains to be discovered - in the region of the upper reaches of the Leie; did he also paint elsewhere? Indeed, we do know that for the average Fleming, ten trees and a blackberry bush already form a forest. Ultimately, the operational definition of open space for the average Flemish person is a space where no very 'typical' farmhouse ("*fermette*") has yet been built, of course with a garden and a garage, meanwhile also with a swimming pool and whirlpool and we don't even keep up with the developments of the last ten years or so because we don't feel like spatially fed impressions annex depressions. At best, one can find a traditional-looking castle in this region, or even a work of a modernist nature such as the private clinic of doctor Adriaan Martens (1885 - 1968), designed by the famous Henry Van de Velde. This doctor and professor - functionally no fool - was also a very consistent man because he was a convinced collaborator or traitor to the people during WWI and again during WWII. The house Villa Zonneschijn of Belgianists Claus - Dufaux, on the other hand, could simply be called classic.

We live in the present, so in the future, and have little or no open space, in this upper course of the Leie - among other things. For the few snobs from this region who are going to read this, some things could have been presented a bit more diplomatically, but it is clear. The content of the text applies to everyone, because the problem of parcelization is prevalent in the whole of Flanders. Or, where is it strikingly different in the very busy and dispersed Flanders? The living situation is precisely due to very predominantly terribly ugly and especially intrusive houses (with .. and .. and ...) in the region just above Ghent, very ironic as the once heavenly setting for Emile Claus and relatively many very good visual artists from the so-called "*Latem Schools*". These art schools are therefore numerically indicated with "*I and II*". Because a third could not come by definition. You understand why: the washed-up snobs can collect art with their masses of white and black money, but they can't paint a crooked skate themselves. They could do something else - and urgent?

Anyone walking through this region, especially on the small former country roads, should watch out for enormous racing cars that make walking there almost life-threatening. Anyone who really wants to cycle, should go to the "*Vlaams Wielercentrum Eddy Merckx*" on the Blaarmeersen in Ghent: excellent facilities and covered, so safe. Such a velodrome fits in with a long Belgian tradition that was partly in danger of being lost. But as an important cycling facility it is very little, although you can cycle well around Ghent and especially next to the rivers and the big city of Ghent is seriously working on space for the bicycle.

We are again or still in the region that Emile Claus and so many colleagues sang about. Anyone who has time to look next to them, always sees the same pattern. There are hardly any open areas but masses of always independent and off-street houses. With something like gardens around them. You will find a lot, a great deal of grass there. Grass, isn't that for cows, deer, ...? That appearance has a name; lawn. Linguistically it is strange to call it or striking and that word and especially the onomastic absence of the other green in gardens conceals a Dutch-speaking, in this case Flemish, worldview. You will indeed find a tree there now and then, half a tree or a shrub like the "*Buddleja*" or butterfly bush. The latter is almost as symbolic for the invasive presence of the houses themselves because very finely scented and attractive to many insects, it spreads via its tens of thousands of seeds per tree almost like the plague. But let's not grumble about what is planted now and then, uninvited or not, and let's get to the heart of the matter. And again via ... Emile Claus?! Once again the website of the retrospective exhibition comes to our aid, probably in a way that the good fathers/mothers (who should be mentioned first?) of that exhibition did not consider: "*Impressed by the paintings that contemporary Charles Verlat brought back from North Africa, Claus also*

decides to undertake an orientalist excursion. At the age of 29 he crosses Spain, Morocco and Algeria. Claus' letters show his great enthusiasm for this new, fascinating world." We would like to read from those letters one day, what impressions those journeys produced for the clearly very enthusiastic Emile Claus, at that time no longer a completely young man. Presumably he went there, like quite a few Western Europeans, simply to empty his seed sack, as they say in Ghent. He went there to look with his eyeballs - as a painter - and with his balls - as a male animal. As a participant in the sex tourism of the time; and don't say this too loudly during your walk through the exhibition!! ... **see Eugène Delacroix .....** We are also curious about the places he visited in Spain; most likely the Andalusian part with, among others, the incomparable cities of Cordoba and Granada.

Indeed, normally we should read somewhere how these journeys influenced the painting of Emile Claus in terms of theme, sensitivity to another, sharper light, and so on. Or for example whether he treated the female model just that little bit more orientally than before in his weak Flemish way. As a relative layman in his oeuvre (not as a specialized art historian) and certainly not on behalf of this website, we cannot attach any work to a possible oriental orientation; strange, isn't it? But that interests us a little less than the question of what he retained in that Middle Eastern atmosphere for the most intimate place of his life: for Villa Zonneschijn and of course its garden. As students we had to be very frugal and above all work a lot, in all kinds of ways and preferably every year for the entire three-month vacation: our magna cum laude is therefore flattered in reverse. Among other things, or not least, we once had our most interesting vacation job for three months; archaeological excavations of the RUG now UG support and that in front of the ... Servaestoren in Sint-Martens-Latem. It was with a fantastic group! We know the local situation very well, a situation that has become much worse because it is now forty years later. That study-work situation did allow us once to go on a dirt-cheap trip to Spain in the last week of September and the first of October. That was a country that interested us mainly or only for "*Al Anadalus*", also because we simply wanted to see a statue of the very interesting philosopher and so much more Averroes or Ibn Rushd (1126 - 1198). We once spent a few days in Granada city looking up, with looking being the appetizer. Then we went up to the "*Generalife*", in Arabic "جَنَّة الْعَرِيف / *Jannat al-'Arīf*" or "*Garden of the architect*". It is the summer palace of the then Moorish rulers of Granada. And what gardens ... Finally we went into to the of the "*Alhambra*", the most beautiful building in Europe or poetry in stone or something. And there too those gardens ... And in both palaces all the little gardens without grass!! It is said that the "*Persian gardens*" have been legendary since time immemorial. In such a religiously fanatic country at the same time a country with unimaginable potential energy and more than 2,500 year culture and besides getting a bit older ourselves, we will probably not get there anymore so that we cannot put it to the test. Pardon, there are books and there is the internet: not bad and also for you examples. In any case, Arab and Persian garden cultures are together with the Japanese unequalled. We cannot go into details and differences. And to be brutally said, we are pour le besoin de la cause only interested in their form or appearance - in their exemplarity - and not in their worldview motivations. Their very old garden cultures are appreciated by very many people in the world and in already unknown cases imitated. But for further 'imitation' or introduction, more knowledge is of course necessary; why not through lessons in aesthetics or ...? Two things strike us throughout these gardens:

1) We want to remain consistent, especially when we have to. In these oriental gardens, the grass that is always necessary in Flanders, that overwhelming grass here, is missing. Oh, or away with lawns! Elsewhere we discuss the awfulness of the mono-thing of the Mark Rothkos of this world, these terrible monographic painting-like things that are painted as a kind of

Flemish lawns, as it were. Almost every grass garden gives you cramps - apparently even bad ... Feng Shui?! Of course it is nice that children can play football and such; they can also do that in every municipal/city playground and on the street if those stupid cars stay inside or preferably away. We will not mention the inadequacy of bouncy castles. Better to jump out of the box;

2) But what gardens, full of intimacy, peace, ... Feel free to think of more qualities but they always come back to these fundamental values. Was our Jenny with our Emile in such a Middle Eastern garden where they sat en passant, very Middle Eastern refined or in a Flemish peasant way licking their lips, spoiling each other? Details are not at your disposal for reasons of privacy, and are not yet known to us. And furthermore; did Charlotte and Emile order an interesting for example oriental sculpture from Georges Minne or someone else, during his lifetime, that symbolically represented ...?

The Flemish Community is responsible for a great deal on its territory. The Belgian country is simply a very special construction. Many Flemish people are openly or semi-anti-migrant. There can be no doubt about that. However, we propose to tackle a serious Flemish/Belgian disease - the parcelization and many of its consequences - as it were to cure it by more immigration. Through the idea and preferably the application of oriental and/or Japanese gardens. As children we saw the first Toyotas and they were only small cars. You can see the difference in the meantime, quantitatively and qualitatively and statistically. The hundreds of thousands of gardens in Flanders that have been disconcerted by parcelization have a great future ahead of them. Away with the stupid grass and long live the intimate garden. Whoever comes home from a stressful day, does not have to mow the lawn. She and he can relax, become normal children as adults, even become real children by, among other things, playing hide and seek in their own gardens, with their many quiet rooms. Rooms whose walls can be ... removed; one big garden!? Oh, what will that bring to discussions in court, and to cases of adultery?

Everything is possible. We are now just past 60 years old, so we have some life experience. We planted our first tree (an oak via an acorn) when we could hardly walk. Once it had apparently grown too big, our robust grandmother pulled out the tree, roots and all, without a single word of explanation: that was how it was done then and for centuries before that. Later ... We planted hundreds of trees of a whole range of species with our own hands and an ordinary bucket and spade in the Central European country of WLV. But first ... As a student in the first year in Ghent - 1981 - 1982 - we lived in a room in the attic in the François Benardstraat. Through the dormer window we saw many tiny gardens; why not demolish those walls and ..? Fortunately there was some parking nearby with the emphasis on opportunity; of course that was/is nothing serious. From the following year onwards we would stay for a long time in a pleasant and then very cheap workers' house on the old industrial Stokerijstraat, no. 57, where there was no garden, three times nothing. That was a corner house of an old and then dilapidated workers' housing estate. And no green to be seen anywhere! We started building some boxes as flower boxes around our house and at some neighbours (one is probably still there, the flower box). We tried out some covering with ivy and climbing roses. The fact that all sorts of neighbours came to take out the gladioli; we accepted it because it indicated a need. A neighbour further down the street or the special Pascal was actually removing paving stones to let willows grow there, which worked out fine. Some time later we started thinking about an article as an architectural blueprint: what is possible in terms of greenery on facades? We wanted to write that together with our great friend architect-urban planner W14W17X. But unfortunately he never had time for that - and

neither did we because we needed an architect to draw up plans. In the meantime, many people and cities even companies are busy with that kind of new greenery. With our unfortunately deceased and worldwide birdwatcher Wim Jourquin we were able to stop a huge development in the city of Ronse in two moves in 1999 - 2,000, well timed with a view to the municipal elections of that year. Eventually the city council took this over and turned it into the so-called "*Stadstuin*" (the "*City Garden*"), not entirely successful because there are far too few trees - but still... In the meantime, there are also such things as green roofs. What else? Are you not yet familiar with the groundbreaking work of the architect Hundertwasser (1928 - 2,000 + his first name does not even have to be mentioned): cute, isn't it! And inspiring! And hopefully those internal constructions will never collapse. In the meantime, we have started two more park projects. One was very small because on the ... driveway of our semi-detached house in Dendermonde. Strangely enough, we have never seen that variation elsewhere: a driveway garden?! It also means that the garage, for which the driveway is by definition meant to be used to park a car, is not used as such. More can be said about that later. The same applies to our much larger park project on almost half a hectare - quite a lot for Belgians but in itself far too little to do anything thorough - in the European country BVD1B where there is simply much more - affordable - space. Where we can experiment freely, not in the least, both in the artistic field - we are guided by no less than the work of Paul Klee! - and in the field of types of trees. We will leave it at that but also note that the relatively many Dutch people living there, with much more financial wealth, do not have such ambitions at all. They only like ... grass or large lawns; ugh. The Dutch real estate agents there earn a lot of money from their services but unfortunately have no interest at all in this garden or general green problem. Nobody among them thinks in the long term or literally - green - growing term. In any case, using more open space for something like interesting gardens or parks is hardly possible in our own Belgium and also not in the Netherlands. It can be done privately so only when moving within Europe and then specific mainly age-related conditions apply; so when you are either winding down (older/or sicker), or as an emigrant (if you are younger). What we are trying is therefore rare and in principle almost impossible as if it were a figment of your imagination because trees simply need a lot of time. What about those trees if we drop dead; easy firewood for the next owner? In this case that is perhaps a possibility for Belgian and Dutch private and even government organizations to ... green space ... there? Let someone investigate that!

It is certain that the Flemish community may not be a sacristan or a communist: property rights are important and must therefore be motivated above all. "*THE NEW GARDEN*" is nevertheless not only necessary for pure beauty and fundamental general peace. It is also not new at all because it has been cherished for more than 2,000 years in ... Persia and then a little later in Andalusia. You know, and was perhaps already there as a tourist. In the meantime, THE NEW GARDEN has also become a very important instrument of general interest of the polis. After all, it is a strategically extremely important instrument against the undeniable global warming that everyone personally experiences. THE NEW garden is also of insufficiently known importance in local water management. Moreover, there is one extra powerful argument for more trees and real intimacy in THE NEW GARDEN: our children! Where and how can they be more moved and passionately touched than by butterflies, bees and those friendly mosquitoes in addition to the almost most important thing: the everyday birds in this kind of new, real gardens! Fresh, fruit-bearing small trees and berries of all kinds: a treat for half the year. Children get less and less natural stimuli and space, not so much to play but to grow up in general. And what about flowers - also or especially wild flowers! Didn't Emile Claus reportedly whisper these last words on his last bed: "*Flowers, flowers, flowers*..." - his eternal flower bed!? Garden is life. Garden is growth, change and interesting

or educational distraction Which pedagogue at which university in the Low Countries writes a vulgarized or well-readable "*pedagogy of the garden*"? Pedagogues, teachers, gardeners and parents: get to write and work please!

And always remain alert and optimistic! Hopefully the snobs from inside and outside Sint-Martens-Latem will continue to play golf as if their lives depend on it! If that sport were to stop, that green would indeed be freed up from grass - short grass... - existing terrain. For real estate agents. For houses. And again for stupid gardens. Or? Still for ...? For a ... second golf course next to it - woohaa!!!

7. Emile, wife and mistress in a comic strip by Willy Vandersteen?

Until well into the 90s, you were not allowed to borrow comics from Belgian libraries if you were a child. The good little ones apparently had to be protected from - from what? Only under the supervision of your parents were you allowed to take your favourite comics with you, as well as those you did not know yet and wanted to try out. In later years, you finally got comics if you took a few 'real' reading books home with you. Finally - we repeat that it was certainly past the mid-90s then! - you simply got those comics. It was limited in number, which in itself made sense. Those were the days, all before the explosion of the internet medium.

We escaped those sad restrictions - thanks to private initiative, as it were. From a few years old we could read (and write), and devoured everything legible - albeit already with a form of qualitative selection. Due to the circumstances of our youth we spent a great deal of time with a grandmother in Dendermonde. In retrospect she was relatively well-off. She certainly had a great many "*images*" such as an old German graphic by Raphael that would make a lasting impression on us and that we were very fortunate to have been able to keep until today, as the only one of her most important pieces: ... **see Raphael .....** On the other hand she was exceptionally frugal. You could call it stingy but that generation of Belgians had already experienced two wars and not least, her husband and his two cousins Bonkoffsky would together experience about seven years in Nazi prisons and camps, and at least survived! A person then becomes cautious for the rest of his life, in many ways. So we had to ask her, if we wanted to read in the evening, to turn an extra lamp to the chandelier - so that we had sufficient reading light. This grandmother from Dendermonde - we never knew other grandparents in life - also had two neighbours. Even then, Belgium was densely populated and everyone had two direct neighbours; there were many more, such as the neighbours on the other side of the gardens, who were a little less direct.

Those neighbours all got along well, fortunately. In this Dendermonde garden district - a relatively common urban development phenomenon in Belgium after WWII and shortly before - all residents were separated by "*ligustrum vulgare*", one of the most popular or used green shrubs at least until many idiot neighbours started using concrete and plastic: 'progress' or, among other things, a waste of good money. We would of course learn that Latin name much later; what was "*vulgare*" or simply vulgar there in retrospect? Nothing of course because it was and is a great garden demarcation that was always kept at a normal height - about one metre - almost certainly on the instructions of the housing association in Dendermonde. This allowed every resident and certainly also children like us, to have a broader view from the local or individual situation. Compare that openness or form of ... democracy with a later advancing very 'modern' fuss in which even ordinary neighbours place higher and impenetrable fences, or an obstacle - in advance because literally communicated in

the act - to communication. And then of course just be happy with that other progress because now finally dare to openly complain - on those very social media - about "*the foreigners*" - haha or especially infinitely sad. Those hedges of that time - they are fortunately still there - have stayed with us so deeply that more than forty years later we would use the same privet in other ways, as mainly independently valued plants - in short mentioned relatively large own park project (where besides every nearby resident can enter because we never wanted to make a fence on the street). Those ordinary but beautiful and anyway evergreen hedges were truly a feast for the eyes and heart during autumn and winter! And please compare again with those mind-numbing concrete and plastic fences!!! - had a very great cultural or human significance for us at that time. These hedges were absolute examples or entrances of progress for us. We could literally just walk through that one neighbour's house because of them: there was a lot less hedge there. Call that a hole - in the hedge. We really don't know anymore whether we made that hole ourselves, although our grandmother wouldn't have done it. She of course (...) spoke to her neighbours over this hedge. Through the door and window of these neighbours facing the garden or by popping in, we always politely asked if we could enter the beautiful stable. Incidentally, that stable - just like these houses of simple but beautiful architecture - was never locked day and night, although we never went to look at it at night. You just knew something like that. And it was precisely that stable that we were after! Because there against the entire back wall was the true paradise! On shelves were hundreds of comics that we were all allowed to read. Which we all brought back very neatly, albeit very symbolically torn to pieces: until the next one!

As was the case in the then predominantly Christian Dendermonde circles, the bulk of these comics came from the stable of the Christian publisher "*Het Volk*" from Ghent, through which we also read a great many informative comics. Between our birth year 1963 and until 1977 or during our entire younger growing up years, the newspaper "*Het Volk*" would publish the youth weekly "*Ohee*". Among other things, you could read the unforgettable comics there about the pleasant detective "*Thomas Pips*", work of the even broader and great comic talent "*Bluth*" (pseudonym of Leo De Budt, 1919 - 2010). In the meantime, the man and this important comic series have apparently been completely forgotten - probably because they were too dated. That is understandable, but that work has had a lasting impression on generations of young Flemish people. And not unimportant: Bluth was partly trained as a comic strip artist by the international art genius Fritz Van den Berghe. Of the latter we have already said supra that he is probably the greatest Belgian artist of the 20th century. Also in passing, comic strip art has long been recognized as "*The Ninth Art*". Although we cannot simply say from our stupid heads what components all those previous eight arts consist of. In any case, or that is to say in our personal case, together with completing every possible puzzle and every findable crossword puzzle, we have really had an inimitable logical and worldly education, as it were before or partly next to school where we also very naturally read all kinds of stories under the school desk if by some chance the teacher could not captivate us at all - haha.

One of the blissful moments we shared with a mass of Dutch-speaking children, is this. Later it turned out that there were many translations of the work of that comic strip author, especially in German. His studio, very coincidentally called "*Studio Vandersteen*", turned out to be a cozy goldmine - and probably still is and we wish big congratulations. Just as undoubtedly his justified ambition was spoon-fed by the system of Walt Disney (1901 - 1966), albeit somewhat more modestly. This great, unique, sometimes somewhat overwhelming comic strip author - he could think of more series than a human could read and in retrospect praises us as infinitely happy that there was nothing like the internet, let alone

social media ... This excellent independent entrepreneur who worked on all series in his studio with up to 30 other employees, we would recognize a few decades later directly by his early style when we came across some of his works in "*Volk en Staat*", the daily newspaper of the collaboration movement VNV in 1942. How it could have taken so many decades - after WWII - that the same comic strip artist who had been spreading idealism over us all for decades, you could safely say absolute top artist Willy Vandersteen (1913 - 1990) was also and still early in his career the author of these great pieces of, among other things, anti-Semitism; strong or incomprehensible stuff ...!!!??? The non-discovery so long ago did not surprise us afterwards because the academic education in history throughout the Low Countries or certainly as far as modern or most modern times or especially WWII is concerned; we could talk about anecdotes or scandals for hours. It is indeed a remarkable disgrace because if one were to consult a doctor with the same 'professional' level as the average historian around WWII, many would literally die. Well (sic), we regularly discuss this in our reasonably groundbreaking political-historical analyses around WWII. And we have certainly already sown the seeds for this, among other things, by constantly eating ... Belgian comics. These were mainly Flemish, but also Walloon. Unfortunately, these neighbours had much less around the certainly even more unique magazine "*Spirou*", although we were at the same time fortunately enough able to read a number of series around the publisher "*Dupuis*", such as ... + ... + ... Flanders was still very pillarised in those days, but still more open, if only in the area of comics. Fortunately again, there was also attention for foreign comics, relatively little, but there was the phenomenal series "*Prince Valiant*" (Hal Forster, 1892 - 1982). Naturally, the Walloon and English-language comics were translated into Dutch.

In those literally or spiritually or intellectually impressive comics there was the uniqueness in every issue, the always captivating and educational "*SUSKE en WISKE*". That is known as "*Bob et Bobette*" in the French-speaking area, in English it is called "*Spike and Suzy*". It has also been published in no less than twenty other world languages! We have been very lucky, chronologically speaking, because we were able to devour, let's say, the first classic hundred issues, before this comic series gradually descended to descended to ... To nothing less than at least less than the greatest poverty and with that in any case partly throwing a blemish on the uniqueness of this series, its classic comics. The publisher and the inventor and the heirs themselves found it necessary to continue the series until eternity, with all the consequences in terms of quality, an incredible disgrace. That is understandable because of the enormous money that can be earned. At the same time, this transmission, first during and then after the death of Willy Vandersteen, can be understood because such a series becomes "*sui generis*", as if it has always existed and must therefore continue to exist. It is a scenario that has followers within the international comic strip world, in addition to very famous 'refusers'. In the latter and in principle case is the even more famous Hergé (alias from Georges Remi, 1907 - 1983). He, the father of the Belgian comic strip and a world star to this day, he the father of the unique comic strip character "*Tintin*" has forbidden further editions of this Tintin by other comic strip artists. Ironic because it is precisely his heirs - his second wife (during his lifetime) with her second husband (during her lifetime) - who are otherwise known around this charismatic comic strip character for their extreme greed - or diametrically opposed to the eternal fragile idealism of the same Tintin. Hergé the half-prescient worked with Willy Vandersteen for several years and gave him the successful nickname "*the Brueghel of the comic strip*", a well-deserved compliment. And that from the mouth of one of the great and internationally highly regarded Belgian artists of the 20th century. That comic strip art in general and universally is considered a great or a separate and highly valued art form is a right thing. The 'ordinary' visual artists who have been influenced by all kinds of comic strips are

countless, so we will not start on that here. But - always that but. Can you imagine that, for example, the heirs of the excellent and locally and internationally highly valued painter Michael Borremans - the man is still very much alive and kicking and we wish him multos annos and much life and pleasure in art! - will allow, say, a student of his (who would that be?) or an admirer or just an opportunist and decent painter to bring works to the market "*in the style*" of him or as a Michaël Borremans epigone!? Even with a signature such as "*By "FR4UY", in the style of Michaël Borremans, with the permission of his heirs.*"? Are you bursting into fits of laughter? The scenario is not ridiculous at all, since during the lifetime of visual artists more or less (to nothing - haha) false works are marketed under their names. Now try to find real or unadulterated graphics by Constant Permeke (1886 - 1952) on the Flemish markets! In addition, we know from direct experience how many types of artists are also - or mainly? - concerned with creating art, pardon, with creating money. In Dutch we can formulate this nicely ambiguously because we can speak of "*scheppen*" as "*to create*", as well as "*scheppen*" as "*to scoop up*". If many artists are not obsessed with money - who honestly believes that sincerity themselves? - it is the pleasant lady of the house or the mistress who are obsessed with money. Or these artists 'have to' constantly go to the whores - especially to the more exclusive segment of it, the so-called luxury escorts. Of all those types and shapes and weights there are apparently masses in the country of the Belgians, the younger the better and especially young wenches from Latin America. And there it is: "*All that stress also from having to create that new art ....*". Or - "*Noblesse oblige*" because something as trivial and vain as paintings, the better wallpaper, goes over the counter for exorbitant prices. This special succession scenario has with absolute certainty never happened during the life or especially after their death, with the artists Emile Claus and much less with Jenny Montigny. Or it concerns all kinds of museums and other idealistic opportunists who publish the better posters of the better paintings, or even types of "*original copies of*" painted by anonymous 'artists'.

Back to Willy Vandersteen and his unique series "*Suske en Wiske*". We must - must - talk about Jenny Montigny and her Emile and his Charlotte with compelling necessity and unavoidable fatalism about one of his, if not better, then philosophically most interesting numbers, "*Het brommende brons*" ("*The humming bronze*" + 1971). In that comic strip, some remarkable similarities can be found. Note that throughout this kind of ongoing series of comic strips, we could read this number from 1971 perfectly and also actually at its publication, because of our birth in 1963. Although we are sure that we were not really aware of that at the time. For us, those shelves in that shed with their hundreds of comic strips were one big reading and viewing paradise! There is a separate Wikipedia page in Dutch for this comic strip, just like for all the numbers in this series. That is of course a happy fact and you can guess who is behind this, although we would like to repeat that from number XYDZ the series has been bogged down, really deeper than quicksand. Or it is nothing else and the real fans will agree negatively about that, nothing other than pure betrayal against what one may call the original quality. And how come you can't find this consideration on these pages?

Het brommende brons - Wikipedia

Lijst van verhalen van Suske en Wiske - Wikipedia

The comic strip "*The humming bronze*" could be filmed as a sugary operetta-like tear-jerker. And effectively (so not efficiently ...) much is recognizable from the lives of Emile and Jenny and Charlotte: there we are! Did Willy Vandersteen know their triangular relationship because the man knew a great deal about life in his homeland, was very well documented to process everything from it afterwards? Or did he have one, or two, ... mistresses himself? Or see it

differently: such a special relationship and certainly among artists or relatives, is timeless. It is interesting that Willy Vandersteen would finally really start to blossom from 1945 or the last year of the war and then until his death. That he had supposedly done some art collaboration during that period that had just passed, was pragmatically seen as something that was fortunately swept under the carpet by the Belgian military court. And that was fortunate for the artist and his heirs and for the countless readers. In any case, he would testify to an enormous optimism throughout each issue of the - classic - editions of "*Suske en Wiske*", with which he also gave the golden decades of the golden fifties and sixties an artistic and pedagogical shape at the same time. Indeed, his comics were always positive or optimistic in attitude without one exception. And with that he went completely against his old good friend and partly mentor Hergé. This comic strip author, regularly depressed and reportedly not at all a fan of children and from a certain point even fed up with his own child Tintin, would end rather heavily cynically, almost crashing with the downright hilarious and self-blasphemous "*Tintin and the Picaros*" (1976). We as good Christian readers of Willy Vandersteen never had any problems with that. Even more so because there is not only the "*but*" regularly but also the "*more*". We still have to say something about that concept "*more*" how Willy Vandersteen confused us as children for years. In his comic strip "*The Texas Rangers*" (1959) gin is occasionally touched upon and Lambic says about it: "*It tastes like more*". Believe it or not, but for years we were wondering whether "*more*" was something like chocolate, or a form of perfume if necessary, or strongly scented peanuts that make you drink more (gin)? While it was obvious - but not to us - that it was a small superlative. We - never great fans of spirits, even alcohol; give us "*Cécémel*", the best chocolate milk in the world - probably couldn't even believe that these comic strip heroes could be interested in something as stupid as spirits - oh well. That endless optimism of the - classic - "*Suske en Wiske*" expressed at the end of each comic strip has certainly given our innate optimism a firm push, especially when we were confronted with a *** stepfather from about the age of 7; what did that *** person come to do in our lives?

That is on the one hand, because on the other hand, we have also been permeated, as it were, by a strong Catholic upbringing, for eternity, by what we may call a structural naivety. Going to Holy Mass twice a week for almost two decades; it leaves deep traces. Although we almost derailed from a certain point in time. In any case, we have always made a deep, convinced commitment to the feasible and - indeed - the democratic openness of the world through our thoughts and actions. While on the other hand, we really cannot empathically penetrate the souls of the countless people who are mainly or only motivated by either money or power, or both. These observations make us truly intellectually bewildered and humanly sad. We can console ourselves with this scientific knowledge: one percent of the population seems to be genetically psychopathic, only and solely interested in satisfying their own needs, using the other as a doormat. Is nationalism the same but on a broader scale? We simply never learned all that or the essentials from all those comics from those bygone but inward-looking times.

The man and artist Willy Vandersteen could then, from 1945 onwards, forget the well-known 'of everything' surrounding the tragedy that had just passed. He had to do that anyway in order to be able to live commercially and with his family. He must have carried some things with him with him for sure, although due to lack of time we will not make an overarching content analysis here and gladly leave that to comic book lovers and finally broad and deep-thinking academic historians - although as we saw with lady Petra Thijs that there are also competent Romanists next to a ... ists ... ists and ... - fine! WWII was a horrible time for all Belgians, although that honestly was nothing compared to countries occupied by the Nazis, such as Poland and large parts of the Soviet Union, not to mention quantitatively and qualitatively

(how to express that?) the fate of all Jews who were on Belgian soil at the start of WWII on May 10, 1940, as Belgians or as foreigners, after almost all European Jews had been persecuted for almost 2,000 years by the holy mother church - three times just initials. However, there is and was one form of political attitude that we may consider to be the saddest and most human of all: denunciation. And that certainly happened many times a day during WWII. And it is certain that this was not done only or not at all by psychopaths, despite a gigantic uncertainty due to far too little scientific knowledge about this nevertheless eternally human phenomenon. It happened through your neighbour's grandfather, for example, who had also loved your grandmother before the war but fell short because he only ... And then saw an opportunity to ... with ... And Endlösung.

People used to know, and to a certain extent still do, almost everything about each other's neighbours and family. Especially in dangerous times like such an occupation, this came in handy if one wanted to 'solve' all sorts of existing feuds, say, to "*Endlösen*" them definitively. And we encounter this, among other things, alongside or out of jealousy in "*The humming bronz*e" (1971), which is at the same time a classic but moving love story: look for the similarities later! It is a comic strip where we encounter very original storylines around - defective - communication alongside, not least, the problem of - looking at each other correctly, incompletely and longingly, through statues or standing images. Here too, Dutch is quite enriching because the Dutch "*standbeelden*" of course means "*statues*" but analytically means "*standing images*", or standing thing or standing images. As the real philosopher and washed-up German Rudolf Boehm once told us: Dutch is a very philosophical language! The comic strip is a work written for young people, but can be read perfectly by adults through so-called sensible glasses.

The main characters of "*The humming bronze*" are first and foremost a shepherdess called Mira. And that is a name like a bell, albeit one with very feminine sounds. It was the name that was known to most Flemish and many Dutch ears as the main character - also - from the book "*De teleurgang van de Waterhoek*" by the famous writer Stijn Streuvels (1871 - 1969). The novel dated from 1927 or one year after the death of Emile Claus. That publication caused quite a stir in the very Catholic yet narrow-minded Flanders because of its boldness or openness. It was also successfully filmed in a Belgian-Dutch co-production, also in ... 1971. It is absolutely certain that the inner crowd knew about this film production already in 1969 or two years before this film was finally shot and released. It cannot be otherwise that, given that this comic strip by Willy Vandersteen also concerned a special love story, he was aware of one thing or another. From the Wikipedia page dedicated to this specific comic strip, we know for certain that this comic strip was published in the newspaper "*De Standaard*" from March 31, 1971 to August 1971. That was quite a coincidence, because the "*release date*" of the film was ... March 4, 1971. That was no coincidence or a little bit of shamelessness on the part of Willy Vandersteen, who apparently came up with the story of this comic strip together with a collaborator. About that collaborator - Paul Geerts (1937) - we do not have much good to say in breadth/depth, other than that he should have kept his individual hands off the comic strip series; sorry, man. But here that guy really did his best, together with the spiritual father: of course we do not know the mutual responsibility or the respective contributions. Equally obviously, we do not know when we read this comic strip as a young child, but given the circumstances that every comic strip lover (including our neighbour - haha) liked to devour comic strips "*saignant*" with freshly ground pepper, we must have devoured this comic strip in the same year 1971. There was no question that we knew anything about the film itself, and only now have we figured out this similarity - from clear facts.

While the film and the book are set in an unspoilt, bucolic suburban Flemish country, in the comic strip everything happens in or around an urban park. That urban park is full of statues. There is the poet who - he is a poet, isn't he - sings about his beloved or Mira with verses. However, they are positioned in such a way that they cannot see each other but through the magic of the comic strip they can hear and speak to each other. We do not find that far-fetched at all because it has happened to us repeatedly that, alone or silent as a mouse, we hear the portraits or sculptures present talking to each other in a museum. Although that apparently only goes from room to room. We therefore propose to all museum directors in the world who have the same sensitivity as a mouse, to place all portraits and sculptures in one room in the future: a lot of work for movers and undoubtedly architects - and all by Willy Vandersteen and Stijn Streuvels! The further similarity between film and comic strip is that the theme is identical because both works deal with something universal or falling in love, in both places presented quite specifically. In any case, it is correct that a shepherdess or a farm girl - as in the book and the film - is used as the heroine. She falls in love, and it is mutual, with the poet Amadeus or "*The Beloved of God*"; wake up every morning with such a first name. There is the classic jealous woman annex sculpture, who calls herself "*Vanity*". That could have been more subtle in the manner of "*Asterix*" for example, but the previous first names make up for a lot. So as always, a lot happens or there are quite a few bad guys involved in this story. Those bad guys are led by "*Feesles*" or "*Faceless*". And that in 1971 or Willy Vandersteen already foresaw Facebook popping up?

Logically, that means that we as children, who only got English lessons after the age of 12 and who almost never encountered the English language on TV or radio or elsewhere, could not understand the meaning of this name at all. It was therefore a stupid invention on the one hand or only from the mind of the creator himself. The target audience - the young people - could never understand this ingenuity (...). What we did understand and we have also remembered to this day the image or picture and even the blue colour of the clothing - pants and vest - of Feesles on the cover of the comic, is that Feesles, in revenge for the unmasking of his gang by the heroes Suske and Wiske and friends, did something dramatic. You can partly notice it directly on the cover of that book, the only thing we can refer you to as visual material unless you simply buy or read the comic yourself. What follows we would have liked to use as visual material here, but for copyright reasons we will of course not do so. Feesles wants to dynamite Amadeus because he considers him responsible for helping our friends who have busted his gang. He is 'after all' (sic) informed about this, guided by "*Vanity*", not just a jealous bitch but a filthy snitch like Willy Vandersteen must have known during WWII. She - Mira or the true, the beautiful and the just - sacrifices herself and Mira is dynamited by Feesles. Mira explodes and is destroyed. You must now remember that the images could hear and speak to each other, whereby he sent her poems, always of his own making of course. So it was love at first hearing - but without mutual sight! And now comes the best part. It is worthy of an Oscar-winning scenario.

Because her statue, her bronze is dynamited, the shards fly around. Not just around because at least or mostly her naturally unscathed and therefore perfectly visible face flies through the air of the park; the comic is bursting with logic! And that face flies at eye level of the poet. So that Mira and Amadeus can see each other. For the first time. And for the last time because her face with the still living because looking and so longing eyes can look at him. Until the bronze lands on the ground - and breaks. It really isn't over yet. Or it has to really start somewhere, with the core of the matter or the apotheosis! It is nothing other than a phenomenally good scenographic find, more than worthy of Stijn Streuvels. In the hundreds of comics that one could read in the '60s + '70s + '80s + ... it is one of the most impressive

moments. Because. What next, you thought? It is about bronze so that ...? His bronze may of course have been hit a little bit by some shrapnel. Willy Vandersteen was after all a full-blooded Antwerp native and therefore with 100% certainty experienced dozens of impacts on and around Antwerp by the **** absolutely far from any Amadeus standing German Vergeltungswaffen V1 and V2 at the end of 1944 and throughout the first months of 1945. And lost acquaintances, neighbours, sports friends, family or friends themselves. But that logical materially damaging consequence against the statue of Amadeus of the now blown up statue pardon beloved Mira standing in the same park was of no importance. You know that; to achieve love, one is willing to endure scratches because "*Never the rose without the grip*". No! And now take a handkerchief. The bronze of Amadeus turned dull. From sadness of course or what else did you expect from a bronze statue in love? He or what was left of pure bronze material was taken away by alert employees of the city park services because a bad statue is no longer worth seeing. Bronze is too valuable to just ... The bronze of Amadeus was therefore and fortunately quickly melted down. With of course all the - very carefully - picked up pieces of ... Mira. Into a new statue, melted together and solidified into one statue - for the park and the public. Cupid eventually did his job and - of course - gave his name to this statue full of love. And in this god they "*lived happily ever after and perhaps even got many small statues*." Those alert employees of the city park services were not made of iron.

This story of the humming bronze is without a doubt one of the most romantic stories from modern Belgian times. We hereby ask our beloved and honored opera phenomenon Peter de Caluwe (1963), unfortunately only one year the director of the Brussels somewhere more European opera house De Munt/La Monnaie, to make a modern (and listenable) version of this, if necessary or rather a children's opera or why not, a nice, modern operetta? Then mix in Emile and Jenny and Charlotte. Something for a modern version of "*Cosi fan tutte*" (1790) from a certain ... Amadeus!

8. From Jenny to Petra. Or what have we learned now?

The last formulation is known to every Flemish person because it is the famous final formula of the well-known and extremely skilled television chef Piet Huysentruyt (1962). It is indeed a didactically brilliant formulation; the man was clearly a student at one of the best schools in the entire country.

However, perhaps there should first be some clarification around the meaning of "*we*"!? As far as we know, almost all European languages that have ties to the original language Latin have no Old Slavic possibilities in which the personal pronoun can be expressed plurally or in a nuanced way. In that linguistically poor/poorer way of expression, "*we*" means both "*I*" in the form of the pluralis majestatis and "*You and I, or .. we (haha*)". In any case, we hope that you have learned something despite our possible digressions. And that from the day after tomorrow you will start planting trees and shrubs; away with all that *** grass, and from today make preparatory plans!!!

We ourselves have learned that we do not know much about Jenny and especially do not understand why she was smileless. And that consequently around her and around all the ladies annex pupils annex ??? of Emile Claus also some thorough digging and thinking may be done - and exhibited, with him there, albeit now somewhat less excessively. We ourselves are especially happy that as a discovery of our reflections and research we have found a decidedly interesting woman, a kind of model thinker: Petra Thijs. With this 'kind' of inhabitants Flanders/Belgium is on the right track. Because; well-educated, thoroughly digging into and

thinking about the mentioned subject (10 years!), assertive but distinguished, elegantly giving their own sources without doing "*name dropping*", which is one of the most terrible or most pedantic forms of so-called scientific handling of necessary knowledge. Perhaps we are forgetting qualities, but those can then be partly deduced from the previous ones.

And on top of that, something special has charmed us, which should be a matter of principle: a Romanist who seriously and valuedly delves into another field, here both art history and history. That deserves a feather in his cap. No, that deserves a pen, a PC, a printed edition, a ... - so that other, much younger people can read that and through that, they have now studied brewery engineering or even the science of pimpampom, feel called to become sincerely and diligently expert, to become an expert, in a so-called other domain of human activities.

9. Jenny and Emile and who knows, maybe even Charlotte at our house! At your house?

So we learned something. But we want to end with the double image, of Emile Claus together with Jenny Montigny - in our house, in your house. Or maybe a triple image because with that special wife Charlotte there again?

Those with patience and eyes will regularly receive a visit from Good Fate. On that beautiful day we were able to buy a lithograph by Emile Claus: "*Hay Stacks*" or based on the painting of the same name from 1905. That was a golden opportunity at the time because we had so little means of exchange money available that we were even burning our unique collection of toothpicks to have some homely warmth. Friend LVH1983 was so free and kind to lend us everything. Unfortunately we do not know more about this work, elsewhere on the internet dated circa 1890 and called there as "*The gleanders*", which is an impossible attribution based on precisely this peasant image. Hopefully we will find the correct dates this year via this exhibition. How we acquired this beautiful graphic work, we will have to discuss separately later because there was both a beautiful and very sad love story behind it with the seller. We have then actually been able to make it again or even more of a real, albeit somewhat mystical, love story. You know how it is, that you can jump higher than the ceiling, than the house or even into the sky when you have been able to acquire something unique. That uniqueness happened of course when, not so long later, we were able to acquire a beautiful lithograph of the eternal theme "*Mother and child*" via the fine Etienne. By, yes, Jenny Montigny. Those two lithographs were of course hung together from then on! It is striking that the farmer's wife who is apparently distracted from her hard work in the fields, reminds us of ... Charlotte Dufaux!? Why or why! She is wearing clothes that are a bit too nice without any sweat visible while this was terribly hard work - certainly for women. Her hair is fairly simple but still beautifully made up. But then again that looking away - always by the same painter! Oh, there is what you can objectively call a reason; she is looking at two people who are apparently passing by and it is certainly a man and a woman; also a couple? Of course we wanted and want to see that looking away to see HER or Charlotte as a farmer's wife in costume. And of course we would like to see the theme of "*Mother and child*" literally because Jenny Montigny would - prove the opposite via certificates from the Civil Registry - never be able to fulfill a desire for children, would regularly paint and etch children. First of all, her fellow acquaintance or competitor Charlotte Dufaux could not and never fulfill that either. She was probably liberal so .... and ... besides ... But such a desire for children for a woman; that is more than metaphysics, that is written in the stars. Later, much later and at the perceived end of her life, where the emptiness of children is felt more compellingly than ever, Charlotte Claus - Dufaux was able to donate all remaining works of paintings and drawings as her own children - to a local government, who gladly received that, as a young child on his

own that would grow into a relatively mature museum. This means that the suspicion is sky-high or much higher than the many haystacks that Emile Claus has painted, that this painter or creator of hundreds of paintings, drawings and lithographs was infertile, perhaps even ... impotent? Isn't it a little, little or bigger bit striking that Emile Claus has indeed painted smaller children, but never a father with a child, or especially never a "*Mother and child*"? Always, always, almost without the slightest exception, a creative artist wants to live on, in the eternity of art history and history. We do not know - yet - whether creative artist Emile Claus has left behind writings or interviews about that. Secondly, why that expression "*creative artist*" or isn't every artist creative? That expression is like a pleonasm and therefore has its very important cultural-historical or existential meaning as a stylistic device. He or she was therefore not a creator of power or money or, however you look at it, two important motives that always distort or destroy man and society somewhere. And yet, very unfortunately, throughout this website we must use the term "*deprimates*" for some nevertheless world famous artists. Because they were/are so completely nihilistic or depressing or destructive or ... anti-creative or anti-human (...) busy.

Five years ago to the day our mother Annie Bonkoffsky died, also and not in the least our only real parent. She sometimes said to us: "*Do you always have to go into everything so deeply*?" But she also said once: "*If everyone jumps into the Scheldt, will you jump with them*?" And took us with her as a small child, for example to buy the very successful painting "*XXX562*" by XFD5, which now hangs at her 'surviving' last partner - "*Because I like looking at it very much; take it back after my death, please*." She took us even more to those cozy auctions in Dendermonde at "*Huis Leybaert*", with that unique mix of visual arts, Persian carpets and with whatever materially wanders around with a certain added value under the Flemish skies. That one tree at that newly purchased house in 1979 had, to our amazement, fallen on our return from school - cut down by human hands. It was even a "*Prunis ... persica*", an annual fruit-bearer - once from Persia or an immigrant, partly as she did through her great-great...parents from Poland - mind you! It apparently also bore leaves " ... *and they fall to the ground and* ...". Logic or the moving part of motives. One day you get that consciously, from home, from school, from ... Sometimes just from your inner conviction that you already have as a small child, as if you were driven from before you were born.

Jean-Marie De Dijn, SK, 18 augustus 2024.

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Kinoe no Komatsu, Katsushika Hokusai (葛飾北斎, 1760 - 1849), woodblock print, Edo period – undated (circa 1814). Sumisho Art Gallery, Tokyo.

T.I.S..

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La Maja desnuda, Francisco Goya (Francisco José De Goya y Lucientes, 1746 - 1828), oil, circa 1797 - 1800, Museo del Prado Madrid.

+ La Maja vestida, idem.

T.I.S..

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Le Baiser (De Kus - The Kiss), Frans Masereel (1899 – 1972), woodcut, 1924, 14 op 28, (this print in) Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Gent.

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1. Value of graphics next to paintings or value of artists?

The most famous graphic artist in the world of the last 150 years is without a doubt Frans Masereel (1889 – 1972). He was a native of Ghent, a bilingual Flemish, Belgian and world citizen who knew not the least perfect German - and en passant a great playboy in addition to being a lifelong, loyal friend. He showed, among other things, his deep ties with Germany, again immediately after WWII, where he actually started teaching young German artists among the bombed-out rubble. That was nothing more than an expression in word and image of his lifelong idealism, say, his own International. His worldwide popularity was of course related to his enormous desire for peace, which he expressed as widely as possible in his compelling work during the terrible First World War. Of course, it had something more to do with his anti-capitalist worldview. As a result, he became extremely popular in the former Soviet Union and the unfortunately still communist China, a country that has also had the most insane capitalism for several decades. Frans Masereel produced an enormous amount of artefacts, also the normally much more expensive paintings compared to graphic work. He sold what one calls well. In any case he was never known as a money-maker which he could very easily have been because of his world fame, also with his graphic work. That was completely opposed to quite a few so-called modern or current artists sometimes against their will read thanks to galleries and big collectors and the entire international **** of very, very big art lovers. People produce things that one may call works of art, things that are painted, sculpted, drawn and what else in formal artistically recognizable or explicit technicality - with some necessary fillings like the present sugar and cream sometimes vinegar or piss as artistic next to all kinds of explanations, to the point of making the public has to throw up before suffocating. But the activity of these formal artists - building up in something even like a life's work; watch out, some are undergoing a substantive, call it formal, artistic evolution in the meantime - can't be called that of artists au fond or in principle or idealistically. They are entrepreneurs as you can find in the local or regional craft or industry field. In that very much

connected to the art world, dealing with money as a so-called means of exchange or measure of value, Frans Masereel is not an old-fashioned example. How he has always or during his entire and rather long life retained his idealism and dignity is a recommendation for everyone who calls himself young and wants to become a .... Young artists in the free world, multiply your work but not that one means of exchange! It is "*Love for Art - or love for Mammon*" - hahaha.

Frans Masereel was in a sense the Picasso of woodcarving because he is the father of a huge and - 'also' - valuable oeuvre. He was also a painter. That was an 'activity' to which he apparently enjoyed dedicating himself over time. Unfortunately, he could not paint at all because the graphic artist can be seen at work in every painting. We are happy to forgive him for that shortcoming. One cannot handle everything, except for the very few broadly brilliant artists such as Brueghel, Albrecht Dürer (1471 – 1528), Goya, Rembrandt and Monsieur Picasso: who are we still forgetting? These artists were in themselves unimaginably important painters or absolute world leaders: fantastic isn't it. But some of them are known for their incredibly beautiful or overwhelmingly important paintings, that their graphic work is actually forgotten – by most people. But what about our Frans Masereel? Throughout that long and intense oeuvre of wood carvings, he created numerous masterpieces, with individual pieces, so to speak. In addition, he also became famous, and rightly so, with the publication of books or cartoons, which are the joy of every book lover - they are still easily available in relatively new editions - and of the true museum enthusiast. We just said that, at least in our experience, Frans Masereel could not paint at all, while his wood carving is of an unparalleled level, both artistically and - how to separate that analytically? - content-related. We deliberately mention this repeatedly because we note that graphic work is still worldwide considered less important compared to painting. We cannot elaborate further on this remarkable and partly comprehensible fact other than in two necessary ways.

Etchings, woodcuts and all possible graphically multi-formed art products - sculptures can also be reproduced several times and still be considered authentic, but that is another matter - are very rarely published in only unique or very small editions. There is even the technique – or artistic desire – of the monotype, or the one-off or unique print! The normal graphically produced art objects that are to be reproduced are therefore not numerically unique. This art production therefore differs diametrically - or dramatically - from paintings. This also happens when paintings themselves are a form of repetition or reworking – an extreme rarity, albeit not for some painters who, for example, give paintings the same name and shape and then number them. In addition, there is a very important argument to be made in favor of graphics as opposed to painting. That pro argument may sound a bit sad. At least we have had to conclude, through our fairly thorough knowledge of Belgian art between 1880 and 1950 and through roughly 50 years of art viewing, that artists very regularly make excellent graphics - usually etchings. And yet as painters they deliver inferior to much inferior even negligible quality. Surprisingly enough, we know of no art historical studies on this observation, even though we have about a thousand art books ourselves; maybe a taboo? In any case, it seems to us to be a delicate subject on the part of the artists themselves. Who among them would want to make such a comparison in a reflection on their own (life) work? At the same time, on this website we refer to Victor Delhez: **See Victor Delhez ....** He was born just a few decades after Frans Masereel in the same exuberant painting country Belgium/Flanders. But - or does that "*but*" not even apply here? – he was also born and raised in Antwerp and 'therefore' a fellow citizen of an infinite number of excellent 'local' painters, including some of the absolute world top; Brueghel, Henri De Braeckeleer (1840 - 1888), Jacob Jordaens (1593 – 1678), Rubens, Frans Snyders (1579 – 1657) and Antoon Van Dyck.

Although relatively little has been published about Victor Delhez, a man from two continents, first Belgian and later South American, we have been able to conclude through our studies of him that he has exclusively made graphics throughout his long life or career. These were almost always woodcuts in addition to a minority of linocuts. But. They were always graphic works. Comparing the (top) artist Victor Delhez with his – absent – work as a painter or with that of (countless) painters is simply nonsensical or ridiculous. In our opinion, both Belgian graphic artists - Victor Delhez and Frans Masereel - belong to the absolute world top, not only of their generation and of the last 150 years, but also for the entire history of art, although they face intense competition from the few world-famous painters and graphic artists just mentioned. At the same time, and this is the crucial point, they are fully present as graphic artists and have their absolutely deserved place among other world-famous artists, 'so' almost always 'just' painters!

Certainly for Belgian compatriots and probably also for French and Germans, it is very easy and relatively cheap to purchase a "*Masereel*". Although a very international artist, many of his woodcuts deal with subjects from his home country. Moreover, there are sometimes works that have been published in hundreds to 750 editions! The intention was, let's just say it quickly, not and never the precious money gain. Based on his deep democratic convictions, he wanted to bring art to men and women as widely and literally as cheaply or affordably as possible. Apart from some German Expressionists, we simply do not know of any modern European or American artists - say in the last 150 years - who had this humanly and socially beautiful attitude, something that should not be admirable but rather the norm; or not? If you look at today and at a Belgian top artist and Antwerp native like Luc Tuymans, you will notice that his graphic work - lithograph or silkscreen - is also extremely or insanely expensive (a few thousand euros) and only affordable from the better middle class. And that has everything to do with the high position of this formally competent painter and still much more clever or cunning and as a pure commercial heron uninterrupted networker who once could have as many so-called noble ideals as he wanted - "*Mammy, Dady, i want to become an artist, ohlalala*" -, but because of his extremely sought-after paintings has become nothing more than a plaything or de facto money slave of the sharks of the international art world, with works that in themselves are in our opinion terribly pretentious and bad or ultimately art historically du jamais vu passé. **See Luc Tuymans** ... By the way, it could be infinitely worse say far more expensive. The lifelong art phenomenon Pablo Picasso (1881 – 1973) made beautiful linocuts in his older age (circa 1960). Now or barely 60 years later, these pieces are put on the market "*post mortem*" at completely outrageous prices such as 20,000 to 40,000 dollars – separately for the sake of clarity! It is better to let this kind of work or 'capital' get moldy in the vaults of art speculators or something (at least copy it in books) - and above all invest in young artists of all countries!!! But it deals – in our opinion, modest or immodest, what difference does it make? – with very valuable art, something that cannot be said at all about painter Fernando Botero. His paintings fetch extremely high prices but are aesthetically and art historically seen - compare with Luc Tuymans - completely worthless. Or at least for what concerns the 'second' or internationally most appreciated Botero'; the 'first' Botero was mucho better! **See Fernando Botero**.

2. The Kiss. That Kiss. Always like the very first time.

There is one famous work by Frans Masereel that has been printed or reproduced on a very small scale. And we have been grieving for it all our lives for a long time now because we have wanted to hang it on our wall at eye and heart height for just as long. Insofar as it is

important, we have personally given ‘a’ Masereel or a woodcut by him as a gift to acquaintances of the time a few times – in the manner of artist and idealist Frans Masereel: does a great collector like the internationalist and Frenchman François Pinault ever give away paintings?! We will not do that with the woodcut “The Kiss” from 1924. Or maybe we will because one day we want to give it completely anonymously, albeit to a specific museum or university, together with all our other Belgian graphics, more specifically if it is possible (one ‘must’ want to accept it) in the European country of XC4K. If we ourselves are still alive and conscious because, exceptionally, every person who becomes an heir is oh so greedy. The woodcut “*The Kiss*” is one of the most iconic graphic works of the 20th century, if not of history. Masereel has, and it should be repeated, produced an incredible amount of graphic art, in series and in individual pieces. Consequently, this gigantic quantity included some nonsense or the usual assembly line work - which has a specific art historical as well as artistic therapeutic value (keeping busy until the real thing comes again). In addition to these gigantic quantities of low quality, he certainly produced a great deal of high quality or world-class artwork. As here with “*The Kiss*”. He was also a painter at times. But he really couldn’t do that: his paintings seem to be a ‘sincere’ copy of his graphic technique and the real or academic art historians next to the real painters - where are they when they are not entering or leaving the bank? - can explain that to you much better. But what problem are we touching on here, if an artist has shown such exceptional dedication in one area of the visual arts, and that for decades or a lifetime? The truly versatile artists can literally be counted on one hand, such as Brueghel, Goya, Rembrandt and Picasso; who can offer another wonderful name?

This graphic work from 1924 is called “*The Kiss*”. As a human experience it had already been shown billions of times. Or shown less often but experienced indoors or before the altar. As a work of art, at least we ourselves have effectively (not efficiently!!!! When will people start making a distinction between these two concepts???) encountered it very little. Isn't that surprising? Is there something socially, morally, politically, health-wise, structuralist, narrow-minded or big-minded, ... wrong perhaps, about something as interesting as a kiss? It is unimaginable that Europe from about the fifth century - that is, formally counted after Christ - was intensely permeated by one philosophy of life. That was Christianity. And in that, as a core element, was/is/will be, once again, Love. Theologically, that is the vertical love for God next to or horizontally but equal to the love for man, fellow man! That therefore (sic and sic until ...) next to that hardly any to no kisses (the plural of the kiss) can be seen in the millions of up to recently Christian inspired works of art!? It is at least worth a consideration. No, it makes us speechless because it is completely incomprehensible. In addition, you also very rarely see another expression of human tenderness or affection although you can notice a bit more (hidden) lust throughout this art history: just look at the famous fuss about the recently painted masterpiece of masterpieces, "*The Jewish Bride*". **See Rembrandt** ... Frans Masereel was known as a playboy besides being very loyal besides also liberal: some important additions. Seen or rather unseen the latter, we have long been planning an exhibition project around his ... religiosity because we want to approach that in two ways as ... and as ..... (shhhht; we cannot yet give it because so many have already been intellectually disadvantaged, robbed or ...). Unfortunately, no time for that until now:

"*Las! voyez comme en peu d’espace,*
Mignonne, elle a dessus la place
Las, las, ses beautez laissé cheoir!"
(Pierre de Ronsard, circa 1524 - 1585, "*A Cassandre*", 1545),

In any case, shortly before his graphic "*The Kiss*", there was one very famous work of art that appeared in Europe, which he had probably seen himself within the borders of traditional Europe (Belgium, France, Germany, etc.). He had heard of it with absolute certainty and had already seen it as an image, in one of the many art magazines that usually circulated internationally for a short time. But before we go to that eternally famous example, we must point out "*The Kiss*" ("*Le Baiser*") from 1886 or before the birth of Frans Masereel. That "*The Kiss"* was by the sculptor's hand of that other art phenomenon, Auguste Rodin (1840 - 1917). By Rodin - the man, like many famous artists, hardly needs a first name - we once saw the statue "*Honoré de Balzac*" (1897) as a student in high school, in the highly recommended sculpture park or open museum "*Middelheim*" in Antwerp. We still remember as if it were yesterday how astonished we were. Practically every day we saw the - very traditional - statue of a missionary father at the main church of Dendermonde, right next to our college: you quickly look past it but you have it stored in your brain as an 'idea' forever - as an example! And here or then through the confrontation with the statue of Rodin in Antwerp!? We made a discussion of it for the aesthetics course of which we of course no longer have a copy; it was certainly extremely concise - humhum. Moreover, we got that course from an enthusiastic teacher ("*Lights out, spotlight on*!" - with the spotlight of the slide projector because fortunately we did not only get the images to be controlled from a small manual - blessed be this teacher Guido Triest!) only one hour a week. Fortunately, that did happen over two years, albeit the last two of six years of secondary education; compare that with the eternal two hours of compulsory gymnastics - yuck - while we ourselves already trained extremely intensively basketball at school; or two hours purely wasted that could have been spent on ... aesthetics! The task of writing an essay about this sculpture must have been a mandatory assignment. So we had to fill in ‘something’ because what schoolchild doesn’t want a little bit (half anyway) of the points? In fact, that work is still a milestone for our lives for what modern or new art is – should or may be? While we were fascinated by all kinds of applied art expressions from a very early age, in retrospect we have always had the feeling that we never ‘really’ understood art, even though we have one enormous preference for art: if the given work of art contains something tangible and mysterious or shows an intermediate stage between abstract and recognizable, as in the phenomenal work from the period circa 1900 - 1910 by the later creepy Piet Mondriaan (1872 - 1944). See, among other things, work from circa 1907, later used by a well-known - guess who - contemporary painter as an example, albeit without explicitly referring to it:

Bestand:Red Amaryllis with Blue Background by Piet Mondrian.jpg - Wikipedia

Or the almost perfect painting from a year later:

Molen bij zonlicht - Wikipedia

For all necessary clarity we have already read several books about the 'late' or so-called 'real' Mondrian; we regularly do/did/will do our utmost, albeit with metaphysical limitations in terms of (less) time and meanwhile (also less) health. But we understand absolutely nothing about that late or real Mondrian and we also don't get a rotten **** from looking at it. They can keep it (those late works also seem to suffer from a form of scabies partly due to poor quality) and give us any Italian fresco, more specifically a "*pesce fresco*" in an Italian fish restaurant, in good company; "*Better one nice, fresh fish in the mouth, than one rotten one on the wall*", says the well-known proverb. Apparently that final work of Mondrian is his most important, which we therefore very much doubt because just that thing before that; top and why didn't he say to himself; stop!? “*The Kiss*” by the French sculptor giant Rodin dates from a decade earlier than his own sculpture around the literary giant Balzac and is clearly much

more academic. There are various versions of Rodin's "*The Kiss*": in baked clay, white marble and bronze. And in the meantime there are certainly hotheads, say insincere opportunists, next to sincere airheads who have cast it in plastic or even ... uh ...: after all, the good is often imitated - hihihi. All those variations by the hand of the master himself; they are all very nice to compare with each other and simply to meet an example via à vis; petting unfortunately "*Verboten*!" That simply allows for the different possibilities of a sculpture. But those variations of this "*The Kiss*" in themselves tell us relatively little. We find this kiss rather bland, too .. normal - for Rodin, right?!

That is simply impossible to say about the next great sculptor, the Romanian and half-Frenchman Constantin Brancusi (1876 – 1957). His first version of the sculpture "*The Kiss*" dates from 1907 – 1908. That is relatively soon after 1886 or the year of birth of yet another "*The Kiss*" – by Rodin. And also relatively soon before yet another "*The Kiss*" – by Masereel from 1924. What was also produced around these wonderful times, with among other things the terrible events of the First World War and the rise of the extremely creepy world communism and its brown fascist variant, by candidate or recognized artists in terms of concrete representations of that ideal "Kiss" over and over again; we leave that to the academic art historians. Or is it more or better intended for that one true researcher in his or her attic room who likes to make a single image of the many dust that he or she has scavenged and sniffed from many cellars? We wish them, him or her (women are never in attic rooms by rule, except "*Mimi*" in "*La Bohème*" (1896) but she will soon leave that - via the cemetery - for eternal salvation in heaven) all great success! It is of course no coincidence that we have to mention the blessed opera composer Giacomo Puccini (1858 - 1924). Both his work and that of his compatriot and partly contemporary and also predecessor Guiseppe Verdi (1813 - 1901) are full of tragic women who are abused by men - always men - and of course dramatically succumb to it, while they can still continue to sing exceptionally until their last note. Beautiful and ridiculous, but probably not to be solved otherwise, that singing on the brink of death.

Both sculptures and paintings are without musical accompaniment to this day, although there are quite a few contemporary artists who accompany their work verbally, although very fortunately not by singing; we are not suggesting anything!!! In other words, they cannot keep their mouths shut or feel constantly called upon to talk about their handiwork: do you know a carpenter, roofer or so on, who does the same? These double pseudo-pedagogues prefer to try to explain the "*layers*" or very deeper meanings of their work or of someone else's work that they now love. While these layers are either self-evident or not there or do not interest anyone because every pedagogue can explain to you that adults themselves like to understand something, or interpret something. There is absolutely nothing to interpret because it can only be stated that a series of masterpieces by both Puccini and Verdi are about love, and more precisely about the tragic element of on the one hand the exploitation of the man over the (loving) woman and on the other hand about the concept of understanding the truth too late: man seems to realize again and again too late that it is too late. Isn't every "*The Kiss*" by Auguste Rodin, Constantin Brancusi and Frans Masereel, not to mention those similar, kiss-rich artefacts by visual artists that have fallen through the cracks of our knowledge or through the cracks of history tout court, an equally necessary expression of the continuous yearning for each other that is doomed to fail somewhere by a certain power struggle or even game element of at least one of them (always the man, by coincidence?), psychologically or socially, even physically for one of them (always the woman, by coincidence)? In that sense, sculptures are more interesting from a purely material point of view because they cannot be separated. They cannot, of course, literally or physically, but not even through the gaze of the

viewer. Just try to separate the entanglements within the two sculpted representations of "*The Kiss*" with a covered eye or something similar! You can't, even if you had thought of it! Something similar happens in the graphic representation "*The Kiss*" by Masereel. Consequently, a paradox or a form of insatiable hope or complete coincidence can be seen here. In musical masterpieces by Verdi such as "*Rigoletto*" (1851) and "*La Traviata*" (1853) and actually in all major works by Puccini, the same theme is touched upon as in all cited works around "*The Kiss*". However, in the meantime or in comparison with musical work, in the latter three the kiss or the intertwining or the connection remains eternal. The only alternative, so to speak, is to smash or tear the visual work of art itself; come on. And yet, yet.. Isn't there that limitless human creativity in ... destruction!? That this image of entanglement can also very delicately see its situatedness fanned by a whirlwind into a storm fire of life, and thus be destroyed by a new, albeit chronologically consecutive, yet again inevitable reality, and that this is also understood in this way by quite a few people, is shown in the concept of the famous, rather infamous socialist fraternal kiss: see.

Socialist fraternal kiss - Wikipedia

Thus, the old East German supreme party leader Erich Honecker (1912 - 1994) functions as a famous image twice in such a famous kiss of comrades. Once it happened when apparently many red roses were still blooming with the URSS party leader Leonid Brezhnev (Леони́д Бре́жнев, 1906 - 1982). It provided an unforgettable image precisely because of the sufficient memory of what this kiss had meant politically, and had now fortunately disappeared. But then everything was fine with these gentlemen party leaders. Until the successor in the URSS because in the GDR everything at the top would remain the same. Until indeed in 1989, with the kiss of camaraderie as apparently the kiss of impending political death, of the man and his regime, with the reformist USSR party leader Mikhail Gorbachev (1931 - 2022) with the almost extinguished in all areas of life Erich Honecker. That was a formal kiss for both because the leader of the URSS already thought his colleague from the GDR was not keeping up with the signs of the times, and both were no longer ideologically at ease with each other. It once again produced a very famous image, let's say with quite a bit of symbolism of political decline, although not much of that has remained in our small country because it is downright astonishing that in a free country like Belgium in the national elections in 2024 a communist party - throughout the entire territory - was not only allowed but received a great deal of support, say votes; it is historically 'right' to be deeply afraid of it. So. Beware of their political fraternal kisses. Both moments were supposedly and publicly intended as a kiss among political 'comrades', while however one turned or twisted it East German Erich Honecker and his filthy regime were merely slaves because they could only exist by the 'grace' of the big brother of the USSR - and not to forget via an enormous, annual flow of money from the so-called corrupt West (of course West Germany; do you remember that country or that 'given'?). But it is an image or also an example (in Dutch that is again more interesting than in English: "*beeld*" as "*image*" is part of "*voorbeeld*" as "*example*" or "*voor-beeld*" as "*pre-image*".

Indeed. Just look around in your life and in life. Looking for images of separated kisses! Ultimately, almost everyone, every concrete person knows one kiss, from life, from the immediate world such as from family and friends where "*The Kiss*" no longer went through, now and above all absolutely not dead because "*The Kiss*" overcomes that border at least in the remaining personal memory, expanding within the family and even throughout society. There is simply (sic) a lot of separation, very formally through divorces but also through all kinds of ruptures between people, among themselves or as parts of organizations and so on.

That means that for the most deeply hurt and embittered "*The Kiss*" no longer exists as an example for (their own) life, while let's say they can never physically bury or let their hormones - see opera - drown them out. And yet, yet ... In both a psychological and social sense, every more or less visually successful "*The Kiss*" is both a joyful recognition and - in so far mimetically necessary - an encouragement. It is where it touches the heart through the eyes and awakens it, much like a prick in the backside to shoot forward again and venture into that new but still the same kiss. This is one of the reasons why we are so strongly opposed to the - commercial and museum - glorification of deprimate artists such as Rott and Ko and Luc Tuymans, whereby the first probably not coincidentally buried himself in a kiss of death and the second always turns up again with his face and vocabulary of a gravedigger. That is not a plea for false images or an art historical department of "*Brave New World*". Quite the opposite, as we discuss in the introduction and further: **See Luc Tuymans** ...

3. Pillars: literally and figuratively, although the figurative ones are the most literal.

However you look at it, Brancusi's "*The Kiss*" belongs to eternity. Once you've seen that image, it's incompletely completed. As in the wording of the Nicean Creed: "... *begotten, not made,* ..." You might ask what material it's made of, in which it uses the most powerful or figurative language: limestone, marble, plaster ...? All together, these are modalities. In substance, Brancusi's "*The Kiss*" can be called a primeval image, like relatively few works of art that have been made. Or does - and may we almost hope so? - the same iconopower apply to "*The Kiss*" by graphic artist Frans Masereel? Or even ... more!? "*The Kiss*" by the Romanian countryman alias Parisien Brancusi was actually born in the beginning of humanity, somewhere when man from hunter-gatherer started to settle. And needed all kinds of images for a few important functions. In contrast to Rodin's work, here for once there was no fuss or movement or 'intentions': it is kissing, being connected in the deepest sense. And as the couple kisses, it is at the same time - albeit quite shyly - also the coïkiss of the same couple, or the sexual and therefore existential maintenance of man. However much more traditional it may seem compared to Brancusi's "*The Kiss*" from the early 1900s, Frans Masereel's "*The Kiss*" from 1924 is just as iconic - ancient or "... *begotten, not made*, ...". In the more traditional Rodin and at the same time innovator the ancient Brancusi, the kissers stand alone as if they are almost only kissing and almost only love, if need be - one can but should not associate it - only lust or pleasure. Masereel throws that whole lot of the edge of possible sentimentality and vulgarity away completely by situating the kiss, socializing it and - therefore - redeeming it! It takes place somewhere, here and now or more correctly formulated: You can always recognize yourself in it!! This work of art is a scene. Two-dimensional because it is a woodcut on paper, this "*The Kiss*" is pure theater. And theater in which one wants, can or must play along.

After WWI, Masereel lived mainly in France and briefly in Berlin in the early 1920s, where he reportedly became friends with the intriguing and, to say the least, provocative German artist George Grosz (1893 - 1959). Unfortunately, we do not know the provenance and publication history, and more specifically the origin of "*The Kiss*". The skyscrapers present in this work from 1924 have never been seen in the heart of Paris before that time. In New York, on the other hand! We can safely assume that the work either originated in Berlin or was inspired by it, together with a dash of New York. Berlin after WWI was a torn, impoverished city where suffering seeped or poured through windows and doors. On the other hand, it was a city full of life that was a point of attraction not only for the many and often extremely high-minded Russian emigrants after 1917, including and not least the almost incomprehensible phenomenon Vladimir Nabokov: **See Sebastiano del Piombo**... Life there bubbled like the

ever better than better French champagne; who compares or has already compared Paris and Berlin from roughly 1918 - 1933? Not least, Berlin was the location of the famous and very influential film studios of "*Universum Film AG*", better known by the abbreviation "*Ufa*". It is unimaginable what talent flowed there from Germany itself and from Northern and Central Europe, not least the filmmaker and screenwriter Billy Wilder (1906 - 2002, born Samuel Wilder or in Yiddish ווילדער שמואל or Shmuel Vilder), who in 1934 would move to Hollywood or the safe USA for the known reasons after a short stopover in Paris.

Berlin was a city - and this brings us seamlessly to Frans Masereel and his "*The Kiss*" from 1924 - where films were produced on an assembly line including countless timeless classic films. There was that one famous film or "*Der Blaue Engel*" (1930) by Josef Von Sternberg (1894 - 1969) with some top German actors and above all the legendary Marlène Dietrich (1901 - 1992), a true diva - and no, we find her not attractive enough for this website. Since cinemas were incredibly popular in the interbellum - literally every village had a cinema and every small town even had several - millions of European women and men must have sung along with La Dietrich: "*Ich bin von Kopf bis Fuß auf Liebe eingestellt*." ("*I am set on love from head to toe.*"). Attention: she sang that song wearing a ... hat, or did she still have something 'physical' left without - love!? More fitting to the iconic image from 1924 of Masereel and especially chronologically parallel to it, is the film whose screenplay was written in the same year 1924. Due to the astronomical costs of "*Metropolis*", this German film would only be shown in cinemas worldwide in 1927. With this film, director Fritz Lang (1890 – 1976) made one of the innumerable city films of the 20th century, which can also be called the century of the film genre. At the same time, he would absolutely certainly introduce the city as a true player with this film. Fritz Lang would then repeat this city film with the gripping thriller with the telling title "*M. Eine Stadt sucht einen Mörder*." (1931 + "*M. A city is looking for a murderer.*"). With a human penchant for paraphrasing - and often imitating, just say more or less legally stealing (hihihi) - one could propose an alternative title for Masereel's "*The Kiss*" as "*Zwei Stadtbewohner auf der Suche nach Liebe.*"; that is somewhat moralizing or a fairly ridiculous title of course. It can - metabletically seen - be no coincidence that just after the year 1924 - with "*Metropolis*" and Masereel's "*The Kiss*" - the city played a leading role in the field of art again, now in a novel or a piece of writing, by John Dos Passos (1896 - 1970) with "*Manhattan Transfer*" (1925)

This work of art by Ghent and European Frans Masereel is iconic because it is simply graphically exceptionally well or suddenly perfectly depicted. It is almost anti-artistic in these times because it is completely or easily recognizable, or just not to be situated or delineated as distorted (expressionism), mystical (symbolism) in colored forms (cubism) or form-seeking colors (fauvism). The work could just as well have been carved in wood and printed on paper five hundred years earlier. The work is more than "*The Kiss*" by August Rodin and also that little bit more than "*The Kiss*" by Constantin Brancusi an icon of longing for the buddy, the partner, that one love with which one thinks (thinks) one must (must) unite. It shows an improbably inexhaustible urge for a deep bond with one other. The philosopher Plato (Πλάτων, circa 427 BC - 347 BC and not to be confused with the exceptional writer of writers or at least one of the greatest political (indeed) analysts of the 20th century, Andrei Platonov - Андре́й Плато́нов, 1899 - 1951) already spoke in his "*Symposium*" (circa 385 BC) about the universal "*search for the other half*", a mythological representation of course, the reason for which we do not need to say anything here (the Gods who after all... blah blah...). That well-known text fragment was honestly far-fetched, but as is the case with all myths, it answered a fundamental human question: why connect ourselves to another person, and preferably and especially even forever to that one!? Frans Masereel actually explains that question here like

an old-fashioned, solid schoolmaster. Consequently, one needs zero "*layers*" to understand this work. Of course, one must first encounter or find the work concretely, which is physically much easier than with those stupid paintings of which usually only one was made, unless one, as a painter, was very happy to be tempted to make various "*own copies*" of coveted work for the precious money. Formally, Masereel uses the so-called environment or a very large part of the background in relation to the foreground of the two young people surrendering to each other (young is the future and everyone loves future-future-future plus those who remain young at heart are ... young!) to explain precisely this foreground in a strengthening way. That is no coincidence of course, because it is an art method that is doubly formally known as cold, ever-reheated tasty porridge. Not only had almost every painter since ab urbe condita and therefore long before the invention of perspective internally arranged representations so that one could, as it were, hold exercises for student surveyors. But in the meantime, something like Gestalt psychology had started around 1900. And those ... parts ... completely ... Well, you know how it is because if you are a man, when you are attracted to a woman you first look at ... then ... to finally ... And Frans Masereel did this even before you because he was alive and kicking then and absorbing impressions and emitting expressions, next to being a serious stud.

The man Masereel was technically unimaginably gifted and as a small child - we have confirmed this via an email from Plato, or was it from Platonov? - never ate with a knife and fork, let alone with a baby spoon, but only with gouges and knives. And always on wooden planks: ceramic, tin or .... = yuck! We see, among other things, or especially on both sides - of course horizontally, or is that vertical for you? Or call it left and right - two blocks of houses that are neatly opposed in black and white or formally attracted to each other. Of course, those blocks of houses have windows, because those two youngsters are not monkeys who can swing themselves upwards via the ... Via what, actually? Incidentally, you see two factual errors in one of those two blocks of houses. For example, you will not find a second window under the man's window on the side. No, incorrect, that window is closed or has closed shutters! The real mistake is therefore at the window below that of the girl because that window has no flower box irons - or can you suggest another name for this iron thing that is thought of here by us? Indeed, both the girl and the boy who are so eager to lean towards each other that they can finally touch each other, are technically or for rather obvious safety reasons slightly if sufficiently supported by these irons, which for the rest cannot possibly have any other function than something as a support for flower boxes. It is of course a great find by seer and doer Frans Masereel who saw all that as if he were Fritz Lang himself, an impossible person it seems who drew lines on the film floors where 'his' actors and actresses had to step. And you guessed it; if their legs were too short and they could not take steps according to Lang's pre-programmed wish, this Fritz started to drag those legs. Now those were real ideologists and bosses of directors who let the wildly ambitious young men and women toil without nannies on the work floor without them going to court afterwards because of ..., - because of missed career opportunities? In fact, the boy from "*The Kiss*" leans more towards the girl as is appropriate with all etiquette - "*Ladies first*" - which made him grab those irons in terms of safety regulations: that's how careful director Masereel was with this actor of his! And which at the same time gave this image more verve and was not just a stupid symmetrical representation as if it came from Old Constantinople just before Iconoclasm.

There are more blocks of houses than these two blocks framing the view, which at the same time make both sides extremely dynamic. You can try to count all the blocks because we don't; really don't feel like it. There was unimaginable construction here - and in height! It is chock full of blocks of houses, some of which approach the skyscrapers of New York. That city in what is still the New World - where is that new world now and is this world, if it exists,

also given capital letters as initials? - was a place where in 1924 Frans Masereel had certainly never been and whose skyline he could therefore only know from images, in books, magazines or films. Those apartment blocks or skyscrapers of "*The Kiss*" by Masereel stand there similar to architectural pillars, an art element that had been used in various ways millions of times since the earliest Greeks. These pillars have a second meaning because pillars were there in these times and from the end of the 19th century in various, let's say deeply separated constructions and afterwards until about the eve of WWII in enormous development: the pillarization! Literally visible in striking architecture and concrete politics and present in all kinds of social ways in almost all of the then existing Western European societies, you had almost everywhere 3/4/5 pillars that carried the canopy of heaven above the territory of the pillar worshipers. There was the usually dominant Catholic pillar that was often double because it consisted of a more working-class next to a more bourgeois sub-pillar. Unless you were colorblind, you could not ignore the red socialist and blue liberal pillars. A little later, brown and red communist pillars emerged or would very soon even push away the other pillars completely, if not definitively. But let us first or only here look at our tangible or visible loved ones who were probably workers. Otherwise they would of course live in a posh villa or a townhouse or simply in the countryside. That from two different and literally completely opposite buildings, say two real or philosophical/political pillars, two people - residents perhaps, visitors perhaps, even ... thieves, then heart thieves? - reach out to each other with their hands and lips and hearts, effectively kiss each other, it is of great and not just purely sentimental or cozy amorous importance.

The title of this work is "*The Kiss*". And that is in Dutch "*De Kus*", as it is stated on the website page of the Ghent museum about this work. That is - we may say it now or almost confess - not correct. The correct or only title is "*Le baiser*" as one neatly even colorblind but not completely blind; no work of art is ever signed with braille, don't ask us why because we would do it if we happened to be visual artists. Just look at the bottom left in the pencil for the handwritten indication of the title, next to the mention "*14/28*" or the number of this edition. Masereel was certainly mainly French-speaking throughout his life, of course because as an adult he almost always lived in France; do you know a single Frenchman who speaks another language or wants to speak another language at all? French is a fantastic language that is apparently spoken by its natives while they think they are the center and more of the world. Masereel certainly knew Dutch. The fact that he gave this title in French was of course, besides something obvious linguistically, above all a lame joke. The French word "*baiser*" or "kiss" has the somewhat milder "*bisou*" as a synonym. But "*baiser*" as a French verb or written in exactly the same way as the noun "*baiser-kiss*" means a little more that happens while one continues kissing or has just ended up doing so: fucking. "*On va baiser*?" ("*Let us go to fuck?*") is something that is now easily said in dance halls and so on, but in free-spirited environments such as that of Frans Masereel, it was not pronounced but simply done. By the way, it has been known for centuries that French people - at least in the so-called higher circles - fuck each other like rabbits, something that pays off because "we know each other" or regardless of their respective ... pillars! The ever delightful and ideal son-in-law next to the reader at the hearth Bart Van Loo (1973) already wrote about it in his popular "*France trilogy. Eating! Reading/Making love*!" (2011). La douce France is also or even more la pouce France, if you mean what we read - or something like that. Further on we will make the connection between kissing and making love a bit more explicit, as it was certainly present here in this title and naturally flows from the work or the image of "*The Kiss*". However, the title of the work could have been somewhat moralizing: "*Make love not war.*". But that was not interesting because then artist FM - the man cut those letters in his wood blocks in the blink of an eye - immediately gave a 'layer' to this work, through the title that somehow

remained somewhat without complete concealment. Although complete nonsense or total non-conformity with the apparent content of the image in question is perhaps the most interesting for a title - quoi? Whether Masereel could mumble a few words of English, we do not know and we do not expect that either. But as said, he could do much more than mumble or stumble in Dutch.

"*De Kus*" is therefore the familiar or fixed title for this work for the Flemish - usually Dutch speakers - who, not coincidentally, en masse also know a lot of the almost always graphic work of Frans Masereel because they love it very much. We will just say that we are not Flemish nationalists at all, but it is undeniable that French speakers, at least in Belgium, can be called backward people, culturally or humanly speaking, because they look down on and sneer at almost everything that concerns "*le flamand*". One should hear them pronounce it so intensely disapprovingly or one almost wants to attack the speaker's throat, except that this .... - oops, and we will hold back because we do not want any complaints about racism or tralalala. Nevertheless, for once we do not have a language battle about the title of this work, so to speak. It is probably due to the great actual stupidity of the French speakers who hardly want to learn a word of Dutch, that up to now a culture war has never broken out about the correct title: "*Le baiser*" or perhaps "*De Kus*". And if that had happened, we repeat that this is more of a coincidence, that would testify to enormous irony because it would completely go against the ideal of Frans Masereel, not only in his entire long and downright impressive life's work - what a man or a real or great artist!!! - but even within .... this one work!!! Indeed, every small child who at least speaks Dutch - and in this case even only or mainly a Flemish dialect - knows that a "*kiss*" has the word "*zoen*" as a synonym. The word "*zoen*" has the verb form "*zoene*n" and that means exactly the same as the verb "*kussen*": kissing! According to our increasingly poor knowledge of the language, "*zoen/zoenen*" has no similar alternative in French. "*Zoen/zoenen*" are seen as such as a bit more modest or less lustful than "*kiss/kissing*", do you understand? But. Always the eternal but or at least if you know Dutch, a knowledge that is therefore (???) not shared by the majority of at least the French-speaking Belgian compatriots or also residents of the EU. In any case, the Dutch word "*verzoenen*" means - as in "*een verzoenend gebaar*" - a lot because in English it should be translated as "*a concialtory gesture*". "*Verzoenen*" is not 'really' "*zoenen*" but it comes very close to it. But you know that! You know smoking the peace pipe! And if you are against tobacco, you know and have perhaps experienced the kiss of peace! The "*verzoening/reconciliation*!
Then think of the blocks of houses or pillars from which both protagonists approach/hang/float/fly towards each other ... From the end of the 19th century, political and ideological pillars stood directly opposite each other. Something like forging coalitions was not possible in the early parliamentary democracy of the 19th century. It was a local and national battle that was often literally fought to the death with countless life-long, mentally, physically and/or socially horribly mutilated victims, including for "*the soul of the child*"! Let us think of the train of "*The Kiss*" that was of pure survival importance for leading Catholic Belgium in order to keep its electorate at home by the hearth and under the church tower, away from the godless socialism in the cities and heavily industrialized regions! Moreover, there was something else or the well-known "*more*" - and now even more! When publishing "*The Kiss*" in 1924, Frans Masereel had made incessantly and countless anti-war drawings throughout the terrible experience of 1914 - 1918, where French against German workers fought, especially among socialists; there was no International anymore because of all nationalism! No more .. EU! Or no EU already, as you wish. These blocks of houses, these architectural pillars were also the countries of old Europe. It was the Europe of 1919 - 1920 in which the treaties of Versailles and Trianon had inflicted immeasurable wounds, sometimes still unhealable for all those involved. 1924 was also precisely after 1919 - 1920 and 'also'

after 1914 - 1918. Versailles and Trianon were without the slightest doubt the source of the outbreak of WWII. The well-known British historian Norman Davis (1939) calls Europe in a constant war from 1914 to 1990; he will extend that 'in the meantime' because from a perspective of 2022 - 2024/? By the way, we know the work of this historian reasonably well and certainly have a lot of respect for his work and intellectual capacity. But we therefore (sic) do not care about his clear disdain for "*small historiography*"; after all, we use both approaches and find that philosophically and democratically useful, if not necessary. His position is simply ridiculous and incomprehensible. Besides, each cow blows wind on her own udders. Frans Masereel was also such a double-decker. All his life he was, call it a do-gooder, idealist or whatever; he did his best to ... man .. society ... uplift. In addition, he liked to make some cozy love with his daily coffee and glass of wine. And descending to the arts, to that one work of art to be made again and again: here he flew at a high level, of something like idealism of course and at the same time at the so-called formal art level.

With the considerations around the meaning of "*kus/zoen/verzoening*", we must again - **See Jenny Montigny** - point out the fundamental philosophical character of Dutch, a language that, like any other language, is difficult and yet learnable, even for .... er .... In any case, every ambitious philosophy department anywhere in the world can gradually start considering scheduling Dutch as a minor in the philosophy program. "*The Kiss*" is really - look at the image and compare it with the words - about a kiss, because the title of this work is not like the ultimately extremely stupid but oh so well-known and quoted to death title "*Ceci n'est pas une pipe*" by a certain ... er ..... That title creator and so-called wit and actually a big little child or a form of eternal bedwetter or the gradually very much over-hyped René Magritte (1898 - 1967) was, for goodness sake, a fanatic of communism for a long time: even after the worldwide revelations in 1956 about leader Stalin? Oh dear, father Stalin did all that to get that gigantic and gigantically backward peasant nation into the industrial speed of nations. We still hear or read about this insanity or supreme cognitive dissonance to this day and undoubtedly again tomorrow. See the lifelong very interesting, hard-working amateur journalist Willy Van Damme from our dear Dendermonde, who can write beautiful, educational pieces about, let's say, ordinary life. But. Who, when it comes to big politics, is an ordinary servant of Russia, read the USSR (still alive with him!) becomes schizophrenic. He has been a remarkable man, apparently for decades. Do you know "*Pasha Antipov/Strelnikov*" from "*Doctor Zhivago*" (fantastic book and film) then you know sourpuss and sour thinker Willy! Wasn't it the eternally sharp Henry de Montherlant (1895 - 1970) who once - in his beautiful French - said never to trust a person who can't laugh? What this driven journalist, undoubtedly enjoying a Belgian government pension that is ten to ??? times larger than an average Soviet - pardon Russian - monthly salary and who has therefore (!) never been seen to laugh for a single second as a true Parteigenosse, has been spouting off about 'big' politics on his website and in thousands of letters to the editor for years! He would not survive a single hour in his beloved Russia: cut off from the internet and thrown out of the nearest window beforehand, after which the entire contents would of course be plundered: see **Willy Van Damme's Weblog (wordpress.com)**. If only Willy Van Damme, pardon René Magritte, had not continued working in the wallpaper sector, because that at least yielded democratic or almost everyone's affordable products, while in the end it could bring distraction and peace to the ordinary to occasionally unusual ones from the street or the moon, almost everywhere in their homes. As for the Suslov epigone Willy Van Damme - again, living richly with a Belgian government pension and probably previously appointed party politically in of course a government service known for its clientelism (or self-service for and by its own staff - haha) who ... But come on or are we now supposedly too 'personal'? Although he likes to shit from his fat villa and constantly on the corrupt and capitalist Belgium and its tralala and tralalie.

What he has felt the need to write for two years now about the Ukraine affair is inhuman and purely crappy. Although we like to hear and stimulate other bells and have had serious problems with "*our big mouth*" professionally and privately, too much is too much and we have not read that blog of Willy Van Damme for a number of years. Yet we want to take another look because with the non-Stalinist hope of 'self-purification'; really. His work - an apparently life's work unfortunately - is, together with his previous years of whining about the also by him highly praised Bashar al-Assad (1965) in Syria, a real example for future academic historians and even philosophers about manipulation of 'truth', in addition to predominantly effective mainly beautiful reporting when it concerns local or 'halal' news. Or how one can be schizophrenic about political reporting. But long live the freedom of writing and speaking! Although a little straightforwardness or elementary honesty is in his place, right. Compared to a true art giant like Frans Masereel, René Magritte is the level of his shoe sweeper - or did Masereel walk around in the South of France mainly with feather-light sandals!? Frans Masereel has produced a remarkable number of intensely attractive and eternal works, although mainly in his first ten years after WWI; who is going to point this out to him as a shortcoming seen in the usually suffocating light of an entire oeuvre? Please! Not only because of his extreme later expensiveness but even in the form of simply affordable reproductions, we have never seen walls of houses 'wallpapered' with a Magritte outside of student rooms; And there he hangs in his place or is what he means in itself; an artist on the level of cooing students. Masereel, on the other hand, who ... Inseparable from that - claim the opposite! - Frans Masereel was a different quality of person. After all, he was in word and thought, in action and deed a pacifist and internationalist, a bridge-maker or bridge-builder. No slave, no servant of political lords or capitalists but a simple very hard working man who made 'figurines' that appealed to top writers and almost every very ordinary to ... person. And where possible he was a pedagogue because he voluntarily taught young people. Effectively, just like his great friend Romain Rolland he would rave about communism in the second half of the 1930s and 'therefore' visit the USSR, then already the largest graveyard in the world for murdered compatriots, allies even countless other internationalists - but Potemkin was alive because the foreigners who only visited for a short time got to see nothing but something 'good'! Both raved about that communism from an anti-fascism but were never members of the party to our knowledge, the complete mirror image of fascism: brown next to red fascism.

4. Graphic artist par excellence Frans Masereel is also an artist through ... stained glass windows?

When we wanted to start writing this paragraph of this study on "*The Kiss*" by Frans Masereel, we came across a lecture by chance that was given on Masereel and the theme "*City*" by the Belgian art historian Steven Jacobs (1967). See

MSK Lezing : Stadssymfonie op papier. Frans Masereel en de metropool (Steven Jacobs) (youtube.com)

We are going to say roughly that we like to refer to this lecture but because of only two arms and so on and even because of growing older or weaker somewhat less than two, we have not analyzed this lecture, not even looked at it. Undoubtedly an interested reader of this study and of that lecture can find parallels, in addition to also or only contrasts? We ourselves have a whole series of books about Frans Masereel that we have not yet been able to go through in their entirety, because we are waiting for a blessed moment when we have the time and desire to make a thematic study about Frans Masereel possible for us. The man did indeed live a long time and - therefore (?) - produced an enormous amount, always the same or making woodcuts on the assembly line next to some other and especially much less successful work.

We do not want to repeat it too much but remain honest because Frans; a genius with the gouge but a klutz with the brush. So what because who can say that he is already a genius in one art domain? Elsewhere on this website we will attempt to make a small plea so that many, at least future, artists in the world will want to 'produce' a lot less. Fortunately, very fortunately, there are quantitatively a lot less 'real' artists than 'ordinary' people. Imagine if it were the other way around: more artists than ordinary people!? Although we would like to make a quick plea for more active art in passing, both in the areas of music and visual arts - including or especially during school hours where one is better ... In any case, an ordinary person has to look at all that artistic violence or even buy most of it (although the reverend artist Rubens was a great buyer of art, from before and from his own time). And that under the question; is all that really necessary, is every person, even a so-called creative person like a visual artist, called to always be busy and busy and ...? And wouldn't he or she be better off, entirely or from the well-known 'a certain' moment, occupying themselves as a nurse, engineer, garbage collector (of extreme importance!) etc. with more really useful things: in their free time they can also paint top works, sculpt, ...! That sounds a bit harsh, even cynical, and as far as the artist as a whole is concerned partly desperate, but it is simply a responsible question. In any case, and we have already mentioned it, the relatively young Masereel, seen within his artistic career, was busy carving wood on the theme of the city in 1924. Later, one would get quite a fuss - we find little of it because both his subtlety and his strength are apparently nowhere to be found here - from him on the theme of the sea, which can't have been a coincidence for someone who lived in Nice for so long and from 1949 onwards. Wasn't that town still on the sea then? By the way, and certainly not to single out the just-quoted professor Steven Jacobs - we had not even heard of this man before this fragment from Youtube - there is, so to speak, a perfect parallel to be drawn with the international epidemic academic publication fuss of the last thirty years or so, which can be simply summarized as "*Publish or Perish*". The ever-present Gaussian curve tells us that excellent to actually groundbreaking work - both in the field of art and therefore in the academic field - is very, very small. We readily admit that we can be accused of a hidden agenda here, but several times over the last roughly 35 years (at our current age of 61) we have refused various in themselves beautiful offers for publications because-because. And that was our scientific view in cases that 99.999999% of people would have jumped on. Even (haha) regarding our - pardon - paradigmatic approach to human behavior in times of crisis such as WWII, we have hesitated quite a bit about whether to start letting go and in which parts. Secondly, at a very strategic moment like in the spring of 2015, we were actually stabbed in the back or simply sabotaged by our formal academic supervisor when we asked him to help us to finally start publishing; please. Incidentally, he would not be the only obstructor or suffocator at the so-called academic top level around that groundbreaking research. But now it is also about a really extremely sensitive political, moral, historical and ??? subject: politics around WWII. We will talk about that later and unfortunately necessary.

On the other hand, genius artists, next to similar scientists, almost without exception always stand at the top of a pyramid, or at a level where they are figuratively if not literally supported by so-called lesser gods, from their country and tradition. These lesser gods can in themselves be of a very high level, at least on a national level, as we may say with painter Emile Claus: **See Emile Claus/Jenny Montigny** ... It is extremely rare to have to deal with a form of one-hit wonders such as Evard Munch (1863 - 1944). That one hit really came out of nowhere, because from a Scandinavian desert in the field of visual arts. He himself would not even be the impetus for the formation of schools! Of course, comparative art is not about sprinting or basketball and such: try to give operational definitions of why this or that artist or scientist is better or more important than the other. In any case, through a fair amount of experience we

are of the firm, motivated, well-founded, if never concrete opinion that, as far as Belgian visual artists in particular are concerned from the period that interests us a lot, 1880 - 1950, there are effectively hundreds of relevant or attractive artists; Flemish, Walloons as well as Brussels residents (many came from Saint-Josse-ten-Node or lived there; there is nothing left of that now, but let us skip this perspective before we are not more obedient to certain rules). One and the other have as a consequence ... No, we first make the distinction between intention and consequence. An intention is an idea that one makes in advance as an artist or scientist of what the importance of an attempt at a work of art or written thought within an article or book will entail. An effect is that idea that almost everyone can make afterwards or from the very moment after the appearance of a work of art or article/book of the then as well as future value. We find it of the utmost pedagogical importance that the 'youth' is taught logic in an introductory and above all illustrative way. The distinction between intention and effect must certainly be part of this, although we hope to read interesting analyses one day about whether effects cannot be partly conceived through intentions, while ... blah blah blah ... We add this mention of the future importance of something creative because from a moment that a certain breadth of society has established that 'something' as a creation is valuable, this will in principle be even more important in the future. In this respect, a distinction can certainly be made between art and science, but we cannot go into that now. One consequence is that for Belgium there are nevertheless masses of very beautiful works of art for this period 1880 - 1950 - subtract a bit but do not add too much because with the living it is almost always expensive or just read on - available to, in other words; soft prices. It is often to be astonished by it and in any case it is one more reason to be very suspicious of modern, say living, especially established artists who charge prices - as is known almost never themselves because their instigators, next to later their parasites the gallery owners, who also have to ... - who are not only morally and so on insane and scandalous, but therefore unattainable for more than 99.9999% of the Belgian population. This observation is on the other hand a plea in itself - which we will discuss elsewhere later - to pay much more attention, so also financially, say when spending your personal art budget, to very young, not yet established artists.

Something funny is - and you should have heard us coming a long time ago - that within a work of an artist and/or scientist, there are periods of let's say top with lows. For our Frans Masereel that is indeed very noticeable because roughly after 1930 he has made almost nothing of great importance. But he has still (sic) produced and at an incredibly high level of work. The blunthead did stay alive 'therefore' in action until 1972; blame him. We don't have to deal with that now because "*The Kiss*" dates from 1924 or - which can of course be concluded from this work - until his great or top period can be evaluated. And that was approximately fifty (50) years before his own physical death. It is generally accepted, or even by experts, that another Belgian, European or world phenomenon of art, James Ensor (1860 - 1949), had already had his peak period behind him around 1890. Just as everyone knows or realizes that James Ensor, albeit often with quiet intervals for longer periods of time, continued to paint and - even more than ever before - sell. And that was rounded off even longer than with colleague Frans Masereel, namely sixty (60) years! Elsewhere in this study on art we will see that a painter who was already internationally famous during his lifetime quickly sold - or gave - a portrait of himself around his own sister to the local or even national museum of their country: **See Edvard Munch** ..... We believe we once read that a certain Luc Tuymans would have 'kept' so-called important works of art of his in his studio for a very long time (...) in order to be able to sell them - read at an affordable price - to their own Belgian museums. What a loser because in principle the Belgian authorities should partly sponsor the man - through tax reduction or something - so that all his work would go abroad

because it is bad for the Belgian public health. And we do not use volk here in the sense of Nazism of course - please! - but in the sense of the generally used "*public health*"!

To be honest, we have not investigated to what extent this graphic "*The Kiss*", a standard work of art of the Low Countries and of all humanity, belongs to the permanent, that is, hanging collection of the Ghent museum. The relatively many times that we have visited that super interesting museum over the last 45 years or so, we have, to be honest, no memory of a single graphic on the walls - as far as the permanent collection is concerned. For another thing, we have often looked at the floor there, certainly when "Arte Povera" was still represented there, something we laughed about for a long time at the time, but which gave us a great idea thirty years later or around our 55th birthday: with sincere thanks to "Arte Povera" and the museum! What are all those works hanging on all those walls doing? Every now and then a curator or director comes along who wants to tell a new story for bedtime and museum time and the docile foot soldiers of the visitors come in large numbers or not, attracted by this song of the New Lorelei, as long as it is not too new or the city or Flemish politics intervenes. Now everyone knows that Frans Masereel was a passionate world improver, someone who is normally remembered as the former teacher. Does that still correspond with the 'modern', say current - and therefore ever changing, haha - image of a visual artist? Shouldn't they all be mainly ... or even ... or just ...? We wipe our feet on this presentation of all the curators and directors in the world and we always felt terribly cheated if we ever took the trouble to go and see a so-called super important thematic or curated exhibition. That was then put together by an unbelievably handsome curator - always world famous; was that person perhaps born that way? Wow, what a formidably wonderful woman, her mother!! That should be used to breed descendants, right!? - or preferably by a new museum director who had invented the hot water of art for the thousand and first time. One does just that with the knowledge of the difference between intention and effect, because from the choc of trials and errors comes the light.

We may say that the work "*The Kiss*" by Ghent native and world citizen Masereel is a primeval image, as we said earlier about "*The Kiss*" by Brancusi - albeit now a bit more 'primal'! Is that possible? We think so because we dared or were able to formulate these words ourselves. You know the hackneyed story that "*The sky is the limit*". Well, everyone knows that 'the sky' is not at all 'the limit'. But that there is so much more to discover above that sky. And, it is nice to look up but because of that you will fall a lot more easily by not being able to pay attention to the crooked stones through the roads of life: You please look a lot below the sky. What you can find there to see and experience! One of our objectives of this website is therefore indeed to look a little more 'below' in the field of visual arts, such as not only at those overwhelming paintings but also at graphics, not only at those overwhelming artists who were already canonized during their lifetime, which apparently means that they mainly sell very expensively, but also at more locally known even folk artists. In any case, we pay much more attention to the aspect of the craft of the function of visual artist, such as next to her and him the baker, butcher, roofer and so on. It is a given for every person, whether he is fond of looking at and even collecting art or not at all, that this person need a roofer. Rain usually falls from the sky and one needs a roof over one's head for protection. Any building has essentially three dimensions: there is the above (with any form of roof), there is the below (foundation) opposite that and in between something like walls in yet another artistic or architectural way. Of course one needs a door because otherwise it is not a building but a pile of material, with at best something artistic of meaning. Apart from extreme exceptions such as an igloo, all buildings have windows or the function that lets in light and air. In a number of cases - apparently mainly through what one may call a Western tradition - those windows are

used in an artistic way. Those windows are called stained glass windows or one speaks of stained glass art.

The Cathedral of Our Lady of Doornik/Tournai is one of the most important buildings and churches in Belgium. It radiates world class as a whole and in all respects. It is in itself one of the largest churches in the world in Romanesque style. Unfortunately, in the middle of the 13th century it was decided to demolish the choir and replace that Romanesque style with the new modern style, the Gothic - apparently people did not know then that every modern thing is old tomorrow. That choir has an enormous stylistic inconsistency or does not fit with the remaining Romanesque main part, although such a mixture is often pleasant and even valuable in itself because it can be called very open to democratic. One cannot imagine that there were wishes to also adapt that rest to the modern/new. Fortunately, that wish never saw the light of day. The result of the Gothic choir is nevertheless impressive. The choir is truly stretched to the architectural extreme. It provides a breathtaking effect but gives structural problems that had to be solved early on by an enormous iron construction that literally holds that choir together. These reinforcements are not a pretty sight in themselves but the effect of the choir remains impressive in any case. It can hardly be a coincidence that the very important comic book publisher "*Casterman*" started in that same Tournai. Anyone who takes a first step into the choir and, because of its uniqueness, wants to continue and walk the entire ambulatory, experiences nothing other than the experience of walking next to or through gigantic open strips. The cardboard of each strip naturally consists of the stone parts of that choir. And these, as building elements, as it were neutral or at least necessary to support the upper part or the roof, are actually nothing other than the reasons for the thing itself; the stained glass windows! Walk here on a normal, not even wonderfully sunny day, and the experience is indescribable and a walk through that entire choir, where of course the incidence of light partly changes, makes it completely unique. In Christian or at least Catholic churches, every square metre was ultimately an occasion or obligation to decorate something: from the floor over the walls and pillars along the purely tangible empty space (with hanging crucifixes) to the ceilings and roofs. The stained glass window is probably the most striking element in terms of architecture as well as art. To this day, stained glass windows are not only restored as carefully as possible, but are also continually made new. See, among others, multi-artist and excellent art critic Harold Van de Perre (1937). See **WERKEN | Harold Van de Perre** Harold is a man who gave a lecture with slides in the town hall of Dendermonde around Jan Van Eyck (circa 1390 - 1441) around 1980. And that lecture would remain with us so deeply that around 2005 it would also provide us with an article on art resistance in WWII, a case that has plunged us to this day and for much longer into analysis of political behavior around WWII with 'among other things' more than ten thousand pages of analyses and various internationally important scientific discoveries. How seeds can be sown. With certain consequences.

Indeed, Frans Masereel is in his own way and impressively throughout his entire career a maker of ... stained glass windows. Wait a minute. Stained glass windows are made of glass and iron; his work is (mainly) carved wood printed on paper. Probably every piece of glass ever made anywhere is multi-coloured; his graphic work is exclusively in black and white. And it is no detail that stained glass windows are representations of images but at the same time let light through or that they mediate it through their own presence. Every graphic work by Frans Masereel has an impenetrable support; paper. Very many stained glass windows, or at least in the most publically noticeable way, are located in churches. We have never seen a single woodcut by "*FM*" in a church, or it was a written-off, deconsecrated church that functioned as a museum. We have already said above that we want to study in depth in ways a

religiosity present in the work of the freethinker next to liberal Frans Masereel one day; Lord let us live long to write much that is interesting! However, we may or must say here that there is one very important thing that all stained glass art of all in any case older churches, such as the cathedral of Tournai, have in common with the artist Frans Masereel: wanting to educate the people or is that no longer allowed in retrospect, even looking ahead? Does playing at school take place for a long time, albeit only between the ages of 3 and 18, even until the age of 25, and is it definitely over after that time? Isn't education and learning for every day, until the last day, the day of dementia praecox!? Will we - at least the believers - not also be asked at the Last Judgment how much we have studied? In our almost twenty-year research into political behavior around WWII, especially in the Belgian city of Ronse, we have done an extremely large amount of applied genealogical research for the period roughly 1800 - 1950. We could not help but notice that up until WWI people could not or hardly write/read. From the beginning of the glorious story of the cathedrals and other large churches to ordinary village churches and even chapels, the stained glass window was there to teach the good people something about the broad story of that building where they were or where they constantly and at least once a week came together to celebrate the story itself, that of Jesus. The stained glass windows were the comic strips of that time. Especially the earlier "*novels in picture*"' by Frans Masereel from 1918 to around 1930 are every time like the corridor in the choir of, among others, the cathedral of Tournai.

It is certain that many works from Masereel's gigantic oeuvre can be situated in terms of content and even time. This speaks for itself for his endless stream of anti-war images during WWI. As unfortunately said, we know nothing about the history of the creation of the image "*The Kiss*". Almost moralizingly, we know that Masereel liked to splash in kiss and coïkiss. In addition - and besides? - he was an eternal world improver, indeed eternal because during his life that simply continues through the very broad admiration. We may also see "*The Kiss*" as a stained glass window that he installed in the church of life, of every possible house, although in itself it is apparently only hanging on a museum wall - and hopefully somewhere on 27 other walls, preferably not even once in a ... safe!? We already said that he was friends with the phenomenon Georg Grosz for a while and thus in very appealing company. It is unknown how their further communication remained, perhaps by letter? We have no data on actual mutual influence and although we love both their work very much, we do not have time to investigate this hypothesis. In any case, there was that grandiose biting and fiery mockery in George Grosz that we did not encounter in Masereel's work after WWI. Certainly a work like "The Kiss" seems almost impossible to us in Georg Grosz. It was not for nothing that he called his 1946 autobiography "*Ein kleines Ja und ein großes Nein*.", later translated as "*A Little Yes and a Big No.*". You do not have to be a respectable footballer to immediately shoot the cross that Masereel's life's work can safely be called a "*Big Yes from a Big No*". He honestly embodied our own way of thinking because from a very critical approach, building up and building up - not breaking down for the sake of breaking down or simply cynicism, in addition to no exorbitant profit as an artist, mind you. With this, we have quickly added, not at all said that Georg Grosz was not a great artist because in our opinion he certainly said a ... Big Yes!

We have already seen "*The Kiss*" as a political window, through our analysis of the phenomenon of the columns. We can use the idea of a window, of a special stained glass window again, both on a purely human and universal level, but also politically. In the Sistine Chapel, Michelangelo (1475 - 1564) had man meet God, not with a kiss 'obviously' but with that other form of touch or almost touch - see those fingers. They lay/hung at - almost - the same height and with completely identical size, say equality. That in itself was unprecedented

because that in the Holy of Holies of the Vatican, also at a command of his heavenly jubilant overlord of the Church, the Pope. That equal descent on the one hand or elevation on the other hand between God and man had naturally become a complete equality between the two people in "*The Kiss*", which took place somewhere in Berlin, somewhere in New York, Calcutta, ... Yet the aim was identical or a real encounter. Admittedly, God is situated a little higher in Michelangelo's work than man - Adam, and Eve could also be considered, although she was not given a place, possibly because Michelangelo was probably in favor of male love? - then the young woman and the young man of "*The Kiss*" are to be found on completely the same floors, although not on the ground floor. But they are present in other blocks, in other columns. Okay, this was the new city, even if it was as old as the Roman street, because Old Rome in particular had been an extremely large city. Loneliness and longing were in urban areas of all times and regions, whether it was the Old World (Rome), Old Europe (Berlin, Paris, Ghent, etc.) or the New World (New York, etc.). In effect, the city had long been, and certainly in the spirit of Frans Masereel, a place for relative or, at that time, maximum possible freedom. Let us not forget that he spent his youth growing up and his education as an artist in the proud city of Ghent, also with a top artist who had been imbued with Ghent and its traditions all his life, such as Jules De Bruycker. Ghent had always been one of the most turbulent, rebellious or free cities in all of Western Europe, until the end of the 16th century - except in ... 1302, hahaha. That was an incredibly deep tradition that lived on in everyone who was born there or especially would grow up there. In our long article from 2006 "*Een zwaar gewapend tapijt met een subtiele vingerwijzing naar de vrijheid. Een wandtapijt rond Ronse als voorbeeld van symbolische verzetskunst uit WOII.*" ("*A heavily armed carpet with a subtle reference to freedom. A tapestry around Ronse as an example of symbolic resistance art from WWII.*"). We were immediately asked by a certain professor of history Bruno De Wever UGent to shorten the article for publication in the magazine BTNG as well as to expand it through a doctorate in art history on similar ambiguous art resistance in Western Europe. Because we wanted to go 'further' and did not feel like taking side steps, we declined those offers, but the fact was that the Ghent tapestry weaver Gaston Woedstad (1886 - 1950) discussed in that article was deeply influenced by the very long tradition of Ghent rebellion in that tapestry from 1943 or the full occupation period.

But city air made it free, it did not make you happy. Conversely, it did not mean at all that village air or the environment of the countryside automatically meant that one was much less free there but still more happy. Being born, growing up, making love and getting married and having children; it was all fairly fixed, rock solid until death. The country person was, as the Dutch say, "*honkvas*t", bound to his house or "*homely*". There are countless studies on the changes or transitions from a person as a resident of the countryside to a city person or resident of and - mainly - factory worker in the city. The most famous example or expressed in an artistic here literary-theatrical way, about the mental gap that was created in the 19th century and for decades afterwards between the Flemish countryside and a city (in Belgium, Northern France, New York...) is the play "*Het gezin van Paemel*" (1903) by Cyriel Buysse (1859 - 1932), a particularly intriguing possibly by too many still underestimated even forgotten writer. We are (have been) huge film buffs and have only rarely been moved by theatre productions, but our fondest memories are of a performance of this iconic play by theatre group NTG in an inspiring direction by Dirk Tanghe (1956). The journey to and further life in the city brought with it terrible social misery. We ourselves would live for a very long time from 1982 in a very old workers' house in Ghent - Stokerijstraat 57; halo! - where it was very pleasant with, among other things, some great neighbours (and only one lesser one). But it was a neighbourhood that must have been rotten with poverty for decades. Many people must have felt terribly displaced, like drowning people in a sea of stone and

smoke. The enormous cloud of smoke from the locomotive in "*The Kiss*" by Masereel certainly stood for itself, but also for the unimaginable filthy smoke development due to the burning of masses of coal, both for the housing and for the countless factories and innumerable small workshops. One cannot imagine it, but for the nose and other human parts all these cities must have caused daily certain discouragement and simply health breakdowns. Nevertheless, and even more so for the fortune-seekers who finally wanted to taste the fruits of a better life via the medium of the city, the hormones raged continuously or daily at the sight of other interesting appearances like this woman. "*The Kiss*" is a "*Big Yes*" for life - also or especially ultimately in the city that all together yielded enormous advantages for most of its inhabitants.

We said that we would touch upon a political dimension in this paragraph. We ourselves have no idea how long we have known the work "*The Kiss*" by Frans Masereel - a very long time - or when we first encountered it. You undoubtedly have one or more memories of when you first met a person or event, such as the birth of the first child, or ... Our personal memory contains an enormous number of images, so much so that we can sometimes recognize works of visual art that we had never seen before but of which we certainly recognize the style or the hand of the master. We have no idea where studies exist on something like the psychology of the image, but it goes without saying that probably every person, at least in our Western culture dominated by images for two millennia, has been influenced and marked by one or more images from a very young age. In our study on Emile Claus, we give an analysis of the comic strip work of the famous duo "*Suske en Wiske*" in which we try to show the connection between the portrait of Jenny Montigny by Emile Claus and this comic strip "*Het brommende brons*" ("*The humming bronze*" + 1971). We read that comic strip at the time itself or were between seven and nine years old. That reading and especially one image from that comic strip clearly made a lifelong impression. It goes without saying that what happened during the Second World War throughout almost all of Europe left an indelible impression on every person. WWII came barely after the end of the First World War; there were only 22 years between them! That means nothing other than that an incredible number of Europeans were confronted twice by these terrible events. Frans Masereel was known for his entire life - which can be ridiculed or respected - as a world improver: he wanted to contribute to the ideal of a better, that is a more beautiful and more just world. With no place for war or room for healing its wounds. His and our "*The Kiss*" dates from 1924 or very shortly after the end of WWI at the end of 1918. Is it too much to ask of the human eye and then the human memory to have received this image with the greatest possible sensitivity and ... political processing!? We have been able to read or study relatively little throughout our lives, not least in picture books such as art books - often, although not always, with much 'text'. In Belgium or at least in Flanders, the publisher Mercatorfonds has been at a very high level since 1965 and others such as the Davidsfonds, Lannoo, Ludion ... have also contributed their share to artistic popular education. As mentioned, we ourselves do not know of any studies on the reception and further effects of images. Of course everyone knows something about the value or especially the power of what is called propaganda; Nazis and Soviets were formally masters in their times. And what is (capitalist) advertising other than a very intelligent and successful, because it absolutely certainly achieves its goal (increasing sales) continuous brainwashing with images and some text? But we ask you directly: what reception and effect have images by Frans Masereel, internationally at least in the then Europe and especially most in Western Europe, had on at least sensitive souls?

The question can be asked differently. Did art like this discussed "*The Kiss*" function as a stained glass window, as a window, as glasses, as a telescope ultimately with a view of or

insight into the so-called better future? That future meant for this Europe finally better international structures or mutual cooperation - or negatively and at the same time unimaginably positively formulated with "*Never again war*!". We are not thinking here of the foundation of the UNO at the end of WWII. We are thinking very precisely of the beginning of the Benelux between 'only' a few neighbouring countries, including Belgium, the country where Masereel was born and grew up but where he was not wanted until the end of the 1920s because of his anti-war attitude and actions and even entering the territory was "*Verboten*!". Did Masereel, as that great and very productive graphic artist and by very many famous European writers beloved because by them asked as an illustrator, leave a deep and lasting impression on a number of interesting readers? Somewhere now people are, and are constantly influenced, simply overwhelmed by information. The internet is very interesting but scrolling and rolling with a smartphone makes countless young and old people extremely stupid. It is also both ridiculous and tragic as well as fundamentally undemocratic and inhumane that the algorithms that constantly control and manage these people may not be consciously or openly communicated to them, so that they would get to know themselves better in this scientific way! Talk about irony over sarcasm. By the way, try to view even one interesting image or important work of art on such a ridiculously small screen of a smartphone. That alone is a reason for us not to purchase such a technical thing. It will probably have all kinds of really useful functions, such as in the field of advancing care of personal health and certainly for older and disabled people. It is theoretically interesting but almost certainly in terms of intellectual, personal archaeology unachievable, to examine the Bildung of the following people, the Frenchmen Jean Monnet (1888 - 1979) and Robert Schuman (1886 - 1963) and Konrad Adenauer (1876 - 1967). After the eternally reasonable Belgians, willing to compromise, had given the starting signal with the Benelux, these gentlemen, among others and very strongly inspiring, would be involved in the establishment of first the "*EGKS*" or "*ECSC*" or "*the European Coal and Steel Community*" (1952). Which would therefore (...) result in the EEC later EU. And the latter is without the slightest doubt, although of course doubtful and constantly discussed in terms of the 'modalities', the most important political organization ever on the wide European continent. Do you not like peace - and prosperity? We ask you further: do these three extremely important European politicians consequently - we reason the other way around? - among others, have especially read and watched images of Frans Masereel, in addition to the books of his friends like Stefan Zweig? In addition to of course their own extremely penetrating personal and political experiences throughout WWI and WWII.

It is again the story of intention and effect. It was without a doubt one lifelong drive of Ghent citizen and world citizen Frans Masereel to contribute to a better, more open, freer, more peaceful and art-oriented world. His lasting popularity has to do with that, or with the fact that he has, as it were, 'simply' created moving images such as with the popular "*The Kiss*", or - and that will probably be it - for both reasons. Of course, the talkative Frans Masereel has spoken about the technique of his mainly graphic art. But not as a main component of his life and work. From these considerations we may conclude on our tiptoes or at least slightly suggest out loud that Frans Masereel has had a great political influence, more specifically in a gigantically important area. He helped make the establishment of the EU possible, as an intention. Or as an effect?

5. North by Northwest - next to all cardinal directions?

In the few dozen far too few portraits of attractive women that we show throughout this all in all and by definition and per time eternally too modest website - an introduction for you that

you may consider as a gentle suggestion for your own further research - we are somewhat happy that we also have double portraits. They can be counted on one hand like the unique works of Rembrandt and Rubens: **See Rembrandt + See Rubens, The Artist and His First Wife** .... With the remarkable work of Victor Delhez we even have a multiple human pardon female representation and thereby strongly symbolic: **See Victor Delhez** ... In the now discussed artwork "*The Kiss*" by Frans Masereel from 1924 we also have a double portrait, apparently somewhat less pronounced than the two mentioned and classic examples. In this case we see the couple - right? - in a side profile. That cannot be otherwise because the young woman and the young man are in completely separate, as it were, opposite places/buildings - on a higher floor! In that way we cannot see their eyes. That would have been technically perfectly possible at least in part by showing the open eyes through their visible profile to the viewer - on the viewer's side.? It is even funny - and it looks so feminine - that the theoretically visible eye of the kissing woman is not even visible because it is hidden away behind her lank hair. But hey, who kisses their beloved while looking? In the entanglement of "*The Kiss*" all looking must disappear. Because, isn't looking always a distance to, a deviation from what is being looked at? Or is it not, as in all kinds of also previously European traditions, the socially obligatory or otherwise use of the headscarf by women, so to speak, counterproductive!? Doesn't the covering or "*die Beschränkung*" make the covered thing even more attractive? Isn't eroticism, among other things or especially, at its most spicy when not depicted or of course through the use of suggestion?

Frans Masereel can certainly be called a world improver, a now probably old-fashioned and especially a loaded one. We all know quite a few and very important, very influential 'improvers' of the world, left and right and especially far left and far right; all together with tens of millions of dead on their so-called conscience aimed at improvement. In our fairly intensive research into political behavior around WWII we also came across it once from the mouth of a busy Flemish-minded national socialist, also very coincidentally a member of a very world-improving Catholic family for decades; see for instance Noël De Smet (1922) in the political family tree of the Goebeert family from the Belgian city of Ronse.

Frans Masereel came from a liberal background and met, among others, as a teacher the very important Belgian - Ghent graphic artist Jules De Bruycker (1870 - 1945), a giant among European graphic artists who is apparently not well-known internationally. That seems to be the fate of many great artists because in a quantitative way there are actually too many qualitatively important artists, certainly in an art historically insanely rich region like this part of the North Sea; how can we continue to pay them all a certain amount of attention? In any case, Jules De Bruycker was a man who was technically certainly much smarter or more capable than Frans Masereel would ever become. Former pupil and soon great and famous master Frans Masereel would always keep it somewhere reasonably rough, albeit very plastic or swirling or full of life. Both had one substantive thing in common throughout their lives: the attention and love for the common people. Jules De Bruycker would de facto never leave the three towers of Ghent while Frans Masereel (who much later after WWII would have these Three Towers printed in no less than 750 copies!) would also be forced by the circumstances of WWI to become an internationalist. He was without a doubt a true European avant la lettre of hard, institutional politics. In that sense he is nothing more than a forerunner or even a pioneer of the ... EU. And that EU is, despite all the justified criticism and the tons of cynicism also within European politicians, without the slightest doubt the most important political and economic achievement on this continent. That EU is much more important than what one could call a form of shadowy predecessor with the "*Pax Romana*". In the relatively

short history of this EU, a number of political founding fathers invariably come to light, which goes without saying. But let us not forget the role of artists, great writers such as Stefan Zweig (1881 - 1942) and Romain Rolland (1866 - 1944), and not least the visual artist and their mutual friend Frans Masereel. We see current European top artists - often, mostly or always starting out as world improvers or 'critical' minds - do nothing 'on this extremely important political and value level, other than play the intangible cynics with 'comments' or internally masturbate artistically by openly or implicitly admitting to copying great previous masters and above all; profit from the gigantic free internal market or make money galore if they are not already licking the soles of the super-rich, especially in the USA or, God forbid, in Dubai and the surrounding area. Human. And pathetic. And un-Masereel. And un-Brueghel.

Just like this unique and to this day at least in Flanders very beloved artist Jules De Bruycker, Frans Masereel did not remain an unworldly artist throughout his life, now purely formally seen. That was also impossible because both wanted to tell stories, indeed, in the drastically deep yet broad and far-reaching footsteps of one of the top graphic artists in history, next to almost en passant because for only ten years the most important painter of all time, the one and only Pieter Brueghel (the Old, circa 1525 - 1530 - 1569): **See Pieter Brueghel** .... Frans Masereel would like to return to this Brueghel in all kinds of work. Throughout the crushing experience of WWI, Masereel was a pacifist in heart and soul and drawing and engraving hands - just like ... Just like Pieter Brueghel indeed. And despite that obvious attitude, that is to say, giving not the most pleasant messages for those in power, he was enormously popular because he was very quickly gathered by the great and the good of the European world, read the absolute nobility, read the gentlemen of standing who led armies and death squads through cities and regions. We strongly suspect that Frans Masereel would never experience that remarkable phenomenon.

As mentioned, Frans Masereel was not at all a revolutionary image maker or seen on a 'purely' art historical or formal level. He was certainly never an artist of the genre of Igor Stravinsky (1882 - 1971), whose "*Le Sacre du Printemps*" (1913) to this day sounds both extremely modern or progressive and nothing other than deeply classical: this work too is as incompletely completed, as "... *begotten, not made*, ...". It is unique from an art historical or historical point of view, although 'somewhere' a final or 'human' end point of evolution in art can be grasped. Moreover, Frans Masereel must have met quite a bit of the tsunami-like artistic talent there in the 1920s when he lived in Paris, but that has had a strikingly no lasting influence on his work; correct us if you .... Frans Masereel was above all a storyteller, knew his tradition like the back of his hand and was essentially nothing more than an artist and observer of the living environment, as dozens must have been driven by the Reformation in the 16th century. Everyone knows masses of studies about the turbulent 16th century in which Protestantism arose, both as a religious and political movement. That was accompanied by countless and extremely quickly distributed prints throughout a large part of Europe; long live the art of printing, not only of the book but also and together that of the new graphic printing possibilities! It is a mystery to us why we have not even encountered a standard work but a whole fleet of art books about those - rebellious - prints. They could certainly stand in your private library next to the countless works of Frans Masereel! In the 16th century, people had ships with sails or on the small canals pulled with ropes next to carriages with horses. From the 19th century, people had mechanically powered packet boats and trains. Frans Masereel loved the delicious and inspiring wriggling in the graphics and paintings of Brueghel. Who does not share this love to this day and certainly even more tomorrow (this superlative is therefore logical or de facto impossible but you understand; it is a figure of speech)? To put it

bluntly; Masereel had a certain aversion to the "*horror vacui*"; his works are 'full' albeit perfectly organized or directed; behold and walk through this "*The Kiss*"!

We just talked about that, more specifically about the architecture of the images within this image. We used the term "*pillars*" both literally and figuratively. There are people who move because they are on their way. There are stars who move because they shine with their light and will soon disappear. There are no less than seven pieces of rotating figures (can one give that a professional name? We thank you in advance for the next edition in 20xx), in themselves images of the globe itself that turns and turns - including every day around its axis, with light and dark, work and sleep ... Frans Masereel knew his formal classics, including the horizontal line and something like visual rhyme. So many visual rhymes or metaphors for the movement of life, life in the city! Moreover, Masereel had moved from Belgium before WWI, but he knew his country inside and out and knew it, among other things or especially, as a country with the most densely populated railway network in the world, something that would never be repeated elsewhere. And that had, besides the possibilities of pure travel to the countryside and the other glorious cities of Flanders, that advantage that was purely political and clerical; keeping the workers in industrial areas where the absolute majority had become red and also somewhat less liberal, in the countryside and therefore under and in the church tower. For a long time after WWII, masses of Flemish commuters would experience incredibly long hours on trains every day to go to work in Walloon industrial areas. A few hundred thousand of them could not cope with that and would - together with quite a few Flemish farmers - settle permanently in Wallonia alone or with the nuclear family for a better life. The losers would almost immediately put their own language aside instead of trying to be bilingual ...; Flanders, after 1585 a breeding ground for artists and ... collaborators? That is also an irony of history because in the meantime, however you look at it, Wallonia - until half a century ago one of the richest regions in the world because of - has become economically a half-lame horse that is largely kept alive by Flemish subsidies on a drip, so to speak. But let us stay with the train, of which the well-known motto is also spread in these times: "*The train is always a bit of a journey.*". That was also the case in 1924 and partly or largely pure and hard economic reality. In both perspectives, however, it was the means for smaller people, from the countryside or from smaller towns or dormitories, to get to the fully alive city - even if it was for a short day's journey, with friends, with family, indeed with the sweetheart or already the mistress. It was also no coincidence that in the larger cities next to the most important stations - in any case not the freight stations - there was an almost explosion of brothels; or they were - also - located on the edge of the large ports. The train in this famous 1924 performance by the ever-looking and sketching Frans Masereel was at the same time a purely sociological given or image that literally had its functional importance in any representation of an urban scene. It was just as naturally at the same time a metaphor for something like what one could see as the unbridled freedom of the smaller person. The really rich already had their cars then. It was above all that more or more intense of a metaphor because a person cannot live on images alone - although he can get very seriously excited by images, at least used to a certain extent because there is always the second law of Gossen (Hermann Gossen, 1810 - 1858) or the (declining) marginal utility. However. Remain hopeful and realistic! To Gossen or not to Gossen, one can never get enough of love, beauty and silence.

Frans Masereel was a man of flesh and blood, full of life with quivering flesh and boiling blood. He was known all his life for his sexual lust for life or a healthy person. Where the heart is full, the sketch pads must overflow and the train was therefore something for Masereel to laugh with say somewhat - somewhat - to go and sublimate with. But he didn't

make it too difficult or without too many "*layers*" (hahaha) for his target audience. That target audience was ... everyone. In the meantime, in 1924, there had been city trains for a while, call them trams and metros. Trams and of course metros had one extra special characteristic: they liked to dive into the depths and needed shafts, tunnels or large tubes for that. We must then take a step further chronologically and mention another giant of an artist annex chronicler of the 20th century. This train as part of "*The Kiss*" by Frans Masereel, a performance that has a kiss between two people as its main subject, is nothing more than a formally proposed but substantive doubling or reinforcement of this kiss. More; it is the next stop; trains simply have multiple stations on their railway! We are now referring to the daily final phase of this kiss! Indeed, we are thinking of nothing other than the famous final kiss between the actors Cary Grant (1904 – 1986) and Eva Maria Saint (1924) in "*North by Northwest*" (1959). Director Alfred Hitchcock (1899 – 1980) has them lie down in their train carriage, kissing, and then ... Then their train enters a tunnel! You understand. Masereel was, as just mentioned, generally and lifelong known for his fairly large libido, while he was also reportedly a loyal friend of former girlfriends. You can read that and much more in the exceptionally good biography "*Masereel. Een biografie*." ("*Masereel. A Biography*.") by the Belgian Joris Van Parys (1944). This biography was published in 1995 and has already been translated into German (1999) and French (2008) for the international reader: fine and you can still expect it in English, in the year AD 2??? As we hope! Joris Van Parys has more bio arrows on his strong bow, by the way.

In absolute terms, that book by Joris Van Parys or more concretely the life of Frans Masereel himself is one long plea not only for art but art for everyone or for the people or fellow human beings. It is also one long ode or plea to want to live. As a true Ghent citizen of his time and perfectly bilingual in addition to being a resident of la douce France for so long, it is fitting to conclude this piece about Frans Masereel with the famous ending of the poem by the famous Ronsard, who is also famous for it:

"*Donc, si vous me croyez mignonne,*
Tandis que vostre âge fleuronne
En sa plus verte nouveauté,
Cueillez, cueillez vostre jeunesse:
Comme à ceste fleur la vieillesse
Fera ternir vostre beauté."

(Idem, see supra but for this infinite beauty we will repeat that information here; Pierre de Ronsard, circa 1524 - 1585, "*A Cassandre*", 1545 + and it is therefore time that you, o non-French speaking, start learning this unique language - in addition to Dutch of course!).

6. An afterplay - very short.

Now – for how much longer? – in communist China there is a camera hanging on every possible and especially impossible street corner, on every floor of the countless apartment blocks, in every public building that also has a corner (and where there are toilets, separate for women, men and male party members), on … You can go on if you like but we are fed up with it by now. With excellent facial recognition of course: someone is doing something well – or it is done even better! The ancient medieval town of Kortrijk, which is unsightly on a Chinese scale, has also introduced this fuss. Under a liberal mayor, no less. We wonder how a free-born, free-spirited and open artist like Frans Masereel would have depicted his "*The Kiss*" under these circumstances, these cameras. Pardon: would he have dared to depict it?

Pardon: he would never have depicted it anyway because he had been in prison for a long time in both China and Kortrijk. From the inception of the idea of this work.

Jean-Marie De Dijn, EU, september 2024.

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Liegende mit Frucht (Lady with Fruit), Fernando Botero (1932 – 2023), Bronze sculpture, bought in 1998 by the city of Bamberg.

T.I.S..

.....

Lucella alias Luce Caponegro, May Oostvogels (1960), acryl, 2022, private collection.

Forget La Loren, forget Claudia Car. Per favore forget! The two most exciting Italian women of the last 100 years are by all male means in the first place Anna Magnani (1908 - 1973) and in the second nearest to first place Luce Caponegro (1966), also known as Selen, old Greek for Moon. The latter is still alive and kicking, grazie, mille grazie alla Santissima Madonna Maria, Madre di Dio, to whom she is like a decent a bit older schoolgirl praying every single day - even before sipping her cappuccino with her still unpainted but eternally sultry lips, sweet as fresh slices of panettone from artista del leccare Giuseppe Mascolo.

But if we think of the said goddesses of the Italian screen, Sophian Loren (1934) and Claudia Cardinale (1938), they exist in myriad images, moving of course and even more immobile, as photographs - but not in portraits as drawings or paintings. Fortunately, one can still find some charming ritratti of Anna Magnani in that huge image library of the worldwide web.

Even luckier, we've met a Belgian who, while not calling himself a fan of Luce Caponegro, because he claims he is nowhere to be found in the long waiting lists of her social media, is a lover of her aura next to an art patron - in his way, quantitatively modest as well as qualitatively ambitious.

We respect his wish for anonymity and listen briefly to his story. To cut a long story short, he tells us that he met the female painter May Oostvogels by visiting a shop where he at the parkinglot actually... To make it indeed short, one thing led to another; a portrait based on a photograph. What portrait! As a woman and with her belated vocation as an artist, May Oostvogels has like no other managed to capture the delicacy of the eternal Italian beauty of La Luce or Lucella - the working name of this portrait. For example, our lover of the phenomenon Lucella told us how on a very sunny afternoon he entered the studio of May Oostvogels, where the portrait on the easel was ready, and how he was struck by it almost as Bernini (1598) - 1680) depicted the rays from the "*L'Estasi di Santa Teresa d'Avila*".

And those eyes, those ... a rose is a rose is ... The most beautiful eyes in the world! While the eyes of Bette Davis (1908 - 1989) are world famous and beautifully sung about, they are dead and can only be seen on the silver screen and in photos. These playful, deep, naughty, wise, fresh, aristocratic eyes, this Pesche Ripiene with a little touch of Amaretto, The Eyes of La Luce or Lucella, they can not only be seen on Luce Caponegro's social media but just every day. Because she lives - she breathes - she works - she eats - she sleeps - she hums; every fresh day. Any straniero would be jealous of the Ravennati for less.

She flourishes indeed in Ravenna. And just this Italian city is proclaiming itself officially as la città delle donne - an English translation would be an offense towards the heavenly and seductive language from the boot of Europe, the most beautiful country in the world. You now know where in that country the most attractive eyes are. If you can't go that far every day, you can now admire this portrait of La Luce, Lucella, Luce Caponegro, on this website among other very historically very attractive women.

Jean-Marie De Dijn, EU, 2023.

PS. We find it remarkable and certainly necessary to mention that this portrait is 'only' signed on the back by May Oostvogels.

PPS. We are an independent and rather idealistic person, lifelong. We believe we may emphasize that we personally want nothing to do with the modern commercial and press activities of Luce Caponegro, without going into that further. In this portrait project we met her briefly twice. And wrote to her more. And that was/is it. She never showed any interest in this project, not least because - like a tiger with 1,000 legs - she has many projects of her own origin. We think that in the meantime we have shown some sympathy and hopefully some empathy for this intriguing and fine woman. As for us, we have learned a lot again. And let us all wish her a thousand years of beautiful life!

The ephemerality of the human appearance of women in social media?

Eternal attraction in the art images of La Bella Lucella, aka the Ravishing Ravennata, Luce Caponegro.

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Introduction.

You can give her a flower, fresh and almost daily, but then it's cut. Then it will inevitably wilt very quickly - even faster indoors than outdoors. You can plant flowers for her, in the garden or, if space is limited, on the balcony. If you're handy and have plenty of time, you can give her a lasting name as a flower, because you can vary an existing flower species so much that you get a new one. And, of course, name it after her - in Latin or a language of eternity! You can sing her praises as a flower in a poem, and hope it becomes a classic. That's always possible. You can also immortalize her in a visual work of art, in various ways. We, we love flowers, at home and in the garden, poems and works of art. We also love to think, to come up with new or newer ideas. And we've come up with this idea: a text for a woman as a flower. So that she can bloom eternally, in her thoughts and feelings, and in yours as well.

As a poet once wrote - or prescribed:

> "*For, lady, you deserve this state,*
> *Nor would I love at lower rate*."

And? What will you come up with for ...? How much do you love?

Based on the photo shown here of Lucella, a pet name for Luce Caponegro, five portraits have been made of this exceptionally attractive, caring, powerful, cheerful, curious, inspiring - in short, legendary - woman. The works are much better in person, because these photos were taken by - er - amateurs like ... (don't ask, please). May these portraits one day be publicly exhibited somewhere in la bella Italia. And indeed, alongside new, Italian portraits of La Bella Lucella, Luc'Amore, Lulu-Luce, or La Più! Here are five artistic interpretations, all by female artists, in alphabetical order:

+ Steffie Campaert (Belgium), 2023, acrylic, Per Amore Della Luce;

+ Katrijn Jacobs (Belgium), 2023, watercolor (Versione Uno + Versione Due);

+ May Oostvogels (Belgium), 2022, acrylic;

+ Brenda Willems (Netherlands), 2022, pencil, charcoal, and metallic paper.

To La Più, My Fair Lady Lucella. Perhaps there is a way to be even more Fair, through Images, always First Images (Prima Vera), always True Images (Vera Icon).

+ Note to the reader: These texts date from 2021 and were provided to Luce Caponegro at her own discretion. They were slightly revised in October 2025, only to reflect the changing times, and are only now appearing publicly. Those who have known us for a lifelong while know that it goes without saying that we not only wrote these texts ourselves (because...) but also offered them for free (for the same motives).

.....

A. Possible project "*(La?) Luce passa attraverso (La?) Luce".*

Or better: "*La Luce è la Musa*"?

I remember having read once that you hope to be remembered as a woman who was taking care - of other women with the benessere. Obviously this can be remembered as an idea or ideal but also via an IMAGE. And indeed, this ideal should not be restricted to women alone - why not taking care of men, as if they are mainly even only producing negativitity or bitterness towards you? Here undoubtedly you seem to be ambivalent since while producing so much images of you via social media, together with some conversations (I have no idea how far or deep this can go), you are constantly searching the attention of men anyway - or do you have female fans as well or even ... alone?

I have never been on your social media and thus I do not know any of your representations there but have seen some modern or recent images of you on the www. Some - all about the benessere - I have selected for the artists and one has been chosen by the first of them. I have kept this image for the other artist. So this is ONE possible (and real of course) image you are - later because once in you possession as an actual piece of art - able to transform via social or other media and later in the same media or, in my chosen cases via different and wellknown patterns of art like exhibitions.

1) regular portraits about you from .... 202.? + in case resulting in big exhibition in december 2026 = your 60th birthday.

1) TARGET = multy layered!

1) PERSONAL function = the FIRST MEANING of MODEL = you - Luce Caponegro - can become very practically THE most wanted, desired say used or favourite MODEL of Italians artists to reproduce or better to be insipred by to 'reproduce = indeed to become the most important model for modern painters throughout Italy (and .....??? you never know how a ball will roll - when rolling!). Anway, you like to be in the centre of attention, you produce

yourself lots of images but only photo's. Why don't you try the 'real' or at least much more deep and appreciated images!? And of course, together with the actual artist, you can choose which kind of image or representation in the sense I have chosen now BUT as YOU like it; the way of your taking care of .... Obviously some artists, for sure when male, will try more or less subtle 'other' representations. That is the art of mankind since in fact all artists know something of your older images. It is up to you to deal with it and, why not, to find eventually reconciliations between two or more differents kinds of lives say images. You resist the idea of salvation; you seem to be obsessed that you are even .. doomed? Otherwise I do not see the root or 'necessity' of your obsession of the non-possibility of salvation; who is dreaming anyway of salvation than the one who is obsessed by it? Wouldn't it be kind of a salvation if you get the most wanted or desired woman to be painted by - many - (Italian ...) painters, drawers, ... You can doubt this but as I show in the second formula - Homemade portraits - this is a formula hence success you have in YOUR own hands, the hands of Luce Caponegro. You are a businesswoman anyway; use these facilities for maybe this special dream also?! If I were you, i would risk it since there is simply even nothing to loose than only to gain; nice or a little bit less attractive drawings, paintings.. Where are you waiting for?

2) SOCIOLOGICAL/CULTURAL function = the SECOND meaning of MODEL as MODELLO or the EXAMPLE or, a little bit scientifically spoken, the PARADIGMATIC MODEL of Italy, EU, the world - hehe). In fact the MODELLA coming from the Latin MODULUS or the CRITERION (criterio). But that not in the literal or pure artistic way of speaking but in its sociological meaning! Of course it can not be the intention that every where painters and so on start to model their own concrete models - other human beings - towards your face, appearance ... Although this is in the modern world very often the case (one famous woman starts to wear XX and all girls even boys start to wear exactly the same kind of XX). This could be an effect only in this sense that for instance you may use certain clothes who may become very fashionable as a result = a little bit similar with the so called influencers (?).

2.1. It IS AN applied role or paradigmatic function = YOU will be followed by other, younger or older ... women (and even men?) = you will introduce via your social capital but evidently by the value of (many) paintings, drawings, ... the wish for individuals (probably mainly women) to get also their own portrait. With this initiative you could be groundbreaking (innovativo) = to make a new (in fact always existing) and presumbably 'lasting' trend. This is very funny in a way, since the effort of one individual to get - many - by definition own of individueal portraits could be leading to the innovation of much more individual portraits being made so a sociological trend!

2.2. Is there a feed or need for portraits in the purely artistic way? Well, I checked some Italian modern artists or modern leading 'names' via this up to date (2025) website:

Contemporary Italian Painters You Need to Know

Nearly all conceptual! Not one is still making portraits. I am amazed and nearly ... ashamed in their place. By the way; the most important or world wide recognised Belgian (Flemish) painters are producing more than regurarly portraits, which are of course (...) for normal people unpayable; Luc Tuymans (1958), Michael Borremans (1963) and others. About these others, see the recent exhibition (Ends on November 2, 205):

SMAK | Painting After Painting - A contemporary survey from Belgium

So yes, I am absolutely sure there is a so called market in Italy or in ...., and that less rich people are also highly interested to be the 'subject' of a portrait - that they may eventually even not be able to buy say to pay themselves. In fact, would you live in Belgium I guess painters as Luc Tuymans, Michael Borremans and co would be very interested in you. Portaits were centuries long very wished; why should this need have disappeared even more when images of so called self portraits are mechanically that easily made and instantlly dispersed by social media with little or no deep relevance - than the sending itself (?). Informatics does have changed the world a lot but absolutely sure not completely. People do care for valuable and lasting moments, between themselves and yes, for instance also throughout images like portraits of themselves or of dear ones.

It is important to understand that function 2 is just an option in the sene of "*You never know*", but that function 1 is sure in its consequences - if you are interested in it at all. I would be very surprised if you were not

3) Very PERSONAL function = see 1 + 2 = your image or reputation will have a significant other, perhaps - er - higher or more valuable dimension. All those photos you take, clothed or unclothed, have - sorry - in my opinion little or no artistic or deeper value. Okay, they are or can simply be pleasant, and so on, and that's fine. Do you prefer it that way? Do you want to be an artist in the sense that you are part of the creation of an image of ... you by 'one' artist - and even many others?

4) ADDITIONAL SOCIOLOGICAL function = a kind of cultural struggle with the unbearable lightness (Milan Kundera) of the photo or photographic image = millions are posted worldwide every day (do you have any idea how many you've posted of yourself—and perhaps members of your circle of friends?). But 1) what has meaning, what is moving... 2) what is lasting or forever? Even literally = at some point, all kinds of photos are destroyed online = = maybe in cache only? But REAL images through paintings, etchings, drawings... will continue to exist if, of course, they have any value. Also, with my ideas about MULTIPLE reproductions or more images through art by you, this kind of image through this art medium will certainly multiply its own power. More precisely: the more beautiful paintings, drawings... by you, the more this special image of you will endure, will dominate.

++ And! Don't underestimate the effect of reproduction in books, and therefore also of a successful portrait! This is pure luck, of course, but the more you try—see the second "self-made" portrait exhibition—the greater the chance of this effect occurring (even as a ... goal—but you know, I'm exaggerating a bit, aren't I?). Can you imagine a truly successful "Luce Caponegro" hanging in real life on the... and many more available through art books, for example, a monograph by one artist? It would make you and your loved ones proud, very proud, and simply happy. If you truly want to be remembered as..., this is a unique opportunity, although you do need a bit of luck.

5) MENTAL and SOCIOLOGICAL function; not only to the so called young woman is advocated or praised by the representation of the painting, drawing..... but the ever shining woman = like the Englsih say "*Right or wrong, my country*" = "*Young or old, I (am) a woman*". A tribute to the woman who is becoming older, becoming wiser, becoming more ... interesting. It is a small step for mankind but it can entail a bigger for ... (free to Armstrong landing on the moon) = a special time for ... by .. Luce Caponegro from Ravenna! Act local, think big?

++ There is something of a very big hope and show of courage in this train of thoughts. In a way everybody 'knows' you, of course you are extremely extravagant and continously looking for public attention (not my cup of tea but it is my aim here to think about you and in your interest). There is no way ever the beat the algorythms of the internet - I am so sorry. But, THIS is a superb and probably the only way to beat or at least to improve fabulously the representation of your - new - image. Like this it can give lots of women (and men even) an individual boast to try something similar. Extremely much women see themselves as too fat, too too... In this superb way, which would fit you as a tailormade cloth anyway, you give a message of tremendous hope or optimism; everybody has SECOND (or ...) chance - and chance for a HIGHER goal! There is no mental coach or psychologist or whatever wise man, woman or guru who can give you - and others through your example - than this idea or ideal (by this small philosopher). A real or painted or ... IMAGE is so POWERFULL, so CONVINCING, so MYSTERICAL, so ..... It can and WILL speak still to Italians, Chinese, ... within 200 or more years. Try to look for the famous Madonna (Maria Lactans; later forbidden by the Council of Trent) of Jean Fouquet, hanging in the museum of Antwerp. So appealing, so famous, after more than 500 years.

2) **Strenghts.**

2.1. You still have a certain amount of personal capital, indeed, also through your well-known image. But how long will that last? With real art imagery - through real art representations - you're simply socially active for much longer. You can even create your own image production, thus creating a visual tradition. I simply don't know anyone in the world who is similar; who has ever attempted such an image project? No one, because influencers and the like are only concerned with images and photos. There's such a huge opportunity, and you're truly attractive; you not only have the looks, but also a real AURA! This is rare. But something needs to be organized = see my first two (of two) art portrait events, especially the second one. I assume many artists, whether male or female, would be very happy or even surprised if you invited them to take portraits of you! This way, of course, you can meet the younger generations, since you're approaching 60.

2.2. Italy is a country that loves women and art.

2.3. You'd give the finger to being the center of attention through all sorts of interviews. You could create a suburban medium here through the art images. You could achieve a higher - highest LEAP - in representing yourself in - public - life. Aren't you more ambitious? Each painting or drawing can in itself be a new opportunity to be publicly represented. If you have narcissistic or... traits, thank that stupid Belgium for all those suggestions. Or have you thought about it before—and never dared to start? Start! You can talk and talk. Jesus, you Italians can talk - haha. Can you also sit for a few hours for a... portrait? Maybe you can ... talk - parole, parole, ... - in the meantime.

2.4. You have (???,000) followers on your usual social media + it seems you can easily reach other media outlets such as newspapers, radio, TV, etc. = now at a higher or broader level; not just regionally but even nationally...?

3) Weaknesses.

As the famous Dutch philosopher Johan Cruyff once said, "*Every disadvantage has its advantage*." Let's apply this common wisdom more precisely! There's a kind of monopoly on

female beauty, held by young(er), supposedly perfect women. But this is changing in recent years; there are (finally) older models. This newer trend means that (...) older women can also be attractively reproduced in commercial settings. Personally, I'm not interested in the social phenomenon of publicity because I'm simply not interested in this world of publicity (I even turned down a few modeling offers as a student; I could probably still be a model—but I eat too much Belgian chocolate), but that's irrelevant here. However, it does mean, by analogy, that older women have regained or are regaining their overall attractiveness; you're over 55, so "older," right? Moreover, and this is my personal opinion, I think the older a woman gets (chronologically speaking), the more beautiful she becomes. In my (...) very personal opinion, this is the case with you. Do you finally remember my old aphorism: "*You can't paint eyes*" or "*You can't paint your eyes*." By the way, you have very expressive eyes. And aren't eyes always said to be the mirror of the soul? Eyes reflect, they can't lie. So getting older should mean you become more stable, wiser... yes, more attractive or beautiful. Long live portraits of older women! Otherwise, if for some reason you suddenly become bitter and visually very bitter (bitterness you can't hide), then the whole project is LOST. I've never looked at your Facebook and Instagram pages, but I assume you haven't stopped posting (recent) photos yet. Have you?

= Growing older brings its own beauty! Don't forget this. I saw once a Croatian grandmother with her husband and granddaughter at a Hungarian spa. Both women had remarkable eyes. I mentioned it (I speak good Polish, so...) and you should have seen their smiles and (even more) beauty—and the man/grandfather was so proud.

++ even extremely important for so many women... = this is so important pedagogically, morally, and existentially... since so many assholes turn to younger women because they're supposedly more attractive. For this, the evolving part of this project is absolutely essential!

++ Of course your own input is very important + I am personally not a fan of so-called aesthetic surgery, maybe only for very small breasts (...) = don't become like Marlene Dietrich = at a certain point no one was allowed to take a picture or film of her anymore!! She couldn't cope with the idea of getting older or becoming so-called 'uglier'.

4) Opportunities

4.1. Generally speaking = your eternal beauty (a bit sad eyes, but absolutely no bitterness) + your social capital (followers, admirers, press via...) + ???

4.2. Through three possible paths; see the three possible portrait manifestations: mosaic, self-made, and... (still to be explored)

4.3. Where do you find all these artists? I have no idea in Italy, and I'm afraid most so-called modern artists do other things, like "constructions." But there are so many supposedly better amateur painters or professionals who, for "reasons," have stayed under the curators' radar. I'm sure there are at least two hundred artists in Italy who can create interesting or successful portraits. CALL + SEE AROUND

++ Oil painting, drawing, pastel... or... mosaic! You know other art media; try them!

Remark or 'warning' or "*Buona Novella*"

I absolutely don't want to make any special existential or philosophical pretensions, other than to help you. I believe you attach extreme importance to your appearance through any media, and this can undoubtedly be attested to by tens of thousands of followers, admirers, or fans. I assume that through these communication channels, you almost always, or simply every time you appear, ultimately appear through your face with other (naturally connected) body parts. In fact, both FACEBOOK (Facebook!) + INSTAGRAM + ??? are primarily based on this, although I know, of course, that "even" messages are generated or can sometimes be the main message. On the other hand, you seem to attach great importance to the phenomenon of shamanism, which isn't exactly my cup of tea because - for me - it is simply incomprehensible in its countless anthropological manifestations; I simply wouldn't know where (in the world) to begin studying it. On the other hand, I ask myself a simple question: does the worldwide interest in social media appearances not contradict what I consider the essential idea of shamanism, namely contact with so-called higher spirits? I'm neither an expert in shamanism - who in the West could ever be?—nor in social media - who on the internet is ever free to do so? - but when I consider them together, I see little to no higher spirits in all our social media. Roughly speaking. I'm a philosopher - thoughts can seem provocative, but are never intended to be offensive), there is most likely a contradiction between shamanism (in its essence, insofar as it can be anthropologically identified as analogous) and social media (as it currently exists).

On the other hand, with your absolutely strong or good or human values and your daring character or mentality, or whatever you want to call it, there can be a genuine encounter or approach, an understanding of yourself, of you and the artist, throughout the entire art process. And this is more specific and most applicable to the creation of portraits of you. This means that during (time is of the essence here) the process of regular portraiture, 'things' will naturally emerge as works of art that will, to some extent, be, or should be, RECOGNIZABLE as representations of you - and which will be marketable simply because of your celebrity or social standing, but for you, there will be, or should be, a process of getting to know yourself better and better. I don't want to joke about it, but who knows, maybe at some point, through the self-recognition of different perspectives discovered by different artists—each simply seeing you in a different way - you might one day discover some kind of true spirit within yourself (little salvations? - hehe).

All in all, one significant and likely groundbreaking consequence might be that you simply want to disappear from Facebook and Instagram and ...., or at least redefine your representation there. Only through... art portraits, because only through them is the real Luce Caponegro - —finally? - visible?

I wish you success and be my guest in all my subsequent thoughts and reflections. Of course, I wish you much success and, above all, happiness. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to reflect on all these phenomena. Incidentally, during my theology studies, I even developed the concept of a "*religiotope*" or a biotope for religious or mystical experiences. Some of the faculty were in chaos and confusion, but they never did anything with it (I later published it in a local magazine). I am not a materialist thinker in a purely philosophical sense (nor in a human sense - I seek no reward, not even personal recognition - it is a gift for the woman who regularly repeats that ALL men were bad for her; I hope I am/was).

Super Short Summary about the 3 ways!

The first goal (mosaic) fits a special and very old Italian tradition, but is expensive and requires a specific location.

The second goal (homemade portraits) is the most obvious.

The third goal (special exhibition via ....) is the most spectacular or exciting, but the most difficult to obtain.

The fourth goal (special variation of 3) is the most charming.

= OPZOEKEN OF NOG VERWERKEN!!!!!

I recommend trying the second option first, then the first.

.....

B. Possibility One. A mosaic in the project.

"*(La?) Luce passa attraverso (La?) Luce*" or better "*La Luce è la Musa*"?

Your portrait via a public or open mosaic. Can you imagine that?

I'm just providing a simple or temporary sketch with ideas. It can/should be (...) specified if you (...) share an interest.

Target:

+ See general text about the purpose of the portrait

+ More precisely, a portrait of you through a modern or new mosaic = resident of Ravenna/Italy + dedicated to care (for women + for men too; tricopi... - I can't pronounce it, haha) + popular/beloved person + woman with culture = Simply (...) a public representation. A caring, delicate, creative, sensitive, hardworking woman, resident of Ravenna = in this way a perfect model or example for all citizens (men and women, residents and tourists, customers and passengers)

+ Interestingly, a mosaic is made in a very similar way to your work = la mano! See:

L'école de mosaïque de Ravenna sur NOVA documentaire (en Français) - YouTube

Strengths.

The church of San Vitale is the place in the world for mosaics, specifically all kinds of PORTRAITS. Take, for example, the famous Theodora, the former empress. Why not come up with, excuse me, introduce LC as the... new empress? You know Andy Warhol's saying: one minute of fame for every person (or something like that?). A little longer here?

Indeed? Who's ever painted a portrait in Italy again—in mosaic? There are countless portraits of noble ladies and gentlemen; from Titian to... (you name them). Try counting them all; even for the most learned art historian, it's impossible. But in mosaics since THAT late Roman period? No one. Or. Probably no one. And certainly very rare. I can't know everything about your art history. So please, ask an art history professor in Bologna, Padua, Rome...! If you don't have a smartphone, go buy one (hee hee). And start making some calls. If you could do this well, you'd instantly become world-famous and revered by all Italians.

But nobody? That must be a bit of an exaggeration. Since. It does exist in New York: CHUCK CLOSE MOSAICS LS by TORCELLINI DANIELE (CUR.) TORCELLINI D. (CUR.) = see online if necessary. Personally, I'm not convinced by these approaches. I should appreciate them at their true value—but I don't go to New York for that. They're simply too large and flat, or too 'easy'" not sufficiently surrounded or supported by symbolism ... I have the impression that the mosaics are of a different type than usual?

But - again - no one is being a bit of an exaggeration. It does exist, and in Ravenna: see this link:

Portraiture in Mosaic (5 days) - Mosaic Art School (mosaicschool.com)

But, or my eternal BUT (1 T!)! It's only a reproduction! And only the face! Where is the whole portrait, where is the iconological indication or symbolic representation of the feelings and/or social importance of the person depicted? And of course, where is the added or artistic value? For you, HANDS must be visible! Hands to care for, touch, communicate with... Or to support your face. Just like in the photo, two artists (BE + HOL) create a portrait in acrylic or charcoal.

Mosaics are a unique asset for Italy, and especially for Ravenna. This medium is very expensive and naturally requires a very specific location. It's not at all a given. If you've found a wealthy admirer/philanthropist, this could be a realistic birthday gift idea. Or if all your admirers or fans contribute a euro, it could also be a viable option. This would, of course, be a wonderful gesture in itself and a social event with many possibilities.

This could be an exciting challenge for many;

= a competition could even be organized. But not too much of a "circus" = you have multiple responsibilities (child + job + ...), and choosing an artist directly (see Parisi for more) has many advantages; growing together in trust and knowledge...

= by a curator = someone from the board of the Ravenna School for Mosaics? They won't believe their ears because of this, and their eyes because of you... Perhaps one of the board members is already a fan, follower, or customer of Tricopi...?

It's not about the money or the skills, but about the PLACE where it has to be made!

++ height + size .....; see below;

Could be exciting challenge for many;

++ It's absolutely impossible to draw an analogy through your mosaic portrait with the portrait (or portraits) in the Church of San Vitale itself. That church, by definition, cannot be touched with new mosaics. A location in Ravenna that might have a connection to or a memory of Theodora would be interesting. It's impossible for me to imagine it from here, but there are several Ravenna residents who know the city intimately and could offer suggestions. One possibility would be simply in front of the entrance to your wellness center. But then it could only be on the ground? At the same time, you don't have eternal physical life. Yet, your desire to care for women in particular—through this business—is universal and timeless. Such a mosaic could therefore be an eternal continuation of this human ideal (in fact, a moral imperative) and, through its powerful symbolic value, transcend all anecdotal representations.

++ technical measures; must be considered by specialists; see further;

++ in a jealous society like Flanders, there would be a lot of ridicule and envy. I suspect, or at least hope not, in Italy. Anyway, in Italy, you have a lot of social capital! So...?!

Opportunities.

Now the fans/admirers (Facebook + Instagram + TikTok + others???) can really be activated, although...

++ I don't know how many (regular) followers you have, but let's look at it idealistically. They give themselves something, because as fans they are concretely together in virtual reality (photos + the idea or mental representation of you), but here the ideal is immersed in the reality of a collaborative artwork. Everyone can later say they (or she?) contributed to it. Most forms of (public) art are funded by a single major sponsor, for example, the Nutella family and... (Ferrero?) who financed the special renovation of the town square with an art project in their hometown, or through the municipality itself. Everyone donates, for example, 10 euros or... per person until you and the artist decide it's enough = as a reward, you could give them all a...? You have plenty of imagination.

++ Who donates? Are they invited to the opening (apertura)?

++ If too much money is raised = be careful, and it would be better to donate when it's officially (and publicly) announced! Make sure you don't get the reputation of trying to solicit money through this cultural initiative. Perhaps help can be found through Ravenna's Art or Cultural Department? I strongly recommend being careful with the organization of this fund, as taxes can ultimately be difficult. A dedicated nonprofit organization would be best. Does anyone know more about that? So, why not partner with the city of Ravenna? There might be a new mosaic attraction coming up!! And the SCHOOL of MOSAICS. They'll know what to do and what not to do.

It would be remarkable to introduce a kind of... NEW kind of mosaic! This should be considered in consultation with the chosen mosaic artist, as this would be a prestigious act for them in more ways than one! I hardly dare to say this, as a Belgian who knows absolutely nothing about this tradition or technique. But the introduction of a new, interesting, large, valuable, and public mosaic could go hand in hand with a so-called purely TECHNICAL introduction. In that case, one would have to contact a specialized engineer! I assume that in a city like Ravenna, there is at least one company that produces mosaics for the market. Of course, your artist can turn to the aforementioned existing specialists.

A variation isn't exactly the new type of material, but even (or also???) a different SHAPE of the mosaic used. I assume all types of mosaics have exactly the same pattern: a square. I assume all handmade pieces are never perfectly square? The goal, of course, is to create A FACE or A PORTRAIT. So the technological question is, are only squares suitable for this? Is it possible, for example, to use mosaics for the face with only the shape of squares, and on the other hand, to develop other types of geometric representations for the background? This can't be unlimited; circles, parallelograms, and...? You never know, maybe there's a mathematical genius somewhere - in Bologna - capable of (you, after all - don't underestimate the influence of a prima donna like you on many men) developing a usable new form. The question, then, is to find the right balance to avoid a circus effect; too much technological contrast between face and background = an inherent danger in this kind of experimentation.

On the other hand, if a mural or a public (large or important) portrait is to be made in RAVENNA and ABOUT the woman of Ravenna, a TECHNOLOGICAL statement could also be made - again, as long as it's convincing. If you create a new SUBSTANTIVE trend, it would nicely coincide with the new trend in formal or TECHNOLOGICAL terms. This multifaceted approach is obvious to me, though of course extremely rare. In poetry, as a matter of analogy, it would mean writing interesting new metaphors combined with a new kind of poetic form (someone EVER invented the sonnet form; who invents the new form?).

If this is simply going too far in terms of work and experimentation, perhaps there's an alternative, which is perfectly fine in itself: introducing your OWN COLOR! Incidentally, (...) this technical alternative doesn't exclude the first. You can develop the new form of a mosaic with a new color variety. Just a moment; I have to kneel before someone who can do that. I'll continue. Even a new color (or variation, of course) demonstrates courage and a love of creativity. I consider such a public portrait "something" in terms of content, so why not explore all possible avenues! And again: this is Ravenna, the capital of mosaic. Sapere aude! Use tradition to change and renew it, and thus strengthen it! From this perspective, you and the artist should, of course, have a conversation. What is your true favorite color + or which color best represents your most important values, such as caring for women – but please don't forget us poor men; oh yes, that tripicoloquatro, or something like that. There's a long history of color symbolism, of course (white = purity, etc. + red...). The question is: are all existing color mosaics sufficient to express certain desired values, and so on? I once read that Leonardo da Vinci knew 33 (?) different variations of green! Inuit don't even know what snow is (that white thing that...), but they do know countless 'snowy' appearances. But this is probably too ambitious to achieve? Still, the sky's the limit = dare to dream + if you try the impossible, you might just encounter the more than average possible. The chance of finding and developing a 'personal' color is extremely small. Perhaps a little pickpocketing and discover a few important (symbolic) colors that will never be forgotten. Luck exists. Humanity is constantly creative. And don't forget, colors love to be named, because words are important; call that color "*Ravenna Red*" or "*Light Yellow/White/...*" or .....??

Why should I study in Ravenna? - Mosaic Art School (mosaicschool.com)

I smell potentially GREAT TALENT = still affordable, AND I'd love to give her a national or even international platform, perhaps on the catwalk! You could give her career a decisive turn. Indeed, the Italian-Persian Parisa DEGHAHINA seems like an interesting artist. I thought it was a very beautiful first name. According to the specialized website "*behindthename.com*" it means "like a fairy" in Persian. Fantastic people, those Persians, with

a high internal culture and wisdom (unless they're religious fanatics, of course, which won't be the case here)! Do you know Marjana Satrapi, for example? I've taught classes using her comics (Persepolis).

aboutme-persian - Parisa Dehghani

parisa.deghahani7@gmail.com (still relevant?)

She seems to be only a (...) student. Of course, I have no idea that the few portraits she shows here in her portfolio are her only work (actually, I only like one, but that probably shows her true potential). But at the same time, delivering that large, artistic mosaic portrait for you might be too much for her, or it might give her the pride she's been waiting for: Luce for Parisa for Luce! Sounds good—right? I'll probably contact her myself for a project for a ... bathroom—haha.

The concept MUST (sorry) absolutely go beyond a simple depiction of the face. I assume you have no objection to being associated or depicted in some way with your ART OF WELL-BEING (wellness), the TENDERNESS of care through the body for the "bearer" of that body!!! What about the iconology of TENDERNESS in Italian and Persian iconography? I have no idea about Persian applied iconography, although I am sure that Persian culture is historically very open. For example, as far as I know, they are the only Muslim believers to have depicted Muhammad, which is normally forbidden in that religion (there is probably a Danish website to prove this, but no internet access at my disposal...). In any case, Parisa lives somewhere in Italy, and the artwork should be—more or less—understood by Italians—and other foreign visitors to this city.

see eventually tenderness, iconography (italiamedievale.org)

Regional and national TV, why not international (BBC, etc.); everyone loves Italy and mosaics? Who knows any new approaches anyway?

++ But why not the Italian president, sir... blah blah, Minister of Culture, Governor, and Mayor, of course, and... And Giorgia Meloni, the first female Prime Minister in the history of your country! Especially if you're organizing something with the city, even if it's a municipal organization. The importance is clear; it revives a very old and typically Italian tradition (1500 years old!!! who?) + together with a very beautiful Italian lady... + = in this case, FOR your store would... = public and somehow personal! And invite Ursula Von der...; she will definitely come for such a unique occasion. In that case, I will definitely come too – for a selfie. I'm a fan...

You might not have enough seats if even 10% of your fans want to come = practical, but a luxury problem.

Possible CO-ACTIVITY:

It's best to limit them, since there's more or less dedicated space and most likely a lot of spectators!

See also CONCERT:

= the creation of the children's opera "*Vola verso la Luce. Atteraggio su una Nuvola*" (*Fly to the Light. Land on a Cloud*) via ??? from Ravenna (a small chamber opera, but now outdoors = time is important, not in winter!) = message of hope, double.... via ...

+ opera written by a (young) Italian composer

Weaknesses.

1) Where and under what administrative regulations?

+ For example, if a municipal permit is absolutely required for the wellness center. It's basically the same everywhere, except on private property that is conspicuously visible to the public (haha).

2) Technically speaking:

1) Mosaic artist = see OPPORTUNITIES
2) Two options:

2.1.) Standing or vertical position = in that case, two dimensions or sides = if both are used = higher costs for mosaic equipment and labor time

+ Naturally, much better visibility + Similar to existing mosaics in San Vitale, which are 'vertical' (also, or at least vertical).

+ Double-sided is an advantage

a) Historically speaking. All mosaics in San Vitale are one-sided by definition, as they are part of walls;

b) This representation can also have metaphorical or symbolic associations, for example, with a text;

c) Potentially interesting; two sides of the model (you) can (even 'necessarily') be shown!

2.2.) Horizontal position or laying down of slightly oblique

+ slightly oblique is better; a) protects against rain and other types of dirt
b) can be remarked much better

+ orientation has to be researched = where are pedestrians walking (clients, ...)?

3. Professional assistance is needed (masonry, concrete). Perhaps it's best to consult with the city architect (if Ravenna has one?) and the city manager.

3) Time. Working on the mosaic takes a very long time. A small portrait of the face is absolutely avoidable and would even be a laughing stock.

+ This weakness can be a great advantage = to build an ad hoc covering over the spot where the mosaic is to be placed. This also means WORK IN PROGRESS. All kinds of students - from Ravenna AND the surrounding area - can come and watch, residents and visitors of Ravenna.. How often does this happen? Probably even in modern Italian history, the first time. I call myself a pragmatic idealist (not the other way around?); use not only the PRODUCT, but also the PROGRESS! In the case of two folded mosaics - obviously expensive - it can be finished in two sessions, but let's (you and...) not exaggerate; one is enough. Right?

.....

Like the Beatles always wrote; *A splendid time is guaranteed for all*! Success and happiness!

.....

C. Possibility Two. Portraits simply (...) at your home!

Sorry, no SWOT analysis diagram at this point.

+ More precisely; through an ever-new, ever-modern portrait of you = resident of Ravenna/la bella Italia + dedicated to caring (for women + some men with triduomono...) + popular/beloved person + woman with culture = Simply (...) a public representation. A careful, delicate, creative, sensitive, hardworking woman, resident of Ravenna (Italy).

= In this way, a perfect model or example for all citizens (men and women, residents and tourists, clients and passengers).

= Can be posted by the artist on social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTakTok and other social media platforms each time the work is finished. Alternatively, the process can be photographed, but I felt this was too personal, especially for the artist, to publish on social media. Can be used in a later exhibition with the artist's permission.

= A truly unique exhibition format worldwide: it can be exhibited as a COLLECTION EVERY 5 YEARS at the MUSEUM of Ravenna or a similar venue for a 60th anniversary, then 65th, 70th, and so on! Reflecting on ONE model (you) by MULTIPLE artists and over a LONGER period; that has never been done before. I am absolutely certain of that. You can have an art manifestation and of course participate in it with various exhibition possibilities AND for a very long time AND with visible evolution, both in content and form. AND you create countless images of yourself on a completely different, let's say higher level than just (sorry) photos.

1) On a technical or instrumental level = just you and some artist. You hardly have to organize anything every five years. You certainly still have a serious responsibility for YEARS with your work, a growing child,... BUT; one art session at home (possibly in a shop, but I wouldn't do that - try not to mix art with work too much) a month is nothing and relaxation.

2) On the level of existence or the 'soul' = will create evolution AND redemption. Yes! Be aware that good portraits HIDE NOTHING of the soul. So if you want to become - so to

speak - the most bitter woman on earth, this will be visible. On the other hand... It will also be visible.

3) On a relatively small scale, it will ultimately have a broad impact on ITALIAN PORTRAIT ART, the noble and eternal art of portraiture in one of the absolute top art countries in the entire world history, a country that seems to have lost something of its exceptional tradition – also in new expressions/forms/styles/signatures.

= so that you can be a STARTING POINT (THE FLYWHEEL) for Italian art in the 21st century. = This is simply unique, for Italy, but certainly also for European and world art.

+ Keep it simple; why not have your portrait always painted in the same place + and in the same pose. It's best to avoid 'special' so-called 'effectual' gestures altogether. Remember, you're not making films, but by definition offering a close-up of a single moment, be it a representation or mirror of your life at that time. Creating interesting gestures can be discussed with the artist. There are two possibilities. Intentionally smiling isn't easy, as you undoubtedly know. Smiling for an hour, for example; not easy, even impossible? Where should you put your hands? I know of a painting by Titian of a Venetian doge in which one hand is disproportionately 'out of proportion' for 'reasons'; to emphasize the person's strength. You work with your hands, so...? But that's a topic to discuss with the artist in question.

++ It would definitely be best to work PER individual artist = take photos each time to remember how you held your hands, for example (?) = a good way to see if there are any changes. Save these photos on your PC in a special file, for example "*Portraits/the name of the individual artist/.....*". This makes them easy to find later.

++ Pets can be a special kind of 'gesture. I assume you still have your dog. Dogs love to sleep on couches, on their owners' legs. Perhaps a valuable tip for someone who loves... artists? Incidentally, oil painting or watercolors are delicate techniques and very suitable for a dog's hypersensitive nose (probably up to three hundred times more sensitive than the human sense of smell?).

+ Organize yourself. You should personally invite artists; painters, illustrators, etc. Sculptors are also possible, but that takes a lot of time (not just sketching) and energy.

++ List of current Italian artists at a higher level via .... in Italy and abroad via ... I suggest you research this yourself, and once you know a few artists, they will probably recommend others themselves. In fact, a maximum of TEN ARTISTS is obvious; one per month and a few months of free time (for them too). If you're superstitious, you can try ... seven, nine, even thirteen... - just kidding (?).

++ You could start by simply contacting a female art history professor in Bologna; look online. She might even be able to give you some suggestions. Who knows what her interest might ultimately lead to: bachelor's/master's programs for students, and so on? You could also simply contact a larger Académie all'Arte, such as those in Ravenna, Padua, Bologna, or other cities not far from Ravenna. In my opinion, it's important to give young people opportunities to grow and, of course, to be as democratic as possible (in terms of quality), since there are more than enough so-called non-professional artists of good quality! For various reasons, I would consider it very important if one day (65th birthday + 70th birthday...) a general exhibition around your portraits would feature both professional and so-

called amateurs. This could stimulate both artists and critics (life is one learning process; let's keep an open mind) and much more. I don't feel like thinking about all/many possible consequences right now. It will also simply be more interesting for you—the center of attention, of course—not to always be painted by so-called "big" personalities like the so-called famous or great artists. I'm sure you have sufficient social skills to navigate these different classes and social environments.

++ I think you have a preference for female artists, or even only for women. Historically, this is a good time, because they are (finally) more than present. Although I didn't find any on an online list of supposedly famous modern Italian artists; none! At the same time, this formula is perhaps a bit too artificial, and you miss potential comparisons between men and women in later exhibitions. Existentially speaking, you emphasize—I think it goes without saying—in 80% of your interviews that you are... for women and that you... think of men. So, let's go for the female artists? In the meantime, perhaps you could address their male partners, if they have little or no hair left, with your knowledge of tripicolomania—just saying, because I can't pronounce that word...

+ An interesting, potentially very fruitful FORMULA*: to try to invite EVERY artist EVERY YEAR for TEN YEARS or more + one per month and ten per year*.

++ A small practical issue. Normally, a good artist only needs one session to create good sketches. But if they want to create an oil painting or a pastel, and not this sketch of our lives, you have to schedule an appointment. This means that in most cases, you only have artists who want to work so intensively; it's absolutely impossible to 'get' several, or even ten, different artists. Still, I found a certain 'high' number intriguing, especially considering the option of a large exhibition for your 65th or 70th birthday.

++ An evolution will, of course, be visible; of the supposedly aging -female - body;

++ Don't forget! The possible, almost evident evolution of the artist himself in this or even another medium is also important! As an amateur art historian and for all future academics, this is a gift from heaven to study. You become known not only for your portraits, but also for the evolution of the artists who created them! I call this a layered approach; for that reason alone, I consider my thesis submitted here almost worth its weight in gold. It's about your life and your reputation. And about evolution and... redemption!?

++ As I mentioned before, this format, to my knowledge, has never been organized in Europe before (nor in...). Of course, there have been artists who regularly painted their loved ones, see for example (the monstrous) Picasso. There are parallels, for example Claude Monet, who painted the same cathedral (Rouen?) 48 times (it could be more, it could be... less), and also his famous garden in London.

+ Apparently, an exhibition in Ravenna is possible in this case, at a location agreed upon with the city of Ravenna, a cultural service, a museum, or...? A commercial gallery is certainly an option, but I'm not a commercially minded person, so I'll leave the decision up to you... It's your project!

+ one unique advantage to this portrait formula: there is very little to organize, except for example one exhibition every five years:

++ if 5 years; 2026 + 2031 + 2036 +... = perfectly feasible; you should rely on volunteers or simply the city of Ravenna employees (the best idea).

++ You love people, so an interesting effect will eventually, or logically, be that these encounters will lead to certain friendships or connections between the model (you, of course) and the artists. And this could also be a starting point for "*La societa dell'amore*" = your very last... evolution - haha? I'll explain it (again?) in (much later) text (I'll try).

+ a very, very important part of the ESSENCE of this style of portraiture = ALWAYS THE SAME setting! YOU are the one who changes - a little (...)—and nothing around you (except the final dog = if I were to have it done by just one artist, I would recommend it)!

++ Portraits can or should always be done at home, in a studio, or... but there should be at most one building or always the same setting. So if you're going to a park, for example, outdoors, consider the season and keep in mind that it won't snow there next year. You have a harbor, even a beach and sea in or near Ravenna. In my opinion, simply your favorite place at home (chair, carriage) is best.

++ Just wear the same clothes: white, purple (something imperial?), or if you're not afraid, even nude. Our beloved Mario Ruoppolo of Il Postino loved "nuda" a lot!

++ In fact, I remember you once expressed your wish to be remembered as someone who cared, by your commitment to the well-being (physical, of course! + even spiritual?) of other women. So this well-being thing is externalized by WHITE CLOTHING like nurses, doctors, and the like. Maybe it's just natural to wear these (white work) clothes? You could actually think, "*If I - LC from R - were dead and had a headstone, which photo would best describe me*?" I always look at these kinds of photos in cemeteries and rarely see anything other than the very last photo of the deceased. I'm sure you know what I mean, because I'm trying to think from your perspective - hehe.

++ Even though you are a woman who absolutely loves fashion, meaning that it is different from the latest fashion, I would not even think of organizing our own fashion line(s). For example, you could make a deal with one or more fashion designers to (regularly) wear something new and attractive or convincing, but certainly not overwhelming? In my opinion, that is a circus, it simply goes too far and I assume that some, or even most, artists will feel used in this way and even permanently stop all collaboration. So a big plea for steadfastness or always more or less the same clothes = You could even give them a special name, something like my SECOND SKIN (mamia seconda pelle?).

.....

D. The agreements with artists are important:

+ A sense of evolution is an option, but I think it's better to have a more or less fixed and agreed-upon pattern from the start. Preferably without complications, something simple yet powerful and compelling = no problem for hours of discussions!

+ Why not have a delicious meal afterward every time? It's Italy, after all! Didn't you give cooking classes once? I won't even mention your wines because I only drink thermal water and organic milk myself; wow, what a boring man...!

+ Once a year = It's simply best to schedule an appointment in the same month, otherwise it can be deregulating.

+ Any artist can, of course, sell their finished work. And why not hang it for a month or two first, for example, in your wellness center? You can use your social capital here via Instagram or Facebook, TukTak or… But be careful and make sure there are no misunderstandings; there's certainly no conflict with the artist = the goal is to create beautiful things in the long run!

+ You should agree with each artist that all works will be exhibited free of charge in 2026 + 2031 + 2036 +… I can't go into details (like insurance…).

+ As I mentioned before, as a model, it's definitely interesting to give every artist the same pose, clothing, and whatever else?! I wouldn't always ask for the same technique (or oil paint, or pastel, or drawing, or…) = let the artist decide = not too many restrictions = the process is much more interesting than these details.

+ It's very formal, but perhaps it would be wise to draw up a small contract (a written agreement) in which you BOTH jointly acquire the rights to PRINT + REPRODUCE photographs or other works of the painting. This is yours, of course, since you're active on various social media platforms. Reproductions in other domains, such as books, are, in my opinion, the property of the artist. Perhaps you could make an exception for reproductions in a potential monograph, for example, in the case of an exhibition?

+ Selling the artwork isn't really my business, and I don't have any concrete proposals for it. You can do whatever you want. Leave it to the painter, sell it yourself on commission, or "something" together. Of course, you have admirers or fans on your various social media channels. These are potential buyers, but a painting usually has a certain price that's higher than, say, an online SUBSCRIPTION. You're also a businesswoman; consider this potential—along with the artist. But be careful not to ruin your reputation as not so much a MODEL as the SOLE MONEY-TAKER. I must be very clear here: personally, I want nothing to do with any commercial aspect or effect whatsoever. If I can help you at this stage of your life, fine. I don't even need to attend any openings or official events. I have my own dreams. A possible trip to one of your exhibitions would be enough. If I'm still alive and well.

+ a nice extra with the exhibition December 2026

= the creation of children opera "*Vola verso la Luce. Atteraggio su una Nuvola*" ("*Fly to the Light. Land on a Cloud*") = message of hope, ... + performed via ... + opera written by a (young) Italian composer.

Jean-Marie De Dijn, EU, 2021 - October 2025.

Ľudova pieseň (A Folksong), Vlasta Flendrovská (1984), Maľba za sklom or Podmaľba na sklo (Behindglasspainting or Reverse glass painting), 2024, private collection.

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1. The eternal wonder of discovery: seeing without actively looking.

We have studied quite a bit formally and supposedly also informally. That is simply our essence, although we know that our one grandfather on the mother's side - on the other side we have no knowledge at all because of the life dances for our venerable mother, especially because we are a so-called natural child, otherwise and better said: a love child - that this one grandfather known to us read a lot. For example, as a Fleming and perfectly bilingual - that was how it was in the Belgium of that time and especially as a servant of the professional army from the age of 14 - he read the traditionally existing Belgian daily newspaper "La Libre Belgique" every day, at least from his usual early retirement. In French, namely. Since he died a good half year after our birth and we must have been so-called very gifted but even at the age of less than one year we did not think too much and did not even look around that much, we consequently only know from our apparently amused mother – only child of this man among others – that he also read that newspaper on the toilet. Now such knowledge, if made public on one of the social media in particular, would lead to hilarity if not to ... prosecution? For lèse-majesté? In any case, it was for this person with absolute certainty in that place neither a personal or family hiding place nor a situational or incidental hiding place. He did that – reading - there – just next to … er … pissing and shitting. With some archive research, one could undoubtedly fill a nice article with not only Belgians and especially more public figures who like to read, also especially - on the toilet! In the social housing estate "*Het Keur*" and in those beautiful houses, which to this day still look very beautiful or are a feather in the cap of the master builders and the public Dendermonde construction company of then and now, it was very, very quiet. We, born in March 1963 and let's say gradually receptive to "*impressions*" from roughly 1967, have never, but then never experienced any noise from the neighbours. Never. Try to experience that peace in the same country Belgium with its

meanwhile extra two million inhabitants or especially immigrants from all over the world - with meanwhile and particularly unfortunately something like very portable and extra loud radios. We also know that the couple grandparents liked each other or in other words, they never quarrelled. Of course my grandmother then widowed from the end of 1963 did not quarrel with herself, although the number of Belgian and European inhabitants apparently has increased considerably with serious, internal or what one calls psychological to psychiatric problems - or is there now more coming outside!?

It was true that this grandfather Petrus Bonkoffsky had a great voice, as if he was constantly shouting at home. The man also used to shout for many years when he had to drill young recruits as an adjutant in the exceptionally efficient Belgian army. Whether those recruits were given a gun or even allowed to shoot; we were not there again. Apparently my grandfather was not given a megaphone as a drill master. But we ourselves, as grandsons, may have an outlier with a squeaky voice - like our own mother - but on the other hand very regularly a reasonably strong, albeit not heavy or sonorous voice, like this grandfather. We can raise our voices so-called by simply speaking a little more intensely, useful in all kinds of situations. Although some listeners sometimes dare to startle and become more hesitant as - speakers. This (one) grandfather not only read his - exclusively French-language - newspaper every day, he also reportedly (according to his daughter) read - many books. Unfortunately, a thousand times unfortunately, we have seen nothing of it or inherited nothing of it except one rather brisk introduction – now exclusively in Dutch – to medicine. As children we used to browse through it, especially or to be honest only in the accompanying pictures. Although later, rather morally driven, we had for a while the ideal to study medicine, of course to help the very poor people, a trait that was normal in this Christian environment and that we have completely internalized to this day and tomorrow. Amen. In retrospect, it was already clear then that medicine was not our thing.

Elsewhere on this website we have already written how the same house of these grandparents, and therefore for us existentially that of our grandmother or widow (although we never knew that word or concept in relation to her), was an enormously rich source of impressions, a source that would literally or figuratively or both, continue to refresh us until the present day – and always tomorrow; always that next day! That wealth of impressions was therefore internally fed by very many ‘things’ that were not only as it were overwhelmingly present, practical matters of course alongside a great deal of adornment or rather aesthetically intended matters. But therefore – we now understand and appreciate in retrospect! –, we were not externally hindered or fed in that way, by the normal presence of sound or call it normal silence. To say something. We never heard a single so-called marital quarrel in our neighbourhood. Never. We regularly heard from our one direct neighbour and ourselves gladly one of the then world-famous Mexican singers Luis Mariano (Mariano Eusebio González y García + 1914 – 1970). Our apologies! Because we thought Luis Mariano was Mexican because he sang – we heard it so many times – the very popular song “*Mexico*”. No, because the man turned out to be Spanish and French - although the Spanish have a lot to do with Mexico and the French a little bit, don’t they? But that song, the resounding of it, that sound that was produced in that way and resounded to my grandmother’s garden, among other places, that was 1) not disturbing in terms of content, on the contrary and 2) never or never at a number of decibels that would be tormenting for a normal person. We would experience differently later, or at least when we came to live in Dendermonde again in 2013, with a complete psycho as a neighbour who, among other things, had zero higher degrees – and we had four at the time and we ‘even’ did a doctorate in a fifth direction; too much of a good thing for this simply jealous person, such as they are so common under God’s heavens and

pollute the ground and air there. You understand that we do not wish to go into all the truly unstoppable and so to speak creative (sic) frequent misery that arose from this neighbourhood, as if we suddenly lived on the edge of a volcano that almost daily vomited ash and smoke and stench. That terrible misery would actually only disappear by our … disappearing or our moving to a better place!

But everything used to be better, says a proverb or the man or his wife in the street. And we can confirm this on this very concrete and extremely important human aspect. Indeed, if a child or any kind of person wants to grow up, this being needs a minimum, say maximum space, literally spacious in a lot, very much greenery - and peace or silence with birdsong. It needs, highly necessary: trees and therefore above all, forests or real serious 'collections' of trees, rivers with adjacent, passable or cycleable banks, meadows where there is no barbed wire, the sea even with dunes and dunes ... For the umpteenth time - and we hope we can say it regularly - Dutch is again more interesting in terms of expressiveness than English. Because "*very, very necessary*" can be expressed in Dutch as "*broodnodig*" or literally "*as necessary as someone needs bread*"! Of course that is even more understandable from a centuries-old - now probably much less in many modern cultures - essential importance of "*the daily bread*"! Back to the needs of that/the child. In this, as in our case, it is of great importance that the growing child can make interesting observations in and around the house, in the rooms that can sometimes be as continuous as possible, and of course in what one might call a garden; the front garden, side garden or – if it is less fortunate in the worldly traditions of building close together – a 'normal' garden or a back garden. So we are indeed talking about individual homes and not about collective housing, such as in apartment blocks, a building phenomenon that we will discuss in more detail immediately. Our hearts ache when we realize how many growing children, who are therefore susceptible to so many impressions, are not only imprisoned in the cages of apartment blocks where there is usually hardly any to simply horribly ridiculous nothing of greenery next to them. While inside they can still get very few impressions due to all kinds of circumstances, especially poverty, for example, 'something' decent cultural – a real work of art in particular, not even very expensive and not even very important but still original or stimulating. Have you ever walked through the elevator and hallways of apartment blocks: you want to get out of there as quickly as possible, out of those rabbit holes. It is certainly true that at least in Flanders, a great deal of effort has been made in recent years to strongly promote the mental and intellectual growth of our children, at least through library development. The modern library of our childhood home town Dendermonde is a true example of this. City and municipal libraries are without a doubt one of the most important pillars of the common education of a population.

Now these are also, as it were, model libraries – rest assured, in other places such as the Belgian city of Dendermonde we have also encountered such library facilities, such as in …, … and indeed … to the even more exceptionally impressive or leading ... But that is also a city of ….- yup! These are mainly providers, or a form of very passive places: one can borrow, a lot of quality and even quantity but of course has to choose it oneself. At the same time, all libraries that we have visited anywhere in several EU countries and that we really value in three of these countries, always also have an active offer; with lectures, exhibitions and so on. Of course that is also passive in the sense that one can experience it but that there is no obligation or pressure to do so, except for the children who go there under the supervision of teachers. There is something else that we want to emphasize here, or encountering it in seeing or hearing – in other senses? – via a form of active-passive, say "*a fruitful passivity*". We call it the title of this paragraph "The eternal wonder of discovery: seeing by not actively looking". Of course, this cannot and will not only be about discovering in art, because all

kinds of people certainly only or especially have an eye for the wonders of technology, which can also be used verbally or by reading or via CDs or other material in public libraries. How this kind of experience, this form of very useful, albeit by definition accidental pedagogy, can be functionally stimulated or encouraged, is a question that literally by definition seems a difficult, almost insoluble question. Something for pedagogues? We may call this experience what is generally known as wonder, which therefore needs space and rest. That is certainly known as such from and through the elusive thinking phenomenon Aristotle (384 – 322 B.C.), a great thinker who, both simply and inspiringly for the ultimate 'more', spoke in this regard of "*the wonder as the beginning of philosophy just say thinking*".

We met this precious and wonderful work of art "*Ľudova pieseň (A Folksong)*" in the spacious and light-filled bedroom of the Slovak grande dame A-a Z-a. We admit it. At first we had much more eyes, only eyes and also hands and more body and certainly even soul, for this grande dame who gladly invited us to try out the piece of furniture for which a bedroom is made: the bed. That was certainly a spacious bed just as – we repeat already now – it was a spacious room, so spacious that things like this beautiful work did not immediately or as strikingly catch our eye. After what had to happen, had happened and what may always happen again with eager repetition, albeit with necessary experiences to be devoted to all kinds of less interesting things in life or ultimately time killers, our less lively eye fell on this; this whole of colours within a relatively small frame. Our eye fell on this painting. The time of pleasure for flesh and blood and soul with another, very concrete person, with this Slovak grande dame, was immediately replaced by this small happiness through a subtle somewhat surprising work of art. With our old camera that occasionally wants to work well or wants to perform its function (provided there is enough battery), we photographed this directly from the front and back. Indeed, we first did not see that work of art at all as an extremely invisible part of the spacious whole of the whole of the bedroom, a topos with special logos because nothing other than conceived for the furniture of furniture, the bed, where then the love for the Slovak woman can be conceived, further encouraged and then blissfully flamed out. After which the work of art came to us as a form of lively waste because what is still important after "*the deed or the act*", after which because what makes "*omne animal - so also we - triste est*"? After which we perhaps still slightly drunk thought we should turn the work of art around; an inspiration led by "*the Fate of Predestination*"(?). This forced us not only to look at that previously more than completely invisible backside ourselves for a moment but even to capture it for a probably not too eternal eternity. There was namely a lot of text on it: see further and so wait a moment although you can see on the double photo in question that we didn't pull anything out of our thumb, the thumb with which we had to press the button of this old camera, the thumb with which we may have pressed another button just before, in a place where, as they say, the average Slovak woman likes to have that thumb first before moving on to more and more excitement of the eternally most intimate encounter.

2. Seeing something interesting (in terms of art), but not wanting to interpret it but adding 'something' to it! EXTRApretation instead of INTERpretation.

Before we go into the content of this work of art - or maybe not (haha?) -, we should definitely point out that on this website about art and attractive women - see the overview of all discussed and to be discussed works of art - we will later discuss two other Slovak artists with also behindglasspaintings. They are the already deceased Valeria Zusana Benáčková and the still living, albeit much older, Ondrej Richter. Given the relatively young age of this artist Vlasta Flendrovská (1984), it is clear that the fairly old Slovak tradition of behindglasspainting or reverse glass painting is very much alive. Moreover, and we find this

important, although not entirely essential as an art phenomenon in itself: it is clear that this remarkable painting technique, even at first sight, brings or 'allows' traditional yet substantively new accents or forms. We 'do not see' something IN this work. Or we are not going to interpret the work of art - or only a tiny bit (for which no thanks). But we look much more FROM OR AROUND! In one sentence; we did not make any INTERpretation from the work, we did some EXTRApretation from the work.

That we want to extrapret or add something meaningful to this work, that effectively transcends the work but is therefore born from it (for which many thanks to this artist!), is perhaps in itself a different way of looking at art, or not? Pedagogically, that seems to us an important way of thinking about art, so that we should call this a downright positive motive - why we are therefore positively motivated not (only) to interpret or dwell (sic) on this work of art.

That we do not really or thoroughly want to interpret also has to do with, let's say, two negative motives, or a form of diplomacy. That is an important human characteristic that we personally regularly sin against through our arrogance, but that we also have and use from time to time because of our friendliness. That we are regularly arrogant, even irascible, it is in a sense an advantage to be aware of that and therefore to take that into account with even more sensitivity on the one hand and especially more creativity on the other. And we have just explained the latter with the positive motive! A first negative motive is that the artist herself has explained quite a lot or sufficiently about this work - on her back and see the next paragraph. In that paragraph we of course give that literal explanation of her own with an extremely brief commentary. So we cannot jump ahead stylistically anyway and explain things twice. But. We have known Slovakia quite intensely for at least ten years and the men and women there quite well. So this work is about women and men - or about men versus one woman. We know, let us say, certain differences between the attitude or mentality of women on the one hand – indeed much more open than … – and on the other hand (…) men, all again and always in Slovakia. We speak again from a good ten years of fairly intense experience in that country, mainly in the middle of it or in "*Stredné Slovensko*". And we do not want to say more diplomatically or more specifically; we are not going to claim anything about the form of potential truth claim of this work with regard to modern Slovak society.

The second reason, so to speak, of a rather negative nature for not wanting to say anything or hardly anything of substance about this work, is simple: see previous reason (haha, hopefully a little joke is allowed). And above all: we do not want to smear this still young artist (born in 1984) with any of our possible negative insights – if we may express ourselves that way. So for a rare time we are won over by .. self-censorship? No, we simply do not find certain possibly critical or far-reaching representations interesting, also for the career of this young artist (after all, we discuss almost exclusively older, even deceased artists and are then 'freer' anyway). Moreover: see the positive reason. In other words, we want EXTRApretation above all, and therefore ALSO to let this young artist potentially enjoy or support her! In other words; the work that we found very beautiful at first and second and .. sight, we use from this joy to give a little more joy, to the artist herself and to all her colleagues, domestic and who knows, foreign. We have met them before, several young recently graduated Slovak artists, who have great difficulty in finding sufficient - money-making - assignments or work. Hereby …!?

However, we like to interpret, as we have already demonstrated elsewhere on this website with our deep and long and fairly difficult study of a Belgian tapestry – from the war year

1943 – a study from 2006. In our series of manuscripts on political behaviour around WWII we do almost nothing else than interpret – although that mass of studies in itself is an enormous ... extrapretation – isn't it?!

At the same time, we dare to make a very light plea for a form of … superficiality that can be called cosy, or at least daring to give in to a developed intuition, even subtle debauchery. In the art world, far too much has been asked of so-called profundity for a long time, by of course the active artists themselves and not to forget the very important decision-makers such as reviewers, museum directors and so on. We, who have been extremely curious from a very young age, have already read tons of real bullshit, so to speak – about art, and not only about it. There is no shortage of attempts at pretended profundity, which of course occasionally produces pearls for people or readable, say understandable at worst (…) stimulating, somewhat mysterious analyses or interpretations. By the way, may we be extremely topical for a moment and think of the great recently deceased artist David Lynch (1946 - 2025). He had an older brother, younger sister, aunt and the entire family on all sides of his parents and of his four legal wives and x number of mistresses dead after they all tried to understand his work. Although he warned them from the start of his public career: one just had to "*experience/live through/undergo his work*!". Moreover, one can travel and read as much as one wants, it is completely impossible to understand more than say a few world cultures to their deepest subtleties. We will not go into that any further, but here we may say that we are Belgian and Flemish, mainly raised in a Christian culture and in any case in an environment that is at least formally as free as possible – in our case almost certainly much freer than the vast majority of our fellow tribesmen. Slovakia is indeed a European country and has been a member of the EU for some time and even has – very fortunately – the same currency (the euro for those who would not know), but is quite different compared to our reference. So with respect to this reverse glass painting we are first and foremost simply sincerely happy with the valuable art or viewing experience with it. Hopefully we've also got some interesting thoughts for some other people. What more could you want?

3. The back of this painting: a written meaning in the language of the painter.

So we found this small painting interesting enough to look at, and one day we actually turned it over. Now we have seen hundreds of works of art, especially Belgian ones, pass through our hands throughout our lives. Usually there is nothing to turn over because there is nothing to see there. But it can still contain important information because that is the side where there is sufficient space for writable paper. Sometimes it happens that there are all kinds of dedications on it, such as a text from those who long ago donated it to someone, mainly as professional colleagues, as a business gift. The names of those donors generally mean nothing to a modern person. Sometimes there is biographical information on it about the artist of the work, a matter that is quite self-evidently useful because it is justified. In any case and that because of a very long and quantitatively fairly intense experience, we do not remember a single text from the artist himself that wanted to say 'something' about what is on the real ground, the foreground. In this therefore very unique case, the background of the rather coincidentally guided reversal – we perhaps wanted to notice 'something' – turned out to reveal a text that had certainly been written by the artist: **See picture.**

The text as a whole consists thematically of two parts. The first part is a text of a folk song, the title of which is underlined. It is more than clear – after … reading it – that this song is the theme of the painting. We give the song text below, on the left in the original Slovak and on the right in English.

Ľudova pieseň:	A Folk Song:
Horela lipka horela,	The linden tree burned,
pod ňou panenka sedela.	under it the small girl sat
Ķeď na ňu listy padali.	As the leaves fell on it.
všetci mládenci plakali.	all the young men cried.
Íba ten jeden neplakal,	Except for the one
čo ju falošne miloval.	who loved her falsely.

Below that is the statement of the technique of this painting: "*Podmaľba na sklo (Behindglasspainting or Reverse glass painting*)". In addition to the name of the creator of this work of art. The only mention of the country in English is: "*SLOVAKIA – EU*". Interesting for .. tourists - or travellers!

4. A soft extrapretation. The legendary member "*The Linden tree*", an epic poetic song by Franz Schubert.

We now know the meaning or origin of the work of art from the artist's description with the text of a traditional Slovak folk song. It can't be a coincidence that the tree that is central to it – and on fire! – is a "*lipa*"; the lime tree. It is listed here as a smaller lime tree, with the diminutive "*lipka*". It is no coincidence that we have known that word for a long time because it is the same word in Polish. The lime tree – "*Tilia*" with its scientific name – is therefore one of the most iconic trees in the entire European culture, just like the oak. It is perhaps even more interesting because the oak does not give wonderful nectar to the bees like the lime tree, from which they then – for us (…) – make honey. What a magically delicious honey, lime honey! Incidentally, English or Anglo-Saxon knows two variations; the linden tree or the lime tree. We would like to briefly and yet intensely dwell on one other iconic representation of this tree, so beloved by the Europeans, with a famous song. That song was written by a German poet and set to music by a brilliant Austrian, but also German-speaking composer. The piece of music is much older than this painting. But so eternal, so classic.

This song itself is part of the wonderful cycle "*Winterreise*" ("*Winter Journey*" – but doesn't the German sound much more intimate?) from the therefore certainly divine year 1827. This cycle of twenty-four poems was written by the German poet Johann Ludwig Wilhelm Müller (1794 – 1827). He would also have previously contributed to the therefore also divine year 1823 when the also by him composed twenty-poem cycle "*Die schöne Müllerin*" ("*The Beautiful Miller's Daughter*") was set to music. And how!? Both cycles of sung poems are among the most beautiful that Western humanity has ever produced. Of course – we would almost say – hardly anyone knows the lyricist. Everyone – we may say with more certainty – knows the composer, Franz Peter Schubert (1797 – 1828). Schubert – who needs his first name or he is one of those wonderful people who have more than enough with their family name to bring forth many, in this case only positive associations – Schubert, therefore, was and is probably the most lyrical or most heart warming composer in history. Alas, we do not know all the African, Indian, Chinese, and so on composers from the worldwide history of the phenomenon of music.

We once performed another song from the cycle "*Winterreise*" for a class of first astonished and then moved pupils from a final year technical school. They had – 'obviously' – never heard such music before, while the bass line of that one song was so modern – so eternal or so

classical. And the singing. And the text. We could not pass up Schubert's suggestion to also perform something of his around this central tree – the lime tree – as a soft extrapretation. We selected this fragment via Youtube, with the duo of interpreters, the German baritone Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau; (1925 – 2012) accompanied by the British pianist Gerald Moore (1899 – 1967):

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UrxAGwzMp_Q

For the English translation, See: https://oxfordsong.org/song/der-lindenbaum-2

Der Lindenbaum.	The Linden Tree.
German source: Wilhelm Müller English translation © Richard Wigmore	
Am Brunnen vor dem Tore, Da steht ein Lindenbaum; Ich träumt' in seinem Schatten So manchen süssen Traum.	By the well, before the gate, stands a linden tree. in its shade I dreamt many a sweet dream.
Ich schnitt in seine Rinde So manches liebe Wort; Es zog in Freud'und Leide Zu ihm mich immer fort.	In its bark I carved many a word of love; in joy and sorrow I was ever drawn to it.
Ich musst' auch heute wandern Vorbei in tiefer Nacht, Da hab' ich noch im Dunkel Die Augen zugemacht.	Today, too, I had to walk past it at dead of night; even in the darkness I closed my eyes.
Und seine Zweige rauschten, Als riefen sie mir zu: Komm her zu mir, Geselle, Hier findst du deine Ruh'!	And its branches rustled as if they were calling to me: 'Come to me, friend, here you will find rest.'
Die kalten Winde bliesen Mir grad' in's Angesicht, Der Hut flog mir vom Kopfe, Ich wendete mich nicht.	The cold wind blew straight into my face, my hat flew from my head; I did not turn back.
Nun bin ich manche Stunde Entfernt von jenem Ort, Und immer hör' ich's rauschen: Du fändest Ruhe dort!	Now I am many hours' journey from that place; yet I still hear the rustling: 'There you would find rest.'

Does this lime tree give more peace than the one from Slovakia?

5. On to the real extrapretation. Via the exceptional architects Hundertwasser, Le Corbusier and the extremely common Plattenbau.

This colourful and fresh artwork is by a Slovak artist. She is Slovak by nationality and Slovak as a resident of her native country. She lives – that is public information because it can be found on the internet – in a huge residential area of Bratislava. That is after all a capital of a European country, once before WWII and back and apparently definitively since the separation in 1993 with the Czech Republic, officially on that first of January or from several perspectives an ambivalent matter to start a new chronological year with. The Slovaks were never asked, by a binding referendum in particular, whether they wanted to divorce! For various reasons, a larger and richer, more diverse country – such as Czechoslovakia was because with Bohemia and Moravia included and the unmistakable world city of Prague on top of that! – would certainly have been better! Before that, Bratislava was one of the larger, albeit rather unattractive cities of Czechoslovakia. Before the end of WWI it was known on the one hand as Pressburg (German name, so also written as Preßburg) and on the other hand as Pozsony (the Hungarian name). Bratislava only became the – Slovak – name of this city from 1919 onwards, which was hardly inhabited by Slovaks and whose previous Slovak name – Prešporok – was derived from the ... German Preßburg. This probably makes the city the newest capital in Europe. For Hungary, which until the end of WWI was roughly a thousand years much larger, albeit with constantly changing borders as was more the 'custom' in ancient Europe, Pozsony – Bratislava was historically a very important city. After all, from the middle of the 16th century it became nothing less than the royal Hungarian seat, since the Turks had occupied a very large part of Hungary by then. De facto Bratislava was a totally unknown name until 1920 because it had never been a Slovak city, always Hungarian and German with a mixture of Jews. Where now live about half a million Slovaks, until a hundred years ago hardly one Slovak lived; "*The Times They Are a-Changin*". The only interesting historical buildings in this city are Hungarian, exclusively Hungarian.

That is a special historical and existential fact. It may yet give the impetus for something that could be a unique Slovak touch in architecture. "*The Times They Are a-Changin*" may also mean that new and very striking, let us hope, especially valuable paths can be taken through modern architecture. We hardly know Bratislava other than by sightseeing, so to speak, by driving through it by bus or – then we must of course 'look' extremely more carefully – by car. There is very little new interesting architecture to be seen to date, at least in high-rise buildings. In districts that we could observe in other ways – always roughly – such as via the internet, there is really nothing new to notice. Nothing is little because … Nothing. So there is only functional residential construction, a lot of new and standardized high-rise buildings. Because of course people live there – residents, city dwellers. And relatively many or absolutely predominantly in high-rise buildings or in apartment blocks. We know rather well to very well some larger Slovak cities and especially parts of their districts where only high-rise buildings can be found. There you can see – so to speak diplomatically – always the same type of high-rise buildings. And for that they use the name "*Plattenbau*". See:

https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plattenbau

That is a type of collective housing in the GDR (the former East Germany) with a series of layers (approximately at least 5) of which all components are prefabricated. These components are therefore not only made in a factory and therefore assembled on site using the better Lego work so that one gets a rough building, where all kinds of facilities such as electricity etc. are finished. That means that the whole looks completely homogeneous; after

all, there is no or very little space to let the components or panels diverge from each other, to bring in some more individuality. Plattenbau is therefore very efficient, so that countless, certainly tens of thousands of copies have been built in Europe. It is also boring. And that is not only the case for Western European tourists or immigrants who are much more used to individualized housing. That is certainly the case especially for a relatively young country like Slovakia. Slovakia was a country that consisted of small towns and mainly many villages. As a result, it has preserved a particularly rich folklore to this day. This is expressed in many ways, such as in the very popular dances with traditional costumes. It is in these costumes that one finds an incredible diversity or a particularly great cultural wealth. From childhood we have been very fascinated by art in, let us say, its broadest expressions. But folk art was never really our thing and we have actually never encountered it at home or in the small family circle! In Slovakia in particular we also became really interested in that cultural aspect and through the years of regular visits, we have acquired, among other things, about one hundred and fifty books about the diversity of that country. As a result – through books or reading them or at least looking at the pictures in them (haha) – we know with absolute certainty that this incredible at least regionally very diverse cultural wealth, also expressed itself in the regional, local, let's call it traditional architecture. This happened through all kinds of ornamentation and even with relatively simple colour motifs. And of that incredibly rich folk art, which has expressed itself for many centuries via the 'skin' of clothing and via the 'skin' of houses, or in two extremely visual, memorable and therefore essentially very inspiring ways, there is really no trace to be found in either the Plattenbau or the modern high-rise buildings that are so intensively used in Slovakia! That is an absolutely certain and correct statement and at the very least a regrettable one. May we remind you that this European country de jure and forever (sic) only really started out as an independent country in 1993!? And ... !? Apparently mainly motivated to (further) build something like more individuality, more independence, more identity! Well then Slovakia; what in its current and future architecture!

As far as we are concerned, since certain happy modern times – say roughly since the year 2,000 – we have not known a single interesting Central European architect, let alone a movement of architects. But that may be due to us or to our finiteness. After all, we only have two eyes and they are constantly distracted by so many attractive women, certainly in – haha – Slovakia! We simply cannot know 'everything', not even from our own interests, which certainly included architecture and urban planning from our earliest student days – thank you eternally, reverend friend Frank alias Umberto alias … ! We may say that, like almost everyone who can read and write – in Europe at least – we know two names of modern, European architects: Le Corbusier and Hundertwasser.

The famous French-Swiss architect Le Corbusier (alias of Charles-Édouard Jeanneret (1887 – 1965) became known, among other things, for his very important - and for that reason rightly very famous - contribution to world architecture with his five realizations, each with a large complex of apartments. They all had the original French name, "*The Unité d'habitation*" or "*Housing Unit*". See:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Unit%C3%A9_d%27habitation

The first one in particular became authoritative and can still be admired in Marseille. It was built between 1947 and 1952 and is therefore still relatively young. It was given the – rightly so – proper name "*la Cité radieuse*" or "*The Radiant City*". Between 1955 and 1965, Le Corbusier would repeat this design four more times, three times in France and once more in

(then West) Berlin. It can be said with absolute certainty that this design hit like an atomic bomb. Or rather; it was a feast for the eyes of man and in a certain sense for that of the architect because the design was imitated worldwide. Worldwide?

In order to be able to give a concrete answer to this last question, with of course the perspective on, say, the country of our Slovak artist Vlasta Flendrovská, including or not in the least its capital Bratislava, it is important to point out the way in which Le Corbusier tackled his revolutionary, meanwhile classical design. It happened with a few other important architects and artists, besides the so to speak self-evident engineer. Their names are not important here; the collaboration certainly is! Perhaps the word architecture is a bit too little to speak of the experience of The Radiant City. In terms of content, that is to say, artistically, it is certainly of a completely different order than that of the Plattenbau and, you can safely say, also in comparison with probably all the collective housing complexes that we ourselves have ever seen, let alone been able to enter.

Friedensreich Hundertwasser, born Friedrich Stowasser (1928 – 2000), was an Austrian artist and architect. He was best known for the colourful buildings he designed and was an advocate of human and environmentally friendly construction methods.

See: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Friedensreich_Hundertwasser

It is rather obvious that Hundertwasser was strongly influenced by the immense genius Antoni Gaudi (1852 – 1926), who himself was without the slightest doubt one of the most important architects in world history. We do not write ‘real’ scientific treatises on this website and cannot go into this relationship. However, we must note that, although Hundertwasser was certainly strongly influenced in his architectural language by Gaudi, he himself nevertheless had a continuous interest and made architectural contributions to multiple or collective housing. We do not know this at all in the grandiose work of Gaudi, which is at most to be regretted theoretically. But this man also worked quite intensively or for an extremely long time on his relatively few projects. A comparative study between the five Housing Units of Le Corbusier (and co!) with the work on apartment blocks by Hundertwasser seems to us an excellent idea; this question will certainly have been dealt with somewhere in Europe or in .. We suggest that you look up both their work and make this comparison. There is one thing that these two architects have in common without any discussion. And that thing is indeed important in something like architecture and especially the larger because more collective version of it. You know the proverb that cooking costs money, and building is always cooking at a high level. That is why the genius of the Plattenbau speaks for itself because through a uniformity and the prefabrication of the components in a factory, every, ‘individual’ cost price could not be matched – because it was as low as it was architecturally possible! In other words, for the tens of thousands of existing and the many additional editions à la Plattenbau, a version that was, so to speak, subsequently upgraded in the manner of either Le Corbusier or Hundertwasser, was unaffordable. Even more priceless – but the superlative of zero remains by definition ... zero – would be tens of thousands of concrete editions of Hundertwasser or Le Corbusier, if these architects had already been able to complete more than, say, two hundred collective buildings as high-rise buildings. Even more, mutatis mutandis, the same thing can be said if the small or – who knows? – larger ‘versions’ or pupils, i.e. successors, of both famous architects had also always wanted to realize very valuable high-rise buildings throughout their lives. Tens of thousands also to finish high-rise buildings that are as complete or high-quality as possible, aesthetically or existentially; it is not even possible on the drawing boards, let alone on the solid grounds of this world.

We must nevertheless pause for a moment, in terms of content or strategy, to consider the creative phenomenon of Hundertwasser. The man was what one might call a sincere idealist or a thorough daydreamer. While a type like Le Corbusier was certainly groundbreaking, not only in terms of this collective housing, but perhaps a little too ... French aristocratic aloof, too ... Swiss watchmaking precise – say a little too rational or a little too little of a Mensch, perhaps? It is absolutely no coincidence that Hundertwasser, in addition to his more purely architectural concepts (such as his view on the line in buildings or the straights and curves), applied a number of very democratic principles that he presented in architectural translation. In our opinion, the most important here is his "*Fensterrecht*" or "*The Right From Your Window*". That is certainly a fantastic idea and it was, so to speak, only a matter of time before a freer spirit, a very creative and at the same time extremely human and ecologically oriented architect annex artist, would formulate such a concept. Of course there are architects who can listen to the wishes or especially the way of thinking and acting of their clients, when it really is about personal housing construction - and then also realize that in a subtle way. That seems more obvious than it is. In any case, for collective construction or high-rise buildings, that way of thinking, listening and then applying is really almost impossible. 'Purely' theoretically it is possible but with all kinds of and even the greatest possible restrictions it remains nothing but unrealizable. People worldwide can clearly be prepared en masse to go and live in "*boxes*" or apartment blocks, whether or not Plattenbau or a bit more individualized. As residents they are certainly not members of a symphony that can flawlessly, albeit thanks to a leading conductor, go and live or play while living. While Plattenbau is functionally and socially self-evidently highly responsible, as an architect it is understandably completely impossible to take maximum account of the living and thinking world of a complete or per resident of a part of it, any apartment. Hundertwasser formulated an alternative that was very responsible and very sympathetic in his line of thinking. Through the "*The Right from Your Window*" every resident of an apartment could, within the length of his own ... arm (and that of his fellow residents, but isn't there such a thing as technical extensions!?), paint around every window as he or she wanted! This always meant theoretically that if new residents arrived, they could of course make use of the same right, and thus get to work with their paintbrush! Or not? Incidentally, we have not done any in-depth work on Hundertwasser's thinking, but here we may ask for the sake of completeness whether – and how – he thought of any right to paint or aesthetically tackle the windows themselves – haha?

We can indeed not go into the wonderful Fensterrecht extensively or exhaustively here, but we still see many more difficulties than advantages. Now, what do you think? The whole of a block of apartments can become an improbable pot pourri. Just imagine that some residents are colour blind, or suffer from some form of eye disease so that …!? Moreover, what do you do as a collective when one or more ostentatiously refuse to participate, and for example even threaten legal action against their neighbour above that .. , next to the neighbour on the left who even …! Painting from a window is certainly very dangerous; if you fall from the first floor, trying to stop your paintbrush that almost slipped out of your hand, for example, you probably have a chance of survival. But what if ... fifth floor …? Good luck or "*fasten your seat belts*" with that painting – from windows of apartment blocks!

Should we just sit back and do nothing? Or should we just visually indulge ourselves as a passer-by or tourist, as it were, at that remarkable but very isolated new high-rise, which by financial definition is only and exclusively reserved for new and existing rich people? Certainly not. Because! After all, we all know the famous because encouraging, albeit to be

honest rather unpronounceable because much too long and therefore too complicated proverb: "*Point n'est besoin d'espérer pour entreprendre, ni de réussir pour persévérer*." ("*It is not necessary to hope to undertake nor to succeed to persevere*"). There IS an ALTERNATIVE!!! And art has already offered it to us!!! Or at least via the world of comics and children's illustrations, we can offer you 'something' as an alternative to overcome the apparent dullness of Plattenbau, at least partly. It concerns two forms of art, on the one hand the world of comics and on the other hand that of illustrated children's books: in both worlds something is said/written and also - and here especially - drawn. The first world is also for adults as for children, although we know few children who never grow to the stage of adulthood. Or in other words; don't we all secretly like to remain children?

Somewhere around the year 2000 we came up with the concept of a biennial for Belgian children's illustrators, under the name "Illustrale". For "*reasons*" we had to register that name as a trademark one day (because we had also come up with that name ourselves) - although that formal legal action helped quite quickly to nothing at all. In 2003 we would build the first exhibition with a group of so-called enthusiasts selected almost entirely by us. For that we had chosen as part of the exhibition concept - also almost entirely our work - one illustrator who would get a separate or individual exhibition or more space, while the other invited illustrators could offer a limited overview. The explicit objective, well known to everyone from the beginning, was to invite for the first time only Flemish, then later the French-speaking Belgian and then also Dutch illustrators. Our personal dream was to start something on the well-known day of later, also with the gigantic growing ... African market - as the first illustrators' festival in the whole of Europe! It would never get that far (sic). We chose in group after a selection by us of ten Flemish illustrators the Antwerp lady Erika Cotteleer (1972). In the selection that only we had made there was also … and … and so on. But also "*MARTINE*" (French, original name) or "*TINY*" (in the Dutch translation). See:

https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martine

https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tiny

"*Martine*" was therefore the original or French-language name of the young heroine, of an incredibly popular series that was written on the one hand by the French-speaking Belgian Gilbert Delahaye (1923 – 1997) and after his death by Jean-Louis Marlier (1963 - 2019). She was, so to speak, drawn in a legendarily pleasant and attractive way by the also French-speaking Belgian Marcel Marlier (1930 - 2011 + father of Jean-Louis). In retrospect, as founder and largely organizer, we should have insisted more – or worked less ... democratically? - on the selection of "*Martine/Tiny*" for various reasons, one of which is briefly important here: cartoonist Marcel Marlier was still alive in 2003! But ... He was a French-speaking Belgian and the Illustrale group from 2003 turned out to be for us, completely unforeseen but inevitable, a gang of schemers with their own agenda, personal and political. Incidentally, none of the collaborators of this Illustrale who were approached in 2003 had even once come up with the idea for this biennial – only we, as a gift to the community of the city of Ronse, a community for which we had done a great deal for many years, alone or in groups. In the latter respect, there seemed to be no room at all in the so-called monolingual Ronse – officially Flemish indeed, but situated on the Dutch/French language border, so …!!! – and against all original plans, for anything like French culture – and until now! The "*Illustrale*" was stolen and transformed into "*Picturale*" and, apart from the pure betrayal on a human level towards us as the sole creator and absolute main organizer, was from then on (already ten biennials, with all due respect for the efforts, albeit …)

exclusively Dutch-language. That is laughably incomprehensible and extremely sad, having to (sic) experience how a cultural event became a political event in addition to being a vehicle for all kinds of personal ambitions. For us personally it was probably the worst trauma of our lives. It was also intellectually and morally incomprehensible to us how so-called artists – among others, a very famous writer of children's books was selected by us in the first group – turned out to be pure or rabid nationalists (that is to say, haters of the French-speaking part of the same country Belgium), even if they, like that writer, had previously won so-called multicultural prizes. The word "*culture*" definitely acquired a double-charged meaning for us; or 'real/informal' culture (politeness, friendliness, openness, ...) versus 'formal' culture, the culture of producing things like books, paintings, ... A well-known artist can therefore perfectly (sigh) not be a ... cultural person! In any case and always somewhere remain hopeful or still objective; it is a matter of a certain irony that the 'new' management (now Picturale instead of Illustrale) also chose to make a mural of the work of one (indeed only Flemish, so Dutch-speaking) illustrator from the next edition in 2005 onwards. In the city of Ronse – in French Renaix – one can see a series of these murals from that year onwards, per year of the new biennial, albeit (sic) only and exclusively by Flemish illustrators. For Walloon Belgians or Brussels residents or just say French speakers; no place on these walls, let alone in the accompanying exhibitions. In any case, in Ronse, among other places, one can find murals of a certain aesthetic value. The difference with that Belgian city of Ronse and what we mean by work on the tens of thousands of Plattenbau throughout Europe, is that in Ronse free-standing or, as it were, 'lost' walls of buildings are always sought. But in principle the same system can be applied to the free or 'empty' walls of every Plattenbau, although we may make a small plea for 'something' aesthetic and existential at every entrance door; see further. At the same time, this introduction is also a slight digression, a heartfelt plea to concern oneself with art at every Plattenbau. The time of all ideologically dominant communism has been over in Central Europe for several decades. But as we have outlined in a so-called free, democratic country like Belgium (from 2003 and up to the present), political control or misleading cultural policy or nothing more than a form of intra-national gross racism - apparently lies around every corner?

Again, anyway. On both the Dutch and French wiki page of "*Martine/Tiny*" you see – the same – fresh image of Martine – or (in the Dutch version) Tiny! Now she is by no means the only important figure from the world of art, more specifically from the world of comics or illustrators, who is depicted on all kinds of very available walls in Brussels, as high as houses or very realistic and therefore unavoidable. There are already ninety (90) such murals in Brussels within this section of the visual arts! And that number will probably increase over the years, if at least free walls remain or become available. The tourist office of the important city of Brussels could of course not leave such a gift for the tourists and lovers of the genre. It put together a route – a "*Striproute*", or "*Parcours BD*" or "*Comic Book Route'* – through which you can easily find and admire these murals.

See: https://www.brussels.be/comic-book-route

We believe that by giving a few examples from the small and peripheral city of Ronse, albeit with a fundamentally culturally and politically wrong because misleading approach, masking the entire relevant cultural event, and the important, central city of Brussels, where clearly 'sincerely' because exhaustively all relevant artists are systematically featured, we have been able to put every resident or artist with an interest in improving the living experience of the Plattenbau on a promising path. Again, it is not our calling here to promote art out of a favour for this or that movement and so on. It is about the principle; that through certain aesthetic

applications, the living experience in no less than tens of thousands of editions of the Plattenbau throughout Europe can be strongly maximized, that residents and visitors there can feel happier somewhere and structurally. Now we must still briefly dwell on that both Belgian and international "*Martine!/Tiny*" and also - indeed - from our own experiences with that important country in our lives Slovakia. That well-known first name is indeed quite easy for us there too, because we know at least two interesting Slovak ladies, with (…) as first name … "*Martina*" - yup! Although we call the chronologically second either with the diminutive "*Tinka*", or with a derivation of her family name as … (but we can't say that because otherwise … - haha). We also have a pet name for the chronologically first. What are we saying; we have several for Martina1. But also that one ... we … don't … (haha?). Just so you know this for a moment. But of course you know much more or better: after all, everywhere and always and especially also in Albania, Slovakia, Poland, Bulgaria and … - or at least everywhere where there is a lot of Plattenbau! – there are very many girls' names for use in collective housing! As a name and as an image for a respective housing complex. It so happens that we were interested in naming houses about fifteen years ago (once for a logic course in Ostend, and in principle that study is waiting somewhere in the basement of our PC under the working title "Logic for …."; we still have a lot of writing to do in this too short life!). Almost all house names in Ostend are named after ... women. "*Villa Maritza*" for example, is a well-known example of this in the Belgian coastal city of Ostend!

See: https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Villa_Maritza

6. We travel to learn – yes! Also or especially: we travel to give – yeah! Introducing APPART-ART.

With this well-known and clearly still very lively theme, we also found a nice website with the same name; See: https://traveltolearn.co.in/

We have a certain life experience as we were born in 1963 – so we are already 60 years old – and above all; we have already worked as a student and afterwards in quite different places. Before our brain crash on 15/12/2015 we had been working as a teacher for ten years. In the beginning we ignored two offers for a permanent position (so teaching permanently or 'standing' at one school) for various reasons that are of no importance here. In any case, we ended up at a series of schools, in two provinces and – as far as the education system in Belgium is concerned – in two educational networks; that of the Catholic network and at the state schools. Never or to our amazement again totally never, never (sic) were we asked by anyone and certainly not by a management to give our impressions of the school, in particular to give a form of Swot analysis. Never! That is understandable in a way, certainly for those who know the rather timid or shy spirit of the average Flemish person. But it was about schools or - par excellence - systems of education or of progress in thinking and acting. Yet the laws of heuristics are just as intensely compelling as they are simply universal; every newcomer or new person in a reasonably different environment, is as it were flooded with impressions! It really cannot be otherwise than that in principle every new teacher, for whatever short period he or she may go to work, is a goldmine of tips for improvement for every school - and also free: where do you find such consultants!? But. Again! We have never been asked to give a single tip, in whatever area of the well-known SWOT analysis.

We want to apply this legality of the heuristic here, from this Slovak artwork. The Dutch website on heuristics guides this form of thinking very well and we translate ourselves: "*Heuristics (Greek εὑρίσκειν = to find, compare εὕρηκα = I have found it) is the science,*

study or art of finding. It is devoted to methodically and systematically arriving at inventions and discoveries."

See: https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heuristiek

Now tell me; who does not appreciate or have a taste for inventions or discoveries that can make life better or more pleasant in one or even more areas? Everyone, right? Living is one of the most important needs of any human being. Many modalities go hand in hand with this. One modality is without a doubt the aesthetic or, should we say, the (general) existential experience of living. One can then try to analytically isolate and study the aesthetic experience. But everyone understands that this is an intellectual and political approach, but that living without any pleasant or beautiful experience is completely impossible or even unliveable, at least much less liveable! We have already briefly mentioned the experience of the gigantically important but extremely unpleasant or unaesthetic really purely functional Plattenbau. We saw the particularly impressive alternatives for, let us say, most human, profound living in mass cohabitation – say in apartment blocks – via the brilliant architects Le Corbusier and Friedensreich Hundertwasser. This is not the place to give an architectural overview regarding multiple or cohabitation. But it is certain that these two top architects, insofar as they have built quantitatively very limited by definition and therefore have given building possibilities to a limited number of residents, have in any case or very automatically had very many followers and also worldwide or outside their own Europe. All these projects, however incredibly valuable to exceptional to occasionally rather failed, have in common without the slightest doubt that they are only intended for the better class or the upper middle class. It is a law of the Medes and Persians that all ultimately very interesting, famous, valued collective housing projects such as apartment blocks, even if they were nevertheless conceived as purely social housing and therefore also inhabited as such in the beginning, are one day occupied, pardon inhabited by higher or wealthier classes. That happened in particular with the cited project by Le Corbusier and co, The Radiant City in Marseille.

Ergo!? How to get out of this problem and this great challenge? First of all, we have to be extremely realistic and consider – or see (!!!) – that in our Europe alone there are tens of thousands or even more blocks of apartments. We have seen an enormous number of them and always very concentrated in countless cities in Central Europe, in particular and now listed alphabetically, but certainly not exhaustively, Belgium, Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia. Especially in Slovakia we know the housing situation very well; apartment blocks via Plattenbau are the most important form of living there, in large cities but also in many smaller cities and even regularly in smaller villages! It may not sound pleasant to some readers, who possibly live in these types of blocks and also work elsewhere, but we cannot consider the living environment or at least the outside of this form of living as very pleasant or personal. A minimum, if possible, maximum degree of personalisation by residents of these apartment blocks via the "*Fensterrecht*" ("*The Right from Your Window*") of the aforementioned and well-known architect Hundertwasser seems to us, as already mentioned, to be de facto and perhaps even ideally impossible to realise.

How then can something like a more aesthetic or more existentially lived-in living environment be achieved in, around or through this extremely common form of building, of this Plattenbau? We propose here the concept of APPART-ART or: *APART-ART is the art of making the living environment of apartment blocks more lively through works of art*. APPART-ART is perhaps the most appropriate and most financially suitable way to make the almost countless apartment blocks aesthetically AND therefore existentially more attractive or

liveable. The point is to make the whole of apartment blocks, if possible, collective living environments more liveable by means of aesthetically tackling or making the most eye-catching and heart-catching external parts more attractive. Because the apartment blocks are usually too large – roughly at least four building plots – to be made more liveable in a whole, this approach must be approached from a Gestalt psychological perspective. The expression from speech theory of "*pars pro toto*" or '"*the part for the whole*" is also known. A well-known example of this for Belgians is the naming or discussing of "*Holland*", while one should speak purely geographically for the larger country "*Netherlands*". Because Holland is only a part of it, although it is clearly the most striking or important part for various reasons. There are almost countless examples of the principle of pars pro toto throughout an infinite number of languages. That principle is therefore epistemologically very well known and is consequently not exceptional or drastic as a way of thinking, so that it should not immediately encounter an abrupt rejection if used in another situation! If it is impossible by financial and other practical definition – occasionally it is, but that is; occasionally only! – to aesthetically dress up and upgrade the whole of an apartment block, let alone as we have already experienced several times with a street of apartment blocks welded together or standing very closely next to each other that is virtually a kilometre long, then the partial approach is not only a simpler solution but often also the only one.

Although in our opinion the discussion about APPART-ART should start both ideally and practically and that throughout various European and other countries, at all levels such as at municipal or city art academies and of course at the higher art academies and universities, the crucial building element of the ENTRANCE, the DOOR or the ENTRANCE DOOR seems to us to be of strategic importance as a first proposal. We ourselves do not even see a potentially different or at least partially different possibility because one must assume that in Plattenbau the entire external surface is divided in the same way into windows and 'intermediate parts' if it does not appear entirely as a concrete surface on the outside. By entrance, door or the ENTRANCE DOOR we indeed mean the only or absolute main entrance through which the residents and their visitors enter an apartment block in the normal way. We functionally abstract partly from smaller entrances where one can enter for functional purposes, for example – in particular for checking and maintaining technical parts of the building in question. It goes without saying that an aesthetic approach is also possible here, certainly if one has so much money to tackle the whole of an apartment block. One understands that the decision here will be of a more financial nature. In any case, there will almost certainly never be a purely technical entrance of sufficient importance to function as it were as the pars pro toto. We would like to encounter an opposite of that as a concrete example with the necessary intellectual explanation or justification.

The ENTRANCE DOOR is by definition the only component that marks the transition between the outside and the inside. It marks a clear boundary that cannot be replaced by a meaningful or normal alternative between the OUTSIDE of the functions next to or much further from the apartment block such as walking, playing with the children on playground equipment and so on, and the INSIDE or living. For quite understandable reasons we abstract here from forms of elevators even special staircases that occur in blocks, usually for very remarkable architectural reasons so that they are nothing other than completely unaffordable or unfeasible for the ordinary, countless apartment blocks such as the Plattenbau. The entrance door can safely be called the most striking component of the large apartment blocks of the Plattenbau. One can even say lapidary that these blocks consist of entrance doors - and the 'rest'! It is interesting that entrance doors, at least in our experience, are usually present or incorporated on both sides of the respective apartment block, which in itself creates all kinds

of aesthetic possibilities. We do not need to go into these possibilities here at all, because that is the task of architects and/or artists, while we are only trying to develop a principled approach. In any case, we noticed several times - in Slovakia - that one side was the official street side. In the meantime, that side is generally completely occupied, literally like a half jungle overgrown with parked cars; the previous - communist - (building) regime clearly did not foresee so many cars! Which urban planner would have foreseen that phenomenon? At the back of the same apartment blocks, there is usually a beautiful and especially more intimate walking path with, on that also entrance doors of the same size and at the same height or width as at the front or street side. There, the transition from outside to inside certainly seems to be an existentially different experience, which may well entail a different aesthetic approach to the entrance doors.

In any case, almost every entrance door is accentuated in various, though remarkably very few different ways. Often they are located just above some stairs leading to them because there is usually a small basement. The entrance door is usually about twice as big - or wide and of course also as high - as the standard windows of the Plattenbau in question. Furthermore, almost certainly for all apartment blocks in an area, standard sizes have always been used for the concrete panels, i.e. for the windows and the entrance doors. We suspect that most models of Plattenbau in at least all of Europe and then especially in Central Europe, or the places of the former Warsaw Pact such as Poland and so on, with extreme exceptions really only used the same standard sizes. After all, in the communist bloc the guided economy was a dominant principle. And in any case, the residential function for the population was not only one of the main concerns of every communist regime, but the realization of that function also turned out to be one of the largest financial investments for these states. The greatest possible standardization was therefore a form of uncontested standard, an architectural Holy Grail. Incidentally, that does not mean at all that the former Central European communist regimes did not produce interesting architecture. As one might expect, it was almost exclusively to be found in the more prestigious building functions, such as for government buildings. We must then think of buildings that were very important to the governments there, such as an opera house, a (very important for the regime) museum (such as the resistance museum or "*Múzeum SNP*" in the Slovakian city of Banská Bystrica, which was given a very remarkable or remarkable architecture, which in our opinion has nothing to do with its content?). Let us also think of hospitals sometimes, and certainly for a number of these countries of all the newly built 'palaces' in the relatively common thermal areas there. That is certainly one and important part of living or using buildings for important functions in these countries, which on the one hand allowed those people to experience interesting architecture very regularly. But, whereby with a certain irony that was of course unintended (communism and irony???) the monotony and, to put it bluntly, a certain inhumanity of the Plattenbau, was emphasized even more! One should make the journey or transition from an important architectural government building to such a Plattenbau, which as mentioned never stands alone but sometimes in remarkably large groups - whereby the monotony is emphasized even more!

To this day, in these Central European countries such as Slovakia, the vast majority of apartment blocks have never been demolished or replaced by qualitatively better new construction by financial definition. In the meantime, these older buildings have, if all goes well, been 'only' adapted on the outside by applying insulation. That is of course a fine thing that also brings about a better colour appearance in quite a few cases. But, again in our obviously limited experience, we have never seen anything like more aesthetic or more intense existential architectural adaptations or improvements by applying insulation over in

principle almost the entire skin or the outer parts of a block of apartments! By ‘almost’ that entire building we of course mean that the exception is the entrance door! Even, and that will usually have been the case, if these doors were also replaced by perfectly insulated ones, the well-known and annoying … ‘nothing’ happened around it. That nothing is nothing other than a really big and probably continually missed opportunity, not even for so-called reasons of opportunity, mainly financial or purely technical reasons. But indeed, where one has no concept - as here APPART-ART - or no intellectual and visual sensitivity to a certain way of thinking and then acting, one can, so to speak or literally, simply not have thought of it: to therefore also apply an even partial, albeit striking aesthetic and therefore existential improvement of the respective apartment block from these impressive insulating activities! This means very concretely that in all these countries there are still tens of thousands of apartment blocks where, apart from the purely functional improvement by applying insulation with at best a new and even more beautiful colour appearance, absolutely nothing has happened. With the eternal exceptions of course; show them to us, where and how and whether successful!? So there is really a massive amount of work to be done, but if you don't start, you never have to finish. Here lies an enormous pile of work and only work to be evaluated favourably, or without the slightest negative effects or without the slightest, call it collateral damage! The main function of this is of course the improvement of the collective aesthetic and therefore existential experience of the residents, and not to forget that of the visitors in addition to the residents, but where in the meantime and de facto ad infinitum an enormous amount of work and therefore money for an income can be earned by the 'workers' of those activities: artists!

We noticed that Plattenbau indeed, for the same reason of saving, rarely or simply does not use separate recesses where potentially terraces could have been located. We have seen, however, in some, particularly Slovakian, residential areas, a few types of Plattenbau with very small recesses for terraces. This was probably only in the kitchens or it concerned relatively small interventions on the outside. In other words, Plattenbau is for the most part and again with exceptions, on all four sides only present in concrete or glass sections (windows). The mutual relationships between concrete walls and the windows with glass are, with those extremely rare exceptions - again; where and how? - identically the same on every building layer. From that rather overwhelming perception of simplicity, say boredom or dullness, every entrance door automatically stands out. This is further facilitated because every entrance door, in our experience, always forms the separation of two bays as if in a perfect middle. Each bay or each vertical building line represents a completely separate or individual apartment per separate building layer, which, due to the compelling concept of the whole, can be ‘seen’ as a barely knowable part of the entire block; one really has to count the floors if one wants to see/distinguish one’s own apartment. Visually, if one wants with a certain imagination, one can see each entrance as that building part that, as it were, carries all the – anonymous – apartments above, just to the left and just to the right of it. If each apartment above is completely similar on both sides due to the unifying principle of Plattenbau and visually as it were non-existent, then exceptionally when someone, so to speak, hangs out some washing at an open window, then that entrance door with a structurally strongly elaborated and qualitatively inviting aesthetic intervention can ensure a lasting effect for all the apartments above it! This means that in itself an aesthetically adapted entrance will provide a better experience once one goes in (and out) through it. But depending on the design of the aesthetic approach to/around that entrance door, that aesthetic can also strongly influence the entire experience of all the apartments above this entrance door. All those apartments, or that part of an apartment block, are then, as it were, personified. Politically, one can call that – along and somewhat late – the end of the communist, state-led system.

Now each block has a house number, whereby each entrance door is given that house number with an additional or lateral numbering, of course starting with one until the last number of the last countable entrance door. What now makes little or essentially no sense at all, is the naming of each part of a block, seen via each entrance door. For example, now giving number "*15/3*" a name; it has something presumptuous, not to say sad to ridiculous, doesn't it!? But the artist who tackles the aesthetic approach of the entrance door, can also come up with an interesting name for the part of that block, such as with the title of a 'normal' plastic work of art. Will the Slovakian, Polish, Burladian, ... post protest against this?

The aesthetic phenomenology of the entrance as a place for aesthetic interventions, in itself and as a 'departure point' for the apartments above it, probably still needs to be written. In any case, in the concrete aesthetic elaboration, the creativity is truly endless. Has it ever been different? But there are many neo-styles, aren't there… Such an approach can be worked out differently or more precisely or 'more modernly', conceptualised or modelled on local art traditions. With the choice of the behind glass painting "*Ľudova pieseň (A Folksong)*" by the Slovak artist Vlasta Flendrovská (1984) we are immediately at a ... candidate for the very concrete application of APPART-ART! We write this ourselves because we don't know this artist personally at all. Purely quantitatively or in view of the almost countless apartment blocks throughout Slovakia - approximately 5.5 million inhabitants - she alone has plenty of work. Take the relatively small, friendly municipality of "*Závadka nad Hronom*" with approximately 2,500 inhabitants. Most of the houses are individual, but there is also the district (časť or part) "*Paseka*". There are four large apartment blocks. There alone, a passionate artist can not only produce beautiful work but also spend a sufficient amount of time working on it or earn a relatively decent living from it. Such a municipality can then use that in its city marketing and so on, and so on. In this way, several balls are set rolling, always with the certainty of a growth in the general or social interest, at the same time as the growth in the interest of its own young or not so young artists. We have absolutely no intellectual interest in proposing even one form of choice of aesthetics. It goes without saying that in a country like Slovakia, where folk traditions are very, very strongly experienced in many, public ways, the countless folk stories such as in this beautiful painting will play a role. Other municipalities, cities and governments choose a … approach, their approach. And so on. Or almost to the creative infinity!

Many young artists in Slovakia, among others, find it very difficult to launch themselves and hardly develop anything like an art career. It is a shame for all the ultimately half to completely lost dreams, efforts and possibilities. It is also a sin for the social efforts at the municipal and higher academic level. Isn't there a great opportunity here that is also, because that is what it is all about in the first place, of great, almost essential social importance!? A SWOT analysis can be worked out by all kinds of enthusiastic thinkers. We are thinking, among other things, of organizing courses or workshops by the municipal and certainly the higher art academies, where young people are trained as "*Magister in Arts*". Certainly teachers of art history and architecture at universities and colleges may feel addressed by the development of APPART-ART. Given the enormous scale of Plattenbau in the EU, there is no doubt that interest is also possible there, with 'among other things' possibilities for subsidizing specific projects. One can also look for large local, regional, national and supranational collectors who naturally want to promote lively and preferably relatively young artists from their collection, through APPART-ART. They can provide support in exchange for even more socially known reputation and so on.

Indeed; there is still much and so on – to think about! And especially much to do!

Epilogue.

By not wanting to (and partly daring to) dwell on something, one can perhaps sometimes – as we may hope here – go further. Or: by not wanting to interpret even or not too much, one can perhaps extrapret creatively?!

And in the meantime, we and a certain Slovak grande dame, albeit not Martina, enjoy a beautiful work by the young Slovak artist Vlasta Flendrovská. Oh, also ... not Martina. But look, her first name "*Vlasť*" historically refers to both "*power, rule, sovereignty*" and "*homeland*". These are certainly promising because strong associations for an artist who, through a small, fragile work of art, set us on the path to the previous reflections. May she, as an artist and inhabitant of a fascinating and growing country, much more … power ... home ...

Jean-Marie De Dijn, EU, January 2025.

For Frank, by all means – and many purposes more.

Madame Cézanne (Hortense Fiquet, 1850 - 1922) in the Conservatory, Paul Cézanne (1839 - 1906), oil, 1891, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

T.I.S..

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Madame de Pompadour, François Boucher (1721 - 1764), oil, 1756, Alte Pinakothek München.

T.I.S..

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Madame Moitessier (Jean-Auguste-Dominique) Ingres (1780 – 1867), oil, 1844 - 1856, National Gallery London.

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Epilogue.

1. More French than French! But also too unknown/unloved?

Does the name or the word "*Ingres*" really mean nothing to you? You can feel in your elbows that it is a very French word, that it is a word that can only belong in the language of la douce France, that infinite heavenly language. Indeed, in itself the word really means nothing. It is a 'pure' word. It is a name, a family name. But it sounds so Frenchy French, ça sonne tellement français! It does, because it is very close, evoke several important meanings. "*Ingres*" rhymes with the verb "*vaincre*" or "*to overcome*"; not bad, right!? And "*Ingres*" rhymes with the close "*convaincre*", or "to *convince*". Also! And. "*Ingres*" also rhymes with the verb "*peindre*" or "*to paint*" (!!!). We are not going to throw that into an almost silly summary sentence ("*Ingres sait vaincre etcetera ...*"") because we may not believe in coincidence, the coincidence of the adjacent words, just a little bit. And yet! May we now claim from the foregoing that Ingres was not only a painter, but a real painter, a convincing artist, even historically and also philosophically, in addition to politically and pedagogically (pffft!) a winner! In any case a winner for many 'types' of attractive women or our subject!

For the, let us say, very large public, Ingres is apparently not a name like a bell. He does not resonate deep or heavy sounds like the bells of Van Gogh and of an already impressive series of top artists. Then we are talking about names, more precisely family names, that do not need a first name but have become a brand name in themselves. Yet Jean-Auguste-Dominique

Ingres is absolutely not an anonymous case. Just take his first name. We have rarely found another application of this combination of first names. Apparently the triple "*Jean + Auguste + Dominique*" is quite unique while the variations on "*Jean-X*" are very common in the same French: thank you ma for our Jean-Marie! J.A.D. Ingres was nevertheless very famous during his lifetime and already at a very early stage. He is said to have had almost three hundred pupils, or nothing less than an impressive number. Although!? We may add that, despite our rather broad knowledge of European art history, we ourselves have not been able to identify any of them as a name in themselves. But then again! We must also be careful with this remark or nuance. Although everyone can name off the cuff a number of important artists (painters or sculptors) who indeed helped to lay the foundation (hahaha) for younger, in turn, great visual artists, or even, as in a famous French case, who very dramatically prevented that succession (Auguste Rodin, 1840/1917 versus Camille Claudel, 1864/1943), no mathematical relationship may be made. It is therefore not the case that mastership and apprenticeship must lead to ever greater mastery. We assume that several, broad studies in addition to very in-depth monographs have been conducted on this intriguing issue, mainly by art historians. Presumably, in this area of pedagogical expectations, everyone is a form of victim of a similar example that has even spread over one more generation. It originated very long ago and has been a truly unique and leading example throughout the entire Western cultural world. We think of the successive trio of philosophers Socrates (Σωκράτης circa 470/469 - 399 BC), Plato (Πλάτων, circa 427 - 347) and - without a doubt the most brilliant of them all and probably the smartest man in all of history - Aristotle (Ἀριστοτέλης, 384 - 322 BC). Incidentally, Socrates in particular had one outstanding pupil, Xenophon (Ξενοφῶν, circa 430 - 355 BC). People, what a wonderful infectious sun, back there in Athens!

We will see in a later paragraph that our Ingres at least influenced the super phenomenon Picasso very strongly and precisely. If Picasso is not a name like a bell, pardon, a name like a complete carillon! Both of them of course never met each other due to the chronology of their lives but at least as far as Picasso was concerned they were active or working as artists ('busy') on the same because French soil for a very large part of their lives. It goes without saying that a man like Ingres, who as we will see immediately, was very quickly canonized or as the French themselves like to call it "*un monstre sacré*", left all kinds of profound artistic traces on several greats of art. We cannot testify to that ourselves, so we will soon talk about the example with Picasso. Nevertheless, Ingres, through two works and with names around one reasonably well-known French compatriot, became very famous and undoubtedly already known to you, as (…) 'painter of'. The French country and people have produced two real monsters over the last five hundred years, who were somewhat different by birth but nevertheless exactly the same by blood and by nature: warlike and imperialistic. The first was the famous "*Roi Soleil*" or more precisely according to his birth certificate and the subsequent logical coronation "*Louis XIV*" (1638 – 1715). The man was also known as "*Louis le Grand*" Presumably this was because of his "*la pouce France*" or his very pronounced or publicly known sexual activities at least fairly one-sided: the man had the ladies high to preferably not too low but to choose and impregnate. The man was, as is well known, hideously vain in every possible way and among other things wanted to have himself immortalized continuously. Presumably his most beloved portrait dated from 1701 when he had just passed the age of sixty and thus had the potentially ever-approaching death in sight. It was the work of his court painter Hyacinthe Rigaud (1659 – 1743 + the man had the slightly less French because Catalan original name of "*Jacint Francesc Honorat Matias Rigau-Ros i Serra*"; sometimes a tolerant fellow that Louis). See:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portrait_of_Louis_XIV

Please keep this portrait at hand for a moment because we are going to move on to Ingres. Or to who else!? Ingres became famous at a very young age through two paintings, one of which is almost a copy of that famous portrait of Louis XIV! Ingres was born in 1780 and therefore born late enough to keep his stupid neck attached to his smart head and had hardly known a king at the beginning of his life. The storms of the French Revolution, which in principle and for a time de facto put an end to the monarchy in France, had already subsided somewhat, or at least in the area of guillotining. One of the other scourges or consequences of that revolution was the rise of an admittedly brilliant military man, in addition to a great letter writer and reportedly half-and-half good lover, a man who was far from the noble blood birth of his otherwise half-countryman Louis XIV. But he did share the unimaginable ambition with him, in addition to especially the insane military and expansionist ambitions. Both, Louis XIX and Napoleon (1769 – 1821 + born in Corsica as a half-Italian as "*Napoleone di Buonaparte*"), belong without any doubt – at least according to us – to the greatest European criminals because mass murderers of the last five hundred years. We can easily go back a literal while, but then it will gradually become a bit crowded, like with Caesar, Attila and … While we can also go the other way to the more recent times towards monsters like Hitler and Stalin. Although they all, exactly all of them, needed a fair number of collaborators and implementers. At the same time, Louis XIX and Napoleon and tutti quanti can in their own way be equated with organizations like our Holy Mother the Church with more specifically but not only the Inquisition. Although the Protestants and Orthodox have also done their best to murder and quarter more or less en masse on occasions (that lasted for centuries), often 'only' but spiritual or social, in the most complete possible contrast to their source – Jesus Christ.

Napoleon – then already but also only "*Premier Consul*" of the French Republic – is said to have personally commissioned Ingres to paint this portrait, but he himself did not have the time to enliven the work with his presence. That was a problem that the exceptionally technically gifted and still fairly young Ingres had no problems with at all, because in 1804 he would paint Napoleon …. blah blah blah … This magnificent portrait can now be seen not in France itself but in the Belgian city of Liège:

https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bonaparte,_Premier_consul_(Ingres)

Under the well-known French motto "*Everything can be better. Et tout va tres bien, madame la marquise*.", Ingres was again commissioned to paint a portrait of the same Napoleon just two years later. This fellow had now risen in rank, which was not really planned – in the ranks of ranks. Indeed, it was difficult to climb above "*Premier Consul*" even for a math whiz like Napoleon who must have been incredibly good at calculations, especially in ballistics because the man, just like Louis XIV, was crazy about cannons and what could be achieved with them. You can find this new and also the last portrait of Napoleon by Ingres here:

https://www.musee-armee.fr/en/collections/museum-treasures/napoleon-on-the-throne.html

You can see immediately that this portrait, known under the titles "*Napoleon on the Throne*" or "*His Majesty the Emperor of France on his Throne*" is largely identical to the just shown portrait from 1701 of Louis XIV. One may see it all in its time, as much as one wants and can; above all they are completely ridiculous portraits, except if you talk about this in la douce France; "*Please don't laugh*!". Because or in other words and very briefly explained: they are two queers who were allowed to play macho.

So. In that way Ingres was known to many of you to this day, by both or by at least one of the portraits of queer alias macho (or vice versa or identical?) Napoleon. Fortunately, Ingres would finally be allowed to portray real women, although he probably had to wait a long time for the most interesting of them, or about forty years. He was allowed to paint that wonderful lady twice and certainly life or posing, although in one case he would need a very long time. One work was finished in 1851, while the other was begun in 1844 but it would not leave his studio for her salon until 1856. This is the most important of the two portraits by "*Ingres/vaincre/convaincre/peindre*" of Madame Demoissier and at the same time one of the most beautiful portraits of women in European history. Even if you are French, you have to cross the Channel to see it because it is on display in "*The National Gallery*" in London. See:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portrait_of_Madame_Moitessier#cite_note-7

The other portrait of her is also fantastic but we will not discuss it separately. It does not hang in France either but further away because it is also in a "*The National Gallery*" albeit in Washington, USA. Both museums are beyond the madness of beauty! See and compare for yourself:

https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bestand:Jean-Auguste-Dominique_Ingres_-_Madame_Moitessier_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg

2. An artistic imitator – aha!! But; it is The Pablo indeed. So ladies and gentlemen!

Art books; You can never have enough of them. At least, we can never have enough of them and it is such a shame that we can no longer teach because of an annoying but fairly persistent neurological problem. How many students – in our case – especially final year students of secondary education still receive introductions to art history, of course together with sufficient attempts at interpretation from philosophy, theology and history, if not political science and whatever else may be used to explain – QUESTION MARK! Fortunately, there is also a lot to be found on that intriguing but also disastrous medium of the internet. Incomprehensible to us - we do not have a Smartphone deliberately also because we understand and must acknowledge the power of the psychological because behavioral system behind it! - how people waste their valuable life time on daily and endless scrolling and scrolling and ... While as we made a beautiful and extra useful discovery here on a beautiful wiki page about Ingres:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portrait_of_Madame_Moitessier

And no, ladies and gentlemen, the same discovery is not to be found on, so to speak, the same Wiki page. Indeed and yet incomprehensible and, mind you, about two French or French-related painters and about exactly the same subject – the delightful portrait of this lady by Ingres – that extra is not present in the next French version. Compare, it always says what is provisionally written:

https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Madame_Moitessier_assise

And that extra and much appreciated discovery is of course what a certain Pablo Picasso (1881 - 1973) did after his encounter with this painting, and even more after his encounter with yet another very attractive woman, whom he not only wanted to kiss and such, but also wanted to paint. With this as a result:

https://www.nortonsimon.org/art/detail/F.1969.38.10.P

The work is called in English "*Woman with a Book*", dates from 1932 and hangs under - but do not worry not "*in*"! - the Californian sun because in "*The Norton Simon Museum*" in California. Picasso had fallen in love again which again brought about a flare-up of creativity, although in that respect he was rather genetically predisposed or born like Obelix in a cauldron of creative magic potion!

You probably know by now that we like to make "*pleas*", or friendly proposals to do 'something interesting' every now and then, in this case around and with art. For example, in the context of our studies on "*attractive women*", we occasionally show five obviously different versions of a portrait based on an existing photo of the famous Italian lady Luce Caponegro (1966) alias Lucella. On this website you can 'already' see one of them: see **Luce Caponegro/May Oostvogels**. Because we want to keep you on tenterhooks, we can only tell you that these are portraits made by four different artists - and all women. Picasso was not among them, also because that idiot died when we were only ten years old - and he probably had not accepted a commission from a stupid Belgian at that time; after all, we were/are always male and always too poor, for that kind of art anyway. No complaints and back to that masterpiece by Pablo Picasso. Of course there are small differences with the 'original' or call it the source of inspiration. So it is not about Madame Marie-Clotilde-Inès Moitessier "*née de Foucauld*" but about the then – in 1932 – very much alive and jumping Marie-Thérèse Walter (1909 – 1977). The Spanish stud was a bit older then because he was born in 1881 or had entered life almost three decades earlier. That is what you call a detail and we also like to see the reverse happen, although it is quite rare. He would make a lot more portraits inspired by Madame Walter. Of course we cannot propose a study of that series but you will understand that we are quietly thinking about their respective 'provenance', whether they also had such an artistic source of inspiration as here with the identifiable work of Ingres. The nice thing is that both works – the original and the one inspired by it – came together one day. You will also find the testimony of that here:

https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/exhibitions/past/picasso-ingres-face-to-face

For several months in the already blessed year 2022, while roughly two thousand kilometers to the east the modern Mongols were invading the West, killing, maiming, raping and destroying, you could see this duo of paintings/women in "*Room 46*" of the blessed museum "*The National Gallery*" in London, where we quote from this website:

"'*Picasso Ingres: Face to Face' is a unique opportunity to see these two portraits, side by side, for the first time, and to trace the continuous thread between 19th and 20th-century artistic development*."

With all this joy - and the small sorrow that we were not there at the time - we almost forgot that we have to make a plea once again, because here too. That plea is so obvious, although it is also implicit in this short quote: to hold more of this kind of comparative exhibition work in at least one of the fixed locations of one of the most relevant works of art that are the subject of comparison! It goes without saying that works of art are regularly exhibited on which the central artist wanted to draw inspiration. Here it is very explicit or striking and exceptional. And with what a triple result! Elsewhere - see **Jenny Montigny/Emile Claus** - we have also made a plea to try much more in future to confront paintings by a master with the graphic

work based on those paintings, especially with lithographs and engravings. We understand that in many cases this is very difficult for drawings, certainly for somewhat older masterpieces and for older paper that cannot tolerate much light. We are of course convinced that we are not inventing the wheel here and that consequently (hahaha) many more art experts have thought of this formula – and worked on it. This certainly means an immense organizational or practical problem, especially when one particular classical work has strongly inspired several later artists. We ourselves know absolutely nothing about computer science, but we wonder whether this kind of artistic – museum perspective could not be developed through some program or other? That program should make it possible to inventory the undoubtedly relatively many possibilities for this kind of both very interactive and, so to speak, relatively one-sided projects. So that they can possibly be exhibited together 'somewhere/once' as categorically related to each other and the views compared, and also described with an interesting catalogue! In concrete terms, it seems almost impossible to us that only Picasso was inspired by this famous portrait of Madame Moitessier by Ingres. There must at least be all sorts of student works or studies by academy students around this work, whereby it is then a matter of probability, so to speak, whether one or more of these students then effectively grew into great artists. Secondly, Picasso's inspiration is somewhat freer than just an admittedly idiosyncratic or contemporary imitation of the original by Ingres. That means that there will probably be more bound studies of this portrait by Ingres, with, as mentioned or hoped, if possible beautiful works in themselves or at least works by later successful, independent painters.

Anyone who already has a general knowledge of (Western) art history knows that throughout this history very many also very modern or current masters were and are inspired by visits to museums where the so-called classics hang. Those classics are of course (don't they?) gradually but more and more moving towards the present time. Or expressed numerically-artistically, new classical works are constantly being added that one can almost always see via art books and/or the internet, but that one can actually study fully, so only in situ, the visu of life. Moreover, everyone knows and as we have just indicated, that in most higher education in the visual arts worldwide, very much classical work is studied ergo imitated. We know it and it is an eternal reality that will certainly never change in the future and you too know this very famous verse or pericope: "*For many are called, but few are chosen*." (Matthew, 22, 14). Source: www.biblegateway.com/ The later selection or progression of effectively valuable, not even international top artists, is very low from any higher art education. However, viewed from an art historical perspective or taken all together over time, this succession certainly gives a stream of very good to absolute top artists that is almost impossible for the average art connoisseur to follow. It is already well known that many of these top artists destroy older or mainly academic work at a more established moment, as being worthless. In other words, relatively little of the comparative work obtained in this academic way will be preserved later. But it will be there. Just as there are always progressions among art students, it is not always per year, then at least per generation. And that brings us seamlessly back to Picasso and his Ingres.

We do indeed necessarily return to the website of the comparative exhibition Ingres – Picasso from 2022. There you can read a striking quote from one of them, from the sure-footed, self-assured mouth of the more modern or of course infinitely more documented Picasso: "*Lesser artists borrow; great artists steal.*" We do not consider it our task here to analyze this quote, because we simply have the 'feeling' that something is not entirely right with it. What is true and real is Picasso's commitment, which he, as an unimaginably creative artist and as a man who knew very early on how leading he was as an artist, blithely states that every artist of

whatever quality – and therefore certainly also the better or most beloved/appreciated artists – 'uses' works of art by previous artists as models, sources of inspiration for their own work.

By the way, we would very slightly like to correct Picasso because he forgot a second or extra possibility concerning this portrait of Ingres, since we already know that he made a somewhat less striking portrait of the same lady. See again his work from 1851:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portrait_of_Madame_Moitessier#/media/File:Moitessier_(Ingres,_1851)_NGA.jpg

3. The mirror or the exaggerated perhaps ridiculous idea of vanitas or vanity. Because: there is salvation to be obtained/built in the world!

We just discussed Picasso with his interpretation or new use of this famous painting from around 1850. We have not said everything about it, as if, ultimately, everything could be said and in that case one would even have to say everything. Picasso himself has namely started to appear in his version, of a completely different, albeit 'still' French woman. He has therefore become a character in his own painting, a fact that cannot be said of the work of Ingres, in neither of the two versions he made as a portrait of Madame Moitessier. Correct us if you do … 'something'!? Just look at Picasso and Marie-Thèrèse Walter. Because it always says what it says:

https://www.nortonsimon.org/art/detail/F.1969.38.10.P

You can't miss it either, because whoever looks at this portrait of her - which is in any case the core or theme of this work! - automatically looks at her head first. And what is standing right there (right in front of the viewer) next to it; the silhouette or the head of Picasso.

We have the feeling that an important Belgian painter saw that painting by Picasso and used it as inspiration – in turn. The very classically trained, hypersensitive and tormented Jan Cox (1919 - 1980) painted the interesting double portrait of himself (…) with the famous Belgian writer and all-rounder Hugo Claus (1929 – 2008), in 1955 with the title "*Hugo Claus and I*". Unfortunately, we cannot show an image of this work, neither here nor via a reference on the internet. But the profile of Hugo Claus in particular is very similar to the representation that Picasso gave of himself in the painting discussed about his beloved Marie-Thérèse Walter. In this way, 'much' from the insanely interesting and moving world of great paintings indeed touches 'much' other work. Even more and very much in common: the features that Picasso gives himself in that work do not at all resemble the features of ... himself but rather those of the reasonably well-known Roman emperor Nero (37 - 68). Just as we have the feeling that in that double portrait of Jan Cox and Hugo Claus the first – the actual painter – has depicted the second more as Emperor Nero, than as the pure Hugo Claus. Much indeed touches much.

In any case, Picasso had in common with Ingres that they stood with both feet in the 19th century. In other words, they were brought up in a form of eternal classical past. In that past, Picasso would soon make short work of it, although he would then quickly go back and forth to neo-classicism or simply remain Picasso the painter of everything, one was very intensely brought up with images, images with stories. Ingres, Picasso and countless Western visual artists were all brought up in the noble art of iconography. What Picasso comes to do with Marie-Thérèse Walter is mainly or only look. Not just look; it is lurking or playing the spy. As the macho. As nothing else than the owner of this young woman. Because this man was a

bull. He would drop women when it suited him. And fell for them when it suited him … So he literally watched his beloved, not so much as her lover but rather as her guard appointed by himself – or against another potential male lover. He would hold up a mirror to her at another time, in the extraordinary, fantastic or magical "*Girl before a Mirror*" (1932). Perhaps this painting, for which he also took Miss Walter as a source of inspiration, is more similar to Ingres' work on Madame Moitessier? See:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Girl_before_a_Mirror

In this interesting wiki page you can find all sorts of readings around the meaning of the work, in which possibly the "*Death*" with the famous motif of the "*memento mori*" appears. We will not go into that further because it is quite likely that the mirror in Ingres' work has something to do with death. Let us first note that in these times around the two portraits of Madame Moitessier only in this one (most discussed) portrait a mirror is present, and unmistakably very central. This mirror – behind her (of course) – takes up about one third of the entire painting or is very prominent and absolutely cannot be ignored. This mirror can therefore formally have nothing other than a specific meaning, 'next to' or in interaction with the central subject or the portrayed woman. Moreover – and quite self-evident for something like a nearby mirror – it also reflects a part of this woman, namely the unmistakably most important part of her: head and neck or her bust! A very penetrating discussion of this painting will certainly point to this reflection in which, in particular, a door of the room can also be seen, and where both (she as the portrayed and Ingres as the portraitist) are located. We will not go into that. In the next paragraph we will learn convincingly that this woman was considered incredibly beautiful or attractive by several contemporaries, including not least the top painter Ingres. This is visually demonstrated here twice or literally repeated via the striking mirror as if it were the very old, very well-known literary stylistic figure of repetitio.

Ingres would also use a mirror twice in similarly painted portraits of women, at least as far as we have been able to dig through his oeuvre sufficiently. He would do so with a painting that dated from the time of the two portraits of Madame Moitessier, or nothing new under his iconographic sun. He would do so for the first time thirty years earlier in another painted portrait of women. That was first the portrait of "*Madame de Senonnes*" (1814 + Nantes, Musée des Beaux-Arts) and later the portrait of "*Louise de Broglie*" (1845 + Frick Collection, New York). See for both works:

https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portrait_de_madame_de_Senonnes

https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/La_Vicomtesse_d%27Haussonville

Back to this great portrait of Madame Moitessier. At the same time, there was almost certainly a sting in the soft flesh of this woman's beauty. A mirror was not only a utensil par excellence for ladies for centuries, and up to the present. Even the internet apparently cannot offer an alternative. Or are we seeing that wrong!? The mirror could, as just indicated in Picasso's work, be intended as a possible indication of the transience of man, of the transience of flesh, in the case of the equally beautiful, adorable Marie-Thérèse Walter. Just as meat is once cut or once literally dead but therefore 'still' edible because it remains fresh or visible for a certain but almost precisely measurable limited period of time, it is the same with the so-called eternal beauty of women, of this woman, also of such an incredibly attractive woman at the time. She is now very beautiful and there is a certain chrono-logical irony associated with this

portrait! After all, Ingres had worked on this portrait for more than ten years. Or at least he waited a very long time to finally finish it, to present it as an image of that moment, between 1844 and 1856 or twelve years! In any case, she had remained consistently beautiful during that time or twelve years or more than a decade, because he – Ingres – had taken up portraiture precisely because of her then (and clearly enduring) beauty. The Dutch "*voortdurend*" can be translated into English as "*always*" or "*constantly*". But this Dutch word has – once again – a certain philosophical advantage over English. "*Voortdurend*" is a compound of the words "*voort*" + "*duren*", with the core "*duren*" or "*to take time*". "*Voort*" is then an augmentative or means "*meer/more*" so that "*time keeps taking longer*". Otherwise the English word "*always*" is also interesting as "*all ways*". In other words, the mirror is of great iconographic importance because it is an indication of a very important, albeit very negative, value, which apparently went hand in hand with all female beauty for centuries if not millennia; vanity. In any case, all ancient Jews, and therefore all Christians – in this case the entire majority of the Western population for at least fifteen centuries and still 'many' afterwards!!! – knew that because they heard it constantly. It was held up to them on all possible occasions of joy, of prosperity, of beauty as here, of … Of essentially the most positive life experiences (!!!) as a ... mirror for their ears and soul. You probably know through which words or you recognize these famous words:

"*All Is Vanity. 1 The words of the Preacher,[a] the son of David, king in Jerusalem. 2 Vanity[b] of vanities, says the Preacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity*." (Ecclesiastes 1:1 - 2). Source: www.biblegateway.com

That there was vanitas, even insane vanitas in and around the life of the French painter and citizen Ingres, he knew with absolute certainty like no other. When painting the portrait of "*Madame de Senonnes*" (1814), his well-known former and double model and ruler of the "*Empire*" – Mr. Napoleon (I) – was in trouble, although he had not yet definitively disappeared from absolute power; that was 'only' one year later. Thirty years later, when he painted another lady's portrait of vanitas, when he painted "*Louise de Broglie*" or in 1845, it was a completely different situation. Although? The France of the 19th century continued to experience quite a bit of revolution and restoration. In the meantime, Ingres himself had for a time come into the favour of a prince, or the son of the French ... king (!) Louis-Philippe (1773 – 1850) between 1830 - 1848: "*The Times They Are A-Changin'*". Ingres was once again, and in his old age, even "*Sénateur du second empire*" during 1862 - 1867. Incroyable, mais vrai. It was as if he came to sit on the lap of the old Napoleon again!

So. That power and vanitas go hand in hand; all understanding for this logic. But is vanity present everywhere by definition? Do you believe that (also): "*All Is Vanity*"? That some realism may be preached (sigh) does not seem to us to be a bad pedagogical thing. More precisely, there is a very old tradition of "*the cardinal values*". Among these four core virtues – in principle they should belong to the pedagogical core of all education, also informal or at home – is "*prudence*": see

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cardinal_virtues

Philosophically and theologically we cannot go into great detail here and we must concentrate on the essence. We certainly have respect and attach importance to monks, for example, who dedicate themselves to prayer in the most deserted places in the world. But in our opinion, that life or that attitude to life is indeed far from (earthly) joy, far from (earthly) prosperity, far from ... Or far from the most positive (earthly) life experiences. But. That life or that attitude

to life is not opposed to life itself, is not opposed to joy and the like! Even more important - philosophically and theologically speaking, while ultimately every theology is an applied form of philosophy - is the conclusion that the thoroughly Christian idea or the 'ideal', that heaven is the ultimate and above all only redeemer of all forms of earthly suffering, is untrue! Let us very positively assert or assume that it is indeed a correct statement, albeit not a true one... That is to say, it can be a correct representation of the matter, although that is reasonably or necessarily a point of faith since it is still very empirically completely impossible to prove. But unfortunately, it is not a true statement from a Christian perspective, and for that we refer to the core of the thinking of a Christian ... theologian. We also evaluate this theologian as a great philosopher, but we cannot go into that here either. The man has written a gigantic and usually very difficult oeuvre. The study of it alone takes years of time and a lot of effort! We say that very precisely for the reason that he has already passed away and we can no longer ask him about his thoughts on this famous/infamous passage from Ecclesiastes, part of the Old Testament, and therefore - with certainty - part of his absolutely hyper-intense field of study of Christian theology. We find our Preacher or especially this extremely famous and much too often quoted verse, really exaggerated, overly moralizing and almost touchingly ridiculous. Is there then nothing imperishable, nothing of lasting value - also in beauty? Is the experience with or perception of The Beautiful through beautiful things and events - as attractive women - not imperishable and forever burned into the individual retina, as it can/will be in multiple ways the collective or social retina!? And moreover; what simple world or human/woman image prevails here in Preacher! As if aging does not produce its own beauty!? As if aging is by definition becoming uglier? What a real fool or thorough pessimist, that Preacher!? And "*All is vanity*"? Pardon me, what do we mean by "*all*" or the whole of life? How can a person live with such core thoughts?

The Dominican and theologian Edward Schillebeeckx (Edward Cornelis Florentius Alfonsus Schillebeeckx, O.P. + 1914 - 2009) is undoubtedly one of the greatest thinkers that the Low Countries – the man was born and raised in Belgium but would mainly live and work or write in the Netherlands – has produced, last century and throughout all previous centuries. Perhaps he is even one of the last great theological giants that Western Europe has produced? Time will tell, but his value as a thinker cannot be underestimated or ignored. We ourselves have seen the man once live in a form of debate or dialogue with the philosopher Leo Apostel (1925 - 1995), also a phenomenally gifted intellectual but still that little bit less great but therefore – may we express ourselves so difficultly stylishly, please? – still very, very impressive. We add this personal note that we have a great and indelible regret never having had the circumstances (no money enough to go and study under more comfortable or ambitious circumstances) to have studied with this professor for at least a year. It is what it is and of course there are his written texts. In particular and for this context we must emphasize the core of his thinking, that "*Extra mundum, nulla salus*". In understandable English: "*There is no salvation outside the world*." Although this is not formulated very correctly according to formal logic, we may no must translate this into a more optimistic or persuasive language: "***There is salvation to be obtained/built in the world*** *- and much, perhaps even sufficient, alone already but still better with more people*". From this crucial human conception or ideal we have otherwise or very operationally approached a certain nota bene Italian lady, Luce Caponegro or in our name Lucella - without further comment whether that meant a successful objective for either party but one effect is of course these texts about the so-called attractive women in history.

To illustrate this, we will use a fairly recent quote, which can be found on the internet. It indicates what it indicates or is clear enough in our opinion, self-evident in itself and especially concerning that unimaginably pessimistic thinking around the 'ideal' of vanity:

https://www.ncronline.org/blogs/essays-theology/schillebeeckx-no-salvation-outside-world

Schillebeeckx: No salvation outside the world

BY RICHARD MCBRIEN FEBRUARY 1, 2010

"*… reported on Schillebeeckx's final message to his theological colleagues at a symposium held in his honor in Leuven in December, 2008.*

That message was Extra mundum nulla salus – "There is no salvation outside the world." It was a conviction, Hilkert noted, that "captures the love of the world and the 'grace-optimism' that characterized [his] life's work. ..."

From the earliest to his latest books, she wrote, Schillebeeckx "helped readers grasp the core sacramental insight disclosed by the Incarnation: The mystery of God is to be encountered in human life and creation."

For Schillebeeckx, "the creative and saving presence of God's grace" becomes manifest "wherever human persons minister to one another, especially to the neighbor in need. Human love is an embodiment, a sacrament, of God's love." He called these experiences "fragments of salvation." (our underlining).

Case closed? About the vanity of this mirror, in among others the portrait by Ingres of Madame Moitessier? Somewhere the whole thing speaks for itself since we, at least we, discuss her beauty here, as one of the so-called attractive women in history? Interesting or mentally, morally and socially necessary, is of course the further discussion about the evaluation of beauty through the metaphysically unstoppable process of ... aging. We can only hope, so to speak, that we provide sufficient impetus for this elsewhere on this website. Because. What we certainly cannot do, not only because we know nothing about AI but because we simply have no interest in it, is to make a simulation of the aging process of Madame Moitessier! Now we know in any case that she was an exceptionally attractive woman for at least twelve years before Ingres - she remained so. But of course we know nothing about her later situation, about the question of whether she was and remained happy, or whether she perhaps and yet ... And so on. Perhaps she already knew and especially understood the core of the matter according to Edward Schillebeeckx? Who will say or deny it; already through and through she knew and had enough of that thinking of "*Extra mundum nulla salus*". It was perhaps how little or openly known one of her life mottos – besides … Besides indeed also a belief that afterwards, after life, after earthly life, there was a second and even longer life, with much, infinite to almost boring – salvation/salus/salvezza!?

We still have to ask two small but pressing historical-epistemological questions. And try to give an answer to them. The first question seems relatively easy or at least convincing to answer. Did the artist Ingres himself know enough about Christian iconography, that is, about the Christian worldview? The answer is twofold: yes, although especially one time with great certainty. Firstly, he demonstrably made a number of religious paintings next to even stained

glass windows (in churches): so! Secondly, the general intellectual escape from the concepts of the Christian worldview was completely impossible, even for the most hardened republican. The French Revolution, as you know, would reform quite a bit - even the calendar and so on. It did not have much success or lasting impact. From the famous top writer and bishop Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet (1627 - 1704) onwards, there was something specific about the French church as the "*Gallicanism*" that leaned towards French royal absolutism. That aimed for a certain independence from the Church of Rome. But you understand that we cannot go into that. In any case, we would be very surprised if the memento mori were no longer present in that Gallicanism. Moreover, Louis XIV, preceded by François I (1494 – 1547), was an ally in the Islamic Ottoman Empire in his endless intra-European battles, or an enormous historical form of collaboration: what were the consequences in terms of the thinking of 'his' people? There is the other, much more difficult and perhaps even more important question: if the Christian thinking of theologian Edward Schillebeeckx offers an answer to the centuries-long doom-mongering or anti-happiness thinking within the Christian worldview, and given his situation in a time when the power and influence of the Church (of Rome) really declined considerably, was his thinking not simply too late? This question can be reformulated historically in the sense that a more optimistic, say more earthbound-Christian oriented thinking was actually absent throughout the whole of Christian civilization before 1945 or the beginning of the thinking period of Edward Schillebeeckx? We cannot give an answer to that here either, not even very tentatively, to our deep regret.

4. Then the most beautiful woman of bourgeois Paris. Now still or again: a model for all seasons and all women!

Ingres was quite old when he started on the portraits of this lady. It is said that the man had a somewhat pissy character: won't you allow that please? And, a little and piss and shit have very fertile properties! Moreover, throughout his career he appeared not to be really interested in portraits but mainly in historical pieces, although he would become much more famous after his death for the former: once again the difference between intentions and effects! Young as he was before, he could quite naturally not refuse a power phenomenon like Napoleon to make his portrait, especially if Napoleon himself came to 'ask' for it. In the meantime, forty years had passed and a lot of water had already flowed through the Seine. Besides, a lot would flow through there without the wet fingers of Ingres because he was constantly with fingers and toes in Italian rivers, in the Arno (Florence) and in the Tiber (Rome). As mentioned, Ingres had started this portrait in 1844, which he would only finish much later in 1856. In the meantime, he also made a – beautiful – portrait of the same lady in 1851. In those years, something happened to the older Ingres, because in 1852, when he was already more than seventy years old, he would marry. That happened to a French lady and yet special; she was almost thirty years younger than him! It was – what else could one expect? – a second youth for him. The fact that he would finish those two portraits for Madame Moitessier in quick succession probably had to do with that joy for a new wife and the 'fresh' beauty surrounding him. After all, in 1844, when he was asked for a commission via a mutual acquaintance around Madame Moitessier, he was in a phase of his life in which he was still not very inclined to accept commissions for portraits. Apparently, after the actual meeting with Madame Moitessier, he must have fallen next to or rather completely on his easel because of the intoxicating power of her beauty. Here the information from the English wiki page is very informative but first we need to go into the French wiki page about this same painting. See:

https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Madame_Moitessier_assise

Here we find the same initial doubt expressed: "*D'abord réticent, car il considérait alors le portrait comme un thème secondaire de l'histoire de l'art, il accepte la commande car il est frappé par la beauté de son modèle*.". And although we do not consider these texts of this website as purely scientific contributions, in which we would normally have to quote constantly and thus more scientifically, we must now reproduce this note no. 3 in full (it is not that long either):

"*Daniel Arasse, grand historien de l'art, est allé jusqu'à faire l'hypothèse que la tache que l'on voit dans la partie basse de la robe, a été peinte par Ingres non pas comme une ombre mais en témoignage (à la Georges Bataille!) de son admiration et de son désir*." (vertaald: "*Daniel Arasse, a great art historian, went so far as to hypothesize that the stain seen on the lower part of the dress was painted by Ingres not as a shadow but as a testimony (à la Georges Bataille!) of his admiration and desire*."

You understand that we should now in principle look up this reference ourselves in the art historical work of Daniel Arasse (1944 – 2003). We are not going to do that because we do not feel like it and because we may assume that no one would dare to make this reference. Purely in terms of content, the so-called "*tache*" or stain can indeed be seen, but then several times and in different sizes. It therefore seems to us the task of very precise 'ordinary' research in addition to stylistic and iconographic research to be able/dare to determine whether the older, yet certainly married – and even to a much younger woman! – Ingres has actually applied a form of obscenity here. To be honest, that seems to us a rather French, say oversexed way of thinking because through decades of looking at and reading about art we have never seen such a hypothesis expressed. We might see something like that possible in one of the many portraits by phenomenon Francis Bacon (1909 - 1992) about his (suicided) lover George Dyer? Moreover, this hypothesis concerning Ingres' spots seems simply silly in itself; to what need of Ingres would these spots have responded? And above all; if … Then the very wealthy client or Monsieur Moitessier would have noticed this with almost certainty and would certainly not have accepted this version if Ingres had not immediately thrown out the door. Furthermore, one should not forget that this must be regarded as a truly extremely serious insult – if such an intention was effectively behind these 'spots', which we doubt – and that the "*duel*" was still used in France in the middle of the 19th century, to 'resolve' such particularly serious insults. Finally, let us also consider the fact that we may be certain that the older painter and man Ingres almost certainly and even twice wanted to paint the portrait of this beautiful lady, not only apparently because of her beauty, but also very naturally, one would almost forget, because of the handsome capital he received for it from her very wealthy husband. Monsieur Moitessier was, among other things, a banker. And Ingres had, among other things, a younger and French wife to support; haha.

Now let's turn to the English wiki page about this famous painting.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portrait_of_Madame_Moitessier#

Here one also finds the same assertion concerning Ingres and his fainting and immediate painterly righting upon seeing – the contemplation, the visual caress – of Madame Moitessier, in persona non non grata or a "*persona grata*". We quote again as is necessary:

"*Art critic Théophile Gautier, who watched during some of the painting sessions, agreed with Ingres, describing her beauty as the most regal, magnificent, stately and*

*Junoesque that he had ever seen drawn.[*4]". To complete we give the full note 4: "*Kiroff, Blagoy (2015). Ingres: 162 Master Drawings. Blagoy Kiroff. p. 107. ISBN 9786050378276*."

We are mainly trained as philosophers so we think logically as intensely as possible about how people think reasonably logically. We have to try to get into the head or the thinking or perception of this Frenchman and of course contemporary of Ingres. You see that according to the rules of wiki we can click directly on the man, Pierre Jules Théophile Gautier (1811 – 1872). This way we learn that he was "*a French poet, dramatist, novelist, journalist, and art and literary critic*." These are more or less the same descriptions. In short; the man loved beauty, didn't he!? We are not really at home in the mythological use from France in the mid-19th century but "*Juno*" was certainly a very important goddess for the Romans and was among other things the "*goddess of love*"; many actually only worse mythological references could be used compared to Madame Moitessier! And now comes the most important part, via this wiki page, about the thinking and perception ability of the Frenchman Théophile Gautier:

"*Gautier was a celebrated abandonné (one who yields or abandons himself to something) of the Romantic Ballet, writing several scenarios, the most famous of which is Giselle, whose first interpreter, the ballerina Carlotta Grisi, was the great love of his life*." Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Th%C3%A9ophile_Gautier

We really don't need to click further wikiwise on the named ballerina Carlotta Grisi (1819 – 1899), who was clearly of the utmost importance in the life of this man. Not only had he written a lot and literally on her body, but moreover – from our directly formulated perspective! – he did so on her extremely slender or slim body! Or have you perhaps already seen one ballerina, with for example the admittedly adorable appearance of … Madame Moitessier, but who was also (sic) somewhat 'fuller' or at least completely impossible to move on the European top stages as the top ballerina of these times?

That the poor French prolific writer was dumped by this lady Grisi so that (sic) he would find solace in the arms of her sister and have some children through her womb, that was all of no importance here. Purely logical because deductively we have - and we firmly hold on to it! - that the same man Gautier fell for a by definition very slender woman. And that he ALSO sang the praises of the beauty of another woman from the same times - around 1850 - while this woman as she was known and was literally immortalized in two paintings of that time, as not so slender, albeit plump, chubby, … or that little bit fatter. We are talking about Paris around 1850. We are talking about Madame Moitessier, among others, who appears in those two well-known paintings every time in an insanely beautiful dress or in the top-class clothing of that time. Of course, "*la Gisi*" would not have been prancing around in the most banal tutus in the many ballets that Gautier wrote for her, until she fell into the arms of another … She would certainly not have been dancing around 'just' naked, because the Parisians had to wait another half century for the "*Ballets Russes*"; did they dance completely naked anyway? In other words, or this conclusion: in 1850 in Paris, or even the centre of beauty in so many socially important domains – such as painting, dance, … – one and the same Frenchman of, let us say, broad or deep general culture spoke out:

1) about and for the beauty of a slim/slender/... woman;
2) about and for the beauty of a chubby/plump/… (in Dutch "*volslanke of vol-slanke*" or literally "*full slender*"!).

We have personally been very intensely occupied the last twenty years of our lives with above all the first half of the 20th century in (Western) Europe, in almost all important domains such as art. We have indeed not specifically concerned ourselves with the evolution of fashion, French fashion (of course) and certainly not how it was shown, especially through models. Those models showed themselves either live via a catwalk (an English term) or via photos, via general and specialized women's magazines, posters, ... In any case, we can safely say with a very worried heart that the majority - if not ALL - models, whether they are French or from anywhere else (think of the American phenomenon Josephine Baker, 1906/1975, a variety talent of whom we have seen several public nude photos), are as slim as ... are - or even slimmer!

This means that in the mind of the Parisian fashion world, of the world of that fashion that can be called clothing fashion or of a part of the world that at least half of the world would like to wear, somewhere between 1850 and say 1920 something changed; from ALSO plump to ONLY slim, as the so-called everywhere and always propagated 'ideal'! Also call it the straitjacket for all other women, who can either buy something similar or still want to be inspired by it with self-made dresses and so on. Who is stopping who from making the normal and reverse movement again, so from only slim/slender/… to - again!!! - slim/slender as well as plump/chubby/....!!!???

Or back to the future – via Ingres!

5. "*La gonna fa la donna*". Or "*La robe fait la femme*" or "*The skirt makes the woman*"..

We have spent sufficient time in paragraph 3 on the striking mirror in this famous portrait. If that mirror takes up about one third of the space in this painting, we can estimate about the same space for the skirt, for this delightful dress of this delightful lady. And no, we are absolutely not going to talk about her equally delightful jewels now. And for two reasons. Firstly, we can safely say that it is visually very striking that all her jewels can be seen as extensions of her dress; take a look for yourself. And secondly, we simply find a dress or skirt or … – is there another adjacent alternative for this crucial or strategic garment? – much more interesting to look at than jewels, at least in the direct grasp of an attractive woman, until they disappear from her afterwards.

May we kindly ask you to forgive us a major linguistic clumsiness in this paragraph? Madame Moitessier wears a skirt and up until now (we are only 61 years old) we did not even know the difference between a dress and a skirt. So we had to look it up … Now we must stick closely to the facts, at least where those facts also force themselves upon us irresistibly. So (yes, so!) we are a great advocate of women wearing dresses or skirts again or more often. What the difference is, where a dress or a skirt begins, is essentially completely the same to us. As long as dress and skirt end the same, as is known (now also to us). And above all; as long as skirt and dress reveal the same amount of beauty. Now we also love language. And make your choice between a title like "*L'abito fa la donna*" ("*The dress makes the woman*") or like "*La gonna fa la donna*" ("*The skirt makes the woman*"). That choice is made by almost everyone, and just as quickly! In that sense we have made the same translation in French as "***La robe fait la femme***" (the language of fashion, right!?) and in English. You understand and accept!? Thank you.

And now we continue. Although I hope you will allow us to sometimes speak of a dress or sometimes of a skirt – because …

As an art lover, one can see Madame Moitessier's skirt/dress as a true still life, a part as a possible whole of its own. In the previous paragraph we read that the French art historian Daniel Arasse actually saw stains on that dress. There are indeed dark points of light that can form small shadows. The will is often the father of the eye. If one wants very much, one can see spots in those shadows as actual expressions of an irresistible sexual compulsion of the painter towards the portrayed. We find that 'observation' rather nonsense or wishful looking from wishful thinking. But passons; it does not interest us at all and moreover it can simply refer to something like small albeit unavoidable metaphysics. A painter always works with light, doesn't he?! So he also works with shadow! We only show here our sincere admiration for this important appearance of this woman, a woman who was clearly very rich because, among other things, she sat in an expensive dress in an expensive, almost certainly domestic, and therefore semi-princely environment. But she was/is as a woman a woman like all those who came before and after her, or a being with a body that needs a certain protection against the elements and that at the same time always knows this protective function – and is determined by it – as a social function. In this social function, the element of beauty is probably always present if there is at least a minimal material/financial possibility for it. More concretely. The garment of Madame Moitessier that de facto completely encompasses or wraps up the person portrayed has three functions: 1) material protection, 2) indication of social origin in addition to 3) aesthetic, a function that can be analyzed in itself but is also determined by the previous one. Let us leave the protective function for what it is and must always remain, also needfully abstract from the social function of clothing and concentrate on the last function, that of aesthetics.

Since we are discussing so-called attractive women in history and are doing so (almost exclusively) on the basis of paintings, we must first concentrate on the phenomenal appearance of the woman before the eye of the painter via his hand or his brush (for convenience we will leave other possible techniques out of the equation here). That is somewhat delicate for us because it cannot be the intention in this website that we opt decisively for this or that form of painting school, for various reasons. At least we do not want to do that because we find it self-evident that we do not want to make statements that could, so to speak (conditionally of course) bind future artists, or, to put it more diplomatically or cautiously, at least inspire them. Nevertheless, it seems self-evident to us at first sight that a certain choice in what we are going to recommend directly through the knowledge of painters - portraitists! -, must also have purely painterly and therefore art-historical implications. In concrete terms, we did some research; it is said that for some time now Flemish painters have been taught absolutely nothing in their academic training in terms of materials. More precisely; where in Flanders there is nevertheless an improbably rich and very long tradition of any (we are open here, aren't we?) art historical processing of materials such as of course primarily textiles (dresses, skirts, ... hahaha!), metals, marbles and so on? - nothing is passed on/taught in the art technical sense. We do know that someone as intriguing, somewhat unruly artist as Anne-Mie Van Kerckhoven (Anne-Marie, also known as "*AMVK*", apparently she is a very Christian, strongly Flemish-minded lady because with an alias similar to the well-known abbreviation "*AVV-VVK*" or "*Alles Voor Vlaanderen - Vlaanderen Voor Kristus/All for Flanders - Flanders for Christ*." + °1951) works on/with plastic surfaces, with various types of plastic 'even'. Furthermore, we have certainly already seen one intriguing (self)portrait of hers, but due to copyrights, among other things, we will not discuss that here. From that portrait we cannot, for that matter, conclude whether she is wearing trousers or a ... It is quite obvious that makers of women's clothing will never banish the skirt or dress from their shop windows and that the material and aesthetic knowledge of those garments there will never

disappear. In the end, one can always go to the ... Scottish Highlands and borrow from the men there! But so; if ... is wearing a skirt ... and would like a portrait, there is that practical question = which contemporary and future painter can paint that 'in a way' and 'still', assuming that he or she would even (sic) still want to do it? Our great friend and world-class guy Luc Tuymans (1958) is a wonderful example of this. His famous/infamous portrait of the Dutch Queen Beatrix (2013) is du jamais vu or indescribably bad but according to the usual experts of course another milestone in the work of this deprimate. Partly because the man either can't or doesn't want to (he can't) do anything with her dress/skirt; he can't even paint something like textile - but can undoubtedly and preferably for days 'explain' about it. A tongue painter, then?

Ultimately, it has come down to the following for several or through the last or the next of the future - !!! - generations, roughly since WWII. Either one paints completely conceptually or abstractly, even very lyrically or whatever. But then it seems to us almost impossible to still be able to speak of artefacts produced in this artistic way under the heading "*portrait of* ...". One can invent and stick as many names or titles on these artefacts as one wants. Since the interbellum we know that titles can actually run away from their subject, can enter into a form of interaction with it. And moreover, if you cannot recognize anything in anything that could also be presented in a painterly manner; what use is a title to a 'suitable' or explanatory sentence, let alone even added value? Of course we do not deny that when the sun shines, we can see sunbeams. Of course we know from the phenomenon of Picasso alone that he made a great many abstract portraits. We have just recently discussed a portrait of him, of one of his lovers, in paragraph 2. That painting was formally beautiful and in terms of content inspired by this famous portrait of Madame Moitessier as well as by his new, very lively flame Marie-Thérèse Walter (1909 – 1977). However, there is not a single person in the world who, if he or she had by chance never heard of Picasso and this woman, would recognize an effective portrait (of this woman by that man) in this. But he or she would see a great painting in it. With ‘something’ feminine. Because with legs, breasts (especially), a head that is (especially) supported by a beautiful, so feminine position of her arm/hand, … See again:

https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/exhibitions/past/picasso-ingres-face-to-face

In other words, let us try to use very precise words. This abstract painting by Picasso is either not abstract at all. Or, it is only a little abstract and it is not even not conceptual at all. If it had been conceptual, there would have been nothing recognizable of the feminine. If it had been even more abstract, then … Then it could probably be called purely conceptual, right!? This painting by Picasso has been cast in a representation that is acceptable to everyone (except the real art experts of course, the curators, the …) that makes it both recognizable (as a person, a young woman and probably a new love for Picasso) and as a very obviously very beautiful or successful – or art historically beautiful work. We do not prevent anyone and certainly not famous artists of current and future times from basing themselves, as Picasso did on a portrait by Ingres, also on this one portrait by Picasso. Only, if their result is ‘purely’ conceptual or extremely abstract, it will produce streaks or stains, pleasant or beautiful perhaps or at least so to be hoped. But almost certainly (always leave room for pleasant surprises please!) it will not be a successful portrait – of whoever it may depict or whose inspiration it was!

From the other side of the art side or for those painters who still/again want to work figuratively; there relatively ‘perfect’ or convincing, moving (again) portraits can be made. But. Either one only makes nudes and then any addition of something like clothing is simply unnecessary. However. At the very least that is a problematic attitude when one wants to

make a portrait of a child or a couple or when one wants to paint a group portrait – and so on, probably/hopefully. If one then (really!) uses clothing, on the other hand, one can de facto no longer express oneself in a more nuanced way due to a lack of knowledge of materials – than via smears or stains! That can be solved very pragmatically in that way: one only makes ... busts anymore! See **Nefertiti.** That cannot be a definitive solution for several reasons; it would be very boring, among other things. But what one cannot technically represent, one cannot paint either, or a variation on the famous saying "*The medium is the message*". In this way, ultimately only the medium or the artistic domain of photos remains! Whether they are made digitally or even analogue again; has little argument here. Of course, we are not going to deny the light in and out of the eyes of true photographers and admit that everyone can just take photos, let alone portrait photos. May we come back to our great friend Luc Tuymans in this context? Here we go: the photo that photographer Katrijn van Giel (1983) took of a Belgian politician in 2015 is/was a magnificent photo in any case. It is certainly a portrait or an artistic representation of this person to be interpreted/situated. There has been a lot of fuss about this photo and the pure takeover (legally called plagiarism) of painter Luc Tuymans and we will have to come back to it elsewhere. In this entire national and even international discussion – Luc Tuymans is considered an international artist, because the international higher art mob would never have cried for this photographer – there is nevertheless one element that has never been addressed. The photo/plagiarism was a cross-view of a man, fairly obvious with only the upper and middle part of his head. Purely theoretically, this could have been done differently or more specifically predominantly via the lower part, without the brain pan and especially without the – almost always – identifying eyes. Just look at this reconstruction of photo annex plagiarism and imagine for yourself what the reverse result would have been:

https://nos.nl/artikel/2014585-grens-tussen-jatwerk-en-inspiratie-is-dun

These images are not completely sharp and not completely complete – for which we apologize. They are clear for the core of the matter because they are completely the same in content. Don't you notice something that just doesn't stand out!? The person – that man – is not wearing any clothes, or at least has not been photographed as such. That does indeed produce a very strong image through the skill and knowledge of the photographer. That therefore appealed to a professional image maker like Luc Tuymans so that he ... But the power of that photo lies, among other things and certainly to a large extent, in the fact that no clothing or only part of the head – of the person portrayed – is shown. For the photographer it would have been easier, as it were, to continue with that clothing. That would have produced a lesser photo, even if not to ... plagiarize. But Luc Tuymans is an image maker but not a photographer, although for some time now he has apparently liked to use a small type of camera. In any case, this image came out very well, not only because it was incredibly attractive and therefore had to be parodied, or rather plagiarized. But also or almost above all; Luc Tuymans simply cannot paint clothes – properly. He simply has no craft or expertise for it. Or "*The medium is the message*": the lack of craft or expertise is the message. It is then all rationalized by this image maker and boundless expositor. In plain language, it is explained away. Should we speak of sarcasm here or may we simply testify to irony? In any case, with this both famous and infamous photo it is made clear in one fell swoop where the shortcoming of much modern painting lies. It is not in something like a lack of will, or not wanting to look at or observe interesting images. Quite the contrary! It is in not being able to depict, or paint – parts of – interesting images.

Once we had to replace in a vocational school, for (Roman Catholic) religion. We were amazed, among other things, that the reasonably experienced specialist teacher never used real art - in Roman Catholic religion with millions (...) of images of sculptures, paintings, ...!!! So like that. We walked around in our free time, in the school, in the vocational school. So also in the technical rooms or classrooms where 'our' students mainly learned that technical subject. That walking around, our interest, that caused them enormous consternation - for us the very self-evident because we wanted to experience their world with them ... So it had never happened before that even a permanent teacher who was not a technical teacher, had come into such a different classroom: really bad intentions! We think that painters in - four years - higher education should be trained a bit more than just with .. Like they are now apparently 'only' academically occupied with. And learn 'more' professional knowledge. One can then forget as an active artist or not want to use it, later. But the reverse is absolutely impossible. In any case, for those who have the greatest possible interest in the most human object – a portrait (of a human being of course, not of a pet) – there is much, if not almost everything, to be gained from this. Also commercially or as a professional entrepreneur to earn money (honestly and responsibly), But that is an aspect that we may deal with elsewhere. Perhaps, for example, painters in their higher, because academic, education, may also join in the learning areas of fashion education, metalworking, the …

6. "*La gonna fa la donna*" and a little more precisely now. Or are two apparitions of the same woman possible?

There is the well-known expression of "*Le style c'est l'homme*". After our licentiate thesis in philosophy we were completely exhausted so that our brains apparently had room to create a whole series of aphorisms: "*Il cervello è mobile*" – haha. We had never ventured into that genre before, nor with a philosophical genius like Friedrich Nietzsche (1844 – 1900). Perhaps it was a form of philosophy light for us at the time or were we making a huge mistake? We still remember that we used "*Amphorisms*" as a possible title, but we never had to use that for a publication. There were a few keepers, we thought and still think. Like this one: "*Style is what you show when no one else is around*." (in the original Dutch: "*Stijl is datgene wat je toont waneer er niemand anders is*."). You know how writing goes; it is not always clear where thoughts come from, what they want to mean. The language of a person, still in his mother tongue and blessed is the person who can still speak and write one or two languages as a father language or extra emotional language, belongs to the facet of always more than himself, more than what a person thinks he knows about himself and especially thinks he can control about himself. Then it may sound paradoxical that one can still be or get to know oneself, by showing oneself to all third parties - all mirrors - when absolutely none of them are present, when one is completely alone or without any form of communication. In an existential or persistent way this is of course completely impossible, but it is about a basic attitude. In ancient Greek thought, the term "*ataraxia*" (Αταραξία) can perhaps be used for this, as the indication of an equality, a simplicity or sameness of mind. It can also be called a general or deep form of culture, in the broadest or deepest meaning of the word. As a style – 'true' style – where the appearance is both the externalisation of the inner self (a borne inner self) and a reinforcement of it.

Now there is a phenomenal experience with people that we have never experienced with men, so only with women. And that is an experience of a literal two-sidedness. Two styles, two outlooks, two …! So? Also an experience with two 'real' or multiple women? Let us share the latest experiences. Whether it is a coincidence, we dare not say, but it concerns for us – Belgians but also European – two European but also foreign women, an Italian and a Slovak.

Of these Slovak women we can honestly say that we have been able to get to know 'them' (plural) quite intensely in the last fifteen years or so. Yet that two-sided experience with this one or unique, indeed unique there or only experienced with one woman. It is of course true that through fifteen years or so of having met more or less the same Slovak women, we can see certain evolutions, sometimes in their character or mood, sometimes in call it their outward appearance. That seems perfectly normal or human to us and is not what we are going to talk about now. That other Italian lady is a completely different kind of person, if we may say so. She has a public personality, with certain picturesque and blustering sides, is a barrel full of energy that can undoubtedly seem both attractive and risky to many men. She is certainly someone with a great deal of vitality, a quality that we value strongly anyway and is so beautifully expressed in French with "*élan vital*" or "*vital force/life force* ...". Because even if we think we have a lot of social feeling or understanding, we still like or prefer to deal with optimistic people. We may approach that first – Slovakian – lady in a friendly, even sociable way. The Italian lady is a more complex case about which we cannot reveal the back of our tongue, at least not here and now – and perhaps never. We wanted to help her with our brainpower, a motivation that also had something to do with no less than three women we had known before, including the woman of our lives who after all… But that is our own business and we will not give her any breathing space here. Luce Caponegro – you can check it out for yourself in so far as relevant – is a public chatterbox and constantly indicates or indicated (?!) that she did believe in "*Growth but not in salvation*". We did not like that at all, her belief in the disbelief in a kind of redemption, call it deep peace with herself – in her own life. So action! Go play dove of peace – and take off for and land in Ravenna!

In short, we wanted to give this Italian lady – Luce Caponegro or, as we say, Lucella – a chance in several ways to give shape to her addiction to public self-display, but then in a way that is, let's say, both eternal (transcending her own mortality) and most possible artistic, or by becoming the model of Italian visual artists. Through which, if possible, you won't believe your ears, a revival could also be heralded in the Italian art world because truly – we repeat, the Italians!!! – the art of the (human, therefore 'also' female) portrait seems to have been all but forgotten; "*Incomprensibile ma purtroppo vero*." This objective and, nota bene, this fairly unique gift for this objectively seen partly troubled partly lively lady, has thus (sic) or at least completely failed up to now. Presumably because this lady 1) is enormously traumatized by 'the men' (and we are certainly a macho), 2) is a huge control freak (via her collaborator Tania; see further) who wants to create her own image production, say dominantly control it (haha because of "*dominus*" or ... "*lord/man*" - hihi!) and probably 3) also because of certain other views on art, high, low, middle, right, left ... - You understand (hopefully our attempt at diplomatic wording here).

From the experiences with both ladies (the Slovak and the Italian) we may perhaps speak of what we once learned as students of sociology as style inconsistency. That was a phenomenon that you understand by definition, although the soup here is not as hot as it is poured, so to speak. As a small child - certainly before we were five - we had a very fine feeling for the various contradictory or repulsive styles that were to be found in our grandmother's house. We saw, as it were, the operational definitions of various styles dancing before us through that oh so familiar house. Of course we did not know the concept of inconsistency, but we saw it de facto and irresistibly present; form A could not really hang or stand next to form B. And so it went on for a while in that house, through various rooms, as if our grandmother had almost deliberately made a mix of styles to challenge her grandson later, so to speak! Fortunately we had no psychological problem with that; that would have been something. On the contrary! It was even an enormous pedagogical-intellectual advantage because it gave us an – additional

or perhaps pushing? – feeling of democracy, of the presence, in this case in the house of one (older) person of completely different cultural forms. Later, much later we would almost shrink in then flee from, say, a (gigantic) house of nevertheless an internationally undisputed genius like Victor Horta (1861 - 1947). That was in Sint-Gillis-Brussels, with 'of course' one style, with only one style, especially one style, or what an overwhelming quasi-fascist handling of forms in, mind you, a living and residential environment. With that we did not claim that this crushing feeling must always apply to designers of this genre or in essence of all genres. But with cases like this we came to nothing more than a mere viewing and enjoyment experience but certainly not to a desire to want to use something like that, day in day out. See:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Horta_Museum

That experience of disparate even contradictory matters-with-identity-or-a-style formed for us anyway a self-evident or the whole of/around our grandmother. And she was a very important woman in our (early) life because the only grandparent we ever knew, and fortunately quite intense and long enough (in that respect important; there were no points of comparison on our own paternal side because-because). Incidentally, something like true communication between a child – then already known as extremely intelligent because already in nursery school busy with ...; us - and his grandmother (widow shortly after our birth) hardly existed more than say some emotionally charged and some instrumental communication. Those older - Flemish - generations reportedly said almost nothing to children everywhere. And by them (grand)children were especially asked little, let alone actually stimulated relatively little towards them, apart from simply making cultural elements such as books available - and then in libraries or via neighbours. Such a situation was bearable as a child because you could think a lot, in the meantime. And regularly enjoying romantic films on television with her – how nice. Many aesthetic as well as psychological insights were not shared or you had to try to observe and evaluate them yourself. Of course, no person can completely unravel what their own psychogenesis is, let alone how the epistemological structure of their own worldview has developed. One can 'pick up' the shards from memory. Something of those shards and the shard structure must therefore certainly play a role in what we are now trying to translate from our observations around two remarkable and also living, foreign, albeit European, women. Indeed, the perspective is now different because we ourselves are not only supposedly adult and, to put it that way, sexually quite mature and ourselves apparently constantly attractive to multiple women, such as in Slovakia, Italy, ... But we can also ask those women questions in a certain sense or to a certain extent. At least, that would be possible because with this Italian woman there is an important communicative problem, which we do not want to go into here. Anyway, both ladies, the Slovak and the Italian, share something that we, as far as we can remember, have experienced as very rare in our experiences with women who are attractive to us in all (sic) ways: a form of being different, call it inconsistency throughout their phenomenal appearances. Do we call that human (female) phenomenon a showing of really two different faces/styles through other temporal, spatial and environmental factors while they indeed remain objectively the same person – name, character, … ! Or does it …? Does the – slightly or more – different appearance influence the slightly or more different actions of every woman? Does the phenomenally different appearance throughout a communicative context, certainly in a face-to-face relationship and even more so with a macho man like us, influence the existential appearance of such a woman? Does she look as if through the mirror effect of the gaze and the behavior of the man, who thus (!) always meets a formally slightly different often – sexually – more

attractive woman, herself have a different feeling, behavior and appearance? Shouldn't we rather speak of "*style surplusism*" instead of "*style inconsistency*"?

What do we want to say with this? We met the special Italian Luce Caponegro alias Lucella (our working name or nickname for her) twice in September 2022. For reasons we have to (sic) do that again later, although for reasons we don't feel like it that much anymore. By the way. She is a human being. With the right to a private life or privacy, although in her case that is not so obvious. Because. The lady openly and exposed (sic) places half her life on all kinds of media and social media. We do not have access to the latter because we do not want that either since we are not a member of any of those social media platforms because-because. In any case and without violating her privacy, we can say that our first meeting was very short and mainly to really meet. Although we (already) gave her two jars of honey as a gift, a Slovak and a Hungarian jar. As a kind of "*captatio benevolentiae*". To which she replied "*I love honey very much.*" Or a tip for her countless followers! But please, don't all come to La Ravennissama with pots of honey at the same time! It was funny that she looked quite strikingly different then, with her work uniform on and glasses. Also that tied up hair; that gave/gives (?) together with those glasses a stricter or even more serious (...) expression to a person, where she would appear later with loose hair. Looking back from that second meeting; it was as if Lucella has/is two, two strikingly different appearances. And in our opinion you can find, observe that in more media or moments. Those two appearances of hers remind us of a remarkable painting by Gustave Van de Woestijne (1881 - 1947). It is called "*De twee lentes*" or "*The two Springs*" (1910 + Royal Museum of Fine Arts Antwerp).

https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/De_twee_lentes

Gustave was a brother of the very subtle, also oversensitive and superaesthetic writer and literature teacher Karel Van de Woestijne (1878 - 1929). It must have been a special nest, their parental home in Ghent because Gustave was also a very delicate artist, in our opinion not too well-known internationally. But that does apply to several Belgian contemporaries such as ... and certainly ... not to mention, isn't it scandalous, of ...!! Anyway, one interpretation of this work is that it is about two faces of one and the same woman, or two guises in which she can introduce herself to the world. We recently read this interpretation somewhere, probably in a text from that museum, so from an 'expert'. So we didn't invent anything. Or the idea that one and the same, as it were, objective woman can have two, as it were, subjective appearances – which in our opinion can be observed fairly objectively, as of course in this painting and in the lovely ladies from Slovakia and Italy – is not new at all, although perhaps (???) not commonplace.

The second appearance of Luce Caponegro to us (sic) happened on a Saturday morning in early September 2022, more precisely between 10 and 12 o'clock "*ante meridiem*" of course. It took place together with her so-called press manager Tania and a young artist Stefano whose reason for being there is still unclear to us. He was friendly and spoke English well, which is not self-evident for Italians who excel in Italian - and then basta but fortunately also pasta (it's a very poor joke but it's also a very poor general knowledge of languages there). Tania spoke fluent English - and also Italian. A special lady that Tania, about whom we now have to make a parenthesis. Tania was already awake as a daisy at that early hour or rather overtired. After all, she had just returned as the main actress from the last recordings of the new Italian spaghetti thriller, "*Ladri di biciclette elettriche*". And that will undoubtedly be a new blockbuster in the cinema and in the living room, but it is still in post-production. Her first sentence to us - around 10:03 - showed a certain excitement: "*All my girlfriends want to*

meet you." Whether she considered herself or her boss - who was of course already present and seated - as her girlfriends, we did not ask because we were speechless. Then her climax had yet to come, or rather then her "*Paukenschlag*" had yet to burst out: "*You have saved six hundred (600) euros because I, Stefano and Luce normally charge a hundred (100) euros per hour.*" - it sounded around 12:02 when La Capo's dog jumped up happily when La Negro's mother dived in. Considering the reason(s) for which we were there, had come to Italy, you can perhaps imagine our bewilderment - which continues to this day. Unless this statement is an example of, call it, the typical Italian "*Ospitalità*" or hospitalitity? In our language – Dutch – that word is close to or almost equal to "*hospitaal*" or "*hospital*" or the place where we had to go to take care of ourselves afterwards, deeply wounded, almost fatally, in our human heart. A remarkable woman, that Tania, as a combination of an ex-punk star and in the meantime a shrewd, steeped specialist in all kinds of social media and internet. Who was that Chinese who at least already knew English perfectly well and pronounced these words: "*Keep your friends close; keep your enemies closer*."?

Back to her boss, the divina Ravennata Luce Caponegro, although not our (girl)friend but we did our best in a way on the way there. Lucella was sitting opposite us and since her English is apparently not too bimbo, she was looking at me the whole time, accompanied by let's say facial expressions - her facial expressions. You know the Italians. They almost talk more with their bodies than with their normally provided speech apparatus! We talked to and listened to press manager Tania, as mentioned, the shrewd ex-punk star or an ordinary old person with once-wanted-ideals-and-now-like-more-money-please via extreme internet technical qualities. But we especially and gladly looked straight ahead. There we saw a woman with an interesting appearance and great eyes, partly unmistakably deeply sad but not stingy with uplifting optimism and élan vital: captivating eyes like a world and a ... painting in themselves! With a great laugh or if necessary; with deep empathy. With one deep moment of her own shyness when we …. Was that a beautiful moment, not to be feigned and yet partly as ad hominem proof (right!?) that we had done well as stupid Belgians to contact and visit this famous Italian woman. But there was that beautiful morning, with the pastries we had brought with us that we had of course already discovered a few days earlier (but had of course only bought on the way to that 'meeting') at the wonderful "*Forno Pasticceria Nonna Iride*"… There was also or especially: her dress/skirt. Sanctissima Madonna …

We can't go into the details of empiricism again, but we can say that throughout a part of our more intense life we have met some ladies with a certain taste. In one case of those ladies - we are now walking on eggshells and have boiled them hard, very hard - it was also an extremely expensive taste and we will not go into that any further because ... Because an expensive taste does not mean a good taste at all. Of two other ladies, however! Especially that one was what one might call a bit poorer or had to approach it more economically. But what class! You still understand that we cannot cite empirical arguments to ... But eternally blissfully joyful memory for him who was allowed to see and experience this skirt on this Saturday in early September 2022, not in a catalogue, not on a photo of a flashy film star in a glossy magazine, not on the ... But life! Sanctissima Madonna, come può la vita essere bella!? Because it was here, in front of us: "*BELLISSIMA*!" Or how we wanted to ask Verdi or Puccini or Rossini to sing the beauty of this human creation, from questa donna con quella gonna. After those two hours we were so tired because of our special neurological problem that we could hardly ... When this lady Lucella leaned next to/against us to show us some of her apparently recent apparently art photos. Those photos made no impression at all despite our tiredness because ... blah blah blah ... Not our cup of cultural tea, we must conclude diplomatically and with lonely

regret – after all, we came exactly there to promote many portraits including potential top art precisely around her in order to ... - her.

So we have forgotten to ask signora Capobianconegro the data (what a clinical word) about this dress/skirt! More or even much more important. We have forgotten what this skirt/dress looked like! We can honestly say that from a young age we have had a formidable visual memory annex visual sensitivity. It will probably have become somewhat less powerful in perception due to getting older and certainly due to some consequences of our brain crash on 15/12/2015. But, prego: You must also understand us. We sat for two hours directly opposite or reasonably close to the most beautiful eyes of Italy, from 1983, 1984, 1985, 1986, 1987, 1988; 1989, 1990, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999 *("I was dreamin' when I wrote this/Forgive me if it goes astray/But when I woke up this morning/Could've sworn it was judgment day. …*"), 2,000, 2,001, 2,002, 2,003, 2,004, 2,005, 2,006, 2,007, 2,008, 2,009, 2,010, 2,011, 2,012, 2,013, 2,014, 2,015, 2016, 2017, 2.018, 2.019, 2.020, 2.021, 2.022. And Italy is also the most beautiful country in Europe. That does something to the perception of a person, a man, an aging man, a macho, a ladies' man, according to many ladies, not only in Europe, a man who loves justice and beauty all his life, and preferably together.

We had the same haunting experience with the veracitudely wonderful Slovakian lady X.. She is certainly not a public figure like the Italian but she does like to be in all kinds of public places. Such as in the wonderful, stimulating, heartwarming, intoxicating, ... And so on. Cosi. With all the modesty that also surrounds her, she is a lady of the world. So it happens that this lady appears in one form of complete display, with what is so gallantly called an "*evening dress*" with always really voluptuous, wide-spreading and jet-black hair; a really beautiful appearance. For which you would want to start painting. To portray her. You cannot miss it, as a man, and probably (hihi) not as a woman either (hihi again because how jealous the ladies can be of each other). I sometimes saw the same Slovakian lady dressed casually or homely and with her hair pinned up, which not only reduces the voluptuousness of her appearance but almost makes it disappear. We can live with that because the arc of attention cannot always be tense, just as the inevitable male erectile reaction cannot always be maintained; there are corpora cavernosa provided. But because of that her appearance, her style changes. Her face takes on something – we are exaggerating for rhetorical or theatrical reasons, but isn't art ultimately one big metaphor, one big pair of glasses!? – of the features of the fairly difficult to terrible Chinese princess Turandot, one of the main characters in the very special and last opera by maestro Giacomo Puccini (1858 – 1924). This opera Turandot remained unfinished due to Puccini's death but was almost ready. This opera is masterful in terms of music but in our opinion incomprehensible in terms of content to just plain funny nonsense, although there are many ingenious-genius directors in the international opera world who keep inventing their own new insights, as in this opera that almost asks for it. Perhaps the maestro met such a very similar woman and had this opera in mind for a long time, until he found a more or less respectable librettist. There is certainly a particularly dramatic, personal element of Puccini in the opera Turandot around the person of the slave "*Liu*". If we have the rather bizarre figure of Turandot as an example for this Slovakian woman of a sometimes more distant lady, in addition to those glimpses of great attractiveness that this woman also shows through her inaccessibility, are we not indeed "*combined*" with a – at least for men – rather universal experience? Can it actually be, analytically separated and above all actually observable, that a woman is always rather or only ordinary or unattractive, that she can even be called very boring? And can it – also – actually be that a woman can always rather or only be called beautiful, interesting or very attractive? Rita Hayworth (alias of Margarita Carmen

Cansino + 1918 – 1987) was a famous Hollywood star who starred in the classic film noir "*Gilda*" (1946 + director Charles Vidor, 1900 – 1959). That film had at least one important consequence that resulted in her famous saying: "*Men go to bed with Gilda, but wake up with me*." That is of course no problem at all – for her and for the men who wanted to have more than a one-night stand, say at least a one-week stand or at most a one-life stand. Should we leave it at that? Or not yet. As our old friend Ip once said to us decades ago: "*You can make any woman hot*.". Which means: "*Every woman is hot*." - or hot in potential, so in degrees. And my friend Ip should know because the Chinese have five thousand (5,000) years of culture, with a great deal of pragmatism - and erotic culture. And he would meet a phenomenally interesting woman - and have and keep her, love her. And she … him. We were/are witnesses, thank you so much.

That is a very simple but really essential observation that is of great, essential importance in times that were never as modern or supersonic-technical as now. One can trade in a woman/man/partner as one always buys the latest edition of Smartphone, 'must' have, as one always has to have the latest of the latest. Or once again: "*The medium is the message*". Or: how one behaves in terms of means of communication, one behaves automatically because compellingly in terms of communication itself, i.e. with people. In a class society with a very intense division of labor - for a very long time an unavoidable social and economic fact - a person is constantly or almost daily technically or functionally involved with other people. He/she is technically or functionally dependent on them, on so many others. In that case, something general but at the same time so human as concepts such as politeness, respect and trust are of essential importance: you want to drink a coffee and want to pay the correct price for it, but then it must also be a ... next to ... be, show, have, feel, ... Deceit is of all ages and cultures. Even if we do not believe the latter; who is going to conduct or dig up anthropological studies in which a culture knows nothing but deceit!? Please! A person is nothing without relevant others, a reason why an institution like family is so crucial. But there is a neighbourhood, friendship, there are colleagues who ... , sports friends with whom one ... And that one relationship - even if for reasons it can become a little less close or a little less intimate for a moment. It is probably only reserved for other people in whom one shows a more than ordinary call it an existential or caring even loving interest, that special perception. That of a multiple appearance or that - you can also call it something else - of "*style surplusism*"! So not of "*style inconsistency*"!? If only that your loved one or the interesting one wants to adopt a literally different 'look' for once. Or just because of a slightly different ... morning mood? Or as my grandmother liked to say, when she had become demented: "*Sometimes we are allowed to laugh*."

7. "*La gonna fa la donna*" and now a little less at the same time much more: "*L'Arte dell'Amore*".

Anna Magnani (1908 – 1973). We would have liked to eat, lick, and munch on "*un gelato*" with this donna. And share, especially share: one very, very thick gelato. With all the colours of a new rainbow or at least/mostly with the colour of oxblood. It would have been a quick lick because what a hurricane of human energy and charisma; no wonder that Vesuvius, Etna and Stromboli are all located in la bella Italia.

She played as an actress and was/is/will be one of the ultimately few truly exceptional stars of European cinema. Among other things, she played the leading role – what else, but still!? – in the Italian film "*Bellissima*" (1951 + director Luchino Visconti, 1906 – 1976). Bellissima is of course an Italian word – beautiful sounding, isn't it! In English it means something like

"*Extremely beautiful*". But in the language-close French it already sounds much more euphonious with "*Plus belle que belle".* We generally like to admit that we feel Italian and French formulations sound much better or more intense than in English. "*Extremely beautiful'*, when you hear that after those other Latin equivalents, you hardly dare to say it? How would we put it into words in the not to be underestimated Dutch, which probably has more philosophical potential than sonority: "*Mooier dan mooi*?" Now there is a very well-known Dutch, possibly especially Flemish expression that should be taken into account here: "*Moeders mooiste*. That means "*This child is mother's most beautiful.*". Or more generally: "*This child is the most beautiful*." And that is what this film is about. Or at least for the largest or very long introductory part. Because that last part, the conclusion, is about the opposite and yet again about ... the same thing. And so it is ultimately a film about love, true love. About "*L'Art de l'Amour*" – here "*L'Arte dell'Amore*".

There is something special to say about this film. It was set in 1951, so that was quite some time ago. In the meantime, the internet has entered the picture. In the meantime, of course, the little girl it is all about, the very young "*Maria Cecconi*" because she was five years old at the time, has grown older. And no, it sometimes happens that we go to a European country like Italy to visit a woman, whether or not invited out of curiosity or lust, but with this Maria that is of course not the case. That certainly has nothing to do with her age, now compared to ours because we are purely potentially curious about meeting all interesting ladies – again, potential. Of course, the actress Maria Cecconi has a real name, but we are not going to give it away here. And not because we want to keep it a secret, but on principle. After all, you can find that real name directly – via that same very new internet, right? And. In principle, with some twisting and turning and ….. – so the usual tricks of searching on the internet, tricks that we of course know nothing about – you could know or especially see what our cute young child star of 1951 looks like now, in 2024. That is a question that only occurred to us when considering this paragraph. And isn't that crucial because completely logical or compelling!? More precisely, she, the actress playing Maria Cecconi, had to become, at least according to her mother – also an actress, the already introduced divina comica Anna Magnani, "*Bellissima*", "*la plus belle des plus belles*". But so? Did she also become that very effectively, very actually? On the very interesting Italian wiki page dedicated to this classic film, this girl is referred to as "*una bimba goffa ed impacciata*", or as "*an awkward and clumsy little girl*". See:

Source: https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bellissima

That is cutely formulated, but for us – and for Maria and Anna – it could have been a bit more; isn't she wonderfully beautiful and cute? You will understand immediately that it would not really be appropriate to speak of an "*attractive woman*" here. We have already said that we are not interested in the real name of the Italian who played this child in 1951, and so we are not the least bit interested in her appearance now, in 2024 or some seventy years later. Of course, we do not want to brag at all, let alone laugh at the appearance of our child star now. That would then be a naturally understandable starting point, which would raise the question of how this lady – once a toddler, then … – has fared in the meantime, how she has 'therefore' evolved in the meantime – come una bella donna? There are, however, various questions to be formulated and elaborated here, which in themselves motivate an article. That cannot be the intention. However, let us zoom in on one aspect of Maria Cecconi's evolution. An aspect that was clearly shown in the film itself, and that happened at the end or during what one can call the conclusion, sometimes somewhat moralizing but nevertheless generally philosophically justified expressed as "*The moral of the story*". In life one must constantly eat

and drink and have a hat and a roof on one's head. And that accompanied or led by "*L'Arte dell'Amore*" – the essence, personal and social.

Let us certainly not forget that the film was made in 1951 or only a few years after the end of WWII. That had been dramatic for Italy, on a human level and economically and politically. The country had known the first fascism on European soil after WWI or during the First World War, would get the strongest communist party of Europe after the war (WWII). We do not see this juxtaposition as coincidental: what is essentially the difference between brown fascism and red fascism? Of course there are local differences, but they are two authoritarian, totalitarian movements invented in Europe. Strangely enough, the worst existing examples of serious fascism to date - 2024 - can be found in Asia, because in China and North Korea, so-called communist paradises. Although today's Russia has also been doing its fascistic best for years.

The film Bellissima is therefore for a very long time actually about the social presentation of a great dream, which almost no Italian or at least no Roman mother from, let's say, the less well-off classes could resist: to let their daughter become a child star through cinema. And we feel it necessary to point out once again the year of production 1951. When there was no internet. One remembers the opening scene in which a horde of mothers with their young daughters stream into "*Cinecittà*", the gigantic film studios in Rome. All very understandably with the hope of a better future for their child; who as a parent does not share this kind of dream? A non-Italian regularly goes crazy from the chatter of those Italians, especially the Italian mothers. Of course the film has so much to offer as there is, the simple beauty that such a child radiates, the classic all-encompassing love of such a mother, of every mother for every child (in principle anyway, because sometimes things in life can be more complicated - sigh). To achieve that sacred goal – a better future for her child – Anna Magnani will employ a series of apparently sanctified means, all of which amount to extreme stress for the child on the one hand and undermining neglect of the family itself on the other.

In the end, there is an important criticism to be made of the scenario, because what turned out!? That all the efforts of mothers and therefore children were in a sense for nothing, such as the 'having to' learn dance steps as a ballerina, wearing the most beautiful skirt possible (here we are – also!!!), and so on. Because it turned out – really at the end – that the film crew did not want a new child star like the famous Shirley Temple (1928 – 2014). But so: "*una bimba goffa ed impacciata*" or "*an awkward and clumsy little girl*". That was Maria Ceccina for sure. But la madre Anna Magnani understood the money-devouring, people-devouring machine of the film industry and – of course with her child – refrained from further interest, while the film crew had set the choice on her child! In our opinion, one can find that plot twist too sudden, or too contrived. We saw the film several times and could never have foreseen that ending, in other words never logically predict it from the premises or the (long) course of the film. We strongly suspect that it was not so much or at least partly a criticism of the outward appearance of the film industry. In the end, quite a few participants in this film, including not least the director and the top actress, all earned their bread and butter with it for the rest of their lives. While Italians have developed an exceptionally experienced form of theatricality, especially in their phenomenal operas, and pass it on endlessly – anyone who does not like opera, especially Italian opera, should investigate whether he/she is not related to the cold-blooded ... reptiles?! – we may certainly see that as an existential, symbolic mirror of this country, whatever differences there are in the many regions. At the same time, we suspect that this film "*Bellissima*" contains a criticism of the recently passed fascism and perhaps – we emphasize that "*perhaps*" – of the net and very broadly emerging communism

in the country. Because again; what is essentially different about black/brown fascism and red fascism? Just like an enormous number of Roman women with their children to the gigantic light box of Cinecittà, millions of Italians before and from large to small, have walked to the enormous political, social light box of Benito Mussolini (1883 – 1945) and his "*Fasci di Combattimento*": all hoping for a better future. It all turned out to be fake, nothing "*Bellissima*" but "*uno tempore belli*". It became/was one long state of war – and therefore an extreme amount of misery. It was one long and dramatic deception. Italian fascism was, in addition to all the misery it produced, an enormous outward show. It was one extreme outward appearance with a flood of words or promises (with 'gestures'), uniforms or standardized, meaningful clothing, so-called tangible beauty through appropriate architecture etcetera.

If in growing up and in the rest of life the essence or the most important, the spiritual and physical the most important, indeed "*L'Arte dell'Amore*", then isn't there a certain irony if not tragedy here? A person has to eat and drink and so on. So also have a roof over their head, or architecture. And also have a hat over their head with something more underneath, or clothing. In both cases we speak of ... fashion or style! Every content or function necessarily has a form, just as rain falls from above to below, as water flows to the lowest point. There is no escaping metaphysics. In other words; the almost hysterically moved by social progress mother Anna Magnani wants to give her little Maria the most beautiful clothes possible. That produces fantastic and very poetic as well as bitter scenes, or Puccini could have made the film score again and would have even surpassed his "*Tosca*" (1887)! But although Maria's father often walked around with a simple, especially very cheap undershirt – white of course or purity itself! – Maria needed something more to wear, as a girl, an ever-growing woman. Not only to protect herself but to identify with 'somewhere', to manifest herself through it. With a ... style. And then always via the same modality of metaphysics, because via the kind of provision of the medium of exchange money, the contrast emerges between on the one hand the unique clothing – self-made (you can do that too, madam!!!) or extremely expensively paid for via haute couture – or therefore via standardized mass production by definition or with ... uniforms. In the latter way, however you look at it, something like fascism is latent or already prominently present. On the other hand - just think in analogy of Goethe (1749 - 1832) and his famous saying "*In der Beschränkung zeigt sich erst der Meister*." - in a really very personal even (traditional!) self-made clothing sobriety is a perfectly considered choice, and then, at first, second ... sight, seem to be of financial importance - haha. All in all, it was not a bad thing at all that for centuries men, women and children were dressed in so-called traditional clothing, with now clothing that can be regarded as so-called folklore. May we make a joke, pardon a true story about la bella Italia and una bella donna there? So when we went to attend the longer appointment that Saturday morning in Ravenna in September 2022 with Lucella or Luce Caponegro, and would therefore 'stumble' upon her appearance with a unique, almost blinding dress, we went there deliberately, with simple shorts and a simple undershirt - all in the same green/brown color. Everything very 'casual' - oh well. To ... test her look at 'this', of course. And she passed that test - then anyway - hahaha. Although Tania couldn't help but remark: "*If you were an Italian man walking around in the city like that, people would look at you dead*". Well, if we were walking around there in, say, a suit, people (women) would probably want to ... rip that form of clothing off - for the content? Sex in the city!? Or it doesn't always have to be on a stage.

The film "*Bellissima*", dramatic and moving for sure. Seemingly simple too because what one calls; multi-layered!

8. Her soft cheeks with the introduction of "*Le Bisou Berçant*". Or kissing on the way to heaven.

We were quite focused on Madame Moitessier's dress. Those who understood immediately understood why. Why actually? Purely formally, that dress makes up the largest part of her entire appearance. You can wander over that appearance. And then you almost get lost in that dress. But would you want to sniff that textile? Such interesting clothing or skin on skin, would you want to touch it? Even give it little kisses? No, because you want to give it to you either on her lips - which can give back! - or on her breasts. Or on ...? Maybe on her cheeks.

Those cheeks! So: we forget about the breasts and lips, the normally most obvious parts of an attractive woman to kiss, although there are still important parts like … + … + … +.+.+.+.+. Or de facto her entire body. We drop those lips and breasts as 'kissable area' because they are too obvious. Besides, her breasts are barely noticeable because they are too well hidden by – her dress, hahaha.

The cheeks. They are chubby cheeks. That is almost necessary to determine from a very modern point of view – the year 2024 in Europe – not flat cheeks, or not the cheeks of a woman who is supposedly exemplary to the public as a model/mannequin. They are somewhat fuller cheeks, clearly with the skin of a woman who never had to do physical labor but who therefore had even softer cheeks. Soft like a small child sometimes has on its bottom before it is talc-ed. Soft like a donkey and a horse always have on their lips. Whoever wants to touch the softest 'thing' in the world, even kiss it, must go to a donkey or a horse. At your own risk, even if you don't want to kiss it but still want to pet it! The risk that the man – probably her husband or her husband – had with this Madame Moitessier, we do not know. We have not found any testimonies of that, which is strange because she was definitely famous. Famous because of her beauty, her external beauty. That is why she was also liked to be painted, as here by an absolute top painter like Ingres. He painted her in her full glory, rather stately, though seated in a distinguished manner and in a high bourgeois environment. We know that this portrait was started by this Frenchman in 1844 and finally finished in 1856. He made a kind of stopover with a second portrait of this woman, now standing, in 1851. Not much later and also in France and also by a great painter, Gustave Courbet (1819 – 1877), something painterly of certain importance happened. Courbet would clearly live a little less time than Ingres, but these colleagues must undoubtedly have known each other. This is not the place for a comparison between the two top painters, a subject for which we do not immediately feel called. There is, however, one important thing. In 1866, or ten years after the completion of the second, serene or classical portrait of Madame Moitessier by Ingres, Courbet made one work that would almost completely overshadow his oeuvre, with the emphasis on shadow. That painting – a kind of portrait? – is rather pompously or pseudo-intellectually called "*L'Origine du Monde*". In our opinion, it is above all a sad, even silly work. We saw it once – and had almost forgotten it. See:

https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/L%27Origine_du_monde

The painting "*L'Origine du Monde*" is of course a daring and even necessary work, socially speaking, after almost two millennia of Christian-sexual oppression and real persecution. You may know the saying: "*Du choc des idées jaillit la lumière*." This saying – whether it always applies is another matter – comes from the mind of the French writer Nicolas Boileau (1636 – 1711). From the choc of the very close paintings by Ingres and Courbet, perhaps some lumière or light also comes? What light or what can we see with that light? Because although

light is more or less the essence of – good – painting, then we mainly feel like thinking here. Thinking about paintings, about paintings with so-called attractive women.

Let us first look at something important in the Low Countries, in Flanders at least. While we are getting a bit older – in 2025 brrrr 62 years – we remember quite well the kiss dance that we also enjoyed at the time, albeit partly stressful. Apparently, it is still used here in Flanders at youth parties, a tradition that we suspect or hope will last until the earthly eternity. We found this recent and especially clear explanation of the Kissdance:

"*Typically Belgian, the Kissdance*"

Posted by Harry Fabel (Note: we do not know this figure, for which reason our ...)

"*The dance is quit simple. When people hear the first notes of the song, most of them gather around in a circle and start walking in one direction. Some other people get inside the circle and start looking at the people walking arround. When they see somebody they like, they pick them out of the circle and give them 3 kisses on the cheeks. Why 3? Well that's another story. in Belgium people give 3 kisses when they meet. Once the 3 kisses are given, the people who did the kissing change sides, the one goes in the circles and the other chooses someone else to kiss. The whole dance takes about 15 to 20 minutes, After La Bamba other songs are added*."

Source: https://www.amazingbelgium.be/

We do not remember at all which songs are still played in the stimulating atmosphere of *"La Bamba*". The famous single "*La Bamba*" (1958) is in any case the invention and playfulness of the American singer Ritchie Valens (1941 – 1959). He died very young indeed, in a plane crash. Fortunately after he left this henceforth immortal song for all of us. It can be more ironic. You can hear the song via here:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BycLmWI97Nc

The tradition of the kiss dance still exists. Undoubtedly, playing it is seen as an introduction to something else fun. Normally, the DJ on duty almost always continued with a slow, preferably with the indestructible classic "*Nights in White Satin*" (1967) by the British pop group "*The Moody Blues*". See:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nights_in_White_Satin

For the listenable version. See: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p6xMOTjLIaY

Such a slow dance was little dance and mainly slow or sticking to the girl you chose as a boy, and who then said yes - or no; the reverse happened much less in the past. You should know that in those Flemish times there was even separate education, at least in the dominant Catholic education. In order to come into contact with each other, such close physical and verbal contact, such a slow dance after such a kissing dance was quite strategically important. Folk dance still existed in Flanders at that time, but in terms of use it was already marginal, in contrast to today in European countries such as Slovakia - although we in Slovakia personally have never needed a folk dance to ... blah blah blah .... Let's not digress too much, but we remember a recent Slovak cheek very well because we are allowed to touch it more than once,

with a modest welcome kiss, fairly certainly again in the foreseeable future. It's about her cheek, about the cheek.

X-a's cheek is just like Madame Moitessier's. Again, we speak from a certain experience. Secondly, we remember with sharp clarity (sharp as a cheek does not exist in any language, fortunately – and do read on) the cheek of the sister of basketball friend XY, a girl of our age albeit particularly pretentious. For that reason we simply could not/did not want to talk to her. But her kisses …! Her cheek was soft as butter, although we never actually held our cheek against butter. Moreover, we also ate margarine at home and at some point as students we started eating just dry bread, with toppings of course. But without that annoying fuss with butter or substitute butter. We may also add here that we have never participated in another form of butter use, with a lady. Secondly, there was never a single lady – whether in our dearly beloved Slovakia or in the dearly beloved rest of Europe – who asked us to use margarine for and with her butter, if necessary. The cheeks of the girl around 1980 in Flanders and of the lady in Slovakia in 20++ - 20++ had exactly the same property; driving a man wild. Now we have kissed the bottoms of our own children, also the still soft feet of those same children, until that was of course done by their growing up. That was very pleasant and funny for both parties. It goes without saying that there was not the slightest erotic aspect to it, although now, if we were in the same situation of such a kissing opportunity, we would probably look around two, three, four times to see if there were not the now usual informers, say wokists or employees of the modern Western morality police present.

The two ladies - one in Belgium and one in Slovakia - had the same cheeks as those of the French Madame Moitessier, although we had not seen that directly or certainly not in our initial selection of this painting with her as a historical example of an uncontested attractive woman. We have already claimed that we can seamlessly prove that this plump woman was considered just as beautiful as a very thin model, a professional ballerina no less. That was one very important discovery or so to speak undressing of this elegant woman, as an example for all especially younger girls of the world who at least themselves live in the Western or Western dominated (so in that perspective also for example China!) world or are elsewhere inundated by his images! We now come or rather are already at the second downright positive if not partly sensational positive point or characteristic of or around Madame Moitessier, the same as the Flemish lady at the time (never seen again in 40 years) and the Slovakian lady (who we will certainly see again soon, although we will of course have to show our good manners very much, also because she has a very steady partner and in that place there are other .... such as ...).

Kissing such a chubby cheek – and gentlemen and gentlemen, there are a great many, if we may express ourselves so quantitatively and very qualitatively at the same time!!! – is nothing other than a gift from God or, if you prefer, a heavenly gift. And for the atheists among you; that is why you would even invent a God to thank Him! For that multiple qualitative and quantitative reason and because the kiss is of immeasurable importance in the meeting of people, we have looked for a name for the kiss on this ‘kind’ of cheek. We baptize this kiss with a French name, which sounds much better than the English translation (which we give first, oh well) as “*The cradling kiss*”. So: “*Le Bisou Berçant*”.

Where Courbet looked down at the woman, Ingres looked up. Where Courbet looked at the delicious cunt – with, at least to our taste, a terribly hairy mons pubis as if it were that of a female gorilla, Ingres saw Venus herself. At least in Dutch they say about something that tastes very good – a drink, an ice cream, kissed lips or a licked pussy and so on – that it is “*As*

if an angel pisses on your tongue.". Ingres must have experienced that, not in that of course very elegant skirt but above all; in the cheeks of Madame. We have known for a long time that Ingres only wanted to make this portrait, he was already becoming an older man anyway, when he was effectively confronted with the beauty of this lady. Although confrontation is really not the most appropriate word. Or is it? Supposedly another Frenchman later claimed that certain shadows on the skirt of this lady were due to stains – via the horny, painting Ingres. A bit exaggerated. A bit? That French thinker – we are now deliberately forgetting his name but he was a modern thinker and a man and a Frenchman, and that says a lot – could not see well. And did not even know his own French language well! He could not look or look along with the eyes of this wonderfully experienced and high-quality painter with regard to this top portrait. In other words, he did not see the cheeks, the wonderful but absolutely not unique cheeks of Madame Moitessier! We and certainly Ingres did!! But the blunt-haired man who saw spots as if Ingres had masturbated on his own painting – or something like that – did not even know his own language. Indeed, because what does "*moitessier*" mean other than … "*moist*", "*Feucht*", "*vocht*", "*umido*", ….! Kissing such a moist and soft because chubby cheek; it cannot but have made the old Freud (1856 - 1939) squeal with joy. As if the man could enter the by definition moist and protective … womb via this cheek. It is not surprising that the aging Ingres did not paint this woman alone. He painted her portrait twice.

Now, the return to the womb is mainly a psychological desire for some men - certainly not for us. But one thing was/is certain, and it applies to every man who offers himself at least clean-shaven to the cheeks of a plump woman like the moist Madame Moitessier: *with these kisses you are on your way to heaven*.

9. Expressing attractiveness through language. On the noble art of euphemistics.

It was a rare experience in our lives, to meet a man who could give compliments – to ladies, perhaps especially or even only to ladies. His nickname was "*Yurek*". He was a Polish veterinarian; a regular veterinarian next to a vital meat inspector. Now what is regular because he preferred to sit among the big animals, not like quite a few modern, Western veterinarians who only examine cats and dogs: the wimps pffffff. That is almost laughable, but it is the social evolution, isn't it, because where animals are at best on a farm or in the field nearby, people now speak of pets (in Dutch of "*huisdieren*" or "*huis-dieren*" or "*animals – dieren-from the house - huis*". Yurek could have built a great academic career without the slightest doubt due to his enormous intellectual qualities and networking power. But he never felt like sitting there as an academical veterinarian. He wanted to be among the animals. And to stand among the people.

As a child of an unimaginably damaged Poland from just after WWII, and from 1939 onwards and destroyed by the Nazis and destroyed by the Soviets who even 'liberated' at the end, life was not easy, as one might say. His father had been a very interesting man but largely and definitively mentally destroyed. After all, he had been a partisan, a real partisan. Because. The Nazis had been engaged in a life-and-death struggle in that occupied country for years. For the Nazis, all Poles had to be turned into potato growers (Ei ns, Zwei .. Zehntausend) in their – German – "*Lebensraum*". The rest of the Poles or in this case everyone who could read and write, had to be exterminated. In the meantime and afterwards, the Soviets did the 'necessary clean-up work'. His mother was very simple but exceptionally rich at heart. Whoever knew her; she was gentle like the Virgin Mary, like in the Annunciations. Yurek had a hard time from the start of life and yet was rich at the same time. Very rich; he already got empathy at home and every day on the way to school, on foot. With his bag he learned to keep the wild

dogs at bay. And gradually learned to deal with them: the man could later exorcise the most vicious dog on every farmstead. Then he had become a specialist in caesarean sections. He was the only one who dared to approach a heavily pregnant panther, a circus animal that just like its desperate master howled in pain, and thus (sic) medically and technically perfectly relieve it of the pain - and of the baby panther.

We have always had a fairly great memory, also already or sometimes especially for smells and for visual impressions. Due to our brain crash of 15/12/2015, that memory has diminished somewhat. But there is still 'some' left, in deep impressions. We now – now, November 2024 – still see that one movement of his and also hear his accompanying remark, everything about/towards that Polish lady who … We have no thoughts at all about that woman anymore and know absolutely nothing about the situation. What was so empathetic about this, in terms of content or humaneness? There certainly would have been a big, say better "apt" compliment, clearly with correct but humanly supporting body language – that smile and also a hand gesture (?) – towards a somewhat older woman, in our presence. In other words, we were not just there but a witness. By the way, we do not dare to claim with certainty that this woman was Polish. We have met the man once in the environment of our own mother, a Belgian, albeit also of Polish descent, although that was a serious number of generations ago. She certainly did not know a word of Polish. He could not speak a Western language: that was very difficult in that nasty communistism, although not completely impossible. You understand why. That had nothing to do with the leading communism, but because the big red brother (...) was Russian. That brother/neighbour - twice unfortunately - had previously, because throughout the 19th century and now as a 'real' occupier or predecessor of the Nazis, also tried to completely eradicate the official Polish culture, among other things by no longer allowing Polish-language education. Where have we heard that recently? Those poor, albeit flexible, yet extremely tough and heroic, honourable Poles - who in 1919-1921 held back the Soviet invasion that had already started (then) in the rest of continental Europe - up to the Belgian coast! They have retained their language, their wonderfully beautiful, melodious, controversial and sometimes eroticising language. And not to forget because that is the core of the cultural matter here; they have kept their good manners, their conspicuous "*grzeczność*"! The behavior of most Russians on the other hand ... Compare! Just go and look at a traveling Russian in ordinary hotels. At least; before because with this war since the beginning of 2022 ... What will the future show?

It is quite self-evident that a person, however broad and intense his interests in culture may be, cannot have read or viewed 'everything', not even all the so-called classical books and paintings. Perhaps in his own culture but certainly not somewhat broader, in that of the neighbours and in European culture (including the great Russian writers – not hahaha!). Especially also; what is classical and in which domains should one actually or in principle speak of classical? Moreover, there is such a thing as general or informal culture, the culture that one mainly receives, albeit not only from home and immediate family, but also from the neighbourhood, the school and so somewhat less from important sociological fields in which one must constantly move. And all that until, say, the twenty-fifth year of life or the year in which, according to developmental psychology, one should finally be finished, be an adult. Note that Dutch is once again philosophically more interesting or mature than English because "*volwassen*" expresses much more than just the English equivalent "*adult*". "*Adult*" comes from "*vol-wassen*" where "*wassen*" means to grow (it also means "*to wash*"! So adult or vol-wassen means to have grown completely (vol = full). German is closely related to this because "*adult*" here is "*Erwachsene*", or diegene "*der gewachsen ist*" or "*the one who has grown*". As a primarily academically trained philosopher, previously attending a Catholic

college for eleven years, we have acquired some specific cultural baggage. This includes many sets of norms and values, which have been partly verbally, partly non-verbally or through body language – to us, the ever-growing child. We know for sure not a single Flemish/Belgian example of a text, let alone a book or course in which one could learn about good manners, about something like body language, about something like empathy and the ways in which one could realize or use this in the life. Poland has in common with our Flanders that it is a European area that was immersed in the Catholic faith. However, we can say with certainty that something like "*good manners*" is much stronger or more central to Polish culture than to Flemish. To put it concretely and brutally; Poles are, so to speak, on average much, much better mannered than Flemish people. We recall the statement of this veterinarian about the depth or power of hospitality, according to Poles: "*Gość w dom, Bóg w dom*." Or "*Guest in the house, God in the house*". You don't have to be Tadeusz Kotarbiński (1886 – 1981) or Alfred Tarski (born Teitelbaum, 1901 – 1983) or another international top logician to understand what conclusion follows from this juxtaposition! For another thing, compare that with the earlier story that "*We had saved six hundred euros because ….*" – in the Italian Ravenna or a city for fifteen centuries full of Christian art. Secondly, we find that Hungarians – not coincidentally historically great friends of the Poles – are also on average much better mannered than Flemish people. But there is one gigantic problem: the almost insurmountably difficult to learn Hungarian language, although a language with absolute world literature!

Let us return to the concrete, but very interesting experience around Yurek the vet. You understand that we cannot go into details, but even under communism it was possible for Poles to earn somewhat decent money. But. In other, say in completely economically 'freer' circumstances, this man, who was also politically engaged in a very old non-communist party, to be called the "*Peasants' Party*" in all simplicity, could have become enormously rich through (the end of) the communist period, through his intellect and work ethic, his enormous empathy and friendliness and (as a result of various previous ones) also a gigantic network. In our estimation, money was more than important enough for him – again, having grown up in a hugely devastated and therefore extremely rebuildable country – but never a main issue. Money was a means for the progress of his fellow men and his country. This man could theoretically have scooped up money as if it were water, but in any case never through the slightest deceit of the other. Otherwise we would not have had the slightest respect for him because we have a special relationship with money: we will never understand anyone who worships that stuff. In our opinion, that means almost certainly that true empathy in fellow human beings cannot possibly be realized by a person who is interested in money above all else. That certainly does not mean in itself that that greedy person has no insight into fellow human beings. On the contrary, because even more, that greedy person will mainly have insight into the ways in which he can exploit the weaknesses of others. We have also seen that throughout our lives. So call that life experience!?

We are 100% sure that this man Yurek, one of the most impressive human specimens we have ever met (and we look around us from a very, very young age, for examples, so to speak, of how it should and should not be/cannot be – for modern saints) has used appropriate language, more specifically euphemisms. That through a language that is not only international but also European because Slavic. With in addition or on top of that – analytically we can describe it that way but synthetically or existentially it always went together of course, with the appropriate body language, or cordiality and sincerity given physical form as somewhere only the body can express it so truly. Yurek was nothing but a

stretching example for us, and without a doubt for almost everyone who has ever met him, although there are always double-sided apples in surrounding trees.

We are now going to very concretely, because Polish-linguistically, albeit internationally (sigh), give up an exemplary euphemistic possibility through which Polish lends itself in our context, or how to deal with attractive women. We may walk on eggshells here or express ourselves so-called diplomatically. Right – no?

Do you remember paragraph 4 where we met the French art critic Théophile Gautier. The man could not take his eyes off our Madame Moitessier but also sat looking greedily – and at certain times very deeply – into the eyes of an Italian ballerina. We found that very important because it meant nothing more than that in a so-called European cultural top country like France around 1850 – or not so very long ago – a so-called member of the so-called cultural elite found a woman beautiful and attractive when she was both a bit fatter or plump, and therefore also when she was thin as a broomstick. You understand that we are not specialists in historical euphemistics, while the underlying art of euphemistics does not even exist as a science! Cultural proletarians of all countries (really of ALL countries), unite and invent or develop further, "*The noble art of euphemistics*"!

So we start from a wonderful, possibly idiosyncratic yet according to us – are you following?! – exemplary property of the Polish language, or how to create a euphemism via an ingenious but grammatically correct and therefore linguistically pre-existing construction. That special euphemism is very pleasant to experience as 1) speaker or as 2) listener or as 3) present or all possible participants in the relevant communication context! It is downright charming, is also multi-sex because it can be applied to women or men, and is simply very funny. And isn't humor always the best (language) sauce? If you get a woman laughing fairly quickly, you are already in the middle of foreplay! We repeat (already or again) that it is effectively exemplary or, due to its grammatical properties, perfectly applicable in all kinds of other let's say per se or potentially delicate circumstances. It works as a deminer without one ever being able to injure oneself because there is simply never a self-explosion: hurray!!!

Let's go. A lady looks a bit fatter when … When? In short, she is not a broomstick but a bit more shapely. The same applies to a man, as if he were not also … According to normal or current language standards, there are two situations:

1) In Dutch, you can say quite delicately that someone is "*volslank*" (in English it is very similar to "*full-figured*". Literally, it comes from "*vol*" ("*full*") and "*slank*" or "*slender/slim*". You can see the difference in nuance. But to be honest; even this much 'better' or more diplomatic Dutch seems a bit forced. In English, in our opinion, you cannot make this combination of "*vol-slank*" at all. A literal translation would then be "*fullslender*"; ohlala.

2) We are getting there, albeit in and perhaps one day further than just via Polish. That is up to you to work that out further, if we can at least generate some enthusiasm here. It is about one word that is loaded or somewhat delicate at its core, but that becomes nicer, more pleasant, better because more euphemistic through purely linguistic processing.

First of all, it is important to state the original meaning of the word "*euphemism*". As expected, it has its origins in Greek, for "*eúphēmos*" (εὔφημος) was a Greek word meaning "*uttering sounds of good omen*" or "*fair-sounding*," It is a typical compound word, the first

part or prefix "*eu*" meaning "*good*," as is also used in completely positive words such as "*euphory*" and so on. This prefix therefore immediately indicates – by the normal reading from left to right in our traditions – the nature of the following root word as an improvement of itself (!) or of a more pleasant experience with it. The reverse also exists and is called "*suffix*" and has the same function with respect to the root word. Here we must draw the reader's attention to the fact that there is a certain delicate distinction to be made between Western European languages such as Dutch, French, ... and Slavic languages such as Polish. While all these European languages make striking use of linguistic adaptations to core words, which always results in relatively varied words and the language is literally culturally relativized or nuanced, there is an important difference between the language groups in Western Europe and the Slavic languages. And that difference is, in our opinion, a compelling reason why the average pupil in the EU should learn at least a number of EU languages thoroughly, including at least one from the other language group in addition to his mother tongue: Ursula/Urszula, you know what to …! In our opinion – we are not linguists – Western European languages use the prefix more and Slavic languages use the suffix more. We will immediately give a characteristic example of the latter, from Polish.

The core of the word euphemism is the Greek word "*phēmos*" or "*speaking*." You immediately understand that the word euphemism (or eu+phemism) must be completely non-existent in another cultural context. We are – almost – convinced that there must exist or have existed (too bad) cultures somewhere in time and on the globe that did not know this word because nothing euphoric or euphemistic or eutopian or eu… could ever happen. Because there was actually a state of general well-being that was culturally passed on as such through the mother's milk of the mother tongue. That was then – always hypothetical – a state that could only exceptionally be interrupted by extreme climatological conditions, call it enormous disasters - such as a tsunami. We hope to be able to read and study an anthropological study that is as exhaustive as possible about the linguistic sedimentations of the happiness or, so to speak, 'pure' well-being of a culture, and/or of its opposite and/or the relevant intermediate positions in which, let us hope, above all hope, optimism and other feelings of happiness sound like culturally social stimulating factors. In particular, there must have been cultures that, for example, never knew the "*Book of Job*" because they never had any need for its (oral later written) wording. We have no idea whether there are specific socio-linguistic studies that have investigated, especially for existing languages, such as Western languages such as French, Latin, … Greek (sic), Slavic languages such as … and so many more languages from around the world, to the extent that these languages indicate more or less happiness and such mental states more. That is of enormous importance because although every language lives through the additional, even losing, activity of its actors, the language pool in which they have to swim is in any case this pool. In that sense, the language is always given in advance to every speaker of it. More to our subject – attractive women – this should have meant for some cultures that there were simply no euphemisms, because attractiveness literally did not imply unattractiveness, then again in very high exceptions such as violation by smallpox and other serious diseases. So there would only have been (or are) attractive women there; gentlemen, wake up and take those packed suitcases! By the way, even in those cases of deforming serious diseases, we do not rule out at all that precisely having such diseases, which of course in principle no one from such a culture could pursue and therefore could only get because it overtook this person, nevertheless gave a certain higher status, probably as a sign of a certain divinity. We are indeed not linguists and certainly – a thousand times unfortunately – not a former student of Latin-Greek, but of course everyone knows a similar albeit (almost) opposite word to "*euphemism*", namely "*blasphemy*". The Greek root of this is "*blasphēmos*" ("Βλάσφημος") or "*uttering ill-omened words*". You see that the meaning of euphemism

cannot simply be reversed and that here a future aspect is clarified, albeit completely negatively. Can we leave it at that?

On to the Polish euphemism, and admittedly used towards a man by a woman – but as we think it is typical for the enormous empathy of Mr. Yurek towards women and therefore must be evaluated literally as an example – and further elaborated (found or at least fabricated). For what in English is called "*a fat gentleman*", in Polish one can simply call this man "gruby" or something like "*the fat one*"; mmmmm. Even a Yurek can't get away with that. But then it starts because from "*gruby*" via "*grubas*" it even (!) goes to "*grubasek*". Or in English; you start from "*the fat one*" and in the second instance go to "*the even more fat one*". But that pure or objective augmentative works linguistically or in the concrete, existential language situation as ... dimunitive! Brilliant, isn't it!? "*Grubas*" as the actual thicker one than the "*gruby*" is in linguistic or communicative reality the smaller or finer thick one, or somewhere, actually, in essence not at all … - thick!

So it can be even better, infinitely better, so to speak, although there is literally only one more language step possible. But with what result and in any case, this language step is completely non-existent in English according to our knowledge. That language step - the use of an augmentative but ... - was perhaps once or at least partly possible in Dutch, as in "*Hannekin*" or "*Big Hanne*", a language feature that has only survived in the West Flemish dialect. Fortunately, Dutch can still diminutively quite properly: Hanneke or Hannetje! Now let's .... ? We start with "*gruby*", go to the already fairly euphemistic "*grubas*" to end with the euphemism of all euphemisms "*grubasek*". That, ladies and gentlemen, means nothing else in English than "*little big fat one*". But really literally compare the word images next to or below each other: gruba/s/ek (1 word) - little (1) big (2) fat (3) one (4 words)! Or:

+ Polish: gruba/s/ek (1);
+ English: little (1) big (2) fat (3) one (4).

That should mean exactly the same thing in principle. You can see in this English translation that it is not only literally impossible but almost ridiculous in content. One must – indeed "*must*" – be familiar with this language, Polish, to a certain extent (emotionally, so first logically-linguistically)! We repeat the combination used with this chronological order in Polish: 1) CORE + 2) AUGMENTATIVE (which in itself works paradoxically as a diminutive!) + 3) DIMUNITIVE (which works doubly diminutive!). Or everything WITHIN one word and with double euphemism, without it ever seeming forced. That is not possible in (for us) important languages such as Dutch, French and English – of which the latter two are world languages! In other words, that is perfectly possible in the therefore very interesting Polish anyway – which should therefore in principle be a ... world language!? Apparently, Russian offers the same, if possible even more, possibilities in terms of suffixation, but that is food for specialists. We have always wanted to learn Russian for decades, but due to lack of time and that annoying neurological problem, it will have to be for the next life – amen.

From a purely linguistic-theoretical perspective, we still have to make this observation. We only know this intriguing euphemistic language phenomenon with suffixes or not with prefixes. Does that even exist? We also do not know whether the reverse is also possible with these prefixes, namely first a diminutive followed by an augmentative? And would that make much sense? All questions for language specialists. In any case, and that is the core of the matter, according to our own lived experience, this specific combination is not only unique but also existential or lived through, true or convincing! This complete, three-part

combination (core, augmentative and then diminutive) has something downright endearing about it! We never learned (grammatically) perfect Polish, but we can honestly say that we mastered this language to such an extent and loved it that we knew or recognized this language as an emotional language, and if possible could even make jokes in it. This language use belongs in an everyday atmosphere, in an intimate rather family environment. Of course, it is an important question whether this use also has an effect on the self-image during communication with a 'less slim' lady who one does not know, does not know well enough, does not …? For example, during the crucial first meeting where, as is well known, one can best use a captatio benevolentiae!? These considerations may be the subject of study for linguists, writers … - in Dutch, French, English … We call on them to 'try something like that'. Now, every language changes more or less through strange words or bastard words, or through the creation of new words or neologisms. See the following list of negologisms:

https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lijst_van_neologismen_van_Van_Kooten_en_De_Bie

This impressive and also unique list, probably rarely to be equaled within the Dutch language, is the result of the enormous linguistic skills of the incomparable duo of humorists, Wim De Bie (1939 - 2023) and Kees Van Kooten (1941). This is our small tribute to these language and humor giants (not coincidentally, this combination?). Our perspective is probably even more difficult or complicated or delicate than inventing neologisms, which then have to be recognized 'somewhere' as euphemisms or better expressions for existing concepts. After all, it is not only about inventing a word or concept, or perhaps not, but about making or causing a grammatical intervention that makes it possible to have relevant because 'loaded' words "*euphemized*". Sufficient material for thought?

Epilogue.

This dress. From Madame Moitessier. What happened to it? Presumably it was passed on to the next generation as an heirloom for a short while. Unless it had already been eaten away by clever moths during her lifetime as a textile version of "*memento mori*". We have read very little of Roland Barthes (1915 - 1980) and it was a long time ago. We do remember his description of fashion: "*Le rythme d'achat est plus grand que le rythme d'usure*." Or "*The rate of purchase is greater than the rate of wear*." Do you know that feeling, bulging closets with mainly or only women's clothes? If not, you as a man and especially a partner with a woman living together, can count yourself lucky in a certain sense. But that is not what this is about – or is it a little bit? Everyone knows at least vaguely that there were many cultures throughout the world and history, even up to the 19th century, where, on the occasion of the death of the king/emperor (M/F), several members of the broad court were sacrificed or 'given along'. Less or not at all dramatic is the giving along of all kinds of earthly goods until the deceased could reach the heavenly; he/she could perhaps use them there – or exchange them if they had survived the crossing? We ourselves know an example in the NOW of someone who wanted to be buried with this or that piece of clothing in particular. Would that have happened to Madame Moitessier? More specifically, would the undertaker have draped this cloth on her washed and partly prepared corpse? As so often, we were not there, although we have only ever 'prepared' one dear person as a corpse - the corpse of Yurek. That was in any case an impressive and certainly horrible experience; let us here testify an incredible respect for those who do that daily and professionally.

Back to life and our great Ravennata, hopefully still alive and kicking for decades and in the meantime probably with the same or another super beautiful skirt!? Normally we would go to

the Italian region of Emilia-Romagna again at the beginning of May 2023, had already prepared a lot but decided to cancel all appointments and stay elsewhere. Then this happened in this region. An unimaginably dramatic flood hit a large part of the region and left it under water. See:

https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alluvione_dell%27Emilia-Romagna_del_2023

Literally on the edge of the city limits, the well-known Ravenna, where our Lucella resides, was spared. It was really close. Dozens of municipalities and small towns in the area were badly hit. You can still see many ever-captivating images on that internet. Of course, we remembered that one dress in Ravenna and wrote to the owner; why not organize something charitable among 'saved' women, and thus donate a few (sic) beautiful dresses, skirts and so on to women from the affected region!? Italian women will probably not be much prouder than other women, but when the flood water had receded, the first repairs had been made, one naturally wanted to pick up the thread of a life again to some extent; dressed, well dressed. We have no idea whether our proposal fell on good, at least still dry ground there, so that … Oh, said a certain Jesus, still very popular in Italy, no suitable words about that, albeit short but powerful: "*But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing*." (Mathew 6:3)?

Source https://www.biblestudytools.com

We know that now. There are sometimes women who stand out by showing two faces, by two different appearances. There are also women with two hands! With equal hands. Or sometimes with different ones?

Jean-Marie De Dijn, EU, November 2024.

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Madame Salma Hayek, Sketches for her portrait as a gift for her 20th anniversary of her wedding with my biggest collectionneur, Luc Tuymans, the artist's personal archive, cabinet 22, shelf 7, will be released in 2026 in the Pinault Collection.

T.I.S..

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Malvina, Jakob (Jacobus Johannes) Smits (1855 - 1928), oil, s.d., Jakob Smitsmuseum Mol.

T.I.S..

.....

Mária s dieťaťom Ježišom (Maria with child), Ondrej Richter, behindglasspainting, 2022, private collection.

T.I.S..

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Mósa - Mohave, Edward S. Curtis (1868 - 1952), photograph, 1903, The North American Indian, Volume 2, plate 61 + and online.

In these modern times – and there are never other times than modern or they are past or future – billions of people are intensely engaged in something unique, social media: Twitter or X (who came up with that stupid new name?), Facebook, Instagram, Tiktok – are there others? We do not use any of these media and therefore cannot like anyone. Would we have started liking someone when these media did not yet exist? Although this is by definition a rhetorical because impossible, almost ridiculous question. In any case, we fully understand that liking, giving a thumbs up, a pat on the back, a wink, a ??? Although we would rather bow deeply to those few whom we are about to discuss.

There are some people for whom we, and you hopefully together with us or just alone, will greet while kneeling or bowing deeply. The Dutch multi-phenomenon Robert Van Gulik (1910 – 1967) is one of them. Although we would also have liked to pay tribute to his wife Shui Shifang (1919 – 2005). She was extremely graceful as well as categorically unique because none other than the daughter of one of the very last (Chinese) mandarins! For us there is that one creative human being whom we should like in every possible technical way, with our thumb, on his shoulder and so on - or with and on everything humanly physically permitted at the same time.

We think of none other than the incomparable Nobel Prize-never-winning-but-... Edward S. Curtis (1868 – 1952). He was a professional photographer. So what. But what kind!? Between 1895 and 1930 he took approximately forty thousand (40,000) photographs of North American Indian tribes, as well as ten thousand (10,000) sound recordings of their speech and music. Ethnologically this is unparalleled. By the way, what a decisive and committed man: he undertook this expedition on a completely personal initiative, albeit from a certain point on and quite necessarily supported by sponsors. Neither the American regional nor federal government, nor any of the American, let alone European, universities had any input into this unique and incomprehensibly important initiative! Generally speaking culturally and historically, this undertaking is of the most importance that all humanity has known, vertically throughout world history and horizontally across all kinds of peoples and cultures. Just look for something similar, especially for Africa and Asia. You will find little, far too little.

Various organizations are involved in the preservation and further dissemination of this qualitatively and quantitatively gigantic archive. On this excellent Wikipedia page you will find some references for further research at the bottom. Enjoy – and be sad:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edward_S._Curtis.

Various editions of the work exist on the market in every 'civilized' (sic) country under the title "*The North American Indian* (20 volumes)". See:

Edward S. Curtis's The North American Indian (northwestern.edu)

We have two short bookeditions of it, a small one in an easy-to-carry format (for travelling) and a very large one of which we only have the ... cover; no idea who we lent that book to and that person was clearly quickly and strongly attached to it. Thanks to an American university, among others, the entire world, if it has a computer, internet connection and, above all, electricity, can read through the entire series at its leisure: see the previous link. Hopefully

you have solar energy at home because that study will take a while. But what an experience, as if you were walking around with Edward Curtis back then, visiting unique and nearly completely lost civilizations.

We don't want to go into it any further, but we wouldn't have wanted to just thank this man Curtis, by kneeling in the loose sand of the Mohave Desert or anywhere else on that immense continent. We would have loved to help, to participate! That's metaphysically impossible, though we're glad we weren't born before Curtis' time, that more specifically we are born now, in this age of books and the Internet. We would like to share one more personal thing. How we would have liked to be an North American Indian ourselves, despite our lifelong interest in literature, art and all kinds of cultural sciences (philosophy, etc.) and certainly especially the European part thereof, at least for quite some time before the arrival of that (damned?) Christopher Columbus (1451 – 1506), a discoverer, a coverer.

40,000 photographs by Curtis of 'his' North American Indians. And we can 'only' choose one. From a woman. We selected this photo that can also be found on the Dutch Wikipedia page about Edward Curtis; it is clearly a loved or attractive photo + see

https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edward_Sheriff_Curtis#/media/Bestand:Mosa,_Mohave_girl,_by_Edward_S._Curtis,_1903.jpg

This photo is available as a photo in various versions via the internet. You don't have to pay much for it and downloading is also possible, as here. Naturally, we have not conducted any research into which of the thousands of photos from this irreplaceable 20-volume series is the most popular, in terms of orders and certainly not in terms of visits to the websites that show these photos. Considering the date of the photo – 1903 – the girl from the Mohave or Mojave tribe certainly died, although that could only have happened about four or five decades ago. In theory, you as an older reader could still have met her. And, so to speak, you could have evaluated her aura and also spoken to her. Even the slightly older among you could have met Edward Curtis, because he died in 1952. We have no idea whether Edward Curtis was interviewed at the end of his life by a European researcher, or by someone simply genuinely interested in his work.

Every person has a name. In every culture. Unless one uses numbers; as in dictatorships. But almost all views of this irresistibly attractive Indian girl misspell her first name. After all, the original photo clearly says "*Mósa*" and not "*Mosa*". Fortunately, there is one European language that could help us because Polish has this "*o*" or better "*ó*". But, it doesn't really make any difference. For the sight and experience of this beautiful photo, this language fact is indeed unimportant and remains only a subject for the very rare language specialists.

However, this difference in first names is important because everyone knows very well how existentially important a correct name and name display are. It is incredible how much sloppiness the various American sellers of versions of this photo dare to allow themselves, also because previously there were countless Polish descendants walking around on what were once the plains of North America. There was that incredibly disdainful treatment of the Indians in both the USA and Canada, which meant that in many cases they were taken away from home as children and were never allowed to learn or speak their own language again; English! That is now definitely over and in any case the Mohave language is still alive to this day. In addition, this striking sloppiness in this naming is to be criticized because everyone can also use the instrument www to display the correct spelling, as we were able to do after a

few seconds. Can we say that this sloppiness testifies to a persistent remnant of the deeply degrading, even destructive attitude towards their civilization, especially since the correct(er) representation can be reproduced by computer in all Western books and internet publications!?

That sadness ("*tristesse*") in her eyes which look straight at us. That infinite sadness may have to do with the way in which the children of this tribe - and not only of this tribe - were supposedly civilized. As already mentioned and it should be emphasized again, many Indian children were separated from their parents and therefore (sic) raised in English. Many did not even know their own mother tongue. Or conversely, parents could no longer even speak to their own children, assuming they could ever meet them! That was the way the civilized West worked/works with - as cultural building blocks - almost two thousand years of Christianity and even older Roman and Greek culture. We know nothing more about Mósa than the important fact that she had - had retained - her own Indian ... Undoubtedly she knew from countless peers, from her race, from her population group, the fate described. Sadness from the hard experience, which cannot be denied by any ideology or anything else, of a beaten group, of a way of life almost doomed to death.

Sad eyes and therefore a sad sick person behind them - or not? -, this young Indian woman has an almost unearthly beauty or attraction. This human being, this young woman or girl – whose age we do not know – is nothing other than the concrete representation of a commonly desired, deeply valued ideal of human grace, refinement, nobility or pure, inner aristocracy. The word attractive clearly falls short here and is only a rough direction indicator. According to our increasingly fading knowledge of our own life, a previous encounter with pure grace took place that, ironically enough, came about itself shortly before the discovery by an Italian of the American continent. And everyone will recognize it in the unique at the same time innumerably reproduced painting "*La Primavera*" (circa 1478 - 1482) by Sandro Botticelli (1445 - 1510):

https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/a/a4/Sandro_Botticelli_038.jpg

In addition, we must say - admit? - for both this girl and for "*La Primavera*" that we have never seen either of them live. For that girl, that is simply metaphysically impossible, although we do not walk around here with eternal prospects. One of those prospects certainly includes a visit to Florence/Firenze, where this sparkling painting is already waiting for us. That means that we can never be disappointed by an encounter with the 'real' Mósa. It is hard to imagine, but that experience could happen to us one day with "*La Primavera*". For example, we found the - in the meantime - restored "*View on Delft*" (circa 1660 - 1661) by Johannes Vermeer (1632 - 1675) a reasonable disappointment, about 15 years ago in the Mauritshuis in The Hague. We were apparently too conditioned by the countless times that we had seen it as a reproduction. Funny! Because hadn't the world-famous writer Marcel Proust (1871 - 1922) once called this painting the most beautiful work in the world? And he had seen it in 1902 or even before its restoration! So ...? Oh well, there were enough other unique viewing moments to experience on our day there, like that one Rembrandt - sempre Rembre! And perhaps we were a bit confused, because shortly before we had bought four second-hand chairs "*Vittoria*" by the Italian design phenomenon "*Poltrona Frau*" in that same The Hague. And only one of them was in very good condition, say without scratches (from a cat or dog). While the photos on the internet showed four out of four chairs without any scratches. Or four times the same chair ... That was deception, through showing and selling, by this friendly Dutch family. And we were so happy with this purchase that it took a while before we

realized that we had already paid, neatly, or the requested amount. Later we drove further confused because on the way home or to Belgium, our son Milosz once said: "*Dad, we are in Germany*!". So we should also take a few other roads and return to ... "*View on Delft*"?

Delft, The Hague, Florence, Germany, ... = places to see. But please tell us. Where can we, can you meet this person, this image of inner aristocracy, the purest authenticity, the almost most graceful human being? And, much less sad, not sad at all; where to meet in a world dominated by the desire for money, for luxury, for power, for dominance, for ...? Although a little sadness, a little melancholy seems like never-stuck oil for the engine of the soul - until it closes its eyes.

Jean-Marie De Dijn, EU, August 2024.

Nefertiti Bust, Thutmose, painted limestone, circa 1.345 BC, Neues Museum in Berlin.

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1. A famous bust but with so far not famous objections.

Much can be said about this famous bust. We do not need to repeat it because you can read it everywhere where something has already been said about it – about this bust. You know what a bust means, of course, because it is a form of portrait that only represents the upper or 'most important' part of a person. The feet of a bust are just as human as that bust. What's more, they support the body of which that bust is the end. Without feet, no ... A representation of the feet as an alternative portrait of a person is therefore perfectly justifiable. It is also theoretically possible to represent it as perfectly as possible artistically. It is highly likely that it is also purely technically easy to make, at least if one aims for an ideal of equality between the object and its imagination. Although!? Every experienced artist who is also a portraitist can tell you how extremely difficult it is to represent hands accurately. Is it the same with feet? At least we cannot answer that because, to be honest, we do not know any representations of feet as a complete representation or portrait theme. And therefore we do not know the problems of their representation. Or at least we know very little about it. The representation of feet as examples of portrayed forms is so rare that it almost borders on non-

existent. For example, the well-known surrealist René Magritte (1898 – 1967), according to our long-standing feeling-thought a fairly overrated painter - apart from his "période vache" - painted a few variations on the theme as "something foot-like". It is completely unclear to us whether his motif had any association with the theme of portrait. And as an aside, we find the majority of the surrealists, with a few exceptions, hugely overrated as visual artists. With a few exceptions, those men and women could not really paint and a large part of their 'contents' consisted of nonsense or at best Spielerei. It was all very much time-bound or of little lasting value - except commercially and even in museums, hahaha - but that also has its art-historical time-bound value. So, when we encounter feet as the theme of their works - in Magritte, in Tatatitte and in ??? - , we should actually be suspicious of the relevance of this occurrence, right? Some young art historian should do some research into the presence of the foot in at least the Western visual arts. We are very curious what that will yield, because even though we do not know it, such research has certainly already been done for the human part of hands, even monographically with some artists (Van Dyck, ...?).

In any case, we have some reservations about the phenomenon of busts as immensely well-known by this sculpture of Nefertiti, almost to be called the (female) bust of (female) busts. Can you indeed name a more famous bust, a bust that in this way makes the woman it represents even more important, preferably attractive? That is of course possible, if you yourself would ... make such a bust! And if you can make that product commercially famous, very next. Because everything today is acquired until tomorrow.

2. The multiple almost infinite perspective on the bust Nefertiti.

It is true. Who is going to lift that statue to look at the bottom? Even those who would wish to do so would not be able to fulfill that wish because the statue is literally so precious that it is stored in a cupboard. And of course that cupboard is not only closed or makes that statue tactilely inaccessible, but fortunately the cupboard is mainly made of glass: it is a peep box, for you and for every Peeping Tom and Peeping Thomasina. So that you cannot look at the bottom of that statue, but you can ... The sculptural element bust, whether that is of this woman or of any other real or completely imagined being, can be viewed from any side and therefore theoretically offers every viewing person a maximum view. That is by definition impossible with traditional painting. A painting on whatever medium (panel, canvas or fresco, if necessary on iron or on all kinds of plastic, such as in the case of the formally rebellious but warmly mischievous Anne-Mie Van Kerckhoven, 1951) is completely two-dimensional. Although, in turn, the Italian invention of perspective did allow a greater three-dimensional spatiality to be achieved. Here too, one encounters exceptions, at least among modernists and top Belgian artists! Are you not yet familiar with Wim Delvoye (1965)? Jump into a boat and sail far enough out to sea. And dive! Wim Delvoye is an eternally young deep-sea diver in the oceans of art history. He likes to surprise, so to speak, especially in terms of content, but perhaps more formally or in terms of art media. For example, you are undoubtedly familiar with his enamel-painted gas bottles and tattooed pigs: all more than two-dimensional media for art representations, and art representations themselves. Another intriguing and as yet internationally little-known Belgian painter who we should not ignore here is Roger Raveel (1921 - 2013). He is a rare example of someone who can both paint truly wonderfully and experiment in a credible way. As in the many times that he lets his paintings take on three dimensions, expressed in our simple way. The man worked and sold very intensively and ("but" we can't say, although we hope that the same thing won't happen to every important artist, let alone as he wished here) has his own museum in his own village: see www.rogerraveelmuseum.be

In cases, such as here with the bust of Nefertiti, one can even view the sculpture from a normally almost impossible perspective: from directly above the work. Then you have to be big enough, or still be a small child and be carried by a strong, sweet, tolerant and somewhat childish father who is at least about two meters tall. And you probably still have to get permission from the hall guard. That viewing is an important contrast with a painted Nefertiti. Again; all paintings are until further notice two-dimensional or only have a frontal view, with relatively very few exceptions. It happens very rarely and then in our experience only and only in very modern art that either a frontal view or only a side view is used. According to our conceptual knowledge, there apparently is not even a name specifically for views of people depicted from behind, simply because throughout the tradition of roughly three thousand years there was no need for it. That is remarkable because people simply see from all kinds of viewpoints at countless times of the day, such as from their back. This is even more, albeit eerily strange, because quite a few people like to see the backs of other people. Or because they are glad that they no longer have to meet or 'see' these departing people. Or because they find this back very instrumental, to literally stab it with a knife or 'just' figuratively, with an actual and freshly sharpened knife or 'but' gossip. Or conversely, they are sad to see that fading back, as the characteristic of a person who disappears: via the almost always monotonous surface of that back that eventually becomes a dot - and then dissolves into the All of Nothing, of other themes that will emerge. The back is therefore also positive because it is precisely through the realization of that sad disappearance that it is a last visual bond with the disappearer. And the announcer of the wait: for a return of course. Although that is not very likely in this famous film with this famous scene. See this scene or "*The final scene*" from "*The Third Man*" (1949 + director Carol Reed, 1906 – 1976 + screenplay by writer Graham Greene, 1904 – 1991 + starring the multi-film phenomenon Orson Welles (1915 - 1985). See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l64JIcG-O-k

Possibly our fellow East Fleming Michaël Borremans (1963) also watched this film well because in his slightly neurototectonic oeuvre with many portrait-like representations, one encounters several portraits seen and 'therefore' portrayed from their backs. Although in a traditional frontal view because on the literal back or spine of such a painting you can at most find labels, of the freight transport via air to Zwirner, New York.

We must certainly note that between the statue of Nefertiti and the drawn image of her throughout the many forms of Egyptian art there was a world of difference. Not only did that in time and content fabulous Egyptian art strangely enough never know perspective. But the figures drawn or carved on surfaces such as papyrus and stone were completely designed in a profile that was as flat as possible. You can see that several times in relation to our queen Nefertiti on this English-language wiki page: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nefertiti It is remarkable to nothing less than bizarre that where Egyptian sculpture produced countless works of art for two thousand years - as three-dimensional and also colossal as possible - at the same time the faces/bodies applied to surfaces such as fabric, wood, stone, etc. had no depth effect whatsoever. We find this contrast so great that we even suspect that this was not even a coincidence, like the Incas, a civilization with phenomenal architecture, never knew the wheel while they worshipped the sun and the moon (both enormous .. wheels, although the moon has its quarter cycle!) Perhaps there is a theo-logical explanation to be found as far as Ancient Egypt is concerned for the contrast throughout its metaphysics and aesthetics? Let us know when you … !

3. The eyes. Or the impossible representation by any sculpture.

Now, one can look at a bust like this from different angles, in a sense all the tried perspectives have this one question: either it happens with an eye-view, or it doesn't happen with it. In other words, when one walks 'sufficiently' behind that statue of Nefertiti, one will certainly not be attracted by her eyes at all for a while, for the simple reason that one cannot see them. Every human body part, also as it is materially represented here or expressed through the reality of a statue, is immanently opaque. But you know marginally that it is indeed present! Stupidly put; when you approach a human being for the first time and this happens from behind, you assume with absolute certainty that this human being has eyes, or at least one eye (and the other is covered with a cloth or ...). The films must be innumerable in which a main character is scared to death at that moment when he has to notice that the person he/she is approaching is blind, or even worse ... We will not describe the latter possibility because eyes that .... = terrible!!! It is without a doubt one of the most famous gruesome scenes in film history in which Luis Buñuel (1900 – 1983) in the short film "*Un chien andalou*" (1929 + in collaboration with Salvador Dali, 1904 - 1989) suddenly had a so-called perfect eye cut off by a razor... - brrrrr. The position of an eye, the position of both eyes – preferably always together, and preferably not squinting, even partly, as was perhaps the case with Luis Buñuel? – is of the utmost importance in human encounters. Libraries are dedicated to this and of course we should not repeat this here in general. Let alone apply it a little.

Fair is fair. The bust may be as world-famous as the Egg of Columbus, as it was then inlaid or decorated to the fantastic by Fabergé (Фаберже, 1846 – 1920). The work of art may be as attractive to visitors or other admirers as nothing else in that gigantic museum. In any case, the bust does not reveal the slightest expression in the eyes. Just remember one of the painted top portraits that you once had the pleasure of actually encountering face-to-face with, to your heavenly moment of experience and then later stored in your earthly memory, of course preferably as alone as possible and therefore not as part of the crowds of spectators of the once again very prestigious retrospective exhibition of none other than ... Or of ... or even - please and you certainly took two weeks' leave to travel to the city ... - even the hyper-large ...! The great visual artists who like to make portraits, or who venture to do so on rare occasions – are there great painters, if possible, also great sculptors who have never made a single portrait? – are usually extremely good at depicting eyes. You know the expression that also contains great truth or experiential power in your daily experience: "Eyes are the mirrors of the soul". From a purely technical point of view, this is not well formulated because mirrors allow people to look back at themselves or at themselves. They do not allow us to look through, as with the simplest (non-coloured, non …) glass windows. That is nevertheless what this expression means because through these instruments of the eyes we see the soul, which is hidden somewhere behind it!? But no one is bothered by this objectively incorrect but expressively striking expression, if that person even pauses to consider this? Of course, there is the problem that the statue of Nefertiti once lost one eye, or that the second eye was not placed in time: who is going to say that truthfully? In any case, it is not possible that this bust was unfinished, because otherwise it would not have been found as it was found. Can you imagine that a museum management decided to cover one eye of a work of art, of a painting or other plastic work, to scratch it out or to replace it with blah blah blah? We can imagine that and even with more than one eye because with both eyes, the head also at once and immediately the entire body, so the total identity of the man or woman in question. After all, that was a blessed (....) photo technique that was used by the Soviets, among others, on disgraced people, henceforth ex-Soviets. It was actually a technique that we ourselves were 'allowed' to experience when we gave a speech to all those present at the vernissage as the creator and main organizer about the start and launch of the Illustrale (later Picturale) in

Ronse, Belgium in 2003, after which we were nowhere to be seen in a photo. And never mentioned anywhere else afterwards, and of course even less thanked. But is that kicking people in the teeth, according to the ineradicable moralists? Or is it just a modern example of how censorship can be done in an artistic (sic) way and is still done, by modern Belgian artists, in this case illustrators and/or writers of books for good children, because Flemish nationalist interests prevailed - and continue to prevail - while we absolutely wanted the Brussels and Walloon illustrators to be included from the second edition of this Illustrale …?

Back to Nefertiti because there is quite a bit that goes fundamentally wrong! But don't be too sad because with this kind of artwork it can't be anything else! In other words: what appears to be fundamentally missing there, is not missing because it is ... fundamental! In our opinion, the problem of the eyes in sculptures is effectively 'reasonably' fundamental, in the sense that regardless of the material - marble, bronze, wood or ??? - one can hardly put anything more than the slightest 'extra' dimension in eyes. The proof of the pudding - here the hypothesis or statement - is in the eating - here the empirical checking or simply looking properly. What do you see in EXpression withIN even one eye of Nefertiti other than ...?! NOTHING! A better example of a later date? Let us now take the fairly well-known sculpture "*Moses*" (11513 - 1516) that was designed by the even more famous Italian all-rounder Michelangelo (1475 - 1564). Beautiful statue, congratulations Michele and molto bene, mio caro amico. And keep up the good work! But so: the eyes of this same Moses? Oh, fire doesn't shoot out of there. Not even a flame. Not even a little flash of flame. Then we find his "*Madonna with child*" (1501 - 1504) much more elegant because Our Most Noble Dear Mother and Virgin has somewhat more subtle eyes. They are made noticeably narrower. Moreover, the same applies to her beloved Child Jesus. But of any application of color, or nuance of the expression of the eyes - self-evident or by sculptural definition - there is no question. Not the best sculptor in history - which Michelangelo probably was - can express a real, human depth of the eyes of any depicted, sculpted person. Neither in stone, nor in bronze, in clay, steel, ... up to and including the future or yet to be invented blah blah blah! We would like to read a study about this important sub-problem of the appearance of people through their portraits through sculptures in particular; are there any existing ones or are you going to write one and finally? What are you waiting for?

4. The eyes. Or the inevitability of all visual art.

With this bust of Nefertiti we have an image, a statue. But that is only a partial statue because this form represents only the upper or most important part of the person depicted: the head with the face. Including – the eyes. Eyes - however one turns or twists the matter - mean the central part of an appearing person. Those eyes can simply appear, or be open. They can remain remarkably closed, although that is, so to speak, a coincidental moment of selection by the viewing painter. After all, every person has to blink every 0.3 to 0.4 seconds because the eye has to be kept moist as well as cleaned. That happens in a reflex or is a small, albeit noticeable part of the automatic nervous system. Undoubtedly, one sometimes sees people who are so nervous that they blink intensely, say much faster, but it is impossible that this lasts so long that a painter - a portraitist - is going to capture that, as if that blinking belongs to the visible reality of the given person. However, the human animal, especially the female part of it, is a cunning little creature. Blinking can be guided from a certain functionality, for example in a situation in which one wants to seduce. This can be very subtle, for example, and is hardly guessable through a form of information management. That is a part of being human that the phenomenon Erving Gofmann (1922 – 1982, and for everyone who wants to understand something of the remarkable fact of “society”, an absolute must!) wrote about in

his pure classic "*The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*" (1959 + we hardly dare say it, but in a later study on our Jewish manuscript we have to use this book intensively and … er … amend or 'strengthen' it a bit) with, among other things, the distinction between information that one "gives" and that one "reveals". In the first sentence, the information is produced intentionally and in the second sentence, therefore, rather coincidental or caused by, as it were, independently of conscious being itself, as in principle happens with blinking. But the real human villains; they can, for example, blink much more intensely as an actual instrument to pretend (as a theatrical trick) that they are nervous, so that they can obtain one or more advantages.

Very rarely can one experience a scene like Harrison Ford (1942) who plays a good, decent, somewhat boring, apparently also attractive to some, professor of archaeology in a class in the classic film "*Raiders of the Lost Ark*" (1981), one of the countless jewels of goldsmith Steven Spielberg (1946). A student - a girl, a young woman - who sits in the front right, confuses the professor by showing him her closed eyes twice with written on them clearly legible for him: "*LOVE YOU*". The first word was on her right eyelid so viewed by the professor on the left. And the second word ...; feel free to watch the clip "*Raiders of the Lost Ark. Classroom Scene*" on Youtube. The screenwriter was none other than the very intelligent or creatively versatile Lawrence Kasdan (1949). Had he ever experienced it himself before? Of course, there is also the wink, known to everyone, but not used by everyone: could the use of winks tell us something about the psyche of the user or not, and even more broadly about the nature of the culture in which winking is or is not used, or is or is not allowed? Nefertiti does not wink for one very practical reason. She has only one eye, and we will come back to that later. She also does not use tricks like that student from "*Raiders of the Lost Ark*"; what would one have thought of His Royal Highness? She does not even blink within a second, because she is as empty of life or as dead as the limestone from which she was carved.

The image is on a tripod and that tripod is high enough or at least at the average eye level. You can therefore look at this image from anywhere because you can walk around it – and keep looking. That is - do you remember? - a form of magic that no painting has, no matter what tricks a painter or draftsman tries. There is a form of middle way that we should not call a compromise at all. You have certainly experienced the phenomenon how a person who looks straight at you from a support, a photo, drawing or painting, keeps looking at you while you move yourself at least within that field of vision. That field of vision is actually illusory because for the person looking at the portrait it obviously does not exist at all or in reality. Simply put, there is essentially no looking because it is an image or the gaze of a dead person, even if that painting or photo or drawing was made barely a minute before. The person depicted really cannot look but you feel as if you are constantly being watched, even to the extent that you can even run away from this - in essence dead - gaze by leaving the painting's location. Just stand in front of a successful self-portrait, such as the one from around 1630 by Peter Paul Rubens (1577 - 1640) in Antwerp, a reason alone for a city trip there more than worth it (and the rest ..!? Make it an extended weekend, a week ....): see

Self-Portrait (Rubens, Antwerp) - Wikipedia

Ultimately you may decide to remove the painting, photo etc. permanently (not the one by Rubens of course since, unfortunately or fortunately, all his self-portraits hang in museums), and you may not only put the work away but even hide it there - turn it around! The power of such an omnipresent portrait with a person always watching; nowhere else has it been depicted so powerfully than by none other than the Bach of the film world, bourgeois, good

husband and good father, blond-women-frustrated and mighty film genius Alfred Hitchcock (1899 - 1980 + we would sincerely like to mention "*Sir*" before his name but we don't care about all that inflated nonsense ... - sorry, dear master and we bow deeply before you). That happened in his first American film "*Rebecca*" (1940), a production that was certainly more British than British, not least because it was based on the successful 1938 novel of the same name by Daphne du Maurier (1907 - 1989). We have not read that novel because-because and Daphne herself was not prepared to talk to us about the film/novel because dead as a doornail – and we can not even talk nailish.

It is quite difficult to find a more delicate woman and actress than Joan Fontaine (pseudonym of Joan de Beauvoir de Havilland, 1917 - 2013). We would grant such a woman to any man in the world, but such a candidate man - some lesbians will also be interested, although we say this purely theoretically or without empirical support - will have to search well and at least have to show the condition of being like that himself. We have very coincidentally not found a single painting or real portrait of this nevertheless beautiful if not delightful woman, never even in the catalogues of modern visual artists and not even on the www. That is a fairly common experience for us, at least, because very few of the 'former' film stars seem to have inspired painters and sculptors; we will certainly come back to it more intensely elsewhere on this website because we find this observation remarkable; Don't you? For the Pablo Picassos and co., Joan Fontaine was probably too angelic. And for the Mark Roth and Ko's she was too human - and with this juxtaposition we do not want to give the impression of an artistic equality of both famous painters; the name "*Roth and Ko*" makes that clear. Joan Fontaine played the wrong woman in the film "*Rebecca*" or the woman for the right man in the wrong place and especially at the wrong time. After all, she became the second "Mrs. de Winter" in succession to the shrew of a reportedly overwhelmingly beautiful first Mrs. de Winter. This dead lady was, among other things, by her permanent and centrally hung enormous state portrait on the very large domain of the de Winter couple - de Winter constantly or overwhelmingly, say overwhelmingly present. Like a harpy - the "*Harpia harpyja*" - compared to such a fragile bird as Joan Fontain. It did not help of course that Mr. de Winter had not sent all his old staff away and replaced them with other and better ones. Above all, there was the apparently even worse shrew of the lady-in-waiting and housekeeper, Mrs Danvers, who had been eternally connected to the first Mrs. de Winter since her childhood. You may remember this one sentence from the beak of the little harpy that she gruesomely bit into the much too sweet, soft, elegantly wavy and always open or ready to listen ears of the second Mrs. de Winter. It reminded us of the one baton on the backside of another punished English schoolboy: "*Do you think the dead come back and watch the living*?" It was a biting statement from Mrs. Danvers, also perfectly gothic explained by the "*Master of Suspense*". It was a statement softly shouted by a woman who, with all obviousness, had not only not 'had' a man in centuries to her in principle by nature allotted femininity. But she was probably a lesbian or had been very forbiddenly madly in love (and was still) with her previous mistress. That in itself could also yield a website or book; a history of attractive women seen through the eyes of lesbian women.

The dead who come back to us, even to look at us, to stare at us - brrrr. We may claim with what professional philosophers sometimes call apodictic certainty - or more certain certainty than certainty normally is - that this statement of this human monster Mrs. Danvers is untrue because: the dead never come back. Therefore they cannot look either. Unless. Unless they are indeed first or after their death converted into images, with eyes - that pierce. Think again of Rubens and ... and ... ! Yet nevertheless. You broke up with your lover - or even worse, you yourself got the jilting from your lover! And wait: there go the photos! Or rather not: You

adore that photo, pardon your lover who is only still present here. With if necessary or precisely that impressively theatrical more, you literally beg on both knees before this photo to come back to you. And there are still variations to be found; just look around in your life or if you are a child of god, in that of ...! And so on. But perhaps you are so good, so genuinely naive, that you cannot see or experience such sadness, evil or obsession in centuries.

5. Protected by an Eye? And what about the Evil Eye?

It can't be a coincidence that just a little less than ten years after this magnificent film from 1940, another Brit came onto the market with a very even much more famous variation on the fear of or by the watching or the being watched. After all, you probably know that fear was an essential element of English education, for centuries and hopefully by now ... ? It is effectively about one book. The idea of "*Big Brother is watching you*" from the iconic book "*1984*" (1949) by Georges Orwell (1903 - 1950) is a very striking example of the fear through watching.

Now, English fear of looking or being looked at, and the accompanying excessive punishments, punishments and ... so again or permanent punishments, it is a small part of the seemingly ineradicable and universal idea of "*The Evil Eye*". One could write encyclopedias about this eternal and universal concept and of course we are not going to do that here. We do ask you the question whether the Evil Eye, which was also a part of the enormously old and actually well over a thousand years old Egyptian mythology, still had a connection with the new cult around and originating from the husband of Nefertiti (see further). It is impossible here to go into that new religious cult of that time but ancient Egypt already knew "*The Eye of Horus*", which has continued to live on for more than two millennia. This Eye of Horus would then be the exact opposite of the Evil Eye or offer protection against it. In houses of today and probably in public buildings of ancient Egypt, that One Eye (the Eye of Horus) was placed opposite the Other (the Evil Eye) that was considered potentially present and especially harmful. Presumably there must be both anthropological and art historical studies on this, for Egypt and the current Middle East. Are there also broader or deeper studies on the Evil Eye and apparently opposite the Good Eye through other continents, cultures and times?

We need to say something more about that special looking through something like a special eye or through the Evil Eye. And now not far from our bed. The Evil Eye was also very popular in Flanders from unknown times until recently, or at least very common. It was never so among freethinkers by definition exclusive in content and space. Until very recently and as such still pleasant to buy secondhand, it was encountered everywhere, although not among the freethinkers who were not common for a long time. Except for the very youngest among us, everyone still knows the - for the somewhat older - famous slogan: "*God sees you. Here one does not curse - besides unwritten here kissing, caressing and even masturbating let alone here you do not make love*". It was found for so long in the countless cafés in Flanders (also in Wallonia?) and in living rooms or kitchens of houses. These were all so-called viewing places or places where 'a special eye' or that of none other than the omniscient because all-watching God could be placed as an active viewer. See:

Source: [God ziet mij, hier vloekt men niet - Fotodatabank - Thomas - Godsdienstonderwijs.be (kuleuven.be)]

Note: "*GOD ZIET MIJ. HIER VLOEKT MEN NIET*" means "*God sees me (or you). One does not curse here*". Linguistically, this proposition can be criticized. But everyone understood the imperative 'logic'.

To be honest, after having seen several thousand Belgian paintings, etchings or drawings from the last 500 years or so, we cannot simply name visual works of art in which this fear of or through looking is thematized. Surely there must be such examples! Elsewhere we discuss the internationally well-known - albeit regarded by us a mere deprimate - painter-filmmaker-curator-etcher-guest speaker and money grabber Luc Tuymans, who has painted quite a few "*Diagnostische blicken*" or "*Diagnostic Views*". These paintings – some people call them works of art – are in our opinion rather signs of internal or psychological dystopia dispositions - we are still looking for the correct scientific term. In this, a kind of poignant look through the depicted image and thus at you as a viewer is apparently immortalized, among other things by the 'ingenious' inspiration to also depict people who actually wear glasses or some form of viewing apparatus (divers', racing and pilot's glasses are certainly absent) - well, eternally .... Luc Tuymans is a contemporary painter who has been working since roughly 1980 or on the edge of this century even of the last millennium. Does he mark an enormous substantive, let us hope 'better' or more intellectually and morally mature leap compared to all his Flemish, Belgian and other European artists - and especially with the first ones? Probably not because we remember having seen a relative report with the man by a Dutch organization on Youtube, in which the man - plus 60, or according to cognitive psychology in principle already fully grown, in addition to being extremely successful because both world famous and filthy rich - while walking with the reporting team in the Antwerp pedestrian tunnel suddenly says "*You must always be on your guard, because anyhing can happen.*"! Food for psychologists/psychiatrists for sure and even more for experts on the ... Evil Eye, right? In any case, how do we know, or do we not know, that the Belgians or their predecessors among the Flemish, Brabant, Limburg, Walloons and so on were immune - or not at all - to the view-related fears that nevertheless dominated their own, previous and later generations? This seems to us a nice question for a philosopher with an interest in art history, or even the other way around. In addition, this seems to us either very nice in collaboration or perhaps rather

very necessary - really viewed preventively! - research material for psychologists and/or psychiatrists in particular. In this way they can also research Western (and Middle Eastern) art in particular. In our opinion, one of the core pieces of painting in the Low Countries and indeed of the whole of Europe, which has been permeated or influenced by Christianity for so long, is "*The Carrying of the Cross"* (circa 1510 - 1516) by Hieronymus Bosch (circa 1440/1460 - 1516) relevant to this question: see

https://www.mskgent.be/collectie/1902-h

That painting is – in our opinion – a kind of symphony of looking, also – or especially – in the humble non-looking by Christ and Saint Veronica. It also shows – not to forget – the man who gets the cross of Christ on his stupid head and therefore has to give way or can no longer look or has become a ... follower of Christ because of that cross? In our small, albeit generally very well-received study "*De kruisweg van Edgard Tytgat (1879-1957). Een geslaagde vertelling*." (Ronse - Gaasbeek, 2.000 + "*The Way of the Cross by Edgard Tytgat (1879-1957). A successful story*."), we discussed the intriguing Way of the Cross (1955) by this important Belgian and European artist. That was a result of our political-cultural organisation "*De Fontein*" which exhibited this Way of the Cross (originals and preliminary designs) in the beautiful Romanesque crypt of the Saint Hermes Church in Ronse during Easter in the year 2000 – with many visitors. In that publication we had to point out almost systematically the importance of looking: looking around and at Christ and through Him to God through an act of resurrection such as that Way of the Cross culminates - also artistically! - in the last station. This study or especially the 14 (fourteen) stations next to the preparations we cannot place on the internet before 2027 due to copyright. Consequently we cannot place the appropriate 'viewing passages' here yet so that they can be discussed in an illustrative or explanatory manner. Hopefully you will find that little book somewhere in a library.

The fact that we just made an exception for freethinkers where this slogan or this variant of the Evil Eye would not occur, we must also put into perspective. Among those freethinkers there were "*Freemasons*". We consider them a group of fools for whom we have never been able to muster one gram of meaningful empathy. We thoroughly enjoy the opera "*Die Zauberflöte*" (1791) by the fairly well-known Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756 - 1791). But we are not one iota interested in that story itself, we happily close our eyes when the symbolism or what the modern deconstruvturatists like Romeo Castelgandolfucci (1960) make of it ... uh ... Indeed. But ladies and gentlemen. In the English branch of Freemasonry at least, that *** Eye is now making a comeback! It is enough to blind oneself with despair or even to poke Oedipus' own eyes out, although we advise you once again to regard all this Freemasonry as silly or simply creative nonsense: a sandbox for adults? Now consider this thought: "*The Eye of Providence is a symbol recognized by Freemasons everywhere as a beautiful representation of the watchful care of the Supreme Architect*."

See: **The Eye of Providence: A Journey into Masonic Symbolism - GWMNMA (gwmemorial.org)**

Note: An all-seeing eye of freemasonry or the "*Eye of Providence*": here one is allowed to ... curse!?

Incidentally, it is known that the majority of active Freemasons are people of a better class or strongly in contrast to the Flemish common people who until recently went to the pub en masse. Do such fine gentlemen ever swear, unless about the fall of their share prices – or after the loss of yet another young mistress?

So we are also back on the Egyptian course with that special perspective or the Eye of the Freemasons, although this Egypt of Nefertiti had knocked itself out of the ancient religious Egyptian course; it is difficult to look into one's own heart, and even more difficult to look into the heart of the darkness of history. That we may discover that happening, that almost dizzying presentation of shifting perspectives, through the image-being of Nefertiti, which fortunately is also a very small or humanly manageable image by Egyptian standards (just take a colossus of that damn Ramses The ... st/d/th!), is a magic that we personally discovered only very late in our lives. That can be read individually epistemologically so stupidly, since in our personal environment we were mainly surrounded by flat images: photos, paintings and prints. Our grandmother did have a few ceramic works that are still called "postuurkes" in the Flemish dialect. According to the "*Vlaamswoordenboek.be/definities*" this concept would come from the French word "*posture/poster*" or "*to give a place*". These were images of probably German origin and we vaguely remember some riders that did not take up much space. But we were clearly not interested in those extremely stupid things for a second, although we remember very well how enthusiasts almost fought over them in the days when it was clear that grandmother had become more than demented and therefore her house had to … - and that therefore that oh so familiar house could (sic) be emptied. Fortunately for us, that drama for her and for us happened with the exception of her unique graphic work around the "*Sistine Madonna*" or "*Sistine Madonna*" by Raphaël! **See Raphaël**. Sculptures that can mainly stand alone or independently, that really take up space, are simply rather rare and especially very rare in private ownership. And if one does meet private owners of statues, among the better class, such as for our youth once with a medical specialist, they mainly have room for them in their own private garden. And that is a place where the usual third man/woman hardly or never comes, neither visually nor existentially. These are not conditions for an ordinary image encounter within the lower or middle classes of society, still the main part of civilization. What we describe here has value in itself in the analysis of a work of art. But we must concentrate even more on the phenomenon of the eye level, or rather on the phenomenon of the eye. Because, from looking through one eye or usually with both eyes, we must now stare blindly at her one eye - or is there again more than one eye can see?

6. Still about eyes till sweet words. And most of all: "*The Ever Beautiful One*" or "*Bonheur*".

You know that movement. To try to see better, you sometimes close one eye. Every ophthalmologist will assure you that you are better off just taking a suitable instrument. There are enough of them available, such as a clothes peg, sorry, glasses, a … Now, whether you simply look at this Nefertiti with both eyes, or whether you want to close one eye to try to see better with the eye that remains open, assuming you can figure out which of your eyes you should close better … Because it may be that one of your eyes is a little weaker, in which case you would be better off going to the same ophthalmologist at once … Even a blind person can see that the statue of the most noble Nefertiti has only one eye. Consequently, she looks at us – the viewer – with only one eye. It is quite clear that this depicted queen was indeed normal or 'ordinary' or had both eyes. But. Something has happened to this statue throughout the literal tradition. So she didn't pull a joke like "*Captain Jack Sparrow*" - sorry, he just has terribly thick eye shadow. In any case, many pirates are known for having only one eye or rather, they are known for having two eyes, one of which is covered in a very conspicuous or frightening way; with an eye patch, a pars pro toto for the real pirate. That is of course the classic stupid joke but perhaps quite a lot happened at the home of the pharaoh; pots and pans that flew around too much and her eye that was in the way? Or also purely perhaps she or her rather special husband - we will finally meet him later - was a bit bizarre, also a bit oversensitive, even too psychopathic like our later friend Oedipus (circa 420 BC), a little thousand years after our Nefertiti.

We like to find out in a more prosaic or logical way. That this beautiful statue, although the statue is somewhat less attractive because of that rotten eye that has probably been lost, has been in Berlin for the entire European period, is no coincidence. After all, it was a German team of archaeologists who found this bust in 1912, in Egypt of course. That took place in the important archaeological site of Amarna, or as it was then called, in Achetaton. That old name clearly referred to "*The Horizon of the Aten*", and the Aten in turn was the – henceforth at the wish and command of her husband the King only! – Egyptian god, the Sun God. In this historically extremely important place the bust of Nefertiti was found, more precisely in the workroom of the sculptor "*Thutmose*", who is also famous for this head. Unfortunately, we cannot give you his life dates, but we can tell you with our hand on our European hearts that he was a contemporary of Nefertiti and her husband. After all, this sculptor was known as "*The King's Favourite and Master of Works*". So it is either a portrait from nature (of her of course, which does not exclude that she had an identical twin sister, or even a quasi perfect stand-in) or a copy of an earlier statue made after her. In this way we cannot say anything about the provenance of this statue or the changes of location, say owners of this work of art. It is nevertheless 99.9999% certain that the statue was simply not finished yet in this studio and that it never left this place until the studio itself fell into ruins. About the status of this statue, and more specifically the reason for the presence of only one eye, there are various hypotheses by what are called Egyptologists - or specialists. Possibly later archaeological research will provide more clarity about this.

Whatever hypotheses one uses, the absent eye is absent is absent is sent away and remains in its absence at the same time or forever an eye. There is never any talk of "*the hole*" or the empty space where there is 'nothing' where normally an eye should have been. These thoughts do not so much testify to respect for Nefertiti, but they do testify to respect for this bust – not coincidentally, of Nefertiti. The possession of this bust is, as is known, of unprecedented archaeological and touristic value because the bust is without a doubt one of

the most famous artefacts from the entire Ancient Egypt and therefore a tourist attraction for the Berlin museum where it is – still (…) - located. And that Ancient Egyptian civilisation is without the slightest doubt, partly due to its proximity to and contacts with the Greek and later Roman culture or with the foundations of the later European culture, for the contemporary European inhabitant one of the most impressive 'vanished' or ancient cultures on this globe. And that seen from the entire more or less known world history. The bust of Nefertiti is therefore iconic as part of an era that is in itself iconic or imaginative. If the famous pyramids of Giza are objectively the most important remains and testimonies of the very long and rich Ancient Egyptian history, then the statue of Nefertiti, together with the sarcophagus of Tutankhamun (circa 1,333 - 1323 BC), who was very close to her, represents the concrete Ancient Egyptian man, of course more specifically from the side of the rulers (although objectively historically speaking, "*Toetie*" was only a very minor ruler). Consequently, the non-presence or objective absence of one of the normally two eyes of the person of this statue is not a real problem. Or that normal problem is simply ideologically, albeit very honorably, thought away. One could call this a form of sincere or honest historical and tourist fraud.

Meanwhile, it is an undeniable truth that the same Nefertiti has lost one eye forever. And like every human being, she had only two, whether she was almost divine for her and the population – or not divine as for later people. Whereby, for the sake of certainty, which can now not be apodictic at all but precisely the opposite, one must suggest that Nefertiti actually or in her concrete life-world only retained one or only one good eye. Imagine if she had lost two! And that we can assume from our expectations of knowledge that it is somewhere an additional miracle (additional?) that she did not receive an eye patch – from the then so famous sculptor "*Thutmose*" or "*The King's Favourite and Master of Works*" and consequently also "*The Queen's Favourite and Master of Works*". Was such an eye patch or whatever was suitable for masking, not aesthetically or existentially appropriate for her Highness? Did an aesthetic morality exist in that Ancient Egypt that continued so infinitely, albeit finitely, at least for the highest of society? What was actually obligatory in terms of aesthetics for that then situated human being? And what precisely was not or was forbidden? Did covering the body in connection with changes due to injuries or loss belong to the attempt to make the body more beautiful again or to preserve the body at a certain aesthetic level? Or was that change with loss of its originality – what's in a word? – regularly accepted, also because in this case of the loss of an eye, one could never possibly restore its 'most important' function – seeing? Or was one thing or another accepted in terms of loss of one's own physicality, that is, of the less attractive appearance, so to speak somewhat anticipating the later "*Insjallah*"? The important Belgian painter and sculptor Rik Wouters (1882 – 1916) and the even better known, merely painting Vincent Van Gogh (1853 - 1890) – both artists are not present on this website, but that can be attributed to coincidence; we simply cannot discuss/use 'everything/everyone' – are famous examples of the visible covering up of 'flaws' in the normal physical appearance. These were much later times and essentially ordinary people, at least socially speaking. They were artists or 'beautiful artists', both excellent painters who produced many impressively beautiful works. Rik Wouters suffered unbearable pains at the end of his life and as a result even lost one eye and shortly afterwards suddenly his life. Van Gogh had tinkered with his right ear and afterwards needed a bandage for a while to at least let it heal. We are familiar with this kind of dealing with partly physical loss. It is no coincidence that this concerns men, painters even, who have made relatively many self-portraits. Bad luck for them, but in the most attractive ... men in history we are not interested at all: give us ladies, ladies, women! The question of whether we would have taken 'those' portraits of them – with an eye patch, with a head bandage – is therefore not relevant here in that definitional way – hahaha.

From a purely physical point of view, Queen Nefertiti is half-blind or, if you like, half-sighted. We do not know the technical details of what happens to visual perception when only one eye is still functional. Can we simply assume that one then still has half of normal vision? Now the term "*half-sighted*" is lame language. The concept of "*half-sighted*" also poses a small and therefore smaller problem. Linguistically speaking, that is not a correct expression because when someone is called half-blind, they mean a person who has much poorer vision. Even if this person still has both eyes or eyeballs, he/she may simply have bad eyes. That is absolutely not the case here with Nefertiti, but there is no person and especially no viewer who will raise the alarm about that: the statue of Nefertiti will certainly not be moved to the museum basement because of our article - haha. The question may well be whether, if Nefertiti had effectively had only one eye, or if a matter of speaking was cross-eyed like a dragon, whether she would have been considered royally worthy to be depicted as a statue – publicly, even quite privately within her own royal chambers – let alone whether she would have been allowed to share life with her King - Pharaoh! - very privately and certainly publicly: definitely not! The question can then be asked purely hypothetically whether at a certain point as queen she had only one working eye. And that question is important because it raises the – in any case morally – more important question whether her Royal Consort would still have wanted to 'have' her, show her and so on!? Incidentally, all of her known frontal statues – with a perfect view of her entire face and therefore also or especially of her eyes – always show these eyes in full presence! On that very important, albeit statistically limited level – how many statues of her alone or together with her husband are still under the Egyptian sand? – there can be no doubt that the famous statue of her bust discussed here is a statue that has simply lost one eye. Or that for even more stupid reasons it had not yet been placed by a collaborator from the official sculptor's studio.

These are all considerations that have an importance on a moral and political level: could such an all-powerful man as a pharaoh ultimately reject his almost equally divine wife because for some reason she suddenly had a very noticeable defect, or a serious 'flaw' in the ideal of beauty at the time? That is a question we cannot answer, just as we can imagine that given certain, let us say, strict or compelling religious reasons, such a violation of the supreme woman could not be tolerated. But then the logic always applies whether such problems of ultimate exclusion could also occur for the supreme lord or the pharaoh himself? We are not experts in Ancient Egyptian history, but we have certainly never heard of this kind of striking incident. Moreover, the pharaoh was also a military head of state and military affairs are by definition dangerous. Therefore, it is very conceivable that certain early generations of pharaohs, or later the more daring among them, sometimes took on effective military leadership and were therefore seriously hurt – in very visible places! That too is a fact that must be taken into account in the assessment of human aesthetics throughout these older civilizations, possibly even up to the present day.

As for the great attractiveness of this bust of Nefertiti or more precisely of the actual queen Nefertiti, it seems certain that she was considered as such by her contemporaries. She was certainly considered onomastically very beautiful, at least from a certain point on, let's say strongly presumably shortly before her coronation as queen or official wife of the pharaoh. According to Egyptologists, the meaning of her name indeed perfectly matches the beauty of her bust: "*The Beautiful One has Come*". We suspect - may not say for sure - that she was not given this name at birth. We do not want to be naive, but as our great friend Jacky sometimes says "*All children are beautiful*", she probably did not have a face deformed by mosquito bites as a baby. Moreover, it seems obvious that her beauty was a decisive motive for her later

husband Akhenaten (his reign was during circa 1353 - 1336 BC) to take her as his wife. And therefore to have 'beautiful' children from her. Incest or marriage within the royal family was also known to be present in these circles. We have no idea whether in Ancient Egypt at the highest social level a motive such as great or true love played a role, although that could of course have been an 'additional' motive in this case. We know absolutely nothing about important themes such as love and fidelity or mistresses about the Ancient Egyptian court: did Nefertiti have, in addition to many maidservants, also a form of very tolerated competitors in bed? Did this court and even every court have a tradition of the harem – or whatever that could be called in Ancient Egyptian? We now know that from a certain point on Nefertiti was referred to as an enormously beautiful woman, very officially because through her address or name itself. We know de facto or archaeologically that she was depicted several times in both ordinary statues and in bas-reliefs together with her husband, sometimes hand in hand and sometimes even with their children. Of her husband the pharaoh we know 'on the other hand' no images with beloved mistresses. Furthermore, those ancient Egyptians appear to have been prudish in some way, when one compares the visual culture with Indian temple culture and classical erotic Indian writings. Furthermore, is there such a thing as comparative erotic studies between older civilizations, by anthropologists, archaeologists, historians alongside philosophers and art historians?

We repeat that the name Nefertiti meant in their language "*The Beautiful One has Come*". With that she was not yet sufficiently praised linguistically, stylistically and socially. Nefertiti also had a whole series of "*titles*" or distinguished forms of address. We give three of them that fit well in this context of the discussion of so-called attractive women in history:

- "*Lady of Grace*";
- "*Sweet of Love*"
- "*Lady of All Women*".

The latter is so obvious as husband of the pharaoh that it is almost not worth mentioning. Yet we think it is a beautiful title, for her and as an example! Ultimately, that should also be the name or at least the reality for every woman who is in a relationship with a man, is it a marriage or a previous or more or less similar nature - yes indeed! Of course we do not know who came up with these titles. But not so secretly we may dream and think that one of these titles - imagine all of them!!! - was thought up by her Akhenaten. You immediately understand where we are going with this. Not everyone can become a poet of a certain level. Outside of periods - or at least that one (?) - almost every lover has a poetic mood now and then. From the results of this one can usually not expect impressive literature, or preferably not even? In any case, the sweet words so 'titles' that a man expresses to his wife - and vice versa please - and that throughout the entire relationship; is this famous example of a real woman from the top class not worth further say eternal and universal encouragement! The point is to follow Akhenaten in particular in relation to his Nefertiti – you know, that wonderful woman from that old bust – and to use these formulations authentically ourselves – and of course preferably vice versa! We deliberately did not put a question mark after the previous sentences! Even more, we would like to see these examples – here three successful ones, but there were more in relation to Nefertiti – as truly exemplary, so that you, your sister, your daughter, your neighbor and so on are encouraged to also use … in relation to her …/…! Secondly, we know one wonderful woman who was French-speaking and who regularly called her – only – child, a son, "*Bonheur*" ("*Happiness*"), while that was certainly not his real first name. It is not even a socially known or real first name.

You allow us to use a well-known but still always moving word, if spoken authentically, from a rightly very famous and beloved Dutch (Flemish) poem. More: we give up this unique poem at once:

"*De lenige liefde.*

Middenin de vlakte van juli
kwam ik je tegen. Ik woon hier, zei je.
Ik keek naar de bloemen. Ja, dat zie ik,
zei ik, en waar leerde je de kunst
om niet lang te duren? Ook hier, zei je.

Je was lenig; en je woorden waren zo
doorschijnend, ik kon je er helemaal
door zien.
En daar lag ik al in het gras
en wat hield ik in mijn hand?
Een oortje, waarin ik het lange woord
'lieveling' uitgoot, zonder morsen.

Herman de Coninck (1944 – 1997)

See https://www.hermandeconinck.be/gedicht-lenige-liefde-3.php

For obvious reasons we do not want to translate this Dutch poem – into English. Feel free to do it yourself. In any case you understand the word "*lieveling*" as "*my beloved one*" or "*my darling*" or … – for example. And in what a unique way it is used here between lovers!

After this title splendor, let's return to the meaning of the first name Nefertiti or "*The Beautiful One has Come*". We looked up the following on probably the best website in the world regarding the meaning and occurrence of first names:

https://www.behindthename.com/

We then had to conclude to our surprise that the Arabic language, geographically a successor of Ancient Egyptian, does not seem to know any names in which the core is the word "beauty". Please convince us immediately that we are wrong - and with pleasure! In any case, in some languages that we know a little bit, we do not know a single example! Unless it is "*BO*"; see a further paragraph. That does not seem to be a common first name but itself comes from "*Beau*", which comes from "*beautiful, handsome*". According to the referred website, this would nevertheless be a very late, 20th century invention and moreover also applies to - men! Can we find this very, very remarkable, certainly with regard to the history of naming women!? After all, that is just as much a history of attractive, beautiful women. Let us keep our amazement short here and go straight to a conclusion with force. Let us indeed take this opportunity to call upon all readers to finally create or invent such a name in at least Dutch, English, French, German, Italian, Spanish, … languages, a name that not only sounds

authentic or is motivated as such – but also to invent a euphonious name and preferably as an onomatopoeia. Of course, to propagate this beautiful or necessary first name – for women only, right? – via via (media or mediating means).

We repeat once more that the meaning of Nefertiti's first name was "*The Beautiful One has Come*". After all and after the previous sentence, it is certain that the repetitio was also one of the most important figures of speech for the Ancient Egyptians. That beauty/Beauty of her/Her had come one day, as a queen perhaps. Unfortunately we were not there yet, neither on her young day but certainly not a while later or on her old day. We naturally hope for her, for all those who loved her even worshipped her, and ultimately even more naturally for all women who somewhere for a man, a father and mother, a neighborhood, for a ... That all these women were also like Nefertiti so that ... We indeed hope that the name remained, albeit that it changed that little bit. Just as Nefertiti bore a whole series of titles, she could now also bear this new albeit old his eternal first name: "*The Ever Beautiful One*." Because isn't that the essence of life!? Stay beautiful and attractive, on and through the waves of the world!?

7. The Happiness of the Perfect Absent. A bust is not a rose, not a …, not …

You may not realize it but Nefertiti was very lucky. Or even more: the "*Neues Museum in Berlin*" had, has and will forever have that great luck that Nefertiti came to you all as a bust. And not as a normal, adult or still very young woman. That Nefertiti looked so-called beautifully slim, is quite self-evident but is not at all. Undoubtedly she had a small army of servants just for her, of whom the toughest had the uniquely illustrious job of waving Her Majesty a lightening wind. And that was not so much done to overcome the oppressive hot air of the Egyptian desert by an ancient form of air conditioning. But that was done mainly to chase away all kinds of Nile mosquitoes by incessantly moving all kinds of things - which then had perfect thing names in ancient Egyptian - so that that eternal light wind waved around her. Her adornment as fond de teint has long since been lost or had not even been applied by the painters who had to give this sculpture a finishing touch, it is certain that there are no traces of mosquito bites on her face. We know from, among other things, the Old Testament stories and a fairly impressive film such as "*The Ten Commandments*" (1956 + director Cecil B. DeMille, 1881 - 1959) that quite a few insects flew around in that very old Egypt of, among other things, 1,345 BC. You can bet that tens of thousands of slaves or free Egyptians who built the many and mostly gigantic temples, let alone the unimaginable pyramids, were black with the stings of the countless types of local insects. Presumably they came to this part of the Old World as a kind of economic migrants because a lot of blood and sweat was more attractive there than on, say, the barren soils of darker A...a.

But fond de teint, mosquitoes or other insects. There was something more that is not visible at all in the thereby even more or at least rather attractive Nefertiti. There is after all the joy of Nothingness There is/was/will be the Happiness of the Perfect Absence. When you see a beautiful actress on the silver screen or the not at all white but nevertheless transparent screen, you can hardly contain yourself as a male animal and already start dreaming of "*If only I were there*!" or a more sensual cry like "*Me and you, we* ...!", then that dangerous moment arrives. The actress has to drink, "has to" because the director and screenwriter have foreseen it while they apparently never have foreseen anything 'else', or the actress "*wants*" to eat an ice cream, bite a piece of chocolate, or even - which has not been allowed in American films for some time now - take a drag on her cigarette, something that is all an indication that she wants to give her male co-star a good lick, bite and so on. And then it comes! The great danger! The possible and often certain moment! The moment of the great unmasking, of "*La Grande*

Désillusion" or "*le Moment Sousprême*". Licking her ice cream, taking a light drag on her cigarette, taking a bite of her apple, and so on; they are all actions in which she has to put one hand, if not both hands, to her mouth. Where even without a close-up those hands are central and can be seen. We are sometimes very diplomatic and we will proceed in this way in particular because we are not even going to name one example of an actress, certainly not a current one and certainly not a classic one because she may always remain classic, who is a wonderfully delicious animal, pardon, who is a very attractive one, who may soon be a hopefully lovable woman. But, that eternal but. But that could also be (...) an actress with ugly, even terribly ugly - hands. We are certain that there are men whose erection at such a moment shrivels up to unusable dimensions as if by an ice shower. And so on. You understand that we cannot here proceed to empirical elements from our own lives. Although we are happy to turn a blind eye, except as far as deceit is concerned. Deceit, you say? Or the art of diplomacy, in the bath, bed, at the table and ...? Or an art of looking and not looking through something like love!

There are a great many film critics throughout the still relatively short history of film. One of them must have noticed one or two things and almost certainly some film giants among the screenwriters, directors and even (most of all!?) the producers must have told themselves and their film crews as a mantra: "*If necessary, show her pussy that is heavily hairy - but not in a close-up!!! - but never those kinds of hands (even hairless)!!!".* Indeed, we once saw the beginnings of beard hairs on a female relative who was no longer taking such good care of herself as she was getting older. And we certainly did not find that a pleasant experience. While we quite naturally only had family and artistic reflections on this lady because it concerned our own grandmother. While we always felt something democratic or relativizing bubbling up inside us.

We know a friend who is nice to us and very gallant to the ladies, who looks at ladies' toes. To e-v-a-lu-rate? He is certainly not Chinese in whose tradition sex and feet are very intimately connected. Until just a few decades ago, people were still busy binding the feet of young girls so that they would not grow too much: a means of torture as an ideal of beauty! Do you still remember the overwhelming "*The Last Emperor (of China)*." (1987, director Bernardo Bertolucci, 1941 - 2018). During a lovemaking scene, the Chinese spectators in the cinemas did not turn a blind eye due to a form of collectively formed age-old shame because the censorship had prevented that: kissing the feet - of a woman by a man - was very nice for those involved (the actors) but not for the Chinese authorities. Or how Chinese communists still wear age-old Mandarin clothes or glasses. In any case, we have seen – somewhere 'up there' – attractive women with ugly hands and fingers but never the same kind of ladies with ugly feet or toes. And that is purely cultural because we have no cultural interest in toes and also purely pragmatic because we ourselves are quite tall and would have to bend down deeply and look, to be able to see the feet/toes, assuming that the lady in question is already wearing sandals or is simply barefoot. These are therefore some important conditions in which the general denominator of attractiveness is not easy or almost impossible to apply to the human component feet/toes. Unless it is so bad that the person concerned has colossal flat feet that it is noticeable from far away. Funny enough, there are various types of feet of which the most important of the three most common types is precisely the so-called. "*Egyptian Foot*". That seems to be by far the most common type of foot, with in decreasing order of occurrence the "*Roman Foot*" and – it was to be suspected – the "*Greek Foot*." See:

https://www.podexpert.com/en/blog-pathology-type-feet-pxl-151_159.html

https://voetenbeweging.nl/welk-voettype-heb-ik/

These types of feet are, as expected, only characterized by the nature of their toes. The Egyptian Foot is the type in which the big (left) toe is the longest, after which all other toes become slightly shorter, as if a perfect straight line has been drawn next to them. With that almost eerily straight or 'perfect' appearance of the mutual position of the toes, something is suddenly touched upon that is established in nature and culture as the standard, that is, as the beautiful or to be striven for: the straight line or the perfect shape (in addition to the circle, which one may also call a kind of straight line, but then not … straight through - haha). And not to forget; that straight line is or is processed on both sides in the ideal of symmetry, or approximately the size of all observable things. Now of course you will immediately object; so much attention for types of feet/toes, what about the hands/fingers? We have to disappoint you right away because the study of hand types does not seem to be separate from … palm reading or palmistry. And that is a subject that we do not want to dedicate ourselves to here at all. Let us limit ourselves to two remarks on the matter. For example, someone who loses a thumb, for whatever reason, does not only have extreme problems on a daily basis because the thumb has unique functions due to its opposable function. And also purely aesthetically and existentially; it will 'stand out' or make a person less attractive. The same applies to someone who has lost one or even several other fingers, or even 'only' one or more of the obviously upper phalanges. This is something that one continues to see occasionally as an intimate, as we had to experience with a family member. But what about a really 'somewhere above' attractive woman – who has 'also' lost a finger, even just a phalange? We are not specialists in the now innumerable mannequins, but we have worked professionally with a series of mannequins for a long time as a student, at least we did as one of their roadies. Admittedly: we have never seen a single lady there who had lost either a toe, a finger, or one of their phalanges. That could be statistical coincidence. But who believes in that coincidence? Now, of course, no one should become a professional mannequin or model. Or maybe the opposite: "*Every woman a model*??!!!"

8. Those hands. Nothing to do about it?

We must return or continue with the hands - of Nefertiti. We know for certain that despite the initial deception of this reasonably well-made bust in Berlin, that she had hands on her body for a time before, during and hopefully also after the year 1,345 BC. That she, even if she did not have to do anything in the household (that is certain), never had to roll up her sleeves except to massage the prick of her venerable pharaoh (that is certain). After which she continued with her, always visible on the same bust, albeit completely still closed mouth. Sultry lips indeed of our Nefertiti! But let us not distract ourselves further also or especially because there is so little to deduce from a bust or a statue without tits nor toes! Of that throng of female servants who waited on her to put her at ease in everything - for she had of course had a terribly boring life of permanently doing nothing but the saying "*Soi belle et tais-toi et baise-moi*" ("*Be sexually desirable to me from early morning until especially at night and keep your mouth shut to me for the rest of those long hours - because then I must rule, you understand; rule*!") - there was at least one who stood in for Her Majesty's hands, besides a stand-in and so on: there were enough servants at this kind of higher courts! It was extremely busy there at many daily moments in the wide, nicely cooled and mosquito- and other insect-protected rooms of Nefertiti.

If the muscular, bronzed and perhaps also eunuch Nubians really had to keep blowing the wind every second so that, among other things, Nefertiti's face and hands would never fall

prey to insect bites, then those hands could experience the opposite or the ultimate better; manicure! It is absolutely certain that this Very Old Egypt was the cradle of at least this form of body care, or the beautification of the body! Undoubtedly, the top of this society, which was impossibly rich in all areas and paid an extreme amount of attention to the beautification of all lower and upper parts of their living environment, took the lead in this part of physically bound beauty. It is an interesting hypothesis and probably very difficult to investigate archaeologically, especially archivally, to what extent the example of the top of this unique society also had a concrete effect on the level of their subjects, both qualitatively (of lesser quality if possible with all kinds of further creativity) and quantitatively. Thus, we do not know whether there were classes or groups in that Ancient Egyptian society that either had a ban on beautifying their appearance, or simply had no interest in it! It is certainly common knowledge that in all kinds of so-called older or vanished civilizations there were strict rules that reserved the use of certain colors exclusively for the elite. It is highly likely that this was also the case in Ancient Egypt. This demand for a top-bottom influence on this kind of fashion behavior seems almost absurd for a society that naturally had to do without social media, even images from television and printed press (fashion magazines!). However, let us not forget that Ancient Egypt had an enormous number of temples in which numerous representations were very prominently displayed. These were not only about the deities but also showed the elite of society, such as more precisely and most prominently this queen. There was therefore a lot of relevant material to be gleaned for the viewers to then imitate examples to the extent that was materially or financially possible. What do we actually know about the knowledge sociology of those old, vanished civilizations or how social knowledge was distributed and controlled? We cannot discuss the physical counterpart of the manicure – the pedicure – here, because there is much less to be seen of that counterpart of the feet and toes than of the hands and fingers, right!? Besides, to what extent could manicure and pedicure have differed in essence: both fingers and toes have prominently present nails that can be painted in the same ways!?

We assume that Nefertiti was given extended or artificial nails, although we have never seen anything ancient Egyptian to indicate that. We may be absolutely certain that her toenails were painted perfectly, although probably never with any extensions such as on the fingernails! We must take a closer look at those feminine inconspicuous sometimes very conspicuous body parts when we see Elisabeth Taylor (1932 - 2011) play for the umpteenth time in "*Cleopatra*" (1963 + director Joseph L. Mankiewicz, 1909 - 1993). Although we must admit that we did not only want to look at and briefly touch the toes of our voluptuous Elsabeth, we must also honestly admit that we were also charmed by the sonority of the voice of Richard Burton (1925 - 1984) who, as an actor, did cheat because he was a chain smoker; only for that more or deeper timbre, Richard? Although we are not really jealous of that now because we are full of sincere admiration where fortunately we only very occasionally have a squeaky voice like our late mother had much more often. Strangely enough we now suddenly think that we have certainly never paid attention to the toes of our own mother, but also not even to her hands or especially to their fingers! Those fingers were probably what one could call 'normal' or therefore not too long (they were certainly not hands suitable for playing the piano, something this woman never tried either) nor too short (they were not stumps, something striking because we have relatively short fingers compared to our strong or large palms; probably a gift from our ... natural father, a man eternally unknown to us?). One would, from the logic of the leptosome or elongated head of Nefertiti – as the main part of the bust or the only thing we have of her as an appearance, a simultaneously meager representation of a human being, albeit always the essence of that same human appearance, right? – may deduce that she also had long or slender fingers, with which she could also

pamper Her Husband in all sorts of ways every day, smoothly and yet firmly, or sometimes even … tease Him? It is no coincidence that the leptosome appearance of this queen is formally reinforced by her slightly open or widening crown towards the top, according to experts called the "*Nefertiti cap crown*". This royal or rather queenly crown is without a doubt one of the main reasons why this bust has become so world-famous. For some ladies, and among them very famous ones, this crown is a challenge to make something similar, in order to appear as a Modern Queen Nefertiti themselves. They are all gladly allowed to do so! And should more happen under the motto "*Every woman in her own way – queen*!"?

We - at least besides the Egyptologists we know it too - we know that the very Ancient Egyptians performed brain drilling or attempted a minimal form of brain surgery. Well done, one must then sincerely suggest. But? What about the lengthening of - found to be too short - hands! There ... never ... heard!!! Also the changing, or rather making less noticeable, of the blood vessels on the upper side of Nefertiti's hands, to make them more and more attractive for her husband for that one time or even several times a day that he wanted to make love to her, we have never read anything about that from all those same Egyptologists either. In short, something like the reasonable nonsense and mania of so-called aesthetic plastic surgery was never known to Nefertiti so that her immensely rich husband and Lord of Lords of that Ancient Egypt could not hang tons of gold on it. Plastic surgeons could not become terribly rich then because they simply could not earn a single cent because they were completely non-existent - yet. The very Old and as a civilization very old Egyptians could, so to speak, go to the Moon because they could certainly build enormous high and internally extremely complicated pyramids. They could work basalt as if it were fresh clay and so on and much more. But a hand was a hand and remained a hand. Whether that hand was of the slave as a servant or of the wife of the pharaoh herself, nothing could be done. Or at least; nothing could be extended!

That was a terrible thought for such a Nefertiti who, like some time later and also somewhat higher up in the world Sissi (the famous pet name of Empress Elisabeth of Austria and Queen of Hungary, 1837 – 1898) mirrored herself ten times a day - up to more! She could of course never tolerate one mirror as the Highest Woman of the Empire! The human mirror of the unreal beauty of just one of her servants was never to be accepted, while that lady would of course quickly come into the field of vision of her husband so that that lecher would quickly want to possess this lady. Neither a beautiful woman unequalled in terms of face, nor even in terms of her own plump hands, was ever allowed to approach her queen Nefertiti, let alone take care of her, comb her, massage her, manicure her, and so on, such as fingering her, because if her husband had to reign for far too long, such a High Lady also wanted some physical distraction: her chosen pets simply could not provide for that, although fortunately there were still - and always nearby - eunuchs! Ah, that eternal Jealousy even or still among those so-called Lucky Ones or Toppers of the Earth – was it now at the Equator or far above, far below or even as far away as on the planet Venus! Not a single lady among her servants, not even a single lady among the higher companions was allowed to come even one Meter, one Kilo, one Ampere in the vicinity of the self-evaluated beauty of Nefertiti, or she would have them .... She probably had these desperate ones thrown a little further on in the Nile to the hungry crocodiles - although it had to be far enough away so that she could not hear any horrible screams as a result of her decision driven by her ideal of beauty: such an auditory stupor and disruption of too much beauty immediately caused physical nausea. That event was then a very applied form of plastic surgery or the plastic elimination of those who came too close in beauty, almost surpassed Her Highness. Unfortunately, we have not yet found any papyrus scrolls containing advertisements along the lines of: "*Wanted for the daily and*

therefore eternal care of the beauty of our Queen Nefertiti, but strongly requested that they themselves be a bit uglier, but at the same time not so ugly that it could frighten Her Majesty that She might suffer a miscarriage because of it, because Everything, absolutely Everything for the Preservation of Our Dynasty – Long Live Aton!".

But those hands, those Most Eminent hands of Her Majesty? She will certainly never have held a microphone in her hands. Probably not an ice cream either because it was blood-warm there, already in Very Ancient Egypt. Many of our readers will of course only look drooling at the two main components of the female appearance for them - the head and the breasts. And therefore, mesmerized by it, like rabbits at a light box, that important female part - are there otherwise unimportant, not attractive parts for the phenomenon woman? - will miss: her hands! We do not give ages of women unless they are nicely dead and preferably buried. So we also do not give names of attractive women with rather stump hands. When those stumps can clearly - at least for a keen observer like us - be determined when that female specimen is holding a microphone. When she is eating an ice cream or holding it. Holding an ice cream alone seems to us to be a risky event for a woman who is meant to be attractive!? We do not know many women who eat ice cream and then want to have their picture taken; we can't remember a single one at the moment unless… Oh, we're never going to say or write that in public. And we're not even going to say it to her, if we as ordinary mortals were ever allowed to experience the divine moment of meeting this attractive woman and – horresco refrens!!! – even 'have to' greet her with a … kiss on the hand. But women who have the ambition to torment or sing in public: there are many of them, countless to infinite. Ambition … So there's plenty of work if plastic surgeons want to transform the stumps or other more or less deformed hands of future or already born world stars of music into leptosome, slender, elegant and other so-called attractive hands. Hopefully these surgeons will mainly have fingers that, by their simple appearance, could start to enchant the listeners themselves. Make-up probably won't help much here, although there are endless accessories to think of or apply. We know that the members of the apparently undying Rolling Stones have seduced women on a regular basis. We are not aware of anything similar from our female world stars from the music world. Did you, as a lucky one-night stand chosen by them, suddenly feel cheated when you undressed and groped her when her fingers seemed like real stumps, completely out of proportion to the divinity of her voice and even angelic face? All objections from the fairly devastating image and ideal of truth or beauty of Nefertiti, all in all nothing more than a ... stump of an apparition because only a bust!

9. The love for the Imperfect Present. And its logical Upgrading!?

You have undoubtedly heard that Germany was divided into West and East Germany, that it was Nazi Germany before that and that there was a bit more, albeit not all that long before that, an imperial Germany: "*The times they are a-changin'*". The last and also one of the first emperors, of this dynasty, was a certain Wilhelm II, with his real name blah blah blah. Well, you know that right away. The man lived between 1859 and 1941 and would be emperor of the partly imperial Germany for a fairly long time. Until he had to retreat there because of the situation caused by the insane misery of the First World War - to the then very neutral Netherlands. The man was a country bumpkin of the highest order and that is a high order because German country bumpkins are terrible … He did have his origins in his favor because otherwise he would not have become Wilhelm II. He could use those genes in that dynastic way, but with all those centuries of European noble inbreeding, things did go wrong; see further in the case of Goya. What went wrong with him, you can literally see if you look closely, because every portraitist, whether it was a traditional painter or a modern

photographer, did – or rather had to do – his utmost to hide that one relatively minor handicap of this Wilhelm as neatly as possible. What was the problem, which in principle was almost impossible to hide, because it was certainly not about the length, not even about the strange color of his dick? As far as is known, no nude portraits were ever made of him. The man had, like most people, two arms, with the difference that it was clearly visible that the left arm was shorter than the right arm. Those big guys of that time, and certainly in military circles, they liked to shoot real game, whether or not it was set out for them in a pleasantly hidden way. And to shoot with a proper rifle – and even more so with a bow and arrow if the young emperor wanted to play "*Cowboy and Indian*" as a boy – one needed both arms. After all, the Paralympics had not yet been invented; that only happened after WWII. And at that blessed moment Wilhelm was ad patres. To this day we do not know whether he has risen or is somewhere in heaven or hell, and from our perspective especially not whether he would have arrived there with two normal arms. And we wish this inhuman being and his inhuman regime nothing but good – although it is far too late for that – but we especially wish him, wherever he may be, simply two normal arms, even if he is mainly or only pure spirit.

Given his top position at the head of a European top country like Germany, then in multiple energetic development, many portraits were made of him. A well-known portrait in what is called a theatrical (and therefore normal German) position, is by the German painter Max Korner (1854 – 1900) and dates from 1890. See:

https://de.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Datei:Kohner_-_Kaiser_Wilhelm_II.jpg

We don't like it artistically and so on - but that is not the issue here because we are only discussing and attractive women. In any case, from this painting it is overwhelmingly clear that Wilhelm II almost completely hides his Second Arm. Incidentally, he is also standing there with two but especially very shiny and very long boots. And! That is now without a doubt a part that when put on by a reasonably interesting woman - with preference for an African lady from deep Africa in particular - while she prefers to remain completely naked for the entire rest, that for approximately 85% of men of whatever nature and so on, is a signal to start getting horny and so on. We may admit here that we can confirm this hypothesis from the first source, especially because by the way, with quite a few repetitions it concerned a completely pitch-black woman - a mixture between Congo and Cameroon if we may be so precise - who was also reasonably tall, fortunately for us she was a few centimeters shorter than us. Wilhelm II would certainly have been turned on by this sight and would have immediately called upon his best physiotherapist and other experts to help him with the possible next sexual act, assuming of course that this beautiful lady would have wanted that with such a stupid ass of a Prussian. Painter Max Korner must eventually or "en route" have developed abnormalities himself, in his painter's arm or in his best painter's eye or in both successively. After all, he reportedly painted no less than thirty (30) portraits of this Wilhelm II with II Arms, in addition to dozens of portraits of the German aristocracy of the same 19th century times. As you can deduce from our website, we really have the greatest pity for the Belgian painter and so-called world citizen Luc Tuymans because of his self-invented, albeit often self-borrowed, but always depressing works of art (well, yes). Then logically one should also think and feel the same about a painter like Max Korner. In any case, the man would earn very well from it, by the way just the same as with Luc Tuymans, although we do not understand now how many so-called top collectors, so insanely rich people, can throw away so much money on such trivial to purely objectively viewed worthless art. Just as we assume that during these and ever-advancing times, no one outside of historians and perhaps

psychiatrists is interested in the dozens of portraits of the German aristocrat painter Max Korner.

There have, however, been very important painters – and there will certainly be more – who have painted deformities in, so to speak, an elegant or human way, while they were indeed giants as visual artists, and have remained so to this day. Amen.

A very striking example is the Spanish painter and world-class guy Diego (Rodríguez de Silva y) Velázquez (1599 – 1660), who is loved by almost everyone. Just say Velázquez because the man needs no further introduction or extra. The man was a court painter for a very large part of his life or very much comparable to the portrait painter Max Korner a few centuries later, albeit in the colder German North. Velázquez painted a lot and extremely elegantly, often intriguingly mysterious. Among his fairly large number of works there is what one could call a form of subgenre. It concerns part of the court staff or the dwarfs and jesters at that Spanish court. Unfortunately, we do not know of any broad European-oriented art-historical and historical study that focuses on this subject. As Flemish and Belgians, we certainly do not know of a single painting or etching or drawing that depicts a dwarf at something like a royal or noble Flemish, Burgundian, or similar court. That may be a complete coincidence, but we can objectively say that we have seen 'a lot' of our general visual culture – live and especially through art books – and that, if they do occur, the appearance of dwarfs in these regions must have been very minimal or rare. There was more in Europe than Flanders and Belgium. What about the important Italian noble courts, in particular, where for the European continent relatively the most because hundreds of excellent to brilliant painters and sculptors worked? From this specific perspective, and to be honest only and solely through the Google search function, we have found the important Italian painter Agnolo Bronzino (1503 – 1572). We 'of course' already knew that man, if only 'but' (but!!??) because of his superior painting "*An Allegory with Venus and Cupid*" (1503 – 1572 + you can find this masterpiece in the insane "*room 9*" of The National Gallery, London, a completely insane museum: unimaginable that so many people waste their beautiful, precious life time scrolling). So Bronzino probably painted a dwarf only once; the circumstances are of no importance here. One is as good as none, as a proverb sometimes says, although "*zero*" is the absorbing or all-destroying number while "*one*" is the beginning of all counting – for both the many infinite and the few finitely thinking mathematicians. So in the extremely important Italian painting a dwarf or 'something similar' would have been depicted only once? More precisely, it was the dwarf "*Nano Morante*" (1562), a dwarf who was effectively employed at yet another court, in this case a top place because it was the court of the famous Florentine "*Cosimo I de' Medici*" (1519 – 1574). This suggests that at this court, before, then and later, as well as at other Italian and all kinds of other European courts, there were still dwarfs. And that in turn suggests that there must still be works of art about them or at least with them – as a 'part'. So for us that is a question to which we would like to receive an artistic and historical answer one day.

Of essential importance is that the well-known and multiple portraits of the dwarfs and jesters at the Spanish court of that time and reproduced or forever immortalized by the gracious artist Velázquez, are nothing other than sincerely elegant or very human and therefore not at all mocking or hurtful. A completely different conclusion, we think we may state, should be drawn at the same Spanish court by yet another Spanish painter who in turn may/must be called one of the greatest artists in human history. He is a man of whom we honestly literally never get enough. Of course he knew a great deal of work by his predecessor Velázquez (1599 – 1660), who had died in 1660 or about a century before our man saw the light of day.

Goya (1746 – 1828) did indeed see the Spanish, French and worldly light of day a century later and would himself become very old and experience an incredible amount in those times. During a few consecutive decades, Goya would become the second and then the very first painter at the Spanish court. He became court painter like Velázquez so that the Spanish court, which could also almost hire a certain Rubens as house painter because he would produce a lot for it, de facto had the three best court painters in the entire history.

But dear Francisco José de Goya y Lucientes; what have you been up to there? Where the elegance or great humanity, say the aristocratic portrayal of your predecessor stood out so much in relation to the manifest ugliness or unattractiveness of a part of the Spanish royal court, you have placed very big question marks about the absolute top of this court …? Regularly and hurray Wikipedia comes to our aid here on this website, without us having to list the works themselves or as an appendix and while very nice additional information can also be found there. We are certainly thinking of the famous, pardon infamous portrait of the royal Spanish family – we repeat the ROYAL family of a then relatively important European country – that our great friend Goya was able to portray in large format. An enormous portrait as it has been handed down, or more precisely as it was not destroyed - by the clients or the portrayed of course! And that can still be seen today and tomorrow – in the equally amazing museum of the Prado in Madrid:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_IV_of_Spain_and_His_Family

It is absolutely unnecessary to give here and now even a short explanation or description of the royal portraits present. That royal family appears as one whole of ... scarecrows, right!? We really cannot believe that they themselves, or at least the adults among them 1) did not see this themselves and 2) consequently did not ban this work or even have it destroyed all at once. The work dates from 1800 - 1801 and it is absolutely certain that Goya continued to work at this court. That is necessarily a strong additional argument for the non-rejection or gracious acceptance of this court and family portrait by the then Spanish royal family by the hand of Goya. That Goya, so to speak and in any case on the other hand, could mercilessly and extremely ironically to sarcastically or bitingly creepily denounce all kinds of aspects of Spanish society, in deservedly very well-known series of etchings as well as in equally very famous paintings, is very well known. Even more, surprisingly many art lovers know Goya only or mainly from this biting aspect. We know him from his softer side and discuss him in this website and at the same time twice around a Spanish attractive woman; see Goya.

In any case, and pending further research that contradicts us, we may say that in this famous family portrait Goya did not change anything about the - crucial - faces or the postures of the family members. He did not flatter, improve or embellish these personally and collectively most important elements. He did not use his own Photoshop, which would have been perfectly possible for a painter of his incredible technical, artistic genius. It seems to be the case - see the referenced Wiki page - that Goya used royal attributes in this group portrait. But we consider that a normal thing, because without that use he would certainly have had serious problems with his completely omnipotent client. May we make one important, substantive suggestion in this regard - for which thanks! This painting dates from 1800 - 1801 or is only one year older than the famous etching "*Linda maestra*" ("*Nice teacher*"), which dates from 1799. This is also known as "*Plate 69*" from the even more famous series of 80 engravings "*Los Caprichos*", from the miracle year 1799. That was therefore – again because it is very remarkable! - only one year before this equally famous painting, or a group portrait of the Spanish royal court. See this engraving;:

https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_1848-0721-81

Compare ‘so’ the present witch from this engraving from 1799 with the … queen from the painting from one year later. Q.E.D.??? The least pardon, the most we can or may say here is that all at least all the adults present at this state portrait were ‘somewhere’ aware of their not very pretty, of their rather unattractive appearance. That they in other words never asked, and apparently never thought of, maestro Goya – who could technically do everything in painting, etching and drawing; everything!!! – to polish the whole thing up a bit, at least the wife and mother the queen, can only arouse lasting amazement. We hope to one day be able to read more information, more explanation about the abnormality on the one hand and at the same time normality of this famous Spanish state portrait. Again, this was not about all the dwarfs from the court who were gathered for a group portrait. It was about the closest or highest members of the Spanish royal court. And the latter were, together and, if you like, continually one by one, presented as much less, infinitely less attractive, elegant or human than a century before as regards their staff, the dwarfs and jesters!

Spain was and is a European country. It shares, among other things, and above all, the crucial Christianity, although in Spain, and indeed from very early on, this had a particularly black variant with the centuries-old overwhelming Inquisition. It was therefore historically and politically no surprise at all that the Spanish Civil War would then involve extreme mutual violence. At the same time, the country had/has a tradition of extreme animal abuse, as is still the case today against quite a few ‘useless’ dogs. We will not go into all that any further, but must include it in what follows. In any case, Spain is a country of very important saints, also very mystically inclined such as Teresa of Ávila (1515 – 1582). It is completely impossible here, and we would also need a great deal of applied study, to analyse her own famous writings for their importance in the appearance of a person in relation to the Other. Her approach was above all mystical or her goal was the journey to the inner through the means of prayer and meditation. These human means are at first sight very far, even rather opposed to the appearance as attractive towards others, all others and especially others, let us say, of the opposite sex. But these mystical insights do not at all mean that if one effectively achieves forms of it or books results through it, assuming of course that one is not a nun or a priest but an ordinary believer, one cannot, so to speak, radiate a kind of holiness or beauty. That one produces an aura that is nothing other than really very attractive, even for ‘less’ believers. Even for … unbelievers?

At the same time, there is of course every charitable recognition of the so-called physical shortcomings of a believer (even of the unbeliever) in the sense that these shortcomings – such as the defacement of a child's face after experiencing the serious disease of smallpox – are not de facto recognized as moral, let alone socially important shortcomings, but on the contrary, they are supported insofar as they entail dysfunctions. We give a concrete or contemporary example of this, and the reader must judge for himself insofar as this is not only generally humanely acceptable from a clearly Christian perspective, but possibly even fits in with a Spanish mystical tradition as it is known as we have mentioned here.

For our now very sadly deceased somewhat older friend Marie-Jeanne X. we once experienced a special birthday party twenty years ago. She was a proud woman but with a special problem, which was also an extra problem precisely because she was so proud. At the beginning of her retirement - she had always been involved in art as a teacher of visual arts - she developed a terrible brain problem which she fortunately survived for the most part as a

healthy person. That in itself was almost a miracle, call it a huge blessing in disguise. She could no longer walk properly or constantly needed a walking stick. For the special birthday party, an artist friend of hers made a card with a photo of her next to the dates of the party. And we added a text: "*What is a walking stick but the urge to walk the earth twice*?" ("*Wat is een wandelstok anders dan de drang om de aarde tweemaal te willen bewandelen?*"). We received general appreciation for that and apparently made her happy 'somewhere'. We did not ignore the handicap that was clearly visible and known to everyone, but rather upgraded it, as it were. We did not downplay the handicap but on the contrary named it as a better quality of the same woman. Literally anyway, but it was not only written or printed but was shared, it was in a human not ironic or uplifting way a push in the back - not too hard though because she had a ... walking stick, hahaha.

What we have applied here, to our and above all her own joy, is nothing other than an application of a core Christian thought that has been drilled into us, so to speak, by circumstances that we do not want to go into now. But that was/is a thinking that we naturally stand behind very deeply, as an existential part because it is a central part of our thinking and acting. That famous Christian thought part or the pericope is this: "*The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me*.' (Matthew 25:40). Source: https://www.biblegateway.com And you know the sequel with a list; "*I was hungry and you gave Me something to eat, I was* …" And so on. All works of mercy or call it humanity.

In this case of painters, that would mean working in the spirit of charity or humanity, at least when portraits are made: "*I am/was very ugly but you have my portrait ... erm*…."?! That can be interpreted historically, probably through an awful lot of portraits and times, also or especially before the time that something like Photoshop existed – for photos then and then think immediately of the internet and its social media. It is personally irritating and unfortunate for us and hopefully only a little bit unfortunate for you that we no longer remember the correct term used for the following, nor the exact name of the famous British painter where we found that term and especially that way of portraying. Fortunately, we are not yet completely demented and also have so many art books that we of course constantly or daily browse through; keep getting out of there!? It must have been by one of the two contemporaries and British compatriots, the very distinguished gentlemen painters Thomas Gainsborough (1727 – 1788) or Joshua Reynolds (1723 – 1792). One of them – we are sure of that (…) – must have exclaimed after he had received yet another portrait commission that he had really had enough of painting those "*faces*" all the time. We are quite convinced that we read that funny remark in one of our art books. But because we probably like to browse through a thousand art books regularly, we hope to provide the correct information one day before we become completely demented. That would first have to include the name of the painter, the year in which he said something and preferably the exact formulation, if possible the reason why he said it. And even more: whether he continued to make portraits and how many, not least in statistical comparison with his other paintings! But of course it was not just about that, because we would have found that a bit arrogant but still irrelevant. In the end, he – once again, one of the two top painters! – must have earned an incredible amount of money with it, certainly more than enough to be able to go through life as a gentleman himself. What was so special was that he (he or the other he) said something very specific about one of his models. That was definitely about one Lady, a lady of higher, better standing, who could afford a lot because her Lord not only had a lot of money but also, let's say, "*connections*". In other words, if he - the Lord - had been dissatisfied with the portrait of His Lady, that could only have had consequences for the entire further career of this famous British childer from

the 18th (and 17th, 19th, 16th, 20th, ...) century! That almost certainly also means that this remark - we will reproduce it in our own words immediately, please, just wait a moment! - must have been made by him de facto or in principle from an early stage in his career and therefore in principle and probably never again de facto throughout the entirety of that career. In other words, he was forever and ever during his painting career, in which portraying almost exclusively rich people such as the people of the upper English class was an essential part of the job, bound to the same attitude as a portrait painter! And that attitude was nothing other than … Thus we remember precisely that a certain Lady said or suddenly decided during various sketches or let us say the first attempts to make a – striking (…) – portrait of her that "*The portrait was now beginning to look like her*!". Time and again he – one of our two important British painters and therefore almost certainly for him! – had, so to speak, deviated further and further from such a realistic or normal representation, via again and again actually by his own dexterous hand and excellent technique forms of … Photoshop. Until she actually decided that it was enough, that she was now attractive enough to hang that portrait, of course intended for her own home or at least in another house of the closest family! Until we find the real painterly or artistic term of that time, let us now use the term "*upgrading*", although we do not think this concept is entirely successful.

Of course, there were also limits to the flexible, to the upgrading, for both parties – the portraitist or top painter and the wealthy portrayed person. You know the expression: "*You can't make a horse out of a donkey.*". That is about being able to walk fast and even faster, about being clever or cleverer, about … Things or qualities that are measurable or comparable somewhere. Does that also apply to beauty, attractiveness? Incidentally, these were certainly first sketches, usually as a drawing or watercolour, sometimes as separate paintings. We assume that for all parties involved, a real or finished painting was too expensive or valuable to remove it, in any way, if it was indeed not to the taste, or rather to the 'likeness' of the portrayed person. That certainly meant that, if an agreement had been reached or if the real painting – or portrait work – could be started, the actual or real or very last painting would certainly be even better, as far as (therefore) the appearance of the portrayed person was concerned. Purely painterly, the result or the portrayed person looked even better. Because isn't that one of the unique properties, just say super magical moments or properties of a painting, of a painted portrait in particular!? Which makes this finding (we don't speak of a hypothesis anymore!?) one of the main motives in itself of this entire website - right!?

So! The original, the real because visible or tangible physicality – when it concerns a blind person who wants to 'see' her – is deliberately because at the explicit request rather a coercion (financially and in terms of the entire career of the painter involved) aesthetically or concretely painterly at the same time also art historically adapted – because upgraded. In principle the reverse is possible but that will of course never happen on the orders of a person involved. That will therefore happen by an opponent, especially in the presence – with a very long tradition – in caricatures! If the upgrade is an attempt – almost always or always successful – to achieve a certain ideal image, the caricature is just the opposite; here one has to laugh and so the literally lowest or worst of the humanly conceivable qualities is brought forward, be it the best or – oh irony – for maximum effect also in an artistically excellent way! The strange thing is that the ideal image that is used by a portrayed person - that "*The portrait is now starting to look like her/me*!" - does not necessarily have to coincide with that of the painter, but that he must concretize it, say, simply paint it pico bello. Here lies an extremely small possibility of deviating from the ideal of the portrayed person by representing 'something' differently, either in a very small corner or in an extremely small, barely

noticeable detail, at least if it were to be noticed by the payer, that it is so ambiguous that it could be presented by the painter as a coincidence or unimportant.

People love truth. They like/prefer the authenticity they are confronted with. With the exception of the statistically probably approximately one percent of the population (where else in the world would it be less - more?) of real psychopaths. One will never be able to escape these people and their deforming worldview. Now, 'ordinary' deception can be fun because isn't everything from theatre and film by definition a form of deception!? A portrait that deviates because it has been upgraded, is that ultimately or in real essence not a form of deception? But how can one find out about this so-called deception, just if this portrait is the only one that remains of someone? And if one knows anyway that this painter was once so loose-lipped as to tell 'one and another' about the true, rather sad appearance of this lady; does that then make any difference to our judgment of what we knew from the portrait now know further? Can we mentally, let alone literally see a difference ‘somewhere’ if we only know this situation, so without a point of comparison with another ‘real’ portrait, a photo, ….!? Purely objectively, that is to say purely according to the perception of the painter – and the portrayed and relevant others – the painted representation can be improved towards an ideal. We now know that potentiality of the portrait with certainty. But: is that so bad, is that really deception or something human normally very negative? Purely objectively seen, one can effectively speak of a form of deception, if it mainly – or only? – concerns those physical characteristics that can only and exclusively be improved, represented by the hand and technique of the person who first looks and then thus - better or more appreciatively - represents the materially seen representation. With a painting one can also ‘retouch’ in particular, as a photographer can (by the way, for much longer than the existence of computers, let alone Photoshop). For example, one can make a face with a striking pimple or something even more striking 'purer': the pimple disappears, forever because from now on for (art) history! And so on! Now a portrayed person can hardly be limited in his or her representation to the 'pure' face. A portrayed person and let us continue to talk exclusively about women, can otherwise be organized quite a bit theatrically; the setting with for example a child or an animal, the clothing, the make-up of course, jewelry, the hair and/or a headdress - is there another one and so on? See indeed also the all in all very sober bust of Nefertiti.

The modalities (always as improvements unless one aims at caricatures, but that is not our subject on this website!) of adjustments or upgrades through portraits, can be debated intensely. We do not want to do that here. On the contrary, we do want to make a small, albeit general or principled plea for “*mildness*”. For a certain form of humor of course, although the moral-aesthetic limit can quickly be reached from irony and preferably never to sarcasm (once again, we are not discussing the very important art form of caricature here). We want to make a plea for the knowledge and use of “*euphemism*” in the visual arts, at least as far as portraits are concerned. That is a concept that is normally or only used in verbal communication. Aren’t all visual works of art also communicative objects? Yes! The meaning or etymology of the concept euphemism leads us directly to the right, artistic track. It is composed of the ancient Greek words “*εὖ*” (“*good*”) and “*φήμη*” (“*message*”). A euphemistically made portrait would then have to represent a more elegant or softer form of representation of the portrayed. It is then about something – now expressed in certain more delicate social contexts – like a diplomatic act!? Or do you want war and conflict again and again, perhaps?

We ourselves are primarily trained as philosophers and are therefore, so to speak, conditioned to be interested in fundamental themes such as truth and justice, authenticity, and deception or fraud. We can briefly approach this immensely broad subject from three perspectives.

Firstly, there is – at least for Belgium and many countries on the European continent – the extremely important, if not compelling, legal civil law, in which the concept of damage (the famous article 1382 of the Belgian Civil Code) is central: "*Every act of man, which causes damage to another, obliges the person through whose fault the damage occurred, to compensate for it*." Let us say boldly that no person will suffer damage from an upgraded portrait, assuming that one already realizes that this portrait also does not fully correspond 'somewhere' – the woman who one might meet in her own bed early in the morning, for example, without making up. We have no idea how this important legal issue, touched upon here only very briefly, can/should be approached in Anglo-Saxon law. Perhaps a complete lunatic, alias totally powerful man like King Henry VIII (1491 – 1547) was once fooled by a too cautious, say diplomatic, portrait of this or that princess who had to/wanted/would marry him? In any case, court painter Hans Holbein The Younger (circa 1497 – 1543) was never beheaded to our knowledge! But we live in more modern times …

Secondly, we ourselves, but not here on this website, write very intensely, around the problem of truth/justice versus the reverse or the opposite, through our political-philosophical analyses, mainly around political behavior (and not to forget the historiography about it) concerning WWII. May we refer you there please. For which thanks and understand that the work there is a work in progress.

Thirdly and finally and here the most important. What is 'real' deception, in the visual arts? In order to establish, so to speak, genuine deception (hahaha) in, among other things, or especially in painting, as far as modern times are concerned, we will refer to two very important painters from the last fifty years, elsewhere on this website: see Fernando Botero + Luc Tuymans. Both very important because in any case very famous painters – in our opinion they are artistically worth little or nothing – have each in their own unique way genuinely deceived the art lover, as we will try to demonstrate in the referenced pieces. Strangely enough, as can be observed very widely, they have had a tremendous amount of success, with the top or the leading circles of the organized art world, or with the top collectors, curators, museum directors and so on. That is of course a unique contrast or both philosophically and socially extremely remarkable and really very sad. Both have, moreover, not produced a single interesting portrait worthy of the name.

10. To rate a woman ten out of … ten. Or is she the most attractive?

What you might lie awake about, and if necessary you might wake up tossing and turning terribly and bathed in sweat after terrible nightmares, is the question whether the attractive Nefertiti was just as attractive, or just as beautiful, apart from her beautiful head and neck. You don't even think about her character, at least the important philosopher Edmund Husserl said nothing about that, although he was more human, deeper, because socially engaged, because with European motives or foundations: what a guy, because who dares to dig so deeply! Now tell me, as an indulgent macho; even with an unbearable witch who is irresistibly attractive for everything, would you like to spend a night or a weekend in the "*Ritz*" hotel in Paris, or ...? At least, if your wife allows it, or at least if that woman allows it herself and you are also single, washed and shaved, have brushed your teeth neatly and so on. And have enough money for everything - haha. We can repeat with 100% certainty that in the army of servants of Nefertiti there was a mob of women present for the perfuming, massage and so on of madam. That nevertheless allows us to conclude, even empirically considering the entire depictions of her in frescoes, among other things, that she suffered from all kinds of

physical abnormalities or at least from that one. That one physical abnormality that made it easier for her husband to go to bed with one of those female servants of his wife or, if necessary, to have coitus in the divine Nile with this or the next candidate. Ultimately, in the entire more or less documented history, there has only been one woman who received a "*Ten out of ten*". That happened in the romantic comedy with the very surprising title "*Ten*" (1979, director Blake Edwards, 1922 - 2010). The leading role or the bearer of "Ten out of ten" was reserved for the American film star or Mrs. Bo Derek (1956). You know by now that this first name is the English version of the French "*Beau*" or "*Beautiful*", that it is rarely used and is even given to men. Bo/Beau was not born under that first name at all but as "*Mary Cathleen*"; it could have been much worse, although we cannot imagine how much worse. Apparently she came up with that new first name herself because apparently men were attracted to her – to her appearance – from her relatively young age. What a wonderfully clever idea and first observation, right! Back to that film in which she mainly or rather only has to be so-called beautiful or at least attractive. We were not there as assistants or whatever during the recording of this film and have never had intimate contact with Mrs. Derek, who is only seven years older than us or certainly not an insurmountable problem – for us anyway because … blah blah blah … Therefore we could never empirically confirm this numerical strength, say refute it because downer loading (hahaha). "*Ten out of ten*"! For a human being that is quite a lot. And for an ordinary woman, because ultimately a very simple Hollywood actress, that seems to us very much - say unachievable.

How much on a scale of ten would our Nefertiti have received from her husband, and then in ascending order (of course!) from all the others in her realm, all subjects or submissives (In English, one naturally notices the same nucleus in both words, if you like – not entirely correctly expressed linguistically – the identical prefix "*sub*-". In Dutch, this distinction between "*subjects*" and "*submissives*" is hardly distinguishable; one speaks of "*onderdanen*" and "*onderdanigen*" where a below is assumed to be submissive. Again, we can point out with a certain pride and also the philosophically very interesting character of the Dutch language, at least if one masters and uses that language properly. We do not know that value indication – x out of ten – as far as the beauty of Nefertiti was concerned, given by her own population. Because we have not been able to decipher that papyrus roll until now; We will call you personally when we are done with that deciphering! We do not even know if the Ancient Egyptians could count to ten! That they could count is certain because to be able to build such buildings and that for several millennia, you needed a lot of practical knowledge such as calculating the amounts of stones. And they had big, very big dreams.

To ask the question is to try to answer it. Sometimes you hear that there are no stupid questions. There would be stupid answers. However, philosophically or existentially that is just the opposite! An answer can be right or wrong, and that is about the majority of answers (to stupid questions) in education. Because an answer can also evade, if it is a 'special' question and if you have room to deviate. In that case, just think about what you would do if a KGB or a Gestapo stood in front of you and asked where exactly your son in hiding – for example – is now? As you immediately understand, his life depends on that answer. But perhaps also yours! But well, there are many situations in the entire life of even the seemingly unthreatened, so-called (more) free person in which he or she genuinely feels unwell when asked a question. Because it concerns indelicate, inappropriate or far too curious or simply far too stupid questions. In other words, the question or the questioned topic can in quite a few cases be completely unimportant or very important for the person questioned. And that in such a way that he/she would want to get rid of it because it is purely tiring (would never have wanted to hear the question) or in such a way that he/she de facto or especially in principle

does not want to give an answer to it (would never want to really answer the question). That means, if we have briefly given a reasonably understandable explanation here, that not the answers but on the contrary (many) questions can be incredibly stupid, terribly inappropriate, irritating, distasteful, ... (can). So be on your guard if you ... someone ... that question .... Please! So whether our stubborn Akhenaten gave his own lovely wife Nefertiti a certain number on the scale of ten - assuming that the value meter ten was the normal maximum for all calculating ancient Egyptians - is a question that we should in principle be able to deduce from his new direction in the religion he introduced! Now we know very little about that, also because the papyrus rolls in question are still in Egypt, or are under far too much scientific dust or under the Egyptian sand that is just as exuberantly disrupting the thinking. What we do know is that a time after this ruler of sturdy Egypt or at least a nice 1,300 years later, in the very nearby Judea a certain Jesus Christ walked around. And he could count damn well because even the calendar would actually start from his birth. He was clearly a very multiple miracle or god child! – at least for the greater part of the coming humanity!

That was a great act by the newly born Jesus: He could count before He could walk because "*On the Flight into Egypt*" He was carried by His mother who herself was carried by a donkey! It goes without saying that no one would ever imitate Him again, although there were some attempts to introduce other counting of years, such as by the terrorists of the French Revolution. That is another matter or therefore of no importance here or we will not ask you a question about that anyway! Jesus would not become really old but according to the standards of that time something over thirty years which was indeed statistically quite successful. That was admittedly too little to have children of his own but more than enough time to eventually and fairly soon after His disappearance – by resurrection – get countless followers. Until today – or preferably two thousand years after His own era! And those followers can all read one of His many sayings, in a book that is about and about Him; the New Testament. As mentioned, due to the lack of papyrus archives, we have no knowledge of whether his predecessor and neighbor Akhnenaten also left a kind of Testament, in the form of life wisdom and the like. We can probably reserve a year or two to study similarities between Christianity and ancient Egyptian cultures; a mass of studies must have been devoted to that already. We will not do that now because we have some other attractive women to discuss than this Nefertiti alone, such as a certain Jewish lady and therefore neighbor Mary Magdalene, a lady who was very closely connected to the life of the aforementioned Jesus and especially to His end. SEE **The Penitent Magdalene, El Greco.**

And what did Mary Magdalene not hear from the mouth of the Most High? Among other things, she must have heard this passage about "measuring is knowing" – or maybe not yet? Read along and after a few words, you will undoubtedly be able to recite this passage – this pericope – yourself without reading it: "*1 Do not judge, or you too will be judged. 2 For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. 3 "Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? 4 How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? 5 You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye*." (Matthew 7, 1 – 5).
Source: https://www.biblegateway.com

Crudely translated or applied: be quiet if you find this or that – woman, man, child, cow, horse, … – beautiful and well on a scale of, for example, "*TEN*". And damn it, take a look in the mirror yourself first, or ask someone else and preferably more people to play your mirror.

That can be considered a moralizing approach because a moral judgment in principle seems to dominate an aesthetic judgment, while for centuries it seems to be a Western tradition that aesthetic judgments stand on their own, are so-called autonomous or dominate the thing being looked at through looking. However one twists or turns this moral because Christian view of judgments – of beautiful or attractive people or less or even not at all! – and therefore wants to look at it from all possible perspectives, there is absolutely certainly one perspective with which this way of judging must be viewed. However so-called autonomous or more independent visual artists – including and especially painters and sculptors – became from the earliest Renaissance, they would with absolute certainty live until at least the 18th and even the 19th century and still strongly through the beginning of the 20th century in a time in which Christianity and therefore the Christian and therefore also this saying of Jesus was central, dominated social life and thinking. To put it concretely, we take two of the undoubtedly ten greatest painters in world history – although that is of course far from over so that … ; the gentlemen Rembrandt and Rubens. We will also discuss both gentlemen in this website and in the latter case even twice. Without the slightest doubt one must say of them that they lived in a time – the 17th century – that was completely dominated by Christianity, in their case in any case remarkable by two types of variants of it, Protestantism and Catholicism. Rembrandt was, as is very well known, familiar with a series of Jewish dealers for whom he would work, and with whom he would apparently also have problems with regard to content or art history: SEE **The Jewish Bride, Rembrandt**. What we want to raise here as a question or theme is the possible combination, with all the nuances and compromises that entails, between the very clearly moralizing and at the same time soothing and even humorous judgment about the judgment by Jesus, and the so-called artistic (and social via of course the system of economic market development) becoming more autonomous with and through these artists. You will immediately understand that we cannot simply try to answer this question here. But. We may or must repeat that we, as a trained philosopher among others or primarily, may/must ask this very important or guiding question. How this question was operationalized or artistically and also discursively (to the client in question) answered each time by either Rembrandt, or Rubens, next to van Dyck, Jordaens and so on, is a terribly fascinating subject to which we too cannot give an answer here.

11. The Amarna style, plastic surgery, Photoshop, anorexia nervosa or just looking for an "*ETHICS of ATTRACTIVENESS*".

What is all this about? What triple idi…. came up with such a title, such a long title? Isn't that a violation of every sense of style? Is this nothing more than a bloated, completely unhinged pa-the-ticism? We can perhaps put it positively like this: the title is the content (of what it announces).

We really have to write that well-known 'more'. We can be brief, very brief, about the Amarna style or the new style introduced by the husband of our beloved Nefertiti. We have found some material and indications. Of course, we have looked at that famous bust countless times – although never ... life; Berlin, one day we come! But the photos from many perspectives are fine. By the way, you have understood two important things for a long time:

1) You understand that Nefertiti is depicted as quite slim, but that this was almost certainly not an exception for all Nefertitis from the entire very long-lasting Ancient Egyptian civilization. In other words: this new (later abandoned) Amarna style must not have made any difference to her or more precisely to the representation of her head and neck. She was certainly not depicted à la … Botero – woehaa! SEE **Ferando Botero.**

2) You understand that we mainly want to think and write about this famous bust. There is hardly anything to say about this image itself, also because it is a statue. How much or rather how little can statues really be called human portraits? We are of course talking about the expressiveness of the eyes. Is there anyway one (known or not) sculpture somewhere in the world that has roughly the same expressiveness as the painted eyes of - … and … and …? Voilà!

However, we immediately have to raise a negative or warning finger to ….? To all those parents of young girls who with extreme insistence want to look very leptosome or simply ultra-thin. So thin, like this lady Nefertiti. Was she very, by the way, perhaps a first historically or archaeologically definable example of anorexia nervosa? As thin as countless models of today, yesterday and hopefully not too many or hardly at all tomorrow. The model "*Twiggy*" (1949), certainly still famous for the older ones among you and for the very young ones among you a terrifying example of anorexia nervosa. That model – a word that etymologically means "example", is hopefully definitely a thing of the past. But as macho and aging men we do not keep a pulse on fashion and all its side effects. In any case, we realize that very many and usually very young girls follow role models via social media and other possibly still relevant news channels. Among those role models are stars of the silver screen. By the way: have you also seen the commercials in which truly world-famous movie stars actually advertise for … coffee makers and so on? Unbelievably sad, isn't it, for them, for …- Like Georges Clowney (1961) and ….? Furthermore, pardon, you certainly follow famous models. By the way, just a quick note: unfamous or unknown models (like your neighbor girl?) are of course not eligible; perhaps beginners or the stars of tomorrow are much, much more interesting to follow because .. evolution …? Oh, we mustn't forget; there is a form of 'creatives' for which the nomenclature or social category did not even exist until a few years ago. Behold, a true categorical invention of the internet or the so-called "influencers". That is once again very by the way, a term that we find quite ridiculous. By chance, we recently heard from a – Dutch? – young lady annex influencer, that she apparently did not have large enough breasts and was looking for an enlargement. Of course (help!) she had to blame it on the weeweewee and so on. We assume that the "*reverse*" or the breast reduction will not be promoted by her later, as an in-fluencer? Or then as … out-fluencer? Apparently she had too small or too ??? breasts. But where did she get the nerve and arrogance to inform and encourage her fans or followers – regarding her 'normal' products such as ??? and especially ??? – about something as personal as her … or … breasts? Internet! It is in many ways a blessing for knowledge, science and sincere entertainment. And at the same time a garbage dump full of arrogance and lack of general culture and humanity, as with these kinds of 'successful' losers.

In short, we don't feel like talking about the phenomenon of plastic surgery. That's not because we simply don't have time for it right now, because we still have to boil the potatoes for this afternoon next to ... But due to foreign moving problems, we can no longer find our own course on the subject (it is hidden in one of the more than a hundred still unpackable banana boxes with books and files). That course dates from about 20 years ago and was given to the final year students of the Sint-Barbaracollege in Ghent. Traditionally and we suspect still to the always very interesting present - stay current, ladies and gentlemen, always current! - two types of plastic surgery are known. But so (our eternal but). We remember (concerning ourselves) that we (as teachers) discussed three variants of it at the time - or apparently detected an extra one. That is either not discussed at all later in a second version of

this study on the venerable Nefertiti as non-existent. Or we hope to find those lessons again in the foreseeable future and with sufficient energy, and possibly apply them here.

What concerns us most here, but which we should nevertheless be ashamed of, with great hesitation but in all honesty, due to our current lack of knowledge on the subject, is the following. Of course, you know the philosophers Jean-Paul Sartre (1905 - 1980) and Emmanuel Levinas (1906 - 1995) much better than we do. They were clearly contemporaries, but no famous thinkers could be further apart. These thinkers have written more or less extensively and especially more or even more incomprehensibly about the "*gaze*" ("*regard*") and the appearance of the Other, and what that appearance would therefore mean for us. Sarte, himself one of the ugliest men in all of history and not just because he looked completely cross-eyed with one eye (so the man himself had a double 'regard'), appeared to see the gaze of the other mainly (or was it only?) as an attack. What a shitty guy and fortunately we were only born in 1963 and then mainly in provincial Ghent and so on. So we have been spared from the intellectual rheumatoid Jean-Paul! Fortunately his parents did not call him Jean-Marie after all. Also fortunately we studied philosophy in Ghent and not in Leuven because there they were and still are imbued with Levinas and his now positive "regard". We find his approach quite interesting and to be honest we adopted something of the main idea in our aforementioned course once, without however quoting Levinas. And that has the rather annoying reason that we really do not understand a thing of this man's writing. Let us shyly admit that we 'feel' something about this man. Or at least we understand something essential about this man. If we may express ourselves so delicately and without quoting – for which thanks. In the meantime there is a Belgian painter who likes to play the Antwerp next to the universal philosopher and also – once again!!! – seems to want to talk about the essential about the/a "regard". Although he does not use French but uses a language that offers many more commercial possibilities, so German and English. He speaks of "*Diagnostische blicken*" or "*Diagnostic Views*" and in this respect also likes to paint men (never women?!) with glasses. See **Luc Tuymans.**

Of that last thinker (the man speaks endlessly about art and life through many channels; shouldn't he paint better and especially better?) we understand nothing or we look at him rather as at least an amateur psychiatrist. So we will keep briefly to the first two. With all those moralities or moral systems that Sartre and Levinas keep us busy, we have, to be honest, felt too meager, not yet experienced any encounters with what we now want to call ad hoc "*a morality of attractiveness*". Let us try to say for the sake of clarity what "*morality*" itself means. There have been many attempts at that, for more than two thousand years. The very first one we ever encountered more or less scientifically was of course a little less long ago or during our somewhat later youth, after a bike ride from the very provincial town of Dendermonde to the admittedly somewhat less provincial city of Ghent, where we had stumbled into some bookshops. We found a book about ethics there, probably *"Introduction to Ethics*", by the otherwise unknown Dutch … er … thinker … er …. And of course we didn't understand anything about it then either. May we be hopeful and trust the explanation of our very own Wikipedia:

"*Morality or morals is the division of actions or behaviors, within a society, into two types of rules of conduct. On the one hand, there are the actions that are seen as correct or desirable, and on the other hand, there are the taboos: actions that are not*."

Source: https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moraal

More precisely, a "*morality of attractiveness*" is nothing other than morality or customs in the division of actions or behaviors within a society, in the following two ways:

1) First and preferably, there are the actions or expressions in which the person concerned is considered attractive. This can be about himself/herself (he/she recognizes himself/herself as attractive) in addition to, of course, the position of others on this theme (people find him/her attractive);

2) Then there are the taboos: the actions or expressions in which the person concerned is considered unattractive. Naturally, we notice here the two possible parties involved; a person who finds himself/herself unattractive, and the others who label someone as unattractive.

So one can have four theoretical possibilities concerning the (un)attractiveness of a person:

a) One finds oneself attractive + others confirm that;
b) One finds oneself attractive + others deny that;
c) One finds oneself unattractive + others confirm that;
d) One finds oneself unattractive + others deny that.

You notice that now again purely theoretically, in only one of the four possible positions concerning un/attractiveness, as it were, complete or double attractiveness is presented (the first position). One out of four; that is not a great result, is it? Note of course that it concerns both individuals and sociologically speaking groups or societies, in which in turn individuals or small groups naturally act. In any case, attractiveness seen in this way is a moral issue around which we personally do not know any real theory formation, and for the time being we will not formulate any theory formation ourselves. We propose that – "*a morality of attractiveness*" – to you just as naturally! And wish you much luck and first inspiration besides perspiration.

Let's return to the phenomenon of "*influencers*". It's really not our thing or we look at it from afar, to be honest and especially fortunate. We have no idea of any relevant domain of and for our own lives to which someone could make even one suggestion, via a fairly superfluous yet overwhelming medium like the internet. We are always open but ... We do like to read reviews of books, for example. And we are especially and specifically still eternally grateful to Geert Van Istendael (1947) for his wonderful review of a book (which one then?) by Leo Perutz (1882 - 1957); that must have been around 1983? The reading of the novel he recommended at the time, and all the others we have read by this remarkable writer, have stayed with us for the rest of our lives like food: no TV chef aka cooking ... influencer can compete with that! We eat - we are Belgian for something, aren't we!? – like fries ("*Belgian fries – no French fries! - PLEASE*!") and chocolate and as a Dendermonde resident even horse meat, both raw and prepared. In all those domains that we certainly share with countless Belgians on the one hand and several tens of thousands of fellow countrymen on the other, we do not know a single influencer and we do not need one if he or she still wants to give it a try. If a new shop or butcher opens in or around Dendermonde with products relevant to us, we simply go and buy them - because we want to taste them! On the other hand, we look with undisguised contempt and vicarious shame at this fairly new but apparently very drastic or for many people popular media phenomenon; "*influencer*", brrrr. By the way, the word is very similar to "*influenza*", an annoying disease also abbreviated as "*flu*": brrr or shivering. So "*influencers – influenza - flu*"; influencers are mainly or only disease spreaders = question mark and exclamation mark?!

Unless! Unless. Always stay calm and up-to-date and keep thinking, about all possible aspects of a phenomenon! Maybe this worldwide "*flu*" also contains some real specialists, people who have either studied thoroughly on a certain subject, or have gained a lot of knowledge about it through experience! How else can you appreciate people who apparently want to influence you in that area, change your behavior or of course (…) supposedly want to improve it? By the way, do you know of any "*influencers*" in the field of the music of Bela Bartok (1881 - 1945), one of the most important or deepest or most engaging composers in Western history? Of course ... not, because the work of this artist is simply too difficult to explain in a few catchy words, and too interesting or constructive or contemplative or … In a word; influencers are only concerned with superficial or easy matters, although not unimportant ones at all. There is NEVER an influencer who makes direct or direct contact, in other words confirms (or not) whether you – as a fan or follower – are already attractive, or who wants to help you in terms of attractiveness by… Influencers only want to sell, enrich themselves and in the meantime play a central person, who is important but in essence hopelessly egocentric. We believe that this phenomenon is something of real losers or concerns people who really have nothing else to do than enrich themselves in this relatively new public way, while they are very conspicuously fundamentally nothing new and have absolutely nothing to say. This means that there is, so to speak, a gap in the market for influencing – especially or only? – young people: see further. For people of level, in terms of content in all areas of style (clothing and so on) but also with, call it style or level or depth of thinking, intellectual (creative) and morally responsible thinking, there is not only an opportunity for sincere influence in addition to a pedagogical and humane task.

We hope that you will help build "*an ethics of attractiveness*" wherever you are in the world. May we give you some tips about the two most important target groups? Thank you for your permission and let's go straight away and very briefly.

We have already pointed out that a great many young people, and almost certainly predominantly girls, are infected by the influencer flu, and as it were, keep sneezing like crazy and constantly. Especially an incredible number of young girls across a huge part of the world, but a slightly smaller but certainly also very large part of the young guys in the world, are all more or even more concerned with questions: how may/can/must/want/will we come across as attractive? What else would we expect because we know that young people – male or female – are strongly evolving towards what everyone hopes; an adult, say more or less balanced and reasonably satisfied, even happy person. It goes without saying that the objective appearance or the perceived and experienced attractiveness or especially not, is of essential importance. We don't need to go into that any further. On the other side of life there are the so-called 'older people', or plus-…-ers. In a way, true beauty is to be found there, sure and rock-solid through the eyes: whoever is truly happy, radiates that – through the older but in that way eternally young) eyes! In any case, attractiveness is certainly an important theme for this population group, certainly for women – who, statistically speaking, are already in increasing excess of men from the age of about 50.

12. Nefertiti, her girlfriend the Venus de Milo and the ass dance.

This statue of Queen Nefertiti was of course intended as an official statue. There will undoubtedly have been countless statues of her in circulation in that Ancient Egypt. Money to order them on the one hand and expertise to make them on the other; those were more than sufficient conditions present at that Egyptian court. Some examples of sculptures dedicated to

her that have survived to this day - usually very small or domestic in size and sometimes together with her husband who was of course also the real ruler or crucial social as well as personal figure for her - can be found on the excellent English-language wiki page dedicated to Nefertiti: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nefertiti

Were there any images of her that only had an erotic or bedroom function, like we know quite a few also artistically important paintings from the European upper circles? We have had a lot of interest in Very Ancient Egypt during certain periods of our lives, through books anyway because we never got there ourselves; too expensive and certainly too hot. Fortunately, with our class from Dendermonde we saw an exceptional exhibition in Cologne around 1980 of Egyptian treasures, around Tutankhamun. A statue of Nefertiti was certainly not to be seen there, even though she was/is extremely close family. Again, who has ever seen an intimate, erotically radiating Egyptian queen, not in person of course? Although in the film "*Cleopatra*" (1963) Elizabeth Taylor (1932 - 2011) was slightly irresistible. Unfortunately, we were only born in that year 1963, and then in the Low Country of the Belgians or geographically and chronologically much too far from Hollywood. Besides, what is erotic or hormonal or sensory stimulating or especially attractive about a bust? And here again, a bust with only one remaining eye!

Let us admit that you – man or woman or transvestite – are missing breasts here. The expansion of her bust – in Dutch also aptly called a "*borstbeeld*" (or statue – "*beeld*" with breast or breasts ("*borst*")– the presence of breasts, must have made her appearance much more attractive, if that were allowed according to the standards of that court. Probably so because on the just mentioned English-language Wiki page two full nude statues can be seen, one even holding hands with her husband. But look. There is the all-saving internet again because none other than the singer Beyoncé (1981) – we have never heard her sing but she is apparently extremely popular – can be found there as ... Indeed, "*as* ...." because in this context it is so predictable, like Nefertiti. Beyoncé shows herself in the form of this famous bust. But she does not do so perfectly similarly because she appears au grand complet, with her entire body, with all (sic) her breasts, buttocks, legs, arms .... We do not show these photos due to copyright and blah blah blah; you can find them yourself. Anyway, apparently this modern and very concrete representation of our Egyptian queen is the only one on offer, or the only one that has survived the ravages of time. Although that ravages of time cannot really be called old because this famous bust was only found in 1912, so that bust must have spent at least two thousand years underground: unseen, unknown, unloved. But even in the kind of life version by Beyoncé, who uses a long cape, we miss something so feminine, something exceptional that is attractive to many men. Many men do not just want to look at it. They want to hit it, stroke it, tickle it, ... But don't do that, unless it is your own partner - or something will follow! It is about the backside that once in motion can also sway during the movement; only when walking do you see the backside or the hips come alive!

Before you read on, feel free to take another look at the helpful web. To this page: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Venus_de_Milo

You know of course the "*Venus de Milo*", a younger cousin of Nefertiti. If you don't know her name, you undoubtedly know her statue. If you don't know it yourself, then at least her … name. In short, you can't go wrong with this woman. That literally dumb woman because that untalkative old aunt – a fine two thousand years old and for what remains of it made entirely of marble or lifeless material – has kept almost her entire body, although a lot of cutting and pasting had to be done. The statue was namely dug out of the ground in pieces and chunks.

This was done by a combination of a Greek farmer and a French officer or by just men. They found the statue or the pieces of marble in the Greek town of "*Milo*", while they would have been better off calling her the "*Venus of Miłość*". But the fools apparently didn't know Polish; "*Miłość*" is Polish for Love, just like the famous Amadeus (haha) is also Miłosz ("*The Loved One*"). Although in this unique musical, genius case it is honestly love with the greatest possible degree; loved by no less than Deus! God!!! By the way, tell me for yourself: by whom are you loved the most, by God or by a human being? Well. The female Ancient Greek human being was guaranteed to have arms at some point in her better pictorial times. Or maybe we should do some more digging because those arms are probably still there - hopefully with all the fingers? Well, the statue has been in the Louvre museum for two hundred years. And from there it is a symbol of exceptional elegance or beauty, while it does not even have arms. The statue is therefore officially handicapped and actually belongs in a Paralympic Museum! And while it is also only viewed from the front. In other words, the Venus de Milo has retained 100% of her backside and her hips. But! Not a cat interested in that behind. Not a second to infinity cat interested in those hips!

And yet this Venus de Milo or the Venus of Love has something that you can see if you look closely. You can see it quantitatively only on one rare photo of her in all art books, or on photos and representations on the worldwide web; her backwork, her ass. Of this back view we found at least one representation. You yourself can perhaps do better, but presumably you can count the available photos on your own fingers, and choose in advance which hand. How could that be? Who looks closely that ... But who looks closely? Who thinks without a pre-judice or the judgement preceding a (the 'real') judgment? Who looks without a prelook before the investigative and judging look? Who looks closely nevertheless sees the groove, the cut of her ass. It is absolutely clear that where her front is covered by a cloth, at the level of her female parts - in this case the vagina - here at the same physical height that same cloth has dropped, not completely but 'sufficiently'. Probably – but we prefer to read "*Tintin*" rather than Freud, even though he is still readable in contrast to, say, a successor like Lacan – this sagging cloth and thus the beginning of a view of the bare backside of this elegant woman, is nothing other than the sublimation by the sculptor. The sculptor wanted to earn a pretty penny with this sculpture, but undoubtedly still wanted to copulate as much as possible with this model. A model that or a concrete woman who had a front like this backside, with the lips, the arms, the breasts and the vagina on the front, all four together the four-leaf clover or the most attractive form of a woman for centuries. Although – always trying to provide maximum objective information! – quite a few Ancient Greeks and Ancient Romans were hole lickers and even deeper: ass fuckers, also with men and younger guys. Had this sculptor perhaps had a little anal sex with this Venus after all or was the subtle but clearly present golden ratio of her behind an indication of his eternal after-sculpture-party-dream?

A four-leaf clover? We still have to invent a five-leaf clover? Or is that already there! Nefertiti has very little to offer us. The Venus de Milo has almost everything to offer us, although she is on her way because she probably lost her arms underground. This Greek Venus certainly has a nice but still partly suggestive behind. Unfortunately, she is also made of marble - in addition to being two meters high. No man wants such a tall woman and especially: a man likes to see a behind, adores swaying hips. In contrast to the frontal view of Nefertiti and the almost one-sided frontal view of her colleague from "*over the water*" Venus de Milo, we understand the man who likes to look back. What's more, the ideal of the man or the most attractive woman for him, is not the woman who appears as an image of a woman - certainly not a statue ("*standbeeld*" in Dutch; from "*stand*" from "*staan*" or a … standing statue). The ideal or the most attractive woman is that woman who sways her hips, who shows

a wonderfully plastic but not static behind. That is a behind that is, as it were, of no size and certainly not the fruitless or almost absent behind of the aimless corpses of the models on the catwalks, living corpses that move with cola and cocaine in their veins and are a disgrace to humanity, and nothing other than pure deception for the countless, especially younger women who 'have to' mirror themselves on these models.

Indeed, the ideal looking of the man, at a supposedly attractive woman, is not a viewing or looking at this woman. It is a looking back, a looking behind. That is a paradoxical looking because the further the woman distances herself from a man – that viewer – the more attractive her behind becomes, the more it sways and dwindles in the light of his ever-increasing imagination of the true fusion.

The classical Greek women were almost certainly stiff female beings, not very mobile, without somatic-musical plasticity. In any case, they are depicted infinitely and always statically, even – horresco referens – as physically (!!!) super strong women, because they are truly caryatids. And those women too – we simply remain silent about the Greek men because we have no interest in them at all – then became the examples for dozens of generations of artists and even more viewers and buyers from the time that is called the Renaissance. Pfffffffft or what a lack of taste!!! Because. How more contradictory can that classical Greek image of women be compared to almost all African women! These ladies wear or wore all kinds of things on their heads – textiles, gourds to …. = you saw/see it = you name it! And always so graceful at the same time as if it were a hat by Coco Chanel (1883 – 1971), a genius fashion designer next to oh irony if not some sarcasm a beanstalk or a scarecrow of a concrete woman; no wonder that mainly Prussian generals wanted to beep beep beep with her. From a very young age, African ladies are known for their divinely swaying hips. Everyone understands why hundreds of thousands of white, European men were so eager to play the colonial in Africa! And still: there is not a single white racist who does not secretly dream of touching and thus following the behind of an African woman. And wasn't Nefertiti 'already' an African woman!? Smart guy, that Akhenaten of hers! He didn't think of taking on an ancient Greek weightlifter, discus thrower or wrestler annex let alone Xanthippe as a lady-in-waiting, more precisely his Most Noble Lady and Night Sleeper! Presumably it is no coincidence that, due to the historical scourge of the slave trade from Africa to Latin America in particular, Latin American ladies are also known for extremely rhythmic or plastic body expressions. And perhaps somewhat universally but above all Olympic - in bed. You understand that we do not want to go into this, let's say empirically or logically-positivistically-optimistically. Or feel free to test it yourself before you are bound in the chains of marital fidelity. And even to a modern Xanthippe. We also understand that zealot neurotic and world-famous painter as a pastime - we do not understand that aspect now - Luc Tuymans finally stumbled upon a South American beauty. And keeps on stumbling. When will he make a cheerful and sultry work irrigated by her genetically quasi-infinitely heavenly joy and pleasure-giving source, his very personal henceforth also universal "*L'Origine du Monde*"?!

Some of the high-jubilant attractiveness of African and Latin American women can be acquired by any other worldly woman who finally learns to sway her behind. That certainly cannot be learned via the internet and especially not by looking at social media; to scroll with one finger, does not make one's hips roll. It can definitely be done and preferably from the earliest age when one teaches them dances – one at a time -, especially one or more of the well-known Latin American dances: salsa, rumba,… And the white men can of course not

remain aloof in addition to or with that. Let us think in particular of the tango, the tango d'amore! Listen to the eternally young, sultry and melancholic Rocco Granata (1938):

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6_GIXYzvSX8

Note that to the tune of this sultry song you might just try out a variation, of your personal, family … ass dance. But wait a minute! Of course it can't just be about women who are allowed/have to start dancing: how would they do that without men!?? Boys too are allowed to hit the dance floor from a very young age, first learning, then learning further, eternally learning – with one regular dance partner, with several in one evening and so on! We are thinking of the centuries-old folkloric dances in most Western countries that have been extremely regular and therefore popular. Those were the occasions when young women and men could approach each other in a dignified or respected way, touch 'even' and get to know each other in this way. We are not going to make a plea here for making folk dance popular again where that tradition has almost disappeared. After all, we believe infinitely more in learning Latin American dances as a means – of pleasure and relaxation of course – but therefore effectively for the initiation and development of a culture of touch. However you look at it, almost all of Christianity has reduced the faithful person to a touch machine solely for procreation, or sex in bed solely for having good, Christian children. Who is going to write some persuasive texts for a revival or rather for the emergence of a real touch culture, with respect, tenderness, concentrated lust and so on? It is about time. Elsewhere later on this website we hope to be able to write a little more about this, but we certainly do not feel qualified enough - motivated though! - to write about this and certainly persuasively or with a chance of public success.

Of the examples of the catwalk, no person has anything positive, unless this concrete example fortunately bears the name of Waris Dirie (1965). The fashion industry is largely a human-deforming industry but big business or paradoxically extremely successful; if it only brings in money, then it is ... valuable? It is very distorting in the worldview of countless women. That last aspect is especially true with regard to very young women who are still in full - mental - growth. Now those models do like to walk back sometimes, although they often disappear in one line behind each other; they regularly literally retrace their steps - so that you can at least observe their behinds from one perspective. We advocate here for a universal asswalk. It has been a fashion for a decade now – a horrible keeper apparently – for mainly women to wear trousers with all sorts of pieces of fabric torn off at the knees (there are quite a few variations and it is simply a stupid, ridiculous variation of the punk habit around 1976, … Act normal! And make huge holes or disappearing fabric – on your behinds + if it is raining or cold; there are zippers!). Finally walk like the Milo de Venus albeit with slightly larger or more naked grooves! If it is allowed by one of the most famous Greek/Parisian women, admired daily by … and so on, then now you are allowed to do it too, on the street, in the tram/metro, on your bike… And at home! Only best not at school and especially not if you are a female teacher. Unless you no longer want to use a blackboard – and you can explain and dictate everything – in frontal view.

You see. It is dulce et decorum to study history and art history. From the bust of Nefertiti to the Venus de Milo along the fashion model catwalk – to the universal asswalk!

13. "*Pour vivre heureux, vivons cachés*"? Or: "*If you want a happy life as a woman, don't be too ….*"?!

You know them, the French fables. You know in particular or especially that one legendary French writer of fables, Jean de la … (1621 – 1695). The French fable was practiced as a genre for a long time. For example, half a century later there was a fable that has been almost forgotten for the rest of the world in which a cricket complains about the beauty of the butterfly that overshadows him. But then the cricket remains sober. He sees how children chase the butterfly for its striking beauty and that it perishes because of it. Apparently the cricket finds the value of life – survival – much more important than the value of beauty precisely because of its lack of striking beauty:

"*Il en coûte trop cher pour briller dans le monde.*
Combien je vais aimer ma retraite profonde!
Pour vivre heureux, vivons cachés." (Jean-Pierre de Florian, *Fables*, livre II, "*Le Grillon*", 1793).

It is that last verse that has taken on a life of its own. In the sense of: just act/be normal. Because. That is how you get the furthest, the easiest, the least problematic, the longest, the …. through life. In addition, we have heard this Flemish expression: "*You never have a beautiful woman alone.*". That expression is of course said here from the point of view of the man – who 'has' a beautiful woman or aims to 'have' her. You can just as naturally turn it around or look at it from the perspective of a – beautiful/attractive – woman. To put it most bluntly, that certainly does not mean that as a woman you have to look as ugly as possible, because then no man will look at you. In that case you could well be the target of ridicule. So life is never good? Too attractive literally attracts too much positive as well as negative attention. Too unattractive also attracts too much and certainly negative attention! In the second case, there is certainly the pernicious mocking and belittling, by men as well as other women. In the first case, it is fear and jealousy in men and certainly and very frequently, there is the legendary female jealousy. But is that not all reasonable or just far-fetched, too defensive, not constructive enough or not hopeful enough?

The fabulous, legendary, iconic final sentence – which has become a standard expression in itself – of "Pour vivre heureux, vivons cachés." may perhaps be cautiously interpreted as follows!? The sincere attraction that a woman can exert lies in a quiet, inner beauty of this woman. This woman radiates classical values such as goodness, wisdom, justice, unaffected simplicity, helpfulness without wanting to be a slave, and so on. Although we see less rather than more possible positive characteristics: simply wisdom, is that not enough, not even 'everything'?! True beauty is on the inside and attracts. There is certainly humor or rather mild irony here. This true, because inner beauty is so convincing that it attracts, that it draws the gaze of men, women, birds and all other elements of nature to her. As if the whole world were singing a song of the sun for Her! That is indeed mild irony because without wanting to exhibit, without wanting to make an object of her beauty and certainly not in a commercial way (model or mannequin or whatever derivative), she cannot possibly hide, she shows herself as she is: powerfully calm and softly overwhelming. And oh, only in fairy tales does such a Snow White encounter a terrible woman, a bitch - who tries to destroy her. But. Even there it ends well in the end! In this way, true, sincere, unsought even fundamentally uncreateable not even purchaseable beauty fulfils two social functions: 1) it is both a pleasantly concrete example of being human through the encounters with it and an inspiring

example; 2) it is the best remedy against all ‘remnants’ of jealousy because it is, as it were, a solvent for it.

The real task of the attraction through true beauty is not to show that beauty but to let it be experienced or, as artist and art connoisseur Harold Van De Perre would say: to let you as a viewer, speaker, … travel inside this person (see his book: Jeanne De Dijn, *Sculpturen Reizen naar binnen*, Dendermonde, 1994, “*Sculptures. Traveling into the inside*” + NB: the Dendermonde artist Jeanne De Dijn is not related to us despite sharing a family name and origin). The famous, apparently inspiring image of the bust of Nefertiti generates its ideal, its … opposite, by thinking about it. By thinking about it, it causes its own opposite in the ideal or image of the tranquil, inner beauty. From this logic, the bust of Nefertiti is indeed very valuable, now from a purely archaeological point of view. So feel free to visit the Neues Museum in Berlin. Zum Wohl!

Yet something important about the life and especially the end of life – or the fate – of the writer of this fable, a so-called didactic poem. Jean-Pierre de Florian was born first, in 1755 and as could be expected that happened in France. He would also die not so much later in that same France, in 1794. And that happened sometime after or during the famous French revolution that started in 1789. And those turbulent times liked to eat all kinds of children, hers and the others. Jean-Pierre de Florian would also be arrested together with countless French contemporaries. He would not be beheaded for once but would die quickly of tuberculosis after his release. And that was a disease that he nevertheless suffered from some time earlier but from which he would be fatally weakened by the hardships of his captivity. Somewhere. He. Had. Written. And. Published. His. Fable. Knowledge. But. Not. Applied. It. Himself?

Moral of that and therefore also our story: do what you can't help but do! Be!

Jean-Marie De Dijn, EU, October 2024.

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Out into the World, Maria Catharina Wiik (1853 –1928), oil, 1889, Ateneum, Helsinki.

T.I.S..

.....

Riekend III (Fragrant III), Victor Delhez (1902 – 1985), woodprint (épreuve d'artiste), signed version - 1 of probably only 8 editions, s.d., private collection.

T.I.S..

.....

Saint Georges and the Dragon (and a Woman), Paolo Uccello (1397 - 1475), oil, circa 1470, National Gallery, London.

T.I.S..

.....

Sebastiano del Piombo (Sebastiano Luciani, 1485 - 1547), Ritratto di giovane romana con cesto di frutta (La Dorotea) or La Veneziana by writer Vladimir Nabokov, circa 1512. oil, Gemäldegalerie Berlin.

T.I.S..

.....

Self-portrait (presumed) as Saint Catherine of Alexandria, Barbara Longhi (1552 - 1638), oil, 1589, Ravenna Art Museum.

T.I.S..

.....

Sistine Madonna, Raphaël (Raffaello Sanzio da Urbino, 1483 - 1520), oil, 1513 - 1514, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister Dresden.

T.I.S..

.....

Sofonisba Anguissola (also known as Sophonisba Angussola or Sophonisba Anguisciola, circa 1532 – 1625), Berardini Campi painting a Portrait of Sofonisba Anguissola, oil, circa 1559, Pinacoteca Nazionale di Siena.

T.I.S..

Song of Songs (Das Hohelied Salomos), Painting Cycle No. 4 of Egon Tschirch (1889 - 1948), tempera on cardboard, 1923, Ahrenshoop Art Museum, Germany.

Jean-Marie De Dijn, *Het Hooglied in de 21ste eeuw. Het theoreferentieel nut van bijbelse liefdeslyriek*. Scriptie Enige kandidatuur in de godsdienstwetenschappen. KUL, 2003 - 2005.

idem, *The Song of Songs in the 21st Century. The Theoreferential Use of Biblical Love Lyrics*. Thesis: Sole Candidacy in Religious Studies. Catholic University of Leuven, 2003 - 2005.

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Preface from 2025 to a text from twenty years ago.

The writing and typing standards of the KUL (Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium) were a complete horror for us then (and now and...). We had to spend more time understanding and, unfortunately, accepting those standards, than we did to ... blah blah blah .... Besides, we've definitely (haha) exceeded the limit for what we were allowed to submit for this type of thesis by double or more. Among other things, we would now definitely not want to use any abbreviations (initials) for the first names of cited authors anymore - no way, and not for the *** points either!

We found the topic on a list of suggested thesis topics from Professor Bénédicte Lemmelijn. She was kind enough, and indeed, a student-friendly person, to let us work on this work entirely on our own, or a modern woman with insight into "older" students. We will briefly

discuss its reception by this professor and the faculty; it was both very interesting and disappointing. Therefore, we won't comment on it, but of course, we are rather a lifelong exception, also or primarily intellectually. In any case, this text, and certainly one part of it, would have gotten us expelled from this faculty about fifty years ago and probably excommunicated before WWII. We also noticed some time later that a professor from that faculty had devoted an article to this topic, specifically to section 6.2.3.2. For which we thank and congratulate, although that could be a complete coincidence, as so many coincidences are. It is certainly a coincidence that such a unique work of love ended up in the Old Testament - thankfully. Or maybe not a coincidence, because that love, isn't it - *l'Amore per l'Amore!*

Now, it was quite a coincidence that, as the leaves were falling in October 2025, while we were almost asleep for our afternoon nap, we suddenly thought of this text. Naturally, we then decided to include it, albeit in the original Dutch, in our series "*Most attractive women in...*" So that we could forget this wonderful Jewish woman, for whom we - believe it or not, it's best - read a whole bunch of books and articles before starting the thesis.

The concept of the neologism we invented, "*theoreferentieel nut*" wasn't available in English until now haha. So, we'll simply translate it as "*The Theoreferential Use*" There you go, or may this suffice for the present and a certain future! For another study or for another theology professor, we also developed the concept of "*religotope*" or "*a biotope for religious experiences*" during an other article. Apparently, such a concept didn't exist, causing some consternation, but ... blah blah blah ... and we still managed to get it 'sold' to a local history magazine - in Ronse, thanks to our then-friend and former priest Herman Kerkhove. Studying at Belgian universities outside of philosophy; it's an interesting experience. But we already knew before this study and would experience it again afterwards that innovative or experimental thinking in the Low Countries of Belgium, or a country that primarily wants sheep alongside the few shepherds, is a delicate experience.

The choice of this German artist's artwork was quite coincidental here—or almost entirely. So, we won't say anything about that work other than to say we hope we'll get to see it someday, naturally, as part of the entire cycle—live and gently kicking.

Jean-Marie, EU, October 2025.

KATHOLIEKE UNIVERSITEIT LEUVEN
FACULTEIT GODGELEERDHEID

HIER
LOGO
MARIA

Het Hooglied in de 21ste eeuw.

Het theoreferentieel nut van bijbelse liefdeslyriek.

Scriptie
Enige kandidatuur in de godsdienstwetenschappen

Promotor Prof. Dr. Bénédicte LEMMELIJN
door Jean-Marie DE DIJN

2003-2005

WOORD VOORAF.

We danken Professor Bénédicte Lemmelijn voor de opname van het Hooglied in de lijst van toegelaten kandidaatswerken. De tekst was ons zeker niet onbekend. Nu al hebben we de intentie om de ideeën die hier aangezet zijn, later grondig verder uit te werken.

Eenmaal aan het lezen werd het Hooglied soms wel een beproeving. Het is inderdaad onvoorstelbaar hoeveel verschillende perspectieven of interpretaties men kan terugvinden op het Hooglied. Doorheen de hele receptiegeschiedenis heeft men vele allegorische interpretaties, en de laatste 25 jaar ontmoet men invalshoeken van de meest diverse aard: semiotische (M. DECKERS), christologische (C. MITCHELL), literaire (M. FALK), feministische (A. BRENNER), ritualistische (M. POPE), politieke (L. STADELMANN), subversieve (A. LACOCQUE), erotiserende (C. WALSH), en andere n. Toen we uiteindelijk het werk van P.W.Th. STOOP-VAN PARIDON (in het vervolg STOOP genoemd), een bijzonder diepgaande filologische analyse, lazen, overviel ons werkelijk een gevoel van diepe ontreddering. Wéér eens een nieuwe en aansprekende benadering. Ja, we schrijven “benadering” en niet “interpretatie”, want een interpretatie wil Stoop ten alle prijze vermijden omwille van de objectiviteit! Haar proefschrift (behaald op 80-jarige leeftijd!) is echter ronduit indrukwekkend en onmiskenbaar intellectueel niet te verwaarlozen. Denken we in de eerste plaats aan haar introductie van een verzorgster van de vrouwelijke hoofdpersoon, in de centrale setting van de harem van koning Salomo, een verzorgster die een belangrijke rol in het Hooglied weggelegd krijgt. Als dit klopt, wat valt er dan nog te geloven van alle

interessante verklaringen van die passages waar anderen, zoals M. MULDER, M. ROZELAAR, DECKERS, enzovoort, een andere hoofdpersonage aan het woord laten? Hebben zij dan niet, om maar iets te denken, deze verzorgsterpassages geallegoriseerd, in het Westen blijkbaar het meest verwerpelijke perspectief op het Hooglied?!?!

Wat valt er nu nog te zeggen over het Hooglied? Met dank aan de vele goede stimuli van Professor Lemmelijn zijn we er in geslaagd om inhoudelijk en vormelijk een vrij interessante scriptie af te leveren. We willen Professor Lemmelijn inzonder bedanken voor de combinatie van eerlijke bewondering en gerichte sturing. Terzelfdertijd waardeerden wij zeer sterk de grote tolerantie tegenover onze speciale benadering die eerder filosofisch en pastoraaltheologisch is, dan zuiver wetenschappelijk studiewerk van het OT. Toch schaart deze studie zich in een aantal moderne verhandelingen over het Hooglied waarin diverse andere dan traditionele theologische perspectieven gebruikt worden. We danken ook Frank Vercleyen, classicus, die ons hielp in de zoektocht naar een juist benaming voor het nieuwe theologische begrip dat wij in de titel introduceren.

INHOUDSTAFEL

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2.2. Een deontologisch incorrecte aanpak.
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3.1.2. Het verband met een filologische aanpak.
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3.2.2. Een vrouw als schrijfster?
3.2.3. Een vrouw in een erotisch spel!
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3.4. Het Hooglied is Bijbels en poëzie. Exegetische waarheid en poëtische zeggingskracht: een (on)mogelijke combinatie?

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CONCLUSIES.

VERDER MOGELIJK EN GEWENST ONDERZOEK ROND HET HOOGLIED.

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INLEIDING (NOTA BENE uit 2004)

Onze benadering van het Hooglied gaat verder dan wat gevraagd is in de normen voor een scriptie.

Een zeer belangrijk stuk ervan, de moraaltheologische benadering van het Hooglied, aan de hand van een theorie van Prof. R. Burggraeve, wordt op die manier naar de toekomst verwezen in een ruimere studie. Het is wel zo dat deze moraaltheologische benadering o.i. een onafscheidelijk deel vormt van ons begrip "theoreferentieel nut". Daardoor zal het een paar keer voorkomen in de scriptie op een verwijzende manier.

Onze benadering van het Hooglied is in zekere zin eerder pragmatisch en zeker nieuw en hopelijk vruchtbaar; wat kunnen we doen met het Hooglied? Voorafgaandelijk betekent dit dat we diverse nu gehanteerde perspectieven op hun betrouwbaarheid onder de loep moeten nemen; misschien blijft wel vooral deze bruikbaarheid als paradigmatisch perspectief over? Op deze manier krijgt de lezer een beknopt overzicht van de belangrijkste standpunten rond het Hooglied, enerzijds in het Nederlands maar ook in de rest van de wereld (met een nadruk op het Angelsaksische deel ervan). Daarnaast introduceren wij enigszins schroomvol ook een nieuw begrip, het "theoreferentieel nut" van het Hooglied. Het is een begrip dat door en door modern is: het moet begrepen worden vanuit de lees- en verwerkingspotenties van het Hooglied in onze Westerse helaas grotendeels geseculariseerde wereld. Op deze pragmatische manier denken wij ook de God van het OT én het NT terug te vinden. Het spreekt vanzelf dat dit begrip niet alleen op het Hooglied kan toegepast worden. Daarom is er in de titel sprake van "bijbelse liefdeslyriek". Er moet nog verder onderzocht worden in hoeverre gewone prozaïsche teksten hiervoor ook van toepassing zijn. Alleszins steunen we bij de rechtvaardiging van de constructie van dit pastoraaltheologisch begrip voor een deel op een bespreking van het boek Ruth.

Er zit o.a. nog te weinig hermeneutische analyse in. We kennen ook geen Hebreeuws, wat wel minder noodzakelijk is naar ons "perspectief" maar toch een handicap is, en hebben wel redelijk vele maar ook niet alle belangrijke werken gelezen die de laatste 50 jaar over het Hooglied geschreven zijn. Er blijven ook belangrijke theologische vragen open. Maar we geloven in dit Hooglied, in de zindering van zijn zinnen.

Alle Nederlandstalige citaten uit het Hooglied komen uit P. DRIJVERS, 1996 tenzij anders aangegeven.

Jean-Marie De Dijn. Ronse, 2004.

HOOFDSTUK 1

ALGEMENE SITUERING VAN HET HOOGLIED.

De Nederlandse naam 'Hooglied' komt van Martin Luthers vertaling als "Hohelied" (1545). Het wordt ook 'Lied der Liederen' genoemd van de Hebreeuwse benaming 'Shir Hashirim'. Nagenoeg elke Nederlandstalige auteur hanteert de term 'Hooglied', op Stoop1 na, die als filologe de voorkeur geeft aan 'Lied der Liederen'. Dit gebruik is analoog aan de benaming in het Frans en in het Engels, resp. 'Cantique des Cantiques' resp. 'Song of Songs' – wat in dit laatste geval dan toch meestal weer wordt afgekort als 'Songs'. Wij zullen voortaan steeds de term Hooglied gebruiken, zonder enige afkorting. In de literatuur is men o.i. met deze afkortingen helaas veel te kwistig bezig; de leesbaarheid wordt daardoor zeer sterk geremd en leespsychologisch werkt dit o.i. eerder vervreemdend. Zo spreekt de geciteerde Stoop altijd over 'vr.h.p.' als zij het in haar studie heeft over de … vrouwelijke hoofdpersoon en over "B" wanneer in de kantlijn van een vertaalde pericoop deze vr.h.p. aan het woord is! Haar geprefereerde naam 'Lied der Liederen' wordt afgekort als Ct…

De auteur is niet bekend. Gelet op het feit dat in het eerste vers staat dat het van koning Salomo is, hebben diverse commentatoren er een verband met koning Salomo ingezien.2 Wetenschappelijk gezien is er grote stelligheid om te beweren dat de naam een pseudepigrafie is. LaCocque3 beweert zelfs dat de auteur een vrouw is (zie ……verder). Ridderbos geeft een interessante uitleg over deze pseudepigrafische toeschrijving. Hij vindt het zeer functioneel bedacht door de Joodse cultuur: "We vinden het echter hopeloos ouderwets om dan aan een historische figuur te denken. … Het aardige is dat Joodse uitleggers van onze tijd al deze argumenten kennen. En dat ze toch, uit eerbied voor de heilige geschriften, rustig het Hooglied aan Salomo toeschrijven. De winst die zij boeken, is dat de lijn van de geslachten niet verloren gaat" 4. Historische kritiek heeft hier dus geen kans vermits ze eigenlijk naast de kwestie is. Anders gezegd; ze is eerder middel dan doel. Pseudepigrafie, zo gezien, is een vorm van functionele historiografie.

Het Hooglied kent zeer weinig personages en ook hier is er andermaal zeer veel discussie over de manier waarop deze personages moeten benoemd worden.5 Opmerkelijk is het recente

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1 P.W.Th. STOOP-VAN PARIDON, *Het Lied der Liederen. Een filologische analyse van het Hebreeuwse boek Shir hashshirim*, Leuven, 2003.

2 Sommigen menen dat Salomo effectief de auteur van het lied is. De meest recente verdediger van deze stelling is Mitchell (C. W. MITCHELL, The Song of Songs*. In reeks "Concordia Commentary. A Theological Exposition of sacred Scripture", Saint Louis, 2003, p. 98 e.v.). Mitchell beweert dat "The traditional view of the Song's Solomonic authorship is not currently in vogue in secular academic circles" (ibidem, p. 99). Alsof alleen "secular" academici anders denken over dit auteurschap! Andere auteurs zijn behoudender. Een voorbeeld is Mulder: "… dat het voorzetsel niet als 'van', maar als 'voor' moet worden opgevat, zodat we het opschrift verstaan moeten als een aanduiding dat de volgende liederen een bepaalde relatie tot Salomo hebben" (M. J. MULDER,* Het Hooglied. Een praktische bijbelverklaring*, Kampen, 1991, p. 9-10).*

3 A. LACOCQUE, *Romance, She Wrote. A hermeneutical essay on the Song of Songs,* Harrisburg, 1998, p. 39-53: paragraaf met als titel "The enigma of sexuality seen by a female author".

4 J. RIDDERBOS, *Het Hooglied. Een loflied op de liefde, met een dubbele moraal*, Kampen, 1998, p. 36.

5 Het gros van de discussies gaat over de benaming van de twee geliefden. Traditioneel werden Bruid en Bruidegom zeer veel gebruikt. Dit kan verklaard worden door de eeuwenlang overheersende allegorische lezing in de Westerse Kerk waarbij de Bruid en de Bruidegom resp. voor de Kerk/de gelovige en Jezus Christus stonden. Daarbuiten zijn zeer veel varianten waar te nemen. Mulder gebruikt eenvoudigweg meisje en jongen, Rozelaar spreekt van de Sjoelamiet en de Minnaar (M. ROZELAAR, *Het Hooglied. Uit het Hebreeuws in Nederlandse verzen overgebracht en van een inleidende Studie en een Toelichting voorzien*. Kampen, 1988), Drijvers en de KBS-vertaling spreken zeer minimalistisch van zij en hij (P. DRIJVERS & J. RENKEMA,

werk van Stoop waarin de auteur een fantastisch[22] want volstrekt unieke conclusie trekt (die alleen al daarom verdient dat het hele werk in het Engels vertaald wordt). Stoop, die beweert dat het Hooglied zich voornamelijk in de harem van Salomo afspeelt, geeft veel meer gewicht aan wachters en introduceert ook een nieuw hoofdpersonage: "Deze persoon geeft aan samen met anderen de vrouwelijke hoofdpersoon te willen verfraaien. Het ligt voor de hand dat een van hen hier aan het woord is: de persoonlijkste verzorgster van de vrouwelijke hoofdpersoon. Deze conclusie berust op taalkundige gronden met inachtneming van contextuele gegevens, en wijkt af van de algemeen aanvaarde mening betreffende het aantal sprekers in Ct…"6 7 Stoop meent dat de auteur tot een hogere sociale klasse behoorde omdat de taal niet alleen blijk geeft van "..groot poëtisch vermogen maar ook van eruditie…"8.

Ook over de datering bestaan zeer veel discussies.9 Rozelaar stelt op basis van zeer stevige argumenten dat de tekst te situeren valt tussen 250 en 220 v. Chr. 10

Doorheen de vele commentaren komt men een quasi oneindig aantal indelingen tegen. Het Hooglied telt naar gelang de persoonlijke invalshoek 5, 6, 8, 14, … hoofdstukken. Zo vertaalt Falk zelfs 31 gedichten wat het maximaal aantal is dat men in vertalingen en bewerkingen terugvindt.11 Zeker is dat er 117 verzen zijn. Soms heerst er echt verwarring: zo stelt Knight dat er 25 liederen zijn, maar hanteert hij toch de meest voorkomende indeling in 8 hoofdstukken12. We gaan in het kader van deze studie niet in op deze verschillen. Wel moeten we zeggen dat de oorspronkelijke Masoretische tekst 14 hoofdstukken telt, en dat de nauwgezette filologe Stoop ook tot dezelfde indeling komt.

De indeling die door een commentator gemaakt wordt hangt natuurlijk samen met de visie op de verhaallijn. Ook hier zijn er tal van theorieën waarop we praktisch gezien niet zullen ingaan. Zelfs een kleine verwijzing naar elk van dit enorm aantal interpretaties op dit vlak zou bladzijden beslaan. We zijn wel van mening dat er zeker een goede dichter aan het werk is. Verder zullen we trouwens kort enkele vormkenmerken van de Hebreeuwse poëzie zien zoals ze toegepast zijn in het Hooglied. Men mag echter niet concluderen dat de structuur ophangt aan een theologisch plan van de auteur. We zijn het oneens met Knight die poneert dat de schrijver "…has placed this poems, by divine inspiration, in such an order that he is able, step by step, to show the meaning of true love. He thus reveals not just the love of a young human couple for each other, but actually the love of the living God."13 Voor dergelijke stelling

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Hooglied, Baarn, 1996) en (KBS, NBG & SHA, *Hooglied. Hebreeuwse tekst en Nederlandse vertaling*, Haarlem/Amsterdam, 1998).!

6 STOOP, *Lied der Liederen*, p. 523.

7 Belangrijk is de volgende opmerking over het vrouwelijke hoofdpersonage: "The girl has met her social equal - a fellow countryman…." (G. A.F. KNIGHT, *Revelation of God*. In: G.A.F. KNIGHT & F.W. GOLKA. *Revelation of God. A Commentary on the Books of The Song of Songs and Jonah*, Edinburgh, 1988, p. 15). Het belang van deze passage wordt vooral duidelijk in een moraaltheologisch perspectief waarin gelijkwaardigheid een voorwaarde is voor het aangaan van een slaagkrachtige geslaagde relatie.

8 STOOP, *Lied der Liederen*, p. 10.

9 Sommige commentatoren durven zich niet eens uitspreken en geven slechts een overzicht van de diverse invloeden die mogelijks een rol kunnen gespeeld hebben bij het ontstaan van het Hooglied. Zo zouden er Egyptische, Aramese, Babylonische en Hellenistische invloeden terug te vinden zijn (MULDER, *Hooglied,* p. 10-1).

10 ROZELAAR, *Het Hooglied*, p. 65.

11 M. FALK, *Love Lyrics from the Bible. A Translation and Literary Study of the Song of Songs*, Sheffield, 1982.

12 G. A.F. KNIGHT, *Revelation of God*, p. 3.

13 ID., p. 9.

ontbreekt de evidentie. Pope14 bespreekt, van de weeromstuit, het Hooglied dan weer gewoonweg vers per vers.

14 M. H. POPE, Song of Songs*, (The Anchor Bible 7c), New York, 1977.*

HOOFDSTUK 2

HOE HET HOOGLIED WEERGEVEN IN EEN PUBLICATIE: EEN KLEINE DEONTOLOGIE.

2.1. Een deontologisch correcte aanpak.

De tekst moet eerst materieel tot ons komen, 'kunnen' komen, want blijkbaar is dat toch niet evident. Daarom beginnen we met een noodzakelijke beschouwing rond deontologie van besprekingen omdat we willen nagaan hoe de tekst van het Hooglied aan de lezer getoond wordt. Meer in het bijzonder willen we weten of de vertaler of bespreker de tekst volledig vertaald heeft. Als basistekst wordt steeds vertrokken van de Masoretische tekst.

De publicaties over het Hooglied kan men grofweg in twee onderverdelen: enerzijds de meer gewone edities, voor elke geïnteresseerde lezer, anderzijds de puur wetenschappelijke studies. Bepaalde edities zoals Drijvers trachten deze twee mogelijkheden te combineren.

We denken dat voor elke editie een eenvoudige maar even dwingende deontologische regel vereist is: de volledige grondtekst moet te lezen zijn – en dit in één ononderbroken stuk. Een prima voorbeeld is Drijvers. Naast een eerste versie van het Hooglied waarbij er een uitgebreid maar niet overdonderend notenapparaat voorzien is in een overzichtelijke bladspiegel, krijgt men alsnog de volledige doorlopende tekst. Aangenaam, maar niet noodzakelijk, is de aanwezigheid van illustraties (in het geval van Drijvers van de hand van Salvator Dali). Men krijgt als lezer én de mogelijkheid om via een exegese meer inzicht in de tekst te krijgen, én men kan de verantwoording van de vertaling lezen, én men heeft de mogelijkheid van een vrije literaire lezing waarvan men ongestoord door noten en annotaties kan genieten. Want hierover mag geen enkel misverstand bestaan; het Hooglied is en blijft poëzie van de bovenste plank.

We twijfelen of de Masoretische grondtekst ook moet afgedrukt worden voor het 'gewone' publiek. Dit gebeurde in het Nederlands slechts in een (zeer verzorgde) uitgave van het Nederlands Bijbelgenootschap (1998). Voor degenen die Hebreeuws kennen, is dit natuurlijk een mooie uitdaging. Anderzijds zijn de pure schoonheid én de onmiskenbare magie van de loutere aanwezigheid van de originele Hebreeuwse grondtekst voor een Westerse lezer belangrijke bibliofiele troeven. Ook kan bediscussieerd worden of voor beginnende Hebreeuwse lezers een transcriptie aangewezen is. In diverse reflecterende studies worden immers geregeld Hebreeuwse woorden getranscribeerd aangehaald. Zo geeft Falk in een annex15 de lijst met de transcripties van de medeklinkers. Ze motiveert dit als volgt: "For readers who know no Hebrew, word-for-word translations are provided whenever the Hebrew is cited and its meaning is not apparent from the context. All Hebrew words in the study are also presented in transliterated form, so that the non-Hebrew reader may sense their shape and sound"16. Ook Loretz17 (1971) maakt enkel van transcriptie gebruik.

15 FALK, *Love Lyrics from the Bible*, p. 135.
16 *Ibid*., p. 6.
17 O. LORETZ, *Das althebraïsche Liebeslied. Untersuchungen zur Stichometrie und Redaktionsgeschichte des Hohenliedes und des 45. Psalms*. Studien zur Althebraïschen Poesie 1., Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1971.

Iemand als Mitchell neemt op dit vlak een tussenpositie in omdat hij noch een volledige vertaling noch de grondtekst weergeeft. Maar hij vertaalt anderzijds in vrij grote brokken (op basis van zijn eigen thematische selecties) én bij deze vertaling vindt men steeds de oorspronkelijke Masoretische tekst. Bij deze ontkennen wij uiteraard niet de mogelijkheid en de intelligibiliteit van een (chronologisch) overzicht binnen bepaalde thematisch afgebakende selecties. Deze voorstelling zou toch steeds met een volledige tekst moeten aangevuld worden. Ook esthetisch én als ode aan de veelvuldig en diep besproken tekst, lijkt ons dit minstens een waardige formule als afsluiter van een wetenschappelijke studie te zijn.

2.2. Een deontologisch incorrecte aanpak.

We vinden het zonder meer onverantwoord dat er in ernstige wetenschappelijke studies over het Hooglied stomweg géén (vertaalde) grondtekst staat. Dit blijkt merkwaardigerwijze de regel te zijn in het merendeel van de gevallen, veelal boeken van honderden bladzijden! In het geval van Knight (1988) krijgt men met stukjes en brokjes al eens een vers te zien – de (loodzware) bespreking raast wel zo door. Mitchell neemt een tussenpositie in: na een introductie van liefst 543 bladzijden (een soort theological travel survivor kit?) toont hij opeenvolgende selecties van pericopen met eveneens een zeer uitgebreide toelichting, met in elke toelichting per regel de originele Masoretische tekst. Het is toch onbegrijpelijk hoe er geen plaats kon zijn voor één volledige tekstweergave in een boek van exact … 1300 bladzijden.

Absoluut onaanvaardbaar vinden wij de aanpak van Iny Driessen18. Dit boek, dat al aan twee edities toe is, is een eerder gedurfd open, persoonlijk, badinerend ‘rond-schrijven’ rond het Hooglied in de chronologische volgorde van het Hooglied. We hebben daar op zich niets tegen zij het dat de auteur voortdurend gewoonweg stukken weglaat uit de grondtekst. Bovenaan elk nieuw hoofdstuk staat de pericoop weergegeven die zal besproken worden, en tersluiks, want dit wordt werkelijk nergens gemotiveerd, ziet men af en toe het volgende tussen deze selectie: (…). Hoewel het boekje sympathiek en wervend geschreven is, kunnen we de schrijfster geen absolutie geven. De schrijfster gebruikt uiteindelijk meer dan honderd noten om bepaalde gedachten te duiden vanuit diverse christelijke instanties, auteurs of wetenschappers. Het publiek dat al op deze wijze au serieux genomen wordt, heeft ook recht op de volledige tekst. Het werkt tevens irriterend in de zin dat men niet goed weet of de weggelaten teksten nu niet van belang zijn voor de aanpak van de schrijfster, of deze teksten eventueel te moeilijk zijn, enzovoort.

2.3. Een retorisch voorbeeldige aanpak.

Retoriek gaat over de kunst van het aanspreken van een publiek. De lezer is, communicatietheoretisch gezien, een publiek dat op een gerichte aanspraak mag rekenen. Voor de incrowd kan men op een moeilijke manier schrijven (maar toch liefst ook juist), maar voor een groter publiek is het inderdaad aangewezen om zeer sterk rekening te houden met het absorptievermogen van het publiek. En zie, de reeds positief aangehaalde editie van Drijvers schiet hier weer een gouden hoofdvogel af. Om de tekst zo goed mogelijk begrijpbaar te maken, heeft Drijvers, die bijbelwetenschapper is, niet alleen samengewerkt

18 I. DRIESSEN, *Wat ben je mooi mijn lief! Spiritualiteit van de liefde op de tonen van het Hooglied*, Gent, 2001.

met een eminent neerlandicus, gespecialiseerd als taalkundig adviseur,19 maar heeft hij iets zeer eenvoudigs maar even gedurfd gedaan: “Enkele onduidelijkheden zijn verhelderd op grond van een lezersonderzoek waaraan een dertigtal proefpersonen tussen 17 en 71 jaar hebben deelgenomen.”20 Ons inziens is dergelijke aanpak van letterlijk voorbeeldig belang!

Stoop wil filologisch nauwgezet en objectief werken. Haar werk heeft dan ook in de eerste plaats een wetenschappelijk publiek in het vizier: “Ter wille van de objectiviteit bij de weergave van de tekst wordt bij de vertaling de oorspronkelijke woordvolgorde zoveel mogelijk aangehouden; daarmee wordt afgezien van een poëtisch-lyrische weergave.”21 Verder (WAAR?) zullen we zien dat dit standpunt, hoewel van wetenschappelijke grote waarde, toch niet houdbaar is.

2.4. Het Hooglied vrijzwevend in de wereld van de letteren?

Ter volledigheid vermelden we nu al dat het Hooglied aanleiding heeft gegeven tot vele al dan niet verregaande bewerkingen door schrijvers. Zo zijn er publicaties van belangrijke schrijvers maar vindt men zelfs op het internet adaptaties door geïnteresseerde maar onbekende amateurs. We gaan verder (WAAAR?) op deze boeiende zijtak van de grote boom aan werken rond het Hooglied kort in.

19 Bij een bepaalde vertaalverantwoording schrijft Drijvers: “Keuzes als deze kwamen tot stand in samenspraak met een hebraïcus met veel vertaalervaring en een neerlandicus met enige kennis van het Hebreeuws.”, DRIJVERS, *Hooglied,* p. 8.
20 *Ibid.,* p. 8.
21 STOOP, *Lied der Liederen,* p. 17.

HOOFDSTUK 3

DE POËZIE VAN HET HOOGLIED.

3.1. Het Hooglied is Bijbelse poëzie.

3.1.1. Stijlfiguren en prosodie.

Met Fokkelman zijn alle wetenschappers en gewone lezers het eens over volgende conclusie: "De poëzie die we in het Hooglied aantreffen is onversneden liefdeslyriek."22 Goede inleidingen op de poëtische kenmerken van het Hooglied zijn o.a. Deckers23, Fokkelman24 en Rozelaar25. Opvallend zijn de vele herhalingen als belangrijkste stijlfiguur. Dit is een belangrijk kenmerk van de klassieke Bijbelse poëzie: "Balance is also the underlying idea in the case of poetic parallelisms. The basis of these is repetition, which may be called the hallmark of Old Testament poetry."26

Naast de kennis van stijlfiguren is ook de studie van de prosodie zeer belangrijk voor een goede kennis van de tekst. Fokkelman concludeert uit een voorbeeld van een ander Bijbelboek het volgende: "Uit dit voorbeeld blijkt dat de poëtica (de kennis van de spelregels waaraan de dichter zich moet houden) ons de beslissende argumenten kan verschaffen om problematische passages als deze te repareren en hun oorspronkelijke gezondheid terug te geven."27 Het werk van Loretz is hiervoor een aanzet28. Ondertussen zijn er al diverse zogenaamde literaire analyses van het Hooglied geweest. Stoop maakt hier een belangrijke kanttekening bij: "Pogingen om vanuit de literaire vorm de inhoud te verhelderen zijn legitiem maar indirect en risicovol: de inhoud gaat mijns inziens immers vooraf aan de vorm en bepaalt deze."29

Maar tussen gebruik maken van een goede prosodie om tot inzicht te komen in de originele tekst én om aan een goede vertaalde tekst te komen, is er een problematisch verschil: "Eigenlijk zou men het Hooglied in een soortgelijke poëtische vorm moeten gieten. Maar Nederlandse en Hebreeuwse poëzie verschillen nogal van elkaar; ik heb me daarom zelfs niet aan een poging gewaagd." 30 Overigens bespreekt Deckers de diverse stilistische kenmerken van het Hooglied om op die manier te komen tot een vijfdelige structuur: "Op grond van deze kenmerken kan het Hooglied als volgt worden ingedeeld een korte intro of Inleidingszang … ; drie hoofdzangen …; een coda of Slotzang …"31. Fokkelman daarentegen komt vanuit zijn vormelijke benadering aan een zevendelige indeling!

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22 J. FOKKELMAN, *Hooglied*. In J. FOKKELMAN & W. WEREN. *De Bijbel Literair. Opbouw en gedachtegang van de bijbelse geschriften en hun onderlinge relaties*, Kapellen, 2003, p 377.
23 M. DECKERS-NIJS, *Hooglied. Belichting bij het bijbelboek,* Boxtel, 1989, p. 47 e.v..
24 FOKKELMAN, *Hooglied,* p. 377 e.v..
25 ROZELAAR, *Het Hooglied,* p.75 e.v..
26 J.J. BURDEN, *Poetic texts*. In: F. E. DEIST et al. (ed.). *The Literature of the Old Testament. Volume I. Words from afar.* Vertaald uit het Afrikaans door W. K. WINCKLER, Cape Town, 1986, p. 51.
27 FOKKELMAN, Inleiding tot de Bijbelse poëzie, p.41.
28 ".. immer noch als ein vernachlässigtes Gebiet angesehen werden ...", in : O. LORETZ, *Das althebraïsche Liebeslied*, p. 1.
29 STOOP, *Lied der Liederen*, p. 10.
30 DECKERS-NIJS, *Hooglied*, p. 56.
31 ID., p. 50.

3.1.2. Het verband met een filologische aanpak.

De discussie tussen een streng filologische aanpak én een analyse van de literaire middelen (o.a de prosodie) is tevens van bijzonder belang. We geven één voorbeeld van hoe er voorzichtig tussen en met beide opties moet omgesprongen worden. Fokkelman stelt dat er genoeg signalen zijn ".. die te denken geven en die ons uitdagen samenhang te zoeken langs een andere weg dan die van een helder opgebouwd betoog of die van chronologie en intrige."32 Hij haalt het voorbeeld van twee verschillende passages aan om aan te tonen "…hoe de twee passages elkaar spiegelen" (idem). Wanneer men nu de sprekers van Fokkelman vergelijkt met die van Stoop stelt men vast dat deze wetenschappers echter andere sprekers aan het woord laten. Fokkelman gebruikt enerzijds chronologisch het koor, de jongeman en het koor, terwijl er bij Stoop sprake is van wachters, de verzorgster van de jonge vrouw, de jongeman (= herder) en de verzorgster. Slechts eenmaal is er concordantie van de sprekers. Eén van de mogelijke vragen, en allicht de belangrijkste, is wat men van de opgemerkte parallellie kan concluderen indien er verschillende sprekers al naar gelang de vertaler aan kunnen verbonden worden? Onmiskenbaar is de filologische aanpak van Stoop baanbrekend, maar even onmiskenbaar is de aanpak van Fokkelman intelligibel. Neem hierbij het retorische belang van de tekst naar een publiek toe, denken we dan uiteraard aan de poëtische zeggingskracht ervan, en we komen tot één van de allerbelangrijkste kernproblemen in de vertaling van het Hooglied.

Stoop geeft overigens voorbeelden van de samenhang tussen een filologische en een stilistische benadering: "De filologische analyse in cp. 2 heeft duidelijk gemaakt, dat een herhaling steeds een reële functie heeft, hetzij om te verhelderen wie de spreker is, hetzij om de draad van het verhaal weer op te nemen, dus ter voortzetting ervan … Herhalingen in Ct, al dan niet wijzigingen, hebben dus een structurele functie."33 Overigens komt Stoop tot een veertiendelige structuur, waarbij zij tot haar genoegen, en dit klinkt als een argument, overeenstemt met de oorspronkelijke Masoretische tekst.

3.2. Het Hooglied is unieke Bijbelse poëzie. Een aanzet voor een verklaring.

3.2.1. Een vrouw als hoofdpersonage!

Het is in de Bijbel zeer zeldzaam dat een vrouw een dergelijk belangrijke rol in een boek toebedeeld krijgt. De Joodse maatschappij was paternalistisch ingesteld wat zich reflecteerde in haar belangrijkste "cultuurproduct" de Bijbel. Fokkelman wijst erop dat het meisje 53 % van de verzen toebedeeld krijgt tegenover de jongen maar 35 %34. Hoewel dit percentage in de versie van Stoop door de "introductie" van een verzorgster van het meisje uiteraard naar beneden valt, blijft zij ook voor Stoop de centrale persoon.

Mulder wijst op het uitzonderlijke eigen initiatief van de vrouw in het liefdesspel: "Wat vele uitleggers van oude tijden af vaak verbaasd heeft en wat hun aanleiding gaf tot tekstwijziging, is dat het meisje en niet de jongen hier (NB: vers 8,1-7) het initiatief tot het liefdesspel neemt."35

32 FOKKELMAN, *Hooglied*, p.379.
33 STOOP, *Lied der Liederen*, 527.
34 FOKKELMAN, *Hooglied,* p. 381.
35 MULDER, *Hooglied,* p. 69.

3.2.2. Een vrouw als schrijfster?

Er is niet alleen nadrukkelijk een vrouw aan het woord, volgens LaCocque is het Hooglied zelfs door een vrouw geschreven. We missen echter evidentie in zijn tekst voor deze stelling. Zijn stelling is anders bijzonder interessant. Het Hooglied zou een subversieve tekst zijn die, door een ironische omkering van citaten uit de religieuze traditie in een seksuele context, een aanval zou betekenen op de traditionele paternalistische Joodse maatschappij en op die manier een oproep is voor een onafhankelijke vrouwelijke seksualiteitsbeleving. We zijn, samen met vele andere commentatoren, ermee eens dat in het Hooglied gelijkwaardigheid hoog in het vaandel van beide geliefden staat. Dat is al duidelijk in het afzetten van de vrouwelijke geliefde tegenover de rijke en machtige koning Salomo en haar blijvende keuze voor haar herder. Maar de conclusie van LaCocque gaat ons toch een stap te ver - we gaan er verder niet op in. En op zich is het niet zo belangrijk: wie van de twee nu ietsje meer of minder gelijkwaardig is. Laten we wat meer eer aan de vrouw: helemaal op het einde van het proces van het bij elkaar komen en weer verdwijnen, roept zij hem uiteindelijk in een slotwoord weer naar haar toe: “Spring op, mijn liefste; als een gazel of een jong hert; over bergen vol kruiden” (8,14).

3.2.3. Een vrouw in een erotisch spel!

We haalden hoger reeds aan dat het Hooglied aanzien wordt als onversneden liefdeslyriek. De verbeeldde erotiek is echter nooit vulgair36 maar anderzijds genoeg krachtig om niet alleen tot historische verbazing te wekken maar ook aanleiding te geven tot allegorese. Dat maakt het boekje in het totaal van een niet-gelijkaardige tot een “revolutionair boekje.”37

Een werk dat zich concentreert op deze erotische taal is het recente “Exquisite Desire. Religion, the Erotic, and the Song of Songs” (2000) van Walsh38. We bespreken dit in punt 3.2.1.3. LaCocque citeerden we daarnet reeds als degene die een subversief inzicht in deze erotische taal ziet. Om deze stelling te bewijzen gebruikt hij de intertekstuele methode. De toepassing van deze methode door LaCocque lijkt ons ondanks de fenomenale tentoongespreide bijbelkennis niet overtuigend

3.2.4. De Kerk en seksualiteit.

Met Burggraeve mogen we stellen dat de dualistische (lichaam en ziel scheidende) antiseksuele houding in het moderne christelijke denken radicaal voorbij is en dat een gezonde, evenwichtige benadering een verworvenheid is: “Als ‘blijde’ boodschap impliceert het evangelie ook in verband met de seksualiteit geen negatieve angst- of afschrikkingsethiek, maar integendeel een positieve liefdesethiek als ‘kwalitatieve ethiek van menselijke voortreffelijkheid’ die een beroep doet op het ‘schoonmenselijke’ en de liefdesbekwaamheid in ieder mens om de seksuele vermogens gehalte te geven.”39 Burggraeve stelt het nog scherper, in het kader van o.a. de Aids-problematiek die in bepaalde kerkelijke kringen een ‘ethiek van de vrees’40 doet hernemen: “Zelfs het ‘onheil’ dat uit eventueel immoreel of ethisch minder hoogstaand seksueel gedrag voortvloeit, betekent voor een christelijk geïnspireerde ethiek eerder een oproep en een uitdaging om na te gaan op welke wijze een

36 ROZELAAR*, Hooglied*, p. 78 en noot 3 op p.138.
37 FOKKELMAN, *Hooglied,* p. 377.
38 C.E. WALSH, Exquisite Desire. Religion, the Erotic, and the Song of Songs, Minneapolis, 2000.
39 R. BURGGRAEVE, *Zinvol seksueel leven onderweg. Concrete probleemvelden en belevingswijzen: een dynamisch-ethische benadering in christelijk perspectief,* 5de ed., Leuven, 2002, p. 37.
40 *Ibid*., p. 36.

dergelijk gedrag een ontkenning van de liefde inhoudt, dan enkel attent te zijn voor de nefaste gevolgen" 41 42

Dat betekent dat een vrijzinnige kritiek op de oorspronkelijke antiseksuele houding binnen de Kerk niet meer houdbaar en bruikbaar is, gelet op het feit dat dit modern christelijk denken zich, net als de oorspronkelijk seksbange christelijke denkers, uiteraard ook baseert op het evangelie, zeg 'de blijde boodschap'. We willen hier meteen alle kritiek voor zijn dat het Hooglied in het OT staat enerzijds, en anderzijds het evangelie het Nieuwe Testament is; beiden vormen voor Christenen de Bijbel en voor ons is de ethische bruikbaarheid van het Hooglied vanuit het evangelie belangrijk (zie verder bij het moraaltheologisch nut). Dat betekent tussen haakjes ook dat deze vrijzinnige kritiek hier eens mee zou mogen rekening houden en dus zou moeten stoppen met intellectueel achter te lopen. Een eminent voorbeeld is de over het algemeen gedreven filosoof Koen Raes die het heeft over de vroegere "… diepe wereld-, levens- en mensverachting die het katholicisme aan de wereld had opgedrongen."43 Hoewel hij erkent dat er in de taal over seksualiteit reeds jaren een en ander veranderd is, kent hij in de feiten i.c. in zijn citaten niets van deze verandering binnen de Kerk. Deze opvallende afwezigheid bij deze belezen intellectueel duidt ons inziens eerder op een vooringenomenheid van een bepaald vrijzinnig denken.

3.2.5. Wat is erotiek?

Dat we het onderdeel over de vraag van wat erotiek is, geven na het onderdeel over kerk en seksualiteit, is geen toeval: het lemma "erotiek" komt in de 6 volumes van de gezaghebbende ABD eenvoudigweg niet voor. Zelfs nu durft iemand als Knight nog het volgende zeggen: "If Songs was "published" as late as the period of the Hellenistic Empire (i.e., after 331 BC), then one reason for its issue may have been a protest against the actual cult of sex that the Greek civilization had brought to Palestine."44 Het verwondert ons dan ook niet dat Knight stelt dat deze erotismen werden gesublimeerd in het Hooglied en "…now rendered to the glory of God."45 Hierover meer in het stuk over allegorie.

Gesublimeerd of niet, de erotische taal in het Hooglied is onmiskenbaar. In dit verband is de opmerking van Walsh zeer correct: "The song is intensely sexual, yet biblical scholars tend to ignore the gains offered by the theorists of sexuality, and by so doing, mute some of its wisdom."46 Hoewel we denken dat Walsh soms haar inzicht te sterk extrapoleert (zie verder?), boort zij een belangrijk punt aan. We gaan dan ook niet verder op deze als evident beschouwde thesis in dan door te verwijzen naar het werk van Walsh zelf en talloze passages over seksualiteit bij andere commentatoren.

3.3. Het Hooglied is unieke maar toch Bijbelse poëzie. De reden van opname in de canon.

We trappen uiteraard een open deur in wanneer we zeggen dat één van de aantrekkingspunten van het Hooglied de enorme verwondering is dat het juist in de canon opgenomen is. We gaan

41 *Ibid*., p. 37.
42 "De Kerk van vandaag is even sterk in haar aanklacht tegen seksuele permissiviteit, maar veel genuanceerder tegenover seksualiteit als liefdestaal" (DRIESSEN, *Wat ben je mooi mijn lief,* p. 6).
43 K. RAES, *Seksuele bevrijding is ook een ethisch project. De revival van het antiseksuele syndroom*, in L. VERGOUWEN (ed.). *Religie en erotiek. Balanceren tussen lust en liefde*, Tilburg, 2002, p. 13 e.v.a..
44 KNIGHT, *Revelation of God*, p. 4.
45 *Ibid*., p. 5.
46 WALSH, *Exquisite Desire*, p. XIII.

dan ook niet in op deze discussie waar verschillende interessante theorieën over bestaan. We willen nu wel de aandacht trekken op de discussie in punt 3.2.2.1. in verband met de zin van een allegorie omdat daar twee tegengestelde visies gegeven worden rond het verband van de allegorese van de tekst en de opname van de tekst in de canon.

We vermelden nog dat waar overal aangenomen wordt dat de canonisering plaats vond op het Joods congres in Jamnia, AD 90-100 dit voor sommigen ook niet meer evident is: ”Modern research has shown evidence that there is no conclusive evidence that such a meeting took place.”47

3.4. Het Hooglied is Bijbels en poëzie. Exegetische waarheid en poëtische zeggingskracht: een (on)mogelijke combinatie?

Als het spreekwoord zegt dat vertalen, verraden is (oorspronkelijk in het Italiaans …), wat moeten we dan allemaal niet bedenken bij het Hooglied!? Zo houdt de scrupuleuze filologe Stoop zich nauwgezet aan de originele volgorde.48 Het voorbeeld verder geeft duidelijk aan dat dit, afgezien van de puur wetenschappelijke waarde, tot loutere onleesbaarheid leidt. Falk herwerkt het Hooglied vrij intens en kreeg naast vele wetenschappelijke hulp ook hulp uit een speciale hoek: “Several poets helped during the early stages of the translation.”49 Zij stelt als principe voorop de trouw aan de oorspronkelijke betekenis van de beelden en komt daarmee bijvoorbeeld in het fameuze vers rond de merrie van de farao tot een origineel maar zeer aanvaardbaar resultaat.50 Wij vinden haar vertaling/bewerking geslaagd.

In het Nederlands zijn er zeer veel vertalingen van het Hooglied met een begeleidende commentaar. “Hooglied”51 is een uitgave met zeer weinig commentaar waarin vooral de tekst in het Nederlands en het Hebreeuws kan vergeleken worden. De vertalers noemen hun vertaalmethode idiolect (ook concordantisch genoemd): “ ..een poging om het eigene van een tekst te lezen en te vertalen.”52 Daarbij is de vertaler “… vooral gericht op de samenhang en de verwijzingen die de Hebreeuwse tekst met velerlei stilistische middelen biedt”53 (idem). Om dit adequaat te kunnen doen is het aangewezen om “… zoveel als mogelijk naar Nederlandse equivalenten te zoeken en in de vertaling een vorm na te streven die eenzelfde effect heeft als de oorspronkelijke tekst.”54 Dit is essentieel. Wijkt men immers van deze stilistische getrouwheidsregel af “…dan loopt men acuut gevaar de vertaling ook inhoudelijk iets anders te laten vertellen.”55

Boven werd reeds gewezen op het belang van het parallellisme als Bijbelse poëtische stijlfiguur. Deze stijlfiguur heeft, buiten haar uiteindelijke bedoeling, een enorm belangrijk heuristisch effect. De parallellismen “.. assist the exegesis of texts, in that they add new elements of thought being pursued and so help the reader, through association of words, to see

47 H.L. BOSMAN, *The growth and the interpretation of the Old Testament.* In: F. E. DEIST et al. (ed.). *The Literature of the Old Testament. Volume I. Words from afar.* Vertaald uit het Afrikaans door W. K. WINCKLER, Cape Town, 1986, p. 7).
48 STOOP, *Lied der liederen,* p. 17.
49 FALK, *Love Lyrics from the Bible*, p. 1.
50 *Ibid.,* p. 111-2.
51 KBS, NBG & SHA, *Hooglied.*
52 *Ibid.,* p.5.
53 *Ibid..*
54 *Ibid..*
55 *Ibid..*

new connections an to follow the unfolding of the theme with greater care."56 Zeker tegen een door zijn aard al te drastische interpretatie van een allegorie (zie verder?), kan een correcte analyse van de opbouw van een parallellisme (bicolon, tricolon, ..) ontmaskerend werken. Een mooi voorbeeld van een parallellisme is het motief van de zegel in 8,6 (zie verder in deze paragraaf).57

Het is natuurlijk zo dat de stilistiek één aspect van het verhaal is. Buiten en ook binnen de stijlfiguren zullen keuzes van vertaling moeten gemaakt worden die de lezer op het ene of het andere spoor zetten. We geven als voorbeeld het belangrijke vers 8,6. We zullen enkele vertalingen onderling vergelijken.

Versie Drijvers (1996, pp. 54-5):

Draag mij als een zegel op je hart,
als een ring aan je vinger.
Want sterk als de dood
is de liefde,
onverbiddelijk als het dodenrijk
is de hartstocht.
Haar vlammen, vlammen van vuur,
een goddelijke gloed.

Versie van Rozelaar (1988, p. 120):

Leg mij gelijk een zegel op je hart,
gelijk een zegel op je arm.
Want liefde is overmachtig als de dood
en hartstocht onvermurwbaar als het graf ;
hun schichten – vuurge schichten, een
vlam Gods

Versie Mitchell (2003, p. 1170 e.v.):

Place me like a seal upon your heart,
Like a seal upon your arm,
For Love is strong as death,
And ardor is as fierce as Sheol.
Its flames are flames of fire,
the flame of Yah.

Versie van Pope (1977, p. 12):

Set me as a signet on your heart,
As a signet on your arm.
For Love is strong as Death
Passion fierce as hell.
Its darts are the darts of fire,
Its flames --- (drie streepjes)

En twee versies die expliciet poëtisch bedoeld zijn:

Versie Hugo Claus (1981, p. 49):

Druk mij als een zegel op je hart
als een zegel op je arm
want de liefde is sterk als de dood laat niet los
de jaloersheid onbuigzaam als het rijk van de dood
met een gezicht van vlammen
een vuurhaard een gloed van God

Versie van Falk (1982, p. 47):

Stamp me in your heart,
Upon your limbs,
Sear my emblem deep
Into your skin

For love is strong as death,
Harsh as the grave.
Its tongues are flames, a fierce
And holy blaze.

56 BURDEN, *Poetic texts*, p. 53.
57 Loretz komt tot verrassende aantallen: "Es stehen somit insgesamt 134 Bikola 24 Trikola gegenüber" (LORETZ, Das althebraïsche Liebeslied, p. 58).

En tenslotte de rigide filologische versie van Stoop (2003, pp. 477-88):

Plaats mij als het zegel op jouw hart,
Als het zegel op jouw 'arm'.
Waarlijk! sterk als de dood: liefde.
Vasthoudend c.q. onvermurwbaar als she'ol: qin'ah,
Haar pijlen, pijlen van vuur: haar vlam

Korte vergelijkende bespreking van vers 8,6:

In de bicolon met de zegel wordt telkenmale met 'hart' vertaald en in het tweede deel van de parallellie vindt men vijfmaal 'arm', eenmaal 'skin' (Falk) en eenmaal 'vinger' (Drijvers). Drijvers motiveert zijn aparte keuze door eerst te zeggen wat ook kan (en normaal genomen wordt): "Er staat letterlijk 'zegel op de arm'. Het woord zegel kan ook vertaald worden met 'zegelring'. Omdat het element 'zegel' al in het voorafgaande versdeel voorkomt, is hier met 'ring' vertaald. Het woord 'arm' kan opgevat worden als geheel voor het deel; een ring aan een arm is eerder een armband, en dat is hier waarschijnlijk niet bedoeld; vandaar 'vinger'."58 Drijvers redeneert dus stilistisch. Mitchell wijst er overigens ook op dat kan vertaald worden met zegelring.59 We denken dat Drijvers vertaalkundig een zeer goede oplossing inneemt. De parallellie is inderdaad een zeer belangrijke Hebreeuwse stijlfiguur die hoogst waarschijnlijk begrepen moet worden vanuit de specifieke eisen die een orale cultuur zich stelde (daarom komt zij allicht ook voor in Hebreeuwse proza.60 Voor een moderne lezer, minder een luisteraar, heeft deze stijlfiguur vooral een taalesthetische kwaliteit dan wel een begripsmatige functionaliteit. Indien hier dus een variante op mogelijk is, kan dit. Drijvers geeft via etymologie deze variante aan, die ook door Mitchell erkend wordt, aan en maakt er gebruik van mits de introductie van een kleine nuance door het gebruik van de totum pro parte (van arm naar vinger; de vinger staat dan voor de hele persoon) die echter in de logica van de verwijzende zegelring ligt (een zegelring behoort aan de vinger).61 De nog vrijere keuze van Falk voor de druk van het embleem diep in de huid, waar zij eerst trouwens de "arm" vergroot tot "limbs", wordt aanvaardbaar verklaard omdat " .. the imprint of the seal is to be discerned even after the seal is withdrawn."62 Denk ook aan het liedje "I've got you under my skin"!

Mitchell refereert nog naar andere vertalingen van arm' als 'voorarm' of 'pols'. Hij stelt toch 'arm' voor "…because that is its usual meaning and there seems to be no other OT passage that supports rendering it as 'hand'"63. Hij suggereert dat de zegelring misschien op de hand werd gedragen: "Alternatively, signet-ring in 8 : 6b could refer to a seal that would be worn upon or bracelet or armlet."64 Dit lijkt op den duur toch wat ver gezocht ; de idee van Drijvers in verband met het totum pro parte is in feite een galante logische oplossing binnen een context van een doorgedreven gebruik van stijlfiguren. Om o.a. deze redenen leest de versie van Drijvers ook het best.

58 DRIJVERS, *Hooglied*, p. 54, noot 6c.
59 MITCHELL, *Song of Songs*, p. 1175, noot 14.
60 Zie BURDEN, *Poetic texts*, p. 53.
61 Tromp verwijst naar een oud Egyptisch lied waar een bruidegom verzucht: 'Ach, ik zou haar ring willen zijn ; het zegel dat zij aan haar vingers draagt'" (N. TROMP, m.s.c., *Mens is meervoud. Het hooglied*. Cahiers voor levensverdieping nr. 38, Averbode, 1982, p. 66).
62 FALK, *Love Lyrics from the Bible*, p. 131.
63 MITCHELL, *Song of Songs*, p. 1176.
64 *Ibid.*.

Mitchell en Pope gebruiken een hoofdletter met betrekking tot de term liefde (‘Love’). Ons inziens rust dit hoofdlettergebruik op de dezelfde idee van de absolute liefde die we verder aantreffen bij Driessen. We moeten er naar raden vermits we nergens in de teksten van Mitchell of Pope hiervoor enige evidentie gevonden hebben. Het is ook mogelijk dat zij gewoon aansluiten bij een bepaalde mentaliteit (we schrijven zelf Hooglied en Bijbel!). Zie verder? voor een bespreking van het gevaar van de idee van de absolute liefde. Hier volstaat het om te zeggen dat we deze hoofdletter voor het begrip ‘liefde’ beter weg laten!

Waarom vertaalt Mitchell de verkorte Godsnaam ‘Yah’ niet? Hij spreekt in zijn lijvig werk toch ook voortdurend over God in plaats van Yahweh? Het vertroebelt de lezing maar, want zelfs door een vertaling als God wordt niets aan de originele mening afgedaan. Hetzelfde kan gezegd worden van ‘Sheol’ dat vertaald kan worden als onderwereld, dodenrijk of “If (as we believe) Sheol here refers to the universal grave.”65 Waarom Mitchell het dan niet zo vertaalt, is voor ons niet duidelijk.

De vlammen van Yah hebben natuurlijk veel verhitte discussies tot stand gebracht omdat het de enige plaats is in het Hooglied dat mogelijks rechtstreeks naar God verwijst. De ‘vlam Gods’ van Rozelaar is zeker een juiste vertaling, maar komt ouderwets over (dit geldt ook voor de rest van zijn vertaling ; zijn commentaar, zeker op collega’s is anderzijds uitzonderlijk spitant – en geleerd!). Bovendien mist zij een nuance die aanwezig is in de vertaling van Drijvers ‘goddelijke gloed’: “… letterlijk staat er ‘een gloed van Yah’ …”66 dat wijst op goddelijke inspiratie. Drijvers stelt echter dat er een tweede begrip mogelijk is: ”Het woord ‘yah’ kan ook een versterking aangeven: een ‘ceder van yah’ is een majestueuze of indrukwekkende ceder” (idem). Drijvers heeft voor deze vertaling gekozen omdat hij op deze manier zowel kiest voor een woord dat versterkend is en ook rekening heeft genomen met de goddelijke interpretatie. Dat lijkt ons een zeer goede selectie. Opmerkelijk is de keuze van de atheïst en dichter Claus die opteert voor ‘een gloed van God’. Pope valt het meeste op; hij vertaalt eenvoudig niet en toont in de plaats van het oorspronkelijke tekstfragment laconiek drie … streepjes, toch wel een unieke ‘oplossing’! Hij meent dat “To seize upon the final consonants yh as the sole reference to the God of Israël in the entire canticle is to lean on very scanty and shaky support.”67 68 In dit verband loont het de moeite om even stil te staan bij de vertaalkeuze van Deckers waarvan we de twee versies van haar vertaling van 8, 6 niet weergeven. In twee opeenvolgende publicaties gebruikt zij voor deze term twee varianten! In haar boek schrijft zij ‘brandhaarden van Jah’69 maar in haar doctoraat staat er, net als bij Hugo Claus, ‘één vlammende gloed’.70 Merkwaardigerwijze verwijst zij hierbij niet naar haar eerste versie die in elk geval vulgariserend bedoeld is tegenover het bijzonder moeilijk doctoraat.

Als conclusie van de vergelijking van enkele vertalingen voor wat betreft het vers 8, 6 mogen we stellen dat de versie van Drijvers én interpretatief overtuigend overkomt, én esthetisch de beste lijkt. Blijkbaar slaagt hij in een combinatie van exegetische waarheid en poëtische zeggingskracht (we herhalen trouwens nog eens dat dit mede ligt aan de samenwerking met

65 *Ibid*., p. 1185.
66 DRIJVERS, *Hooglied*, p. 55.
67 POPE, Song of Songs*, pp. 670-1.*

68 In verband met vers 6, 12, door veel commentatoren het moeilijkste vers van het Hooglied genoemd, doet Falk hetzelfde : het hele vers wordt opengelaten ! (FALK, *Love Lyrics from the Bible*, p. 41, met commentaar op p. 126).
69 DECKERS, *Hooglied*, p. 18.
70 ID., *Begeerte in bijbelse liefdespoëzie. Een semiotische analyse van het Hooglied* (proefschrift KTU Utrecht), Kampen, 1991, p. 45 met noot op p. 46 en verdere uitleg op p. 197.

een neerlandicus én een proeflezerspubliek). Het grote probleem is natuurlijk dat door de totaal nieuwe benadering van Stoop, met name de introductie van o.a. een verzorgster, die een belangrijke rol heeft, men de diverse vertalingen vers per vers moeilijk kan vergelijken. Er zijn immers andere hoofdpersonages aan het woord – nog afgezien van een andere lezing van diverse passages. Binnen het bestek van deze studie zullen wij echter blijven vasthouden aan de versie van Drijvers bij het citeren van passages uit het Hooglied omwille van de eerder opgenoemde redenen. Om uit de intellectueel aangename impasse te geraken, waarin Stoop ons op een formidabele manier gebracht heeft, is een veel uitgebreidere studie nodig. Binnen onze pragmatische interesse in het Hooglied is deze te voeren discussie van iets minder belang. Wij willen in deze instantie vooral een echt aansprekende tekst, à la Drijvers, à la Claus en Herzberg, zelfs à la Falk. We kunnen het dan ook niet eens zijn met de volgende stelling van Stoop: "Bij twijfel over de inhoud van een tekst is het beter deze bij vertaling ongewijzigd te volgen, zonodig in transcriptie, dan een emendatie toe te passen. Een emendatie komt vaak tegemoet aan een eigen vooronderstelling. Het verdient de voorkeur ruimte te laten voor (een) andere commentator(en) om alsnog een tekstgetrouwe oplossing te vinden."71 Want wat gaat er eigenlijk 'verloren door interpretatie' wanneer men in plaats van 'she'ol: qin'ah' (Stoop, Mitchell), spreekt van het "dodenrijk" (Drijvers, Claus) of de "Hell" (Pope) of het "graf" (Rozelaar, Falk). Voor een gewone, literaire en/of gelovige lezer in dit particuliere geval toch werkelijk niets!? Men mag ons inziens de tekst op zich niet té hoog plaatsen, niet té belangrijk maken. De tekst is uiteraard het bindmiddel tussen zender (auteur via vertaler) en ontvanger (de gewone lezer). De tekst is eigenlijk de oorzaak van hun bestaan. Maar zonder degelijke d.w.z. letterlijk aansprekende invulling bestaat hij eigenlijk ook niet, heeft hij geen werkingskracht. Zonder degelijke overkomst bij de ontvanger/lezer dooft de tekst uit. De lezer is de oorzaak, de verwekker van een tekst. Een tekst als die van Stoop, hoe wetenschappelijk uiterst waardevol hij ook is, is zonder de minste twijfel totaal onpubliceerbaar want onleesbaar: hij is niet gericht aan het gewone, grote publiek. En voor dit publiek is het ons, de 'evangeliserende' gelovers in de waarde (van de inhoud/vorm) van het Hooglied, uiteindelijk toch te doen (zie verder?) bij het theoreferentieel nut van het Hooglied). Op zijn beurt behoort de tekst dan tot het vermogen van de lezer, zowel in de zin van zijn eigendom (het willen lezen) als in de zin van zijn interpretatiewensen (het kunnen lezen). Het ideaal is dat de vertaalde tekst op eenzelfde manier bij de lezer overkomt als vroeger de oorspronkelijke tekst op haar lezers overkwam. Vandaar ons begrip voor de vertaalfilosofie van Falk, die men een dynamisch-equivalente vertaling kan noemen: "A faithful translation of a text accurately represents its best and fullest appreciation by the reader. If that reader is sensitive, the appreciation will not be idiosyncratic, but it will be necessarily subjective".72

Voorlopige pragmatische conclusie van deze paragraaf:

Voor wat men eventueel verliest aan exegetische duidelijkheid (die er allicht toch nooit zal zijn gelet op de onophoudelijke stroom aan andere perspectieven) houdt men in een 'leesbare' vertaling van het Hooglied een schat over aan voor iedereen prachtige poëzie. Het 'bewijs' is het aantal kunstadaptaties allerhande waarbij er geen enkele directe aanduiding is van het feit dat deze auteurs zich iets aantrekken van de vraag welke basistekst zij zouden moeten nemen. Bij twijfel opteert men noch voor het openlaten van de bewuste passage noch voor de transcriptie ervan, maar hanteert men een taal die het dichtst aansluit bij het moderne taalregister.

71 STOOP, *Lied der liederen, bijlage,* nr. 9 van de stellingen behorende bij het proefschrift.
72 FALK, *Love Lyrics from the Bible*, p. 55.

HOOFDSTUK 4

HET HOOGLIED IS UNIEK IN ZIJN INTERPRETATIEGESCHIEDENIS. EEN HEEL KORT OVERZICHT EN EEN AANZET VOOR VERDERE BESPIEGELINGEN.

Het is in het kader van deze scriptie absoluut materieel onmogelijk een overzicht te geven van de oneindige interpretatiegeschiedenis van dit piepkleine Hooglied. We verwijzen hiervoor naar R. E. Murphy (1990)73, H.H. Rowley (1965)74 en de eerder geciteerde M. H. Pope.75

In deze interpretatiegeschiedenis, waarvan we in het volgende hoofdstuk wel enkele voorbeelden zullen uitlichten, is het echter zo dat enkele belangrijke benaderingen niet aan bod kwamen. Het Hooglied is eerst en vooral een tekst - in een belangrijke context. Daarom vinden we het noodzakelijk, en waarschijnlijk gebeurt dit voor de eerste maal, om enkele interessante communicatietheoretische en metaliteraire beschouwingen rond de tekst te geven.

4.1. Communicatietheoretische overwegingen rond het Hooglied.

Het Hooglied is een tekst met noodzakelijkerwijze alle elementen die erop van toepassing zijn uit de communicatietheorie: zender, ontvanger, medium, edm. We geven hier zeer kort enkele duidingen op het Hooglied vanuit deze theorie. Ze passen zeer goed in onze eerder pragmatische aanpak van het Hooglied.

Deist maakt een communicatietheoretische analyse van de perspectieven waaronder een OT-schrijver “zijn” tekst geconcipieerd heeft. Met perspectief wordt ruimweg bedoeld de specifieke blik van waaruit een situatie bekeken wordt. Hij catalogeert een tekst als het Hooglied als een tekst met een persoonlijk perspectief: “A speaker speaking from a personal perspective does not offer profound truths or philosophise in terms of elaborate arguments. He is simply telling us about his own experiences and voicing his own views.”76 Het is dan ook logisch dat Deist, wanneer hij de vorm van de boodschap van een tekst als het Hooglied duidt als poëzie, zegt dat “…we should realise instantly that we are required to read that text as poetry.”77 Dat het Hooglied poëzie is, werd boven reeds kort aangetoond. De allegorische aanpak van het Hooglied heeft hier geen schijn van kans.

Opmerkelijk genoeg heeft dit persoonlijk perspectief van teksten als het Hooglied een ‘superior survival rate’: “Just because of the ‘defencelessness’ of the personal perspective, coupled with the universal need for such an approach to life, this kind of literature is better to be able to withstand the ravages of time.”78 Dit toont Deist aan door er op te wijzen dat een boek als Psalmen het eerste boek is om vertaald te worden. De massale belangstelling voor

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73 R. E. MURPHY, Commentary on the Book of The Song of Songs*, Hermeneia Commentary Series. Philadelphia, 1990.*

74 H.H. ROWLEY, *The Interpretation of the Song of Song*, in *The Servant of the Lord and Other Essays on the Old Testament*, London, 1952/Oxford, 1965.

75 POPE*, Song of Songs.*

76 F. E. DEIST, *The writer, his text and his audience.* In: F. E. DEIST et al. (ed.), *The Literature of the Old Testament. Volume I. Words from afar.* Vertaald uit het Afrikaans door W. K. WINCKLER, Cape Town, 1986, pp. 20-1.

77 *Ibid*, p. 27.

78 *Ibid*, p. 21.

het Hooglied, zowel bij Bijbelwetenschappers als bij het gewone publiek als bij kunstenaars, wijst hier ook op. Receptietheoretisch bekeken is hiermee dan ook gezegd dat het Hooglied zeker voldoet aan een 'universal need'. Dit aspect van het Hooglied is inzonder in gedachten te houden wanneer we verder spreken van het theoreferentieel nut van het Hooglied.

De canonisering van oorspronkelijk profane teksten als het Hooglied heeft belangrijke gevolgen:

1. De teksten stonden ineens in een religieuze context en de interpretatie werd radicaal veranderd. Ondertussen is dat bij het Hooglied ook veranderd door een reeks van meer wereldse lezingen (dus in een persoonlijk perspectief). Op het einde van onze studie zou het duidelijk moeten zijn dat wij trachten om deze laatste evolutie te respecteren én tegelijk wat om te keren, inderdaad richting … religieuze context!

2. Ze kregen een langer leven dan anders mogelijk geworden was, wat betekent dat er natuurlijk veel meer gelegenheden waren voor een nieuwe, creatieve lezing. In het geval van het Hooglied is dit een understatement.

3. Sommige teksten kregen de vorm van een dogma. Dit kunnen we van het Hooglied niet echt zeggen. Wat betreft de christologische en allegorische lezingen van het Hooglied, die op zich als dogmatisch kunnen gelezen worden, is het zo dat deze perspectieven reeds op zichzelf bestaan, zonder exclusief te moeten leunen op het Hooglied.

4.2. Een metaliteraire opmerking over het Hooglied. Het afhankelijke en het onafhankelijke aura van een tekst.

Door de canonisering heeft het Hooglied een zeer belangrijke eigenschap gekregen die niet inherent aan de eertijds "onafhankelijke" tekst is maar die zij sindsdien nooit meer kan verliezen: het aura van de Bijbel. Als basisboek voor handelen en denken van honderden miljoenen christenen, als het Boek van het Volk van het Boek (we negeren opzettelijk het verschil tussen NT en OT en voor het OT de verschillen tussen Joden en christenen), als lees-, studie- en inspiratiebron voor vele ongelovigen, heeft de Bijbel een immense cultuurhistorische betekenis gekregen die hij met zeer weinig andere boeken moet delen. Dat betekent dat de Bijbel een maatschappelijke status gekregen heeft, een aura uitstraalt. Deze aura straalt af op zijn onderdelen, de diverse boeken die van de weeromstuit in hun optelling en selectie de Bijbel vormen. Een afgeleide vorm van dit aura is terug te vinden in het feit dat er boeken zijn die hoewel ze niet tot de Bijbel behoren er toch een relatie mee onderhouden, de apocriefe boeken. Dit aspect van het aura in een cultuurhistorische, meer bepaald literaire context blijkt na onderzoek geen naam in de literatuurkunde te hebben; we noemen het derhalve zelf het 'afhankelijke aura'.

Men kan zonder meer stellen dat het Hooglied een ongelooflijke receptie- en bewerkingsgeschiedenis gekend heeft, en nog kent, niet alleen omdat de tekst door zijn persoonlijk perspectief aanspreekt, niet alleen omdat het goede poëzie is, maar zeker ook en misschien zelfs in de eerste plaats omdat het een persoonlijke poëtische tekst uit de Bijbel is. Hoevelen verwonderen er zich niet over dat juist dit boek in de Bijbel staat. Men zou zelfs de hypothetische en provocerende vraag kunnen stellen of het Hooglied wel als een even goede tekst zou beschouwd worden indien zij niet in de Bijbel had gestaan (zie vorig punt nr. 2). Het is uiteraard onzinnig om de werking van dit aura op de receptie van het Hooglied ex absurdum te gaan aantonen door een overzicht te maken van talloze nog betere poëtische

teksten met hetzelfde onderwerp uit min of meer dezelfde periode uit de wereldliteratuur maar die desondanks zich niet mochten verheugen in eenzelfde aandacht.

Omgekeerd is door deze blijvende aandacht op het Hooglied, bij jong en oud, bij heteroseksueel en homoseksueel, bij gelovige en ongelovige, een gestage, verzekerde stroom gegroeid van (dikwijls zeer waardevolle) bewerkingen in beeldende kunsten, muziek en letteren. Het Hooglied wordt daarnaast door anderen, onder deze naam of door verwijzing naar bekende verzen ervan (zoals het kussen van de mond), als een begrip gebruikt om eigen verhalen of ideeën op te hangen die ver staan van een bewerking.79 Het begrip 'Hooglied' krijgt in die context een emblematische werking. Dit intrigerend cultureel fenomeen heeft op zijn beurt het Hooglied zelf een tussen de Bijbelteksten bijna ongeëvenaard aura bezorgd heeft. Waar het Hooglied als deel van het geheel Bijbel kon profiteren van het aura-aspect van het geheel Bijbel, heeft het deel Hooglied een eigen cultureel aura verworven: we noemen dit het 'onafhankelijke aura'. Het Hooglied is m.a.w. voor een groot deel ontsnapt aan al die ernstige bijbelwetenschappers die nog maar eens een nieuwe interpretatie willen naar voor brengen. Deze twee werkings- en betekenisvlakken, gecentreerd rond dezelfde centrale betekenaar, het Hooglied, liggen wijd uit elkaar. Zeker op een domein als de beeldende kunsten is deze scheiding soms volledig daar waar het Hooglied blijkbaar vooral een aanleiding is om beelden rond liefde te maken én het Hooglied nog nauwelijks meer dient als werkzaam want overbekend instrument om publiek verzekerde aandacht te trekken op het verbeeldde. Voor de letteren rest een gezamenlijke aandacht uiteraard in het gebruik van een starttekst. In het geval van de bewerking van Hugo Claus hebben we supra reeds kunnen zien dat hij zich vrij nauwgezet aan 'een' basisvertaling gehouden heeft (het is in de editie niet traceerbaar om welke basistekst dit gaat). Terwijl de Kerk, beschouwd als zowel de vertegenwoordigers van het instituut die de tekst pastoraal gebruiken of bepaalde interpretaties als correct beschouwen en als de bijbelwetenschappers die vanuit christelijke inspiratie rond het Hooglied schrijven, nauwelijks of geen vat heeft op dit cultureel fenomeen, kan zij daar toch alleen maar, economisch uitgedrukt, profijt van hebben. Want blijvend wordt de aandacht op dit Hooglied getrokken. Vermits het Hooglied een tekst met zin is, en dan nog meer bepaald rond het thema liefde dat in een geseculariseerde wereld als het ware op talloze manieren geconsacreerd wordt, is dit aparte fenomeen voor de Kerk van onschatbare waarde. Het is juist vanuit dit aspect dat verder het theoreferentiële nut van het Hooglied zal belicht worden. De vraag kan hier reeds gesteld worden of dit nut van het onderdeel Hooglied een heuristische functie m.b.t. het geheel Bijbel heeft, of er m.a.w. nog andere delen van het geheel Bijbel zijn (boeken, boekfragmenten) die dergelijke brede en aanvaarde culturele betekenis ontwikkeld hebben – of, nog interessanter, dergelijke betekenis kunnen ontwikkelen (zie verwijzing naar Psalmen in vorige paragraaf)?

79 Een boek bijvoorbeeld als "Hier ben ik : een hedendaags Hooglied" van Donald Niedekker (2002) heeft enkel nog het thema liefde gemeen met het gerefereerde Hooglied.

HOOFDSTUK 5

OVER INTERPRETEREN. ENKELE HERMENEUTISCHE VUISTREGELS TOEGEPAST OP HET HOOGLIED.

Omdat we door de kriskras aangelegde bossen van de Hoogliedinterpretaties de bomen dreigen te verliezen, en het fijne plantje dat het Hooglied zelf is, moeten we een aantal bedenkingen formuleren over hermeneutische principes specifiek rond een tekst als het Hooglied, met name een tekst die zowel in Joodse canon als een christelijke canon staat. In het voorwoord hebben we het reeds gezegd dat er een ongelooflijk aantal perspectieven op het Hooglied bestaan. Velen zien er zelfs het moeilijkst te begrijpen/verklaren boek uit de canon in. LaCocque spreekt van " … the greatest hermeneutical challenge facing a Bible scholar…"80

5.1. Een oproep voor het onvermijdelijk inzicht in en het moedig gebruik van een hermeneutische ontsnappingsroute

We pleiten voor een sterke intellectuele eerlijkheid – en zullen die in onze eigen conclusie in de mate van het intellectueel mogelijke trachten toe te passen. Hoewel we in een gelovig terrein van nadenken werken, waardoor bepaalde denkinhouden een veel grotere waarde of weerstand zullen hebben of oproepen (cognitieve dissonantie), pleiten we (naïeverwijze?) voor wat we een 'hermeneutische ontsnappingsroute' noemen. Dit is een consequentie van de onvoltooibaarheid van de hermeneutische cirkel: geen enkele interpretatie geeft een exclusieve garantie. Talloze interpretatoren hebben het Hooglied onvermoeibaar tot op de dag van vandaag op een totaal verschillende wijze benaderd. We vragen hen het volgende: 'bewijs' perfect één lezing van een werk door een duidelijk uitgangspunt aan te geven en door dit dan nadien methodisch te ondersteunen op basis van 'evidentie' uit de studie van het Oud Testament, theologie en diverse andere wetenschappen (we moeten hier opmerken dat we bijvoorbeeld nog geen sociologische of psychologische studies ontmoet hebben). Geef vervolgens zelf aan op het einde van de bespreking één andere interpretatiemogelijkheid die niet in tegenspraak is met je eigen uitgangspunt is maar toch een ander perspectief toelaat op het Hooglied. Ofwel geef je zelf de zwakke kant aan van je eigen betoog (wat op zijn beurt een aanzet kan zijn voor een nieuwe interpretatie). Dit is onze hermeneutische ontsnappingsroute. Ze heeft het voordeel dat elke auteur op een retorserende manier moet denken (indien ik A zeg zou B wel eens terecht kunnen opgemerkt worden) waardoor de onderbouwing van een redenering veel sterker zal opgetrokken worden.

5.2. Het fundamenteel interpretatieprincipe "het eerdere wordt niet door het latere verklaard".

Dit hermeneutische principe hebben we een eigen naam gegeven. Heuristisch is er een analogie met het logisch drogprincipe "post hoc ergo propter hoc": het is niet omdat B na A komt, dat B uit A kan verklaard worden. Dit eenvoudig hermeneutisch principe betekent in onze context dat het NT geen handleiding is om de oorspronkelijke betekenis van (dit deel van) het OT te verklaren. Dit soort verklaring noemt men de christologische verklaring van het Hooglied.

80 LACOCQUE, *Romance, She Wrote,* p. XI.

Een eminent voorbeeld van het christologisch interpreteren is de lutheraan Mitchell: “Christ is the one who links together all of the images and themes in the pericope (NB: 5,9-16) because he alone fulfills the entirety of the OT.”81 Wij ontkennen natuurlijk niet de inhoud van het NT en de rol van Jezus als zoon van de God van het OT, maar het ampele feit dat het Hooglied nu eenmaal een deel van het OT is, en dus ouder is, en het NT niet door de Joden erkend wordt, maakt dergelijke lezing van het Hooglied enkel speculatief. In verband met het fameuze zegelvers (zie ? boven) geven we nog een voorbeeld van de christologische visie. Het zegel wordt door Mitchell immers op zijn zeer specifieke manier geduid: “The image of Solomon placing the Shulammite as a seal upon himself in Song 8 : 6 pertains to Christ placing his name – which brings his love, grace, and salvation- upon those he calls to faith and sustains in the saving faith by means of his Word and Sacraments. Through those means of grace, the members of his body and bride are sealed with the Holy Spirit and preserved to life eternal.”82

We geven nog vrij recente christologische lezing uit het Rooms-Katholicisme: “Christus is er niet om wat in het Hooglied beschreven wordt, dus om de vervulling van het getypeerde, maar het Hooglied is er om Christus. Natuurlijk ligt de volheid en de vervulling ervan in Christus. … Christus is de eeuwige; Hij is present, ook in het Hooglied.”83 Vandaar dat deze auteur ook gemakkelijk kan besluiten dat “… de betekenis van het Hooglied bestaat in het volgende: in het monogame, ideale, heilige huwelijk doorschijnt de heerlijkheid der liefde van Christus tot zijn bruid en, als vrucht van zijn liefde, de liefde van de bruid tot Christus.”84

Lamberigts stelt het zeer eenvoudig maar eenduidig voor: ”Een oudtestamentische tekst hoeft zich niet tegenover het Nieuwe Testament te rechtvaardigen en evenmin moet hij eerst christelijk worden gedoopt, opdat hij voor christenen ‘woord van God’ zou kunnen zijn. Het OT heeft zijn eigen waarde en moet zelf aan het woord worden gelaten. We moeten hem zonder vooroordelen beluisteren als het woord van God, dat oorspronkelijk gericht werd tot Israël, maar dat ook blijft gelden voor christenen.”85

We geloven anderzijds wel in een nuttige lezing van het Hooglied vanuit het NT, waarin een gedeelte van de interpretatie van Van Der Meiden kan kloppen! Dit zal blijken in de verdere behandeling van het moraaltheologisch nut van het Hooglied.

5.3. De onwaarschijnlijke bewijskracht van de intertekstualiteit a.d.h.v. het OT

Eén van de intellectueel meest begeesterende commentaren op het Hooglied is zonder enige twijfel “Romance, She Wrote. A hermeneutical essay on the Song of Songs” van André LaCocque uit 1998. Het is een waar meesterwerk, maar helaas niet juist en waarschijnlijk ook niet waar. Niet juist omdat zijn (intertekstuele) methode niet overtuigt (ondanks de gigantische kennis die geactiveerd is) en niet waar in de zin dat zijn thesis, die hij aan de hand van zijn methode tracht te bewijzen, niet waar is.

We geven toe dat we enigszins a priori achterdochtig staan tegen allerlei intertekstuele analyses. We hebben uiteraard kennis van wetenschapstheoretische benaderingen à la Kuhn

81 MITCHELL, *Song of Songs*, p. 946.
82 *Ibid.,* p. 1180.
83 L.H. VAN DER MEIDEN, *Het Hooglied*. Bibliotheek van boeken bij de Bijbel, Baarn, s.d., p. 42.
84 *Ibid.,* p. 43.
85 S. LAMBERIGTS, *Waarin verschilt het Oude van het Nieuwe Testament ?* in *Tijdschrift Tertio,* 210, 5de jaargang, 18 februari 2004, p. 15.

en Foucault die stellen dat er bepaalde paradigma's of episteme's vigeren in culturele contexten en het denken binnen deze contexten conditioneren. Eén van onze achterdochtargumenten is dat elke theorie in feite een werkinstrument is dat letterlijk moet genomen worden: zolang men met de theorie kan werken, blijft men daadwerkelijk aan het werk en dit leidt o.a. tot wetenschappelijke uitmelkerij en muggenzifterij. Maar deze contexten overlappen alleszins nooit perioden van 1000 jaar zoals dit het geval is in het ontstaan van het Oud Testament.86 Intertekstualiteit binnen een Bijbelse context moet ons inziens vooral gezien worden als een moderne actieve toepassing binnen de kunstwereld van Bijbelse teksten dan wel minder als een historisch ondersteuningsmodel van deze teksten. Een toepassing van deze theorie binnen de Bijbel voor een verklaring van de betekenis van het Hooglied lijkt ons buitengewoon hachelijk.

We willen natuurlijk nog eens de aandacht trekken op het belang van de stilistiek voor een begrip van het Hooglied. De stilistiek heeft juist door het aantoonbaar zeer lange traditionele gebruik van bepaalde stijlmiddelen, die zowel in poëzie als in proza gebruikt werden, wel een argumentatiekracht.

We belichten even kort de hermeneutische methode van LaCocque. Het vergt ongetwijfeld een apart artikel een volledig aparte boekbespreking om hierin dieper in te gaan (zo hebben we het boek van Wim Meren "Intertekstualiteit en Bijbel," uit 1993 nog niet gelezen"). Enkele voorbeelden moeten hier volstaan.

Onze bezwaren tegen deze intertekstuele methode op het vlak van een Bijbelse tekst als het Hooglied:

1. Om intertekstueel te kunnen werken moeten er teksten zijn waarmee ('inter') men kan werken. Het Joodse OT is echter pas rond 100 AD gecanoniseerd. Pas dan is er een duidelijk afgebakend canon ontstaan waarop een auteur (onze auteur, of Hugo Claus, of …) beroep kon doen onder de vorm van het actief, intentioneel lenen van tekstfragmenten in materiële bronnen. De tekst van het Hooglied is zeker voor deze periode geschreven (allicht rond 225 AD ; zie boven), een periode waarin het dus nog niet zeker was welke teksten ter definitieve overlevering zouden overblijven. We zouden dus 100 % zekerheid moeten hebben over wat we de 'proto-canoniciteit' noemen van alle aangehaalde teksten waarop LaCocque zich (met toegegeven enorme eruditie) steunt.

2. Intertekstualiteit in het algemeen, en in het bijzonder op de bijzonder intensieve wijze zoals geponeerd door LaCocque, is bijna volledig schatplichtig aan geschreven teksten. De Joodse cultuur had wel rollen maar was op het moment van de creatie van het Hooglied in de eerste plaats een orale traditie. Het lijkt weinig waarschijnlijk dat dergelijk voorgesteld intensief intertekstueel gebruik mogelijk was op een orale basis, en het is helemaal onwaarschijnlijk dat dit kon op basis van de voorradige rollen. Bijzonder eigenaardig is dat LaCocque zich pas op bladzijde 150 bewust wordt van deze problematiek. In elk geval geeft hij deze problematiek aan, wat een mooi en eerlijk voorbeeld is van wat wij eerder de hermeneutische ontsnappingsroute noemden. Hij stelt: "There is no way for us to know what kind of familiarity people in the ancient world had with what constitutes today's biblical

86 We geloven ook in de ontginningskracht van de sympathieke maar soms wazige analyses van Van Den Berg met zijn metabletische theorie die er vereenvoudigd op neerkomt dat in een bepaalde tijd alles met alles samen hangt (zo geeft Van den Berg intrigerende en overtuigende analyses over het verband tussen de ontwikkeling van de röntgenfoto en het ontstaan van de abstracte kunst (beiden als representaties van een abstract niet-concreet gebonden kijken).

traditions."87 Zijn commentaar is in zijn voorzichtigheid bijna vrijpostig: "I tend to believe that these were at least as well known then as they are today."88 Het kan inderdaad zo geweest zijn dat "The ancestral traditions in all their details and nuances occupied a large place in popular memory."89 De kern van de zaak is natuurlijk dat wij nu beschikken over dragers als boeken, CD-Roms, internet enz. – allemaal zaken met onnoemelijk veel meer toegangs- en ordeningsmogelijkheden dan het 'popular memory', als ons eigen geheugen of dat van de pater familias of van de rabbi enzoverder! LaCocque maakt er zich dan uiteindelijk ook vanaf met te steunen op zijn uitgangspunt, dat hij juist tracht te bewijzen doorheen de vele referenties: "Besides, if I am too optimistic on that point, little of my argumentation above is jeopardized. For one did not need to have a cross-referential proficiency in 'biblical' literature to be aware, at least in part, of the allusive character of the author's poetry ..."90 Wat hij in 's hemelsnaam mag bedoelen met "at least in part" mag Joost weten. Want ofwel wordt het héle Hooglied als 'allusive' gezien, ofwel wordt het zo helemaal niet gezien!

3. Er moet een eenduidige betekenisrelatie zijn tussen de basistekst en de gerefereerde teksten. Dat betekent dat het per definitie verdacht overkomt wanneer er van een vers uit het Hooglied er diverse onderling verscheidene betekenisassociaties kunnen gemaakt worden met andere verzen uit de canon. LaCocque wijst er ook eerlijk op: "The allusions in the Song of Songs are seldom exclusive; the plurivocity of the background material is remarkable."91 Hij gaat er wel niet op in. Nochtans is dit voor hem cruciaal in zijn hermeneutische bewijsvoering. Immers, bij de twijfels in verband met het vorige punt merkte hij het volgende op: "Above, I have reviewed several angles from which to identify the allusiveness of terms like chariot and Ammi-nadib. It was sufficient that the original audience be aware of one or two of them."92 Dit geeft uiteindelijk een zeker zinloos gevoel; altijd vinden we wel één of zelfs meerdere verzen uit de canon waaraan een vers van het Hooglied kan gerelateerd worden. Daarbij is het dan ook blijkbaar van minder belang wat de respectievelijke betekenissen zijn; als er maar kan gerefereerd worden, blijkbaar! Het Hoogliedvers kan in voorkomend geval zelfs aan diverse betekenissen (want zo kan men het ook lezen) gekoppeld worden. Op die manier geraakt LaCocque met zijn intertekstuele methode letterlijk verstrikt in een web van betekenissen. De eenduidigheid en zekerheid geraakt zoek. Het 'sufficient' van LaCocque in het laatste citaat kan toch niet als een wetenschappelijke term voor verklaring gebruikt worden!

4. Een zeer belangrijk argument tegen het gebruik van deze methode halen we eigenlijk uit de conclusie die LaCocque aan de hand van deze methode wil bewijzen. Hij wil zoals gezegd aantonen dat het een subversieve tekst die gericht is tegen de patriarchale maatschappelijke instellingen. Bedoeld is uiteraard de patriarchale instellingen van het Joodse volk. Wat schrijft LaCocque nu ook in verband met zijn bespreking van verzen 6,4-5? Hij stelt dat deze verzen "… are not the only time in the Song when notions coming from religious horizons other than Yahwistic are in their turn parodied and secularised."93 Noteer dat het blijkbaar al nodig is om toe te geven dat de auteur van het Hooglied zich zou gebaseerd hebben, en niet één keer, op andere religies. Bovendien zou hij dat op eenzelfde provocerende want ironiserende manier gedaan hebben. Ironiseren tegenover wie?! Het uitgangspunt was toch klaar en duidelijk: een aanval op het patriarchale Joodse instituut via

87 LACOCQUE, *Romance, She Wrote,* p. 150.
88 *Ibid*..
89 *Ibid*..
90 *Ibid*..
91 *Ibid.,* p. 107.
92 *Ibid.,* p. 150.
93 *Ibid.,* p. 131.

een parodiërend gebruik van het maatschappelijk essentiële religieuze taalregister dat voorradig is in de proto-canonische teksten; dus zeker niet in andere teksten, laat staan uit andere culturen! Het moet zeker vanuit dit voorbeeld duidelijk zijn dat wat LaCocque een hermeneutische sleutel noemt een hermeneutische zeis wordt waaronder alles even kort moet gewied worden; er blijft geen ruimte voor nuance of twijfel meer.

5. Deze methode graaft haar eigen val door per se immer buiten de tekst te willen treden. Filologische, stilistische en prosodische analyses treden op de achtergrond. De notie van de intratekstualiteit geraakt vergeten. Een voorbeeld is de fameuze bezwering in vers 2,7 die herhaald wordt in 3,5 en 5,8: "Ik bezweer jullie, meisjes van Jeruzalem; bij de gazellen of de herten in het veld; …". Hierover zegt de auteur: "The defiance by our author reaches its summit when sacrosanct formulas, oats for example, are ironically parodied."94 Hij verwijst naar dit vers en de andere keren dat het gebruikt en zegt dat het gebruik van de "gazellen en herten" "… wild animals of the field, a totaly blasfemous utterance" is.95 Nochtans verwijst LaCocque ook naar 8,4 waar het bezweringsvers heel erg lijkt op de andere drie, maar er nu eens géén sprake is van de herten en de gazellen! Dit wordt door hem niet vernoemd in deze context – dat is dus een onweerlegbare logisch inductieve fout. Anderzijds komen de gazellen en herten nog geregeld terug in totaal andere betekenissen, zo in verzen 2,9 en 2,17 en 4,5 en 7, 4 en zelfs in het slotvers 8,14. Alleen al dit opvallende voorkomen in andere betekeniscontexten van eenzelfde betekenaar moet de intertekstuele interpretator aanzetten tot bescheidenheid.

De conclusie van LaCocque is dan ook even begrijpelijk als overdreven: "Thus, intertextuality makes the nonreligious Book of the Song of Songs a profoundly theological text, indeed the key that unlocks Torah,…."96 We begrijpen ook niet waarom, indien het zelfs zo zou zijn dat de meeste verzen van het Hooglied gerelateerd kunnen worden aan andere bijbelverzen, dit zou betekenen dat het Hooglied een sleutelpositie ten opzichte van hele Torah zou innemen. De vergelijking die LaCocque maakt, houdt dan ook geen steek: "Such a conception is very much akin to Jezus of Nazareth 's declaration that the whole Torah is about love."97 LaCocque verwart gewoon de resultaten van een formalistisch procédé met een idee. Anders gezegd, waarom zou het Hooglied, dat zo duidelijk in een eerste lezing over liefde gaat, al deze letterlijk vergezochte referenties nodig hebben om uiteindelijk toch tot eenzelfde boodschap te komen, nl. één over deze idee van het belang van de liefde? Bovendien zou dit nog eens moeten gebeuren op een zogenaamde subversieve manier, die er overigens vanuit communicatietheoretisch standpunt zou kunnen toe leiden dat de toehoorders zich eerder van haar zouden afkeren. Hypothetisch moet het trouwens zeker mogelijk zijn om op deze basis voor diverse andere bijbelboeken tot een analoog verhaal en eenzelfde conclusie te komen. Dergelijke conclusie is véél te gemakkelijk en is in zekere zin volkomen zinloos indien inderdaad ex absurdum niet kan bewezen worden dat zij niét opgaat voor andere bijbelboeken.

5.4. Wat we kunnen leren, is wat we mogen zien.

In de inleiding van haar proefschrift haalt Deckers de zeven hermeneutische regels aan van Hillel (2000 jaar oud!) en merkt op dat deze regels aan het Hooglied lijken voorbijgegaan. Welnu, hoewel we geen onderzoek op het vlak van deze regels gedaan hebben, denken we

94 *Ibid.,* p. 62.
95 *Ibid.*.
96 *Ibid.,* p. 67.
97 *Ibid.,* p. 67.

toch niet akkoord te kunnen gaan met deze interpretatie. In een korte noot worden deze regels voorgesteld. Regel zeven luidt: “Bestimmung dessen, was aus dem Inhalt (oder Zusammenhang) zu lernen (bzw. Zu folgern) ist.”98 Mogen wij op deze graatmagere basis besluiten dat een oude Joodse uitlegregel zo kan begrepen worden dat een tekst kan geduid worden op basis van wat er uit kan geleerd respectievelijk besloten kan worden? Dan zou dat willen zeggen dat deze regel kan toegepast worden op het Hooglied, indien wij een perspectief, een mogelijk inzicht hebben om van daaruit iets te leren/concluderen uit het Hooglied. Wij hebben … twee dergelijke inzichten – in deel zeven.

98 DECKERS, *Begeerte in bijbelse liefdespoëzie*, p.11.

HOOFDSTUK 6

WAT IS DE BETEKENIS VAN HET HOOGLIED VOOR ONS NU?

6.1. Wat betekent “voor ons nu”?

Als het juist is dat wij ons soms moeilijk de interpretaties van bijvoorbeeld een Bernardus van Clairvaux over het Hooglied eigen kunnen maken, dan het is het ook zo dat wij op onze beurt in ons hic et nunc een eigen lezing van het Hooglied moeten en willen maken. In de 20ste eeuw is dit op een bijzondere manier gebeurd in de geschetste niet door de kerk gerichte afsplitsing in de kunst. Anderzijds willen we de tekst op zich blijven lezen. Onze bedoeling is echter ook een pragmatische visie op het Hooglied te ontwikkelen, en dit niet zomaar op een toegepast want pastoraal vlak. Doorheen een moderne moraaltheologie rond seksualiteit kunnen wij een betekenis aan het Hooglied geven als draagvlak van deze theorie, en omgekeerd kan deze moraaltheorie als een resultante gezien worden uit een canon waarin dit Hooglied op dit vlak beslissend kan bijgedragen hebben. Verder willen wij van het eerder behandelde onafhankelijke aura van het Hooglied gebruik maken; het zal gaan om een stuk modern evangeliseren in het deel over het theoreferentieel nut van het Hooglied.

Vooraleer wij dit kunnen aanvatten, is het noodzakelijk ons kritisch te confronteren met huidige perspectieven op het Hooglied. We kunnen in dit bestek onmogelijk een overzicht maken van alle interessante inzichten op het Hooglied. De inzichten of perspectieven die wij kort zullen bestuderen, zijn relevante inzichten en zullen worden bekeken vanuit het feit of zij al of niet (logisch) aanvaard kunnen worden, en daarnaast is er een perspectief dat eigenlijk letterlijk vrij staat naast de eerdere perspectieven. Uiteindelijk blijft de bijna pretentieuze vraag over of ‘onze’ bruikbaarheid van het Hooglied misschien wel vooral als paradigmatisch perspectief overblijft? Bij de aanvaardbare perspectieven moeten we tevens enkele noodzakelijke nuancerende kanttekeningen maken.

In een volgend hoofdstuk zullen wij dan de aangekondigde eigen lezing uit de doeken doen, daarbij waar mogelijk steunend op huidige goede inzichten.

6.2. Een overzicht van bestaande perspectieven op het Hooglied.

6.2.1. Verschillende aanvaardbare perspectieven.

6.2.1.1. Een goddelijke liefdeslezing in het Hooglied bij I. Driessen.

Dat het Hooglied in de eerste plaats over liefde gaat, ligt voor de hand. Buiten (de superintellectueel) S. J. Luis Stadelmann die poneert dat het Hooglied moet gelezen worden binnen de context van de restauratie van de monarchie van koning David na de ballingschap99, is elke commentator het hierover over eens. De vraag is hoe men deze liefde benoemt: is het enkel een gewone menselijke liefde of is het een liefde geïnspireerd door God? De derde mogelijkheid, een allegorische liefde tussen God en de mens/volk/Kerk wordt besproken en als mogelijkheid verworpen.

99 L. STADELMANN, *Love and Politics. A New Commentary on the Song of Songs*, New Jersey, 1992, p. 2.

In de belangrijke pericoop over de liefde die sterker is als de dood, komen we de enige verwijzing naar God tegen: “Haar vlammen, vlammen van vuur, een goddelijke gloed”100. Mulder vertaalt met ‘vlammen van JHWH’101. Rozelaar vertaalt met ‘een vlam Gods’.102 Voor de rest is er in de hele tekst geen enkele literaire verwijzing naar God.

Een goddelijke liefdeslezing betekent dat in de erkende menselijke liefde in het Hooglied de aanwezigheid van God gezien wordt: “Maar laten we vooral niet vergeten het lied ‘letterlijk’ te verstaan: als een liefdeslied tussen twee mensen die geschapen zijn naar Gods beeld. De liefde van God impliceert immers elke menselijke liefde.”103 Driessen stelt dat elke menselijke liefde haar oorsprong in God vindt. Theologisch gezien lijkt dit juist zodat Driessen terecht met Rozenzweig mag besluiten dat het Hooglied, als een paradigma van de menselijke door God geïnspireerde liefde, een “… kernboek van de openbaring ...” is. Doorheen de verschillende liefdesscènes en –gedachten tussen de geliefden van het Hooglied wordt de liefde van God voor de mens geëvoceerd. Of kernachtig uitgedrukt: “De Bijbel staat vol beelden over Gods ‘tastbare’ liefde – het Hooglied is er op zich al een beeld van”104.

Dit fenomenale minimum aan theologische duiding is echter ook het maximum. In het boek van Driessen wil zij de lezer uitnodigen “ …de inhoud van het lied in je hart te beitelen.”105. Ze wil dit doen, en slaagt daar ook veel in, door een zogenaamde closereading vanuit haar eigen ervaringen als moeder, vrouw, vriendin, enzovoort. Dit geeft mooie en aansprekende beelden en overwegingen. Een voorbeeld hiervan is de bespreking van het fameuze vers 1,5-6 waarin de vrouwelijke geliefde van zichzelf zegt dat zij donker is, maar bekoorlijk. Driessen geeft hier wijze woorden bij: ”In en door de ogen van de ander worden we vroeg of laat geconfronteerd met onze schaduwzijde… Ook al behoren de kwetsuren tot de jaren die voorbij zijn, tot de periode waarin we onze geliefde misschien nog niet kenden, ze zullen stuk voor stuk de kleine en grote stenen worden op onze weg van liefde”106. Of dit exegetisch een juiste uitleg is, doet er eigenlijk niet toe. Zelfs indien Driessen niet juist is, is zij toch waar, in een pragmatisch begrip van waarheid: we begrijpen deze duiding als iets dat we ervaren hebben of kunnen ervaren, en aanvaarden de levensles die Driessen erbij geeft als een passende waardevolle reactie. Op deze manier staan er zeer veel waarheden in haar boekje maar, van de weeromstuit, ook geregeld bedenkingen die er als bij de haren bijgesleurd lijken.

We vinden ook helemaal niets mis aan het feit dat Driessen allerlei verbanden legt met teksten uit het NT. Dat werkt verhelderend en geloofsverstevigend inzoverre verwezen wordt naar basiswaarden doorheen zowel OT als NT. We denken dan onder andere aan diverse Psalmen en vooral Paulus’ beroemde liefdeswoorden in 1 Korinthe 13,7 die door Driessen ook geciteerd worden.

Het is echter iets te ver te beweren dat de tekst een uitgangspunt vormt “..om na te denken over de vraag hoe je vandaag een liefdevolle relatie met God en mens kunt ontplooien.”107 Ze heeft het ook nog over “… het Hooglied dat beweegt tussen God en jou ...”. Deze oproep tot nadenken over een liefdevolle relatie met God gaat echter niet vanuit het Hooglied zonder in specifieke interpretaties te verzeilen. Zo spreekt Driessen in verband met vers 2 ;15 (over

100 Vers 7,6 in DRIJVERS, *Hooglied,* p. 93.
101 MULDER, *Hooglied*, p. 67.
102 ROZELAAR, *Hooglied*, p. 120.
103 DRIESSEN, *Wat ben je mooi mijn lief*, p. 9.
104 *Ibid.,* p. 52.
105 *Ibid.*, p. 10.
106 *Ibid.*, p. 28.
107 *Ibid.*.

de vossen die de wijngaard vernielen) over " …de Heilige Geest, de Kerk ! De Geest (NB: volgens Driessen gesymboliseerd door het koor) waarschuwt voor kapers op de kust, concurrenten die de liefde, zo mooi aan het openbloeien, kunnen bedreigen."108 Op zich is deze lezing valabel, echter is het onmogelijk om hier van een Heilige Geest of de Kerk te spreken. Met betrekking tot 4,16 – 5; 1a lezen we: "Het meisje bidt hier zowaar tot de Heilige Geest !"109 Hiervoor is ons inziens niet eens een tekstuele evidentie, laat staan dat het gebruikte begrip te verantwoorden is. Ook het eerder geciteerde vers rond de donkerte van de vrouwelijke geliefde, wordt door Driessen zonder tekstuele grond geëxtrapoleerd: "Voor God mag je nog zo bruin of zo zwart of zo bleek zijn als maar mogelijk is, als je vraagt dat Hij naar je kijkt, word je bekoorlijk onder zijn blik."110

Zonder dieper op de algemene theologische achtergronden van Driessen in te gaan, moeten we toch wijzen op haar opvallende interpretatie van het beroemde vers 8,6-7 ("Draag mij als een zegel op je hart…"): "In de volgende verzen - de climax van het lied - wordt de absolute liefde bezongen."111 Ze zegt ook: "Het Hooglied wil een lofzang zijn op de absolute liefde"112. Onafgezien van het feit dat daar geen enkele evidentie voor terug te vinden is in de hele tekst, willen wij scherp reageren op deze hypostasering van de liefde. Het is eigenaardig dat waar Driessen zich van in het begin afzet tegen de Platoonse val in de dualiteit lichaam/ziel, ze in een andere Platoonse val belandt - van de idealisering van de liefde. Zeker is het Hooglied een lofzang op de liefde, en in een zeer geslaagde vorm. Maar het gaat over een gesitueerde liefde tussen twee mensen waaraan bepaalde beschrijvingen gewijd zijn (qua afkomst, uiterlijk,..). Twee contingente mensen die elkaar bezingen, en niet de liefde op zich. Twee mensen die door hun plaats in de Bijbel en de wereldliteratuur voorbeelden van geliefden geworden zijn. Deze liefde bestaat ook niet buiten deze mensen, tenzij in de goddelijke inspiratie ervan (overigens kan men volgens bepaalde auteurs in bepaalde vormen van deze liefde een deelname voelen aan het goddelijke). Deze liefde bestaat niet op zich. Dé liefde bestaat niet. Theologisch betekent dit immers dat een gehypostaseerde liefde samenvalt met God (God is liefde), wat de consequentie heeft dat men God dan kan laten vallen. Denken we aan de beroemde koppeling bij Spinoza: 'Deus sive Natura'. Het is dan nog één stap slechts om de 'Deus' in deze disjunctie te laten vallen en alleen de 'Natura' over te houden – een stap die in de 18de eeuw ook dramatisch gezet is. De 'liefde' kan tegenover God enkel als een soort van kwaliteit verschijnen (onder de andere als rechter, koning, enzovoort). Deze kwaliteit kan als de belangrijkste beschouwd worden (wat in het NT zeker het geval is) maar is niet uitputtend. De propositie "God = liefde" moet dan ook letterlijk logisch één-zijdig beschouwd worden; God is onder andere liefde, God is dus nog door andere eigenschappen betekend. Maar het omgekeerde, wat in een gelijkheid op hetzelfde moet neerkomen, nl. "liefde is God", kan dus niet. De hypostasering van de liefde, de absolute liefde, is dus de facto een weg naar het ongeloof. In een NT-perspectief zou men kunnen stellen dat juist de liefde alle gevaren van het gouden kalf in zich draagt. Juist het enorm disparate beeld van God in het OT is een garantie tegen deze logische (en allicht ook Westers psychologische) valkuil. Dat het Hooglied, als deel van het Oud Testament, in de omgekeerde logica van Driessen ingeschakeld wordt, is dan ook ironisch – maar ook gevaarlijk. Het idee dat het Hooglied een lofzang op de absolute liefde wil zijn, moet dan ook ten stelligste van tafel geveegd worden en kan niet gerelativeerd worden als één van Driessens pragmatische 'waarheden'.

108 *Ibid.,* p. 67.
109 *Ibid.,* p. 93.
110 *Ibid.,* p. 29.
111 *Ibid.,* p. 130.
112 *Ibid.,* p. 129.

Ter verschoning van deze wetenschappelijk minder verantwoorde aanpak van Driessen zouden we tenslotte kunnen stellen dat zij niet uitgaat van een wetenschappelijk publiek, maar zich inderdaad ineens richt tot het publiek van mijmerende en mediterende gelovigen dat volledig vertrouwd is met de associërende begrippen en deze ook niet als storend thematiseert. Driessen wil vanuit haar herkenbare levens- en geloofservaringen van het Hooglied niet alleen een lees- maar ook een levenservaring maken. Het werk is ondertussen trouwens reeds heruitgegeven, wat toch op succes wijst, en kreeg zonder meer gunstige kritieken. Anderzijds is Driessen in zekere zin haar eigen methodologische slachtoffer vermits zij chronologisch het Hooglied becommentarieert in zeer kleine pericopen. Dat werkt een badinerende en associërende stijl ongetwijfeld in de hand.

We kunnen concluderen dat ondanks een onhoudbare christologische interpretatie van diverse passages, het werk van Driessen aantrekkelijk is door een bijzonder menselijke manier van lezen en vele menselijke waarheden bevat. Zij gebruikt eerder het Hooglied om er haar dikwijls zeer inspirerende en waardevolle overdenkingen over liefde aan op te hangen, dan dat het een boekje over het Hooglied is. Vandaar ook allicht de titel: “Wat ben je mooi mijn lief! Spiritualiteit van de liefde op de tonen van het Hooglied”. Anderzijds is het wat tegenstrijdig dat Driessen in zoveel noten naar wetenschappelijke studies rond het Hooglied refereert. Haar boek zit wat tussen wal en schip. Ze wil tegelijk varen en duiken. Dat de Grote Roerganger God met zijn Motor van de Liefde wordt vereenzelvigd is echter volledig uit den boze – tenminste voor een ... logische gelovige.

6.2.1.2. J. Ridderbos, een pastoraal toverbos.

Het boek van Jan Ridderbos “Het Hooglied. Een loflied op de liefde, met een dubbele moraal” is zeker niet het wetenschappelijk meest inspirerende en geïnspireerde boek over het Hooglied (zo zijn we nog altijd op zoek op zoek naar de betekenis van de ‘dubbele moraal’ uit de titel), maar is bijzonder aangenaam om lezen – en horen. Inderdaad, het kan gehoord worden, want het is geconcipieerd om voor te lezen op de NCRV-radio.

De radiolezingen vonden plaats op zondag, begonnen op de achtste Paasdag113 of Beloken Pasen, en duurden tot en met Pinksteren. De serie werd op de Drieëenheidszondag werd de serie afgesloten met een lezing van 1 Korinthe 13, het Hooglied van Paulus. Elke leessessie, die als model zou kunnen ingebed worden in een gewone liturgie, had ongeveer dezelfde volgorde. We geven het voorbeeld van Beloken Pasen: Orgelspel + Inleiding + (passend) lied+ schriftlezing (Hooglied 1) + (passend) lied + overdenking (preek) + Motet + gebed + (passend) lied + orgelspel. In het boekje zelf wordt als passend tekstfragment uit Het Hooglied een selectie uit de bewerkte editie van Judith Herzberg genomen. In de inleiding wordt het thema van de dag aangeboord met een verwijzing naar het Hooglied. Voor Beloken Pasen betekent dit dat aangegeven wordt vanwaar het woord ‘beloken’ komt (luiken, sluiten) en wordt vanuit deze ponering een relevante associatie met het Hooglied gemaakt. Ridderbos is hier nogal vrij: “Net als de hemelse bruidegom heeft ook de bruidegom van het Hooglied een geheim. Hij heeft zich verborgen, verstopt. Zijn bruid zingt een liedje van verlangen. Zij probeert hem zijn geheim te ontfutselen”.114

113 “Volgens een oude Joodse gewoonte wordt het Hooglied in de synagoge gelezen op de achtste dag van het Paasfeest”, RIDDERBOS, *Hooglied*, p. 12.
114 *Ibid.,* p. 16-7.

Aan dit ene voorbeeld kan men twee zaken reeds zien: elke sessie is een aangenaam en verzorgd geheel, en het is niet direct de grote theologie. Het is wel zo dat we de sessie niet kunnen horen; bij het boekje zit geen CD. Als toegift zijn er wel enkele houtsneden. En hoewel Ridderbos soms zeer rake opmerkingen maken over de achtergronden van de tekst, zit hij er o.i. meermalen wetenschappelijk naast. Maar door de sympathieke en stimulerende manier van schrijven/spreken stoort dit niet; zijn preken spreken aan. Zijn inhouden staan wel op een hoger niveau dan bij Driessen. Het boekje van Ridderbos is niet zo personaliserend, heeft meer mooie gedachten en is veel beter geschreven. Ridderbos weet zijn publiek aan te spreken en gebruikt daarvoor hedendaagse algemeen gekende beelden.115 Het boekje heeft een pastoraal nut, maar zou ook door anderen kunnen gelezen worden, omwille van zijn vele leerzame woorden "…zelfs voor iemand die niets met het geloof uitstaande heeft"116, net zoals Ridderbos over het Hooglied zelf beweert.

Ridderbos geeft passende aanvullingen uit het Nieuw Testament bij zijn beschouwingen rond het Hooglied. Het is ook logisch dat zijn sessies eindigen bij de fameuze liefdestekst van Paulus. Ridderbos geeft echter geen christologische lezing; het gaat eerder om een (inhoudelijk waardevolle) nevenschikking dan om een (chronologische) onderschikking (Hooglied vanuit NT te begrijpen).

We geven hier vooral een eerder algemene indruk en geen diepgaande analyse van het boekje van Ridderbos. In het kader van deze studie zou het veel te ver leiden om alle gedachten van Ridderbos rond het Hooglied en al zijn associaties errond op een theologisch justitieschaaltje te gaan afwegen. In elk geval maakt hij weinig uitschuivers (cfr. zijn spreken over bruid en bruidegom). Wat in de eerste plaats telt is de sympathieke en goed gelukte pastorale aanpak die als een model in de liturgie kan staan. Eén vraag hadden wij Ridderbos hier nog willen stellen. Terecht haalt hij de oude idee aan dat het Hooglied niet als een straatliedje kan gezongen worden. En zingen is in de gemeenschap zeer belangrijk: "Een kerkdienst zonder zingen is onvoorstelbaar. Van de hemel weten we weinig. Maar één ding schijnt zeker te zijn: in de hemel staat een orgel."117 Dit is overigens meteen ook een mooi voorbeeld van de schrijftrant van Ridderbos. Onze vraag is dan: waar er in elke sessie driemaal gezongen wordt, hoe zou Ridderbos het Hooglied zingen?

6.2.1.3. De begeertedimensie in het Hooglied volgens Walsh. Een juist maar te vergaand standpunt.

Omdat dit een recent en interessant inzicht op het Hooglied is, refereren wij zeer kort naar het werk van Walsh, "Exquisite Desire. Religion, the Erotic, and the Song of Songs". Uit onze titel reeds blijkt dat het aangebrachte standpunt interessant is of juist en tegelijk (veel) te ver schiet. Walsh stelt immers met betrekking tot de begeertedimensie in het Hooglied dat "Desire is about wanting more than about getting"118 en het bijbelboek is "…focused on the experience of yearning, not its relief "119 (onze cursivering). Dit volstrekte unieke standpunt kan op twee manieren ondergraven worden. Ten eerste vanuit een immanente tekstanalyse van het boek van Walsh doorheen een vergelijking van dit speciale standpunt op de evidenties die de auteur in het Hooglied vermeent te vinden. Ten tweede vanuit moraaltheologisch

115 *Ibid*., "Miss World", p. 44.
116 *Ibid*., p. 44.
117 *Ibid*., p. 42.
118 WALSH, *Exquisite Desire*, p. 22.
119 *Ibid*, p. 23.

perspectief120 waarbij doorheen een analyse van het Hooglied door middel van een uitgewerkte theorie over volwassen seksualiteitsbeleving de bevindingen van Walsh getoetst worden. We kunnen nu reeds stellen dat Walsh én te weinig evidentie heeft in het Hooglied om zijn standpunt te verdedigen én dat vanuit een moraaltheologie scherpe bezwaren moeten geuit worden tegenover deze al te zeer op begeerte gespitste interpretatie. De begeerte is in het hooglied uiteraard fundamenteel aanwezig maar volstaat niet als sleutel tot het begrijpen van de tekst. Toch biedt Walsh tal van interessante beschouwingen rond het Hooglied waardoor het een waardevolle studie blijkt en geeft het door verbanden te leggen met andere begeertepassages in het Oud Testament een stuk tegenwerking tegen de huidige tendens om het Hooglied enkel werelds te lezen. Concreet komen we op dit werk terug in punt 7.2.2.2. "Volstaat de begeerte van het Hooglied?"

6.2.2. Verschillende onaanvaardbare perspectieven

6.2.2.1. De allegorie van het Hooglied.

Belangrijk uitgangspunt: de zin van een allegorie

Los van de vraag of een allegorie (nog) logisch kan, is het essentieel te weten of het nog wel nodig is, of ze enige zin heeft! Voor ons christenen kunnen we het Hooglied lezen op twee manieren; ofwel is God de bruidegom en is de bruid het Joodse volk; ofwel is de bruidegom Christus en is de bruid de Kerk. Wie zit in een moderne Kerk nog op iets dergelijks te wachten? Is deze vraag voor een moderne gelovige überhaupt nog zinvol? We denken van niet. Men zal nog nauwelijks een gelovige vinden die de relevantie inziet van dergelijke vergelijking, laat staan dat hij deze zelfs zal weten! Toch vindt men flarden van deze lezing her en der terug in christelijk geïnspireerde beschouwingen. We zitten toch niet wachten op een bruidegom als Christus, maar eerder op zijn Blijde Boodschap. Om dit te bewijzen zou men ofwel eenvoudigweg een brede enquête kunnen houden, ofwel ook een studie kunnen maken van de moderne visie op de relatie God en Kerk en op de kracht van het sacrament van het huwelijk in een tijd waarin ook echtscheiding pastoraal aanvaard wordt.

Dergelijke allegorische lezing lijkt ons ten opzichte van de intrinsieke schoonheid van het Hooglied ook eerder een voorgebakken abdicatie te zijn. Hebben we zoveel intellectuele, exegetische ballast nodig om juist deze tekst te lezen? We denken van niet en bovendien zullen we zien dat er nogal wat addertjes onder het allegorische gras verstopt zitten.

Diverse bijbelwetenschappers zien een belangrijk verband tussen allegorisering én canonisering van de tekst: "By the time of Rabbi Akiba (50-132 CE), the allegorical elaboration has supplanted the literal one and has become the favourite one and even the only legitimate interpretation of the SoS, so that R. Akiba considered the book to be one of the utmost religious importance…"121 en vervolgens kon gecanoniseerd worden (onze cursivering). Keel komt echter tot een tegenovergestelde relatie tussen deze elementen: "Allegorizing presupposes that the song had achieved canonical status in its 'profane' sense ; without this status, allegorizing makes no sense …"122 Op deze fascinerende tegenstelling gaan we niet in. Beslissend is dat, ondanks diverse Joodse literaire lezingen in hun

120 We steunen ons daarbij op de theorie van R. BURGGRAEVE (zie onderdelen 7.1.2. en 7.2.)
121 A. BRENNER, *The Song of Songs*, Sheffield, 1989, p. 69.
122 O. KEEL, *The Song of Songs. A Continental Commentary,* Minneapolis, 1994 (1986). Translated by F. J. GAISER., p. 7.

receptiegeschiedenis van het Hooglied, nu nog steeds de allegorische lezing in het Jodendom overheerst en dus een intellectuele beschouwing afdoende rechtvaardigt.

Wat is een allegorie?

Nemen we de vertrouwde 'Van Dale' bij de hand: "Voorstelling van onstoffelijke zaken en van betrekkingen door personen en stoffelijke zaken en door de handelingen ervan. Bijvoorbeeld: grijsaard met zeis = allegorie van de tijd. In de stijlleer: voortgezette en uitgewerkte vergelijking (metafora), proza of dichtstuk dat bepaalde toestanden of gebeurtenissen suggereert door parallel lopende voorstellingen uit een andere sfeer. Bijvoorbeeld: Vondels Lucifer als politieke allegorie tegen Filips II". Onmiddellijk vallen hier de woorden 'uitgewerkt' en 'parallel' op.

Vijf argumenten tegen een allegorische lezing.

1. De eenzijdigheid van de liefde in het Hooglied.

Hoewel de liefde tussen de vrouw en de herder op heel veel verschillende manieren getoond en bezongen wordt, blijft het een liefde die in hun relatie blijft. Enkel daar waar de verzorgster (in de lezing van Stoop) de verliefde vrouw bijstaat, daar waar de vrouw haar trouw moet bewijzen tegenover de herder, bij de verleidingspogingen van Salomo, daar waar de broers bang zijn voor het gemakkelijke verlies van hun zus, wordt deze liefde wel maatschappelijk erkend. Het blijft echter de verliefde liefde, de liefde tussen twee (tortel)duiven. In heel het Hooglied is de menselijke liefde enkel liefde tussen volwassenen. Inzoverre er al sprake is van ware liefde, en niet noodzakelijk enkel hofmakerij aan het werk is, is er zeker geen sprake van naastenliefde, liefde tussen kinderen, liefde tussen ouders en kinderen, tussen vrienden,… De radicaliteit van de liefde in het Nieuwe Testament is hier ver te bespeuren. We hebben uiteraard geen enkele pretentie tegen de breedte van het onderwerp van het boekje. We vallen niet in een christologische, hineininterpreterende val. Dit gebeurt veelvuldig. Maar het is en blijft een beperkte (toepassing van de) idee van de liefde. Deze liefde is dus een liefde onder de liefdes. Als één mogelijkheid kan hij dus geen startbasis zijn voor een projectie in een allegorie van de liefde tussen God en mens. Gods liefde kan immers niet beperkt zijn tot een liefde tussen volwassenen, tot deze verliefde liefde. Ze moet breder zijn, of ze is niet. Scherper gezegd: er is geen enkel model van menselijke liefde dat op zich een basis van allegorie kan zijn.

2. De onmogelijkheid van een allegorische lezing van het Hooglied door een gebrek aan logische parallellie.

Het net geciteerde woord parallellie duidt op een voorgezette logica binnen de ene betekenisveld van waaruit geallegoriseerd wordt naar het betekenisveld van de allegorie zelf. Essentieel is dat de relaties vanuit het vertrekkend betekenisveld identiek blijven in het betekenisveld van de allegorie. Waar de betekeniseenheden veranderen in een projectie, blijft de onderlinge relatie dezelfde. Dit is niet mogelijk m.b.t het Hooglied. De belangrijkste gevoelsrelatie in het Hooglied is de wederzijdse liefde. Dat is wel projecteerbaar of afbeeldbaar naar een allegorie waarbij er dan een wederkerige liefde tussen God en mens (zeg het Joodse volk, zeg de Kerk, ..) ontstaat, en aanvaardt wordt door duidelijke oudtestamentische evidentie van deze liefde (op talloze plaatsen in het Oude Testament). Op dit vlak is er een correcte bijectie (projectie enerzijds en inspiratie anderzijds) van de tekst naar de allegorische context en terug.

De machtsrelatie tussen de geliefden is in het Hooglied de facto onbestaande. Er is geen patriarchale relatie. Er is een duidelijke gelijkwaardigheid. Deze gelijkwaardigheid wordt door vele moderne commentatoren als revolutionair in de Bijbelse canon gezien en wordt door moderne moraaltheologen als een voorwaarde voor een liefdevolle relatie gezien.123 Deze relatie, die voorwaarde is van de geschetste liefdesrelatie, kan echter niet geprojecteerd worden in de betekenissfeer van de allegorie om de eenvoudige reden dat er van een gelijkwaardigheid tussen God en alle andere mogelijke subjecten (volk, Kerk, persoon) absoluut geen sprake is. Integendeel: "God is the one who has supreme dominion…" En sterker nog: "The experience of God that the wisdom writings presuppose is called 'the fear of God'"124. Denken we hierbij ook aan het tremendum van het Heilige (en God is Heilig) in het werk van Rudolf Otto. Tussen de geliefden is er uiteraard geen angst voor de andere, in de ene noch in de andere richting (in één richting zou reeds voldoende zijn als grond voor allegorisering), noch is er een onderschikking. En de eventuele tegenwerping dat er in de coïtale gemeenschap van een liefdevolle relatie terecht sprake kan zijn van een tremendum, is naast de kwestie van de voorafgaandelijke essentiële gelijkheidsvoorwaarde binnen deze relatie en al haar mogelijke expressievormen. Op het voor de liefdesrelatie voorwaardelijke vlak van de gelijkwaardige machtsrelatie is een bijectie dus niet correct, en dus is een allegorie van het Hooglied in de geschetste zin logisch onmogelijk.

Voor degenen die hier evenwel Jezus willen betrekken in een poging tot allegorisering, waarbij Jezus in verhouding staat tot de Kerk of individuele gelovigen, herhalen wij ons logisch principe "het eerdere wordt niet door het latere verklaard". Men kan in deze context wel logisch allegoriseren, want bij onze relatie tot Jezus is er geen sprake van een superioriteit of angst in deze of gene richting, maar het is enkel een intellectuele spielerei en heeft niet de minste theologische betekenis voor een begrip of gebruik van het Hooglied.

Hier rijst evenwel een ander probleem. Indien de onderlinge liefde tussen mensen, omwille van de voorwaarde van de gelijkwaardigheid tussen geliefden niet kan geallegoriseerd worden tussen een volk/Kerk en God, omwille van het feit van de onderschikking aan God, een niet-gelijkwaardigheid, hoe kan er dan überhaupt sprake zijn van liefde tussen God en mens ? Zelfs in een gewone, niet-geallegoriseerde context heeft de gelovige mens de Bijbelse plicht God lief te hebben (zowel in het Oud als Nieuw Testament), vanuit een onderdanige positie (duidelijk in het Oud Testament).

Stel: 'Liefde = p'
en 'gelijkwaardigheid = q'
en 'de relatie 'daaruit volgt' = →"
en "≈ = niet".

Vermits gelijkwaardigheid een voorwaarde is van liefde, hebben we, indien er liefde is, ook gelijkwaardigheid of: 'p → q'.

Formeel logisch is deze propositie gelijkwaardig aan '≈q → ≈p'. Dat betekent: indien er geen gelijkwaardigheid is, is er geen liefde (zonder gelijkwaardigheid geen liefde).

123 R. BURGGRAEVE, *Zinvolle seksualiteit. Een integraal-relationele achtergrondvisie in christelijk perspectief*, 3de ed., Leuven, 1985.
124 D.N. FREEDMAN (ed.), *The Anchor Bible Dictionary III,* New York, 1992, lemma God (OT), p. 1047.

Dat zou dan willen zeggen, gegeven het feit dat er in het Oud testament geen gelijkwaardigheid is tussen God en mensen, er geen liefde tussen God en mensen zou zijn. We zitten dus met een ernstig probleem. En dit probleem blijft ook gelden indien wij de andere vormen van liefde in het geding nemen, of onder de ene noemer van de naastenliefde. Het heeft ons altijd al geïntrigeerd hoe Sint-Maarten op zijn paard blijft zitten wanneer hij zijn mantel in twee snijdt ; afstijgen is naast de snijdaad de echte boodschap !

Vooreerst kunnen we hier opmerken dat het uitgangspunt van de allegorie een relatie tussen twee personen is, de man en de vrouw, meestal meer specifiek een huwelijk. Het huwelijk als symbolische band tussen God en Israël werd trouwens veel gebruikt in de bijbel (Hosea 1-3; Jeremia 3; Jesaja 50,1; 54,5, 6). Deze vrouw en man hebben in hun relatie altijd een gevoels- en machtscomponent. In het geval van het Hooglied is dit een liefdevolle relatie en een gelijkwaardige machtsrelatie. In het geval van de patriarchale maatschappij die de Joodse gemeenschap was, was deze machtsrelatie binnen het huwelijk een machtsrelatie sensu stricto. Dat wil zeggen dat de man bovengeschikt was aan de vrouw. Op deze manier kan er eigenlijk geen sprake zijn van een liefdesrelatie (we nemen voor de eenvoud aan dat deze machtsrelatie bij de mannen ook geïnternaliseerd werd). Waarschijnlijk ook daarom kenden de Israëlieten de idee van een superieure God, als een metafoor die rechtsreeks uit de duidelijke culturele definities van de eigen maatschappij kwam.

Rond deze idee van de relatie God/mens in het kader van de liefde is de volgende opmerking van LaCocque revelerend: “Now, the equality of the sexes is formulated by the poet in the very terms that describe the mutual relationship between God and Israel in Lev. 26, 12, among other texts (Israel is God’s people, and YHWH is Israel’s God).”125 Welnu, wat in deze pericoop wordt uitgedrukt is een verzekering van een exclusieve relatie tussen de partijen God en Israël; ze zijn historisch aan elkaar verbonden. Er staat echter helemaal niet dat er sprake is van een gelijkwaardigheid en een gelijkwaardigheid is bovendien absoluut géén wezenskenmerk van een exclusieve relatie. De bewering van LaCocque is bijgevolg manifest onjuist. Dit zegt trouwens ook al iets over de betrouwbaarheid van zijn intertekstuele benadering. Hij kan dan ook onmogelijk het volgende concluderen: “That leaves no room for the suzerain-vassal relationship emphasized elsewhere in Israel’s tradition.”126 De vraag van LaCocque zou dan juist moéten zijn waarom er dan op andere plaatsen van dergelijke ondergeschikte relatie überhaupt sprake is en hij zou dat dan moéten weerleggen op zich (weer een argument tegen de intertekstuele methode). Op deze manier wordt een kleine tekst als het Hooglied werkelijk met alle zonnige vruchten Israëls overladen.

Men kan zich hier dan afvragen wat het liefdesbegrip, zowel op het vlak van de relatie in een patriarchale context als in de relatie God/mensen, eigenlijk ook maar kan inhouden. Het woord is er wel maar het lijkt eerder de richting van respect, gehoorzaamheid, hoogstens een soort genegenheid in te houden (die op zich misschien genoeg kunnen zijn voor een vrij gelukkig leven). Met LaCocque moeten we dan wel concluderen dat het Hooglied revolutionair, subversief is omdat man en vrouw in hun onderlinge partnerkeuze gelijkgeschakeld worden. Het introduceert niet meer of minder dan de gelijkwaardigheid in de menselijke relaties en de mogelijkheid tot waarachtige liefde. De betekenis van de tekst is dan veel meer dan een lofzang over de liefde, een lofzang die vroeger dan enkel zou kunnen begrepen zijn als een lofzang op de verliefdheid (die nadien toch zou gedisciplineerd worden in een ondergeschikt, dienend verband).

125 LACOCQUE, *Romance, She Wrote*, p. 157.
126 *Ibid.*.

Men zou nu kunnen zeggen: dit is een nieuwtestamentisch perspectief binnen het OT, maar hier moet men toch enorm mee opletten. Talloos worden de beroemde woorden van Paulus in 1 Korinthe 13 aangehaald (zie boven bij Ridderbos). Wat daarbij nooit wordt aangehaald, zijn de verzen uit 1 Korinthe 11,7-9: "Een man hoeft niets op te zetten, want hij is het beeld van God en een afstraling van zijn glorie. Maar de vrouw straalt de glorie van de man uit. Want de man is niet ontstaan uit de vrouw, maar de vrouw uit de man en de man is niet geschapen om de man, maar de vrouw om de man."127 Ondanks het bijna 'sussende' van de beroemde liefdeswoorden, lijken deze woorden ook een patriarchale verhouding weer te geven (vanuit een Grieks-Romeinse achtergrond dan).

Indien we dus tot een godsbeeld moeten komen waaruit de angst, de ongelijkwaardigheid is verdwenen, waarin de gelijkwaardigheid tussen God en de mens tot stand is gekomen, dan kunnen we wel allegoriseren, maar dan komen we toch tot een eigenaardige situatie. Intuïtief kan deze gelijkwaardigheid immers moeilijk begrepen worden.

De ene mogelijkheid tot het allegoriseren van een liefdesbegrip binnen een menselijke schaal zou zijn een beperkt liefdesbegrip te nemen waarbij door de specifieke antropologische condities er sowieso sprake is van een ongelijkwaardigheid. Het enige voorbeeld hiervan zou de ouder/kind-relatie zijn, bijzonder in de vroegere stadia. De bedoeling van deze opvoedingssituatie is echter juist de ontvoogding van het kind, zodat ook dit restmodel nauwelijks hanteerbaar is. In dit geval zou men dan ook logisch moeten beweren dat de Joden die allegoriseren zich vergissen van liefdesbegrip. Onze principiële vorm van redeneren is niet alleen universeler maar ook beleefder …

3. De onwettelijkheid van een allegorische lezing van het Hooglied door het verbod aan verbeelding in het Oud Testament.

Op diverse plaatsen wordt de schoonheid van een van de geliefden bezongen in een zogenaamde wasf. Falk wijst op deze uitzonderlijkheid: "While wasfs are not uncommon in modern Arabic poetry, in ancient Hebrew literature they appear only in the Song of Songs."128 (onze cursivering). Wasfs zijn beschrijvingen, ofwel van boven naar onder ofwel omgekeerd, van de geliefde. Ze geven dus een selectie weer van indrukken. Hoewel deze selectie maatschappelijk geconditioneerd is door een vormelijke afspraak (beschrijving volgt schema boven/onder) is zij vrij in de keuze van de beelden, de vergelijkingen. Op die manier krijgt men een beeld, zij het meer of minder metaforisch, van het subject. Hoewel de mens naar Gods beeld geschapen is, hoewel we van God een ongelooflijk aantal beelden hebben in de zin van sociale rollen, kennen we geen (uitvoerige) beschrijvingen die min of meer samenhangend zijn (zij het van … boven naar onder of omgekeerd) van God in de Bijbel.

Het beroemde verbod op afbeelding van God in het Oud Testament heeft niet alleen historische weerklanken gehad bij de Islam, de Oosterse iconoclasmestrijd en de Westerse beeldenstorm maar zou ook consequent moeten toegepast worden op de allegorie van het Hooglied. Gelet op de historische resultaten van dit probleem is de volgende redenering eigenlijk alleen van toepassing op Joden en Protestanten.

127 KBS & NBG, *Groot nieuws Bijbel,* Haarlem/boxtel, 1983.
128 FALK, *Love Lyrics from the Bible*, p. 80.

Jesaja 40, 18-19 stelt het duidelijk: "(18) Met wie is hij te vergelijken, wat komt hem nabij? Een godenbeeld? (19)129 Dat wordt door een kunstenaar gegoten, door een edelsmid met goud overtrokken en met zilveren kettinkjes versierd" (Groot Nieuws Bijbel, 1983, p. 845). God is niet te vergelijken, en daarmee is een beschrijving bedoeld. Want uiteraard kennen we talloze beelden van God, onder de vorm van de Verlosser, diverse rollen als de Koning, de Rechter, of andere beroepen. Hier is precies bedoeld, in de analogie met de edelsmid, waarbij de opmerking van de zilveren kettinkjes bijzonder instructief blijkt, dat er geen precieze afbeeldingen van God mogen gemaakt worden. Welnu, als God allegorisch moet worden voorgesteld als de "hij" van het Hooglied, dan moet Hij, God, door de aangename trechter van een schitterende menselijke wasf in verzen 5,10-16! De vrouw is precies en overdadig in haar beschrijving van haar mannelijke geliefde. Dit kan uiteraard maar mag echter niet getransponeerd worden door het Joodse (en Protestantse) verbod op een beschrijving van God.

In het algemeen, en dus ook in de wasfs, is er in het Hooglied ".. noch een directe, noch een indirecte aanduiding van manlijke en/of vrouwlijke pudenda aanwezig."130 Het is een kenmerk van erotische poëzie, in tegenstelling tot pure literaire pornografie, om het erotische door middel van aanvaardbare zij het voor ons soms nog moeilijk verstaanbare metaforen te verbeelden: "Zo verschijnen ook in het Hooglied de minnarijen van de beide gelieven, dankzij de daarvoor gebruikte beeldende taal, als een steeds aanvaardbare en dikwijls charmante uitdrukking van hun innige, oprechte en wederzijdse toegenegenheid."131 Via de metaforen zijn m.a.w. de beschreven onderdelen van de geliefden, als ogen, wangen, armen, lippen, benen, enz., OOK beschreven en maken zij ook een kennistheoretische selectie van de verliefde ervaringswereld van de vrouwelijke geliefde uit. Het mogelijk tegenargument dat metaforen wereldvrij, in de analoge zin van waardenvrij, zouden zijn, en op die manier kunnen geallegoriseerd worden naar een God, wordt op deze wijze neergehaald.

Kenschetsend voor een ons inziens onwetenschappelijke lezing van dergelijke verzen is de analyse van de Lutheraanse geestelijke Mitchell. Eerder wezen we er reeds op dat hij het Hooglied vanuit de komst van Jezus interpreteert en dat dit wetenschappelijk onhoudbaar is. Ter illustratie geven we twee citaten weer van de lezing van Mitchell van deze belangrijke wasf van de vrouwelijke geliefde over haar geliefde. We moeten daarbij opmerken dat Mitchell overtuigd is dat het Hooglied én geschreven is door Salomon én over hem handelt: "Christ is the only one who truly measures up in the glorious portrait in Song 5 : 9-16"132 en "The application to King Solomon of natural metaphors associated with the humble Shulammite may imply Solomon's self-abasement and condescension, his kenotic choice te become like her (sic). If so, then this dynamic may be compared to the incarnation of Jesus Christ, who emptied himself of the prerogatives of his divine majesty and became a creature according to his human nature, like the creatures he came to save…"133 (zijn cursivering). Naar onze mening lijken dit toch werkelijk bij de haren gegrepen interpretaties die een gewone lezing van het schitterende Hooglied overwoekeren met onnodig associërend en zwaarwichtig getheologiseer. De toon van Mitchell wordt echter ronduit agressief wanneer hij, in verband met het al dan niet erotisch bekijken door andere interpretatoren van enkele frases uit deze pericoop, stelt dat "Those interpretations display an unholy preoccupation with genitalia that is foreign to the Song. Most of those who strain to discover pudenda in the Song

129 KBS & NBG, *Groot nieuws Bijbel.*
130 ROZELAAR, *Hooglied*, p. 138, noot 3.
131 *Ibid.,* p. 78.
132 MITCHELL, *Song of Songs*, p. 945.
133 *Ibid.,* pp. 962-3.

are men in need of sanctification" en "A careful philological study of the entire Song reveals that no passage refers to the genitalia. Claims to the contrary originate from sinful ingenuity, not the text."134 We vinden dergelijke moraliserende toon tegenover collegae wetenschappers in een publicatie niet gepast – ja, een beetje 'unholy'.

4. Het hachelijk karakter van een allegorische lezing van het Hooglied vanuit een relatief onbegrip van de oudtestamentische wereld.

Vele commentatoren vinden het een vanzelfsprekende en zelfs leuke zaak dat er zoveel interpretaties zijn en zeggen dat er overal wel ergens een vorm van waarheid in zit135. Wij krijgen er eerlijk gezegd soms eerder een punthoofd van. Zelf zullen we in hoofdstuk zeven het perspectief van het theoreferentieel nut van bijbelse liefdeslyriek op het Hooglied toepassen en in een latere publicatie zullen we dit verbinden met een moraaltheologisch perspectief, wat volledig indruist tegen de huidige tendens tot wereldse lezing van het Hooglied.

Behoudens de geschetste onmogelijkheid en onwettelijkheid van een allegorische lezing, is er nog een laatste waarschuwingsargument. Om te kunnen allegoriseren vanuit een betekenisveld, met name de tekst Hooglied die komt uit de Joodse cultuur van allicht de 3de eeuw voor Christus, moeten we ook de voorhanden betekeniselementen, nl. de woorden, beelden, zinnen en poëtische technieken van deze tekst kunnen begrijpen alvorens hen te projecteren in de verkozen geallegoriseerde betekenissfeer: "The world of the Old Testament is on the whole so far removed from our own that we cannot hope ever to experience or understand it in exactly the same way as he (NB: de schrijver) did."136 Hoewel de teksten niet helemaal uit ons bereik liggen, als mensen met zelfde ervaringen, "… our relative ignorance of its poetic conventions does impose limits upon our ability to enter into its spirit and upon our attempts at creative involvement as readers of these texts."137

5. Een fundamenteel theologische vraag: transcendeert de liefde van God zichzelf in de allegorie ?

Bij deze moeten we opmerken dat de stijlfiguur van de personificatie (soms verbreed naar een groep mensen zoals het volk van Israël), die in de allegorie op een hogere zijnsvorm wordt toegepast (van de bruidegom naar God), zeer belangrijk is in de poëtica van het Oud testament: het "… is part and parcel of its literary and imaginative baggage."138 En een personificatie, is dit nu de stad Jeruzalem, een boom of .. God, kan uiteraard moeilijk zonder enige omschrijving die analoog is aan de gewone leefwereld. Hoger hebben we gezien dat tot deze omschrijving de gevoelsrelatie liefde behoort.

Een belangrijke vraag is echter hoe in deze projectie naar boven (nl. van het lagere menselijke niveau) naar het Hogere (het niveau van God) de gevoelsrelatie "liefde" moet gezien worden na deze projectie, dus op het niveau van God, daar waar reeds op het lager niveau duidelijk was dat de liefde van God in de liefde van de mensen zit, ze geëvoceerd, geïnspireerd heeft. Deze liefde van God is transcendent aan de menselijke liefde, vermits God boven de mens

134 *Ibid.,* noot 62 op p. 932.
135 DRIESSEN, *Wat ben je mooi mijn lief*, p. 9 ; RIDDERBOS, *Hooglied*, pp. 8 en 46 .
136 BURDEN, *Poetic texts*, p. 70.
137 *Ibid.*.
138 J.C.L. GIBSON, *Language and Imagery in the Old Testament*, London, 1998, p. 18.

staat, maar is inzichtelijk voor de mens. Betekent deze transcendentie van de goddelijke liefde op een lager niveau na projectie door de personificatie logischerwijze dat zij ook geldt op het hoger, geallegoriseerd niveau door de noodzakelijke projectie van alle relaties verbonden aan het geallegoriseerde subject? Met andere woorden: transcendeert de liefde van God zijn eigen liefde, transcendeert God zichzelf in Zijn liefde, daar de liefde een noodzakelijk of wezenselement van Hem is (God is o.a. liefde; dus zonder liefde bij Hem, geen God)? Betekent dit dan niet dat in een allegorische lezing van het Hooglied dat de liefde van God voor ons onbekend is, verdwenen is, vermits zij zelfs Hem transcendeert? Is dan ook de liefde van God voor de mens in deze lezing niet contingent en dus niet noodzakelijk? Vervalt hiermee dan niet de plicht van het liefhebben van God door de mens in een pure plicht van de eenzijdigheid bij de mens? Waarmee de liefde van de mens voor God een lege doos inhoudt: eenzijdige liefde dooft uit! En betekent dit dan niet dat een allegorese een vrijgeleide voor ongeloof inhoudt?

6.2.2.2. De arrogante accaparatie door vrijzinnigen. Onjuist en toch waar.

Zeer kort willen we het standpunt aanhalen van Franck Lalou zoals het verscheen in een themanummer van Le Monde des Religions (novembre-décembre, 2003). Hoewel het een zeer kort artikel betreft van slechts één bladzijde (zijn drie boeken over het Hooglied waarnaar de auteur verwijst, hebben we niet gelezen), is het door zijn arrogantie te opvallend om niet onbesproken te laten. We hebben geen andere teksten gevonden met deze instelling maar denken toch dat de tekst representatief kan genoemd worden voor een recupererende poging vanuit vrijzinnige hoek.

De titel van het artikel zegt al genoeg: “Rendons le cantique aux amoureux”139 (alle citaten van Lalou komen van dezelfde bladzijde) Wat moet er eigenlijk aan de geliefden teruggegeven worden ? Dit is naast de kwestie gelet op het groot aantal beschouwende werken die ook vanuit christelijke hoek met een liefdesperspectief geschreven zijn. Daarom kunnen we het volstrekt niet eens met een zin als: “Les lectures juive et chrétienne du Cantique des cantiques nous permettent d’évaluer l’auveuglement religieux. Nog een beetje verder redeneren (sic) en Lalou geeft een Bijbel uit zonder Hooglied erin …? Hij valt trouwens in eenzelfde huwelijksval als sommige christelijke interpretatoren (zie ? verder): “Tous les principes religieux du mariage y sont bafoués.” Het is effectief helemaal niet evident om te zeggen dat het Hooglied over huwelijksprincipes gaat ; de tekst kan dan ook niet bejubeld worden om de vermeende kritiek op het huwelijk. Helemaal lachwekkend, want volledig gespeend van enige tekstuele evidentie is de volgende waarlijke flauwekul: “Dans leur ferveur amoureuse ils oublient une autre recommandation: la position du missionaire. Le lecture de traductions plus calquées sur la langue biblique comprend bien que le cantique est un Kamasoetra.”

Het is werkelijk te gek om te lezen in een kwaliteitsmagazine van Le Monde. En Lalou, in zijn even wilde als van weinig kennis gespeende verbeelding, concludeert op zijn ‘logische’ manier met een, we geven het graag toe, superieure zin voor pathetiek: “Sa seule morale se résume en un ‘l’amour est fort comme la mort’. C’est parce q’il est habité par ces vides que toute la Bible s’articule autour de lui. Par lui, la Bible prend sons sens. Peut-être sans lui aurait-elle disparu. Ce petit texte sans Dieu sauve une civilisation qui lui fait tant de place“

139 F. LALOU, *Rendons le cantique aux amoureux*, in *Le Monde des Religions*, novembre-décembre, 2003, p. 55.

We zijn zeker van plan om al de boeken van betrokkene aan een aandachtige lectuur te onderwerpen en daar eens, uiteraard in het Frans, op te reageren. Anderzijds kunnen we gelukkig nog uit deze benadering een zeer belangrijke les trekken. Ongetwijfeld behoort het Hooglied tot een andere canon, een canon die niet geformaliseerd is als de canon van de Bijbel, maar toch een enorme werkingskracht heeft. We doelen natuurlijk op de canon van de zogenaamde wereldliteratuur. En juist door deze onbetwistbare opname in deze grote canon zit er een enorme kans, zit er een grote functionaliteit van het Hooglied. We zullen dit uitvoerig bespreken in het deel over het theoreferentieel nut van het Hooglied. En enkel op deze manier zit er inderdaad een klein spoor van waarheid in de beweringen van Lalou, hoe abject, onjuist en ronduit belachelijk ze ook mogen zijn. We zullen zien dat het Hooglied inderdaad voor alle verliefden en geliefden iets kan betekenen, of ze nu gelovig zijn of niet. Maar hoe gemakkelijk zij ook getransponeerd én aanvaard kan worden op een universeel zeg zelfs ongelovig vlak, kan deze betekenis niet losgetrokken worden zijn gelovige herkomst.

6.2.2.3. Het christologische perspectief op het Hooglied.

In zekere zin moeten wij hier in plaats van een perspectief op het Hooglied eerder van een perspectief op de gehele Oud Testament spreken. Het Oud Testament wordt gezien als een grond voor aanwijzingen en evidenties voor belangrijke geloofswaarheden van het Nieuw Testament. Het Hooglied wordt hier dan als één van de vele delen van het Oud Testament gezien dat niet zodanig voor zichzelf, vanuit de eigen problematiek van betekenis, moet uitgelegd worden aan de christelijke lezer. Het christologisch denken is, in tegenstelling tot de allegorie die wel voor het Hooglied uitgevonden lijkt, een algemene instelling die in feite overredend werkt dan overtuigend.

Vanuit een goed begrip van het hermeneutische principe “het eerdere wordt niet door het latere verklaard” kunnen we dit christologisch perspectief niet als wetenschappelijk fundeerbaar weerhouden. Heuristisch is dit principe in analogie met het logisch drogprincipe ‘post hoc ergo propter hoc’: het is niet omdat B na A komt, dat B uit A kan verklaard worden. Dit eenvoudig hermeneutisch principe betekent in onze context dat het Nieuw Testament geen handleiding is om de oorspronkelijke betekenis van (dit deel van) het Oud Testament te verklaren. Juist dit soort verklaring noemt men de christologische verklaring van het Hooglied.

Een eminent voorbeeld van het christologisch interpreteren is de lutheraan Mitchell: “Christ is the one who links together all of the images and themes in the pericope (NB : 5,9-16) because he alone fulfills the entirety of the OT.”140 Wij ontkennen natuurlijk niet de inhoud van het NT en de rol van Jezus als zoon van de God van het OT, maar het ampele feit dat het Hooglied nu eenmaal een deel van het Oud Testament is, en dus ouder is, en het Nieuw Testament niet door de Joden erkend wordt, maakt dergelijke lezing van het Hooglied enkel speculatief. In verband met het fameuze zegelvers (zie boven) geven we nog een voorbeeld van de christologische visie. Het zegel wordt door Mitchell immers op zijn zeer specifieke manier geduid: “The image of Solomon placing the Shulammite as a seal upon himself in Song 8 : 6 pertains to Christ placing his name – which brings his love, grace, and salvation- upon those he calls to faith and sustains in the saving faith by means of his Word and Sacraments. Through those means of grace, the members of his body and bride are sealed with the Holy Spirit and preserved to life eternal.”141

140 MITCHELL, *Song of Songs*, p. 946.
141 *Ibid.,* p. 1180.

We geven nog vrij recente christologische lezing uit het Rooms-Katholicisme: “Christus is er niet om wat in het Hooglied beschreven wordt, dus om de vervulling van het getypeerde, maar het Hooglied is er om Christus. Natuurlijk ligt de volheid en de vervulling ervan in Christus. … Christus is de eeuwige; Hij is present, ook in het Hooglied.”142 Vandaar dat deze auteur ook gemakkelijk kan besluiten dat “… de betekenis van het Hooglied bestaat in het volgende: in het monogame, ideale, heilige huwelijk doorschijnt de heerlijkheid der liefde van Christus tot zijn bruid en, als vrucht van zijn liefde, de liefde van de bruid tot Christus.”143

Lamberigts stelt het zeer eenvoudig maar eenduidig voor: ”Een oudtestamentische tekst hoeft zich niet tegenover het Nieuwe Testament te rechtvaardigen en evenmin moet hij eerst christelijk worden gedoopt, opdat hij voor christenen ‘woord van God’ zou kunnen zijn. Het OT heeft zijn eigen waarde en moet zelf aan het woord worden gelaten. We moeten hem zonder vooroordelen beluisteren als het woord van God, dat oorspronkelijk gericht werd tot Israël, maar dat ook blijft gelden voor christenen.”144

Opmerkelijk genoeg zullen we verder bij de behandeling van het theoreferentieel nut van het Hooglied nog een mogelijke christologische duiding van het Hooglied kunnen aanvaarden, zij het dat we er zeker van zijn dat de christologen dit radicaal zullen verwerpen.

6.2.3. Verschillende vrije bewerkingen.

Het uitgangspunt is anders dan in de vorige hoofdstukken. Waar er daar sprake was van een aanvaardbaar of onaanvaardbaar perspectief op het Hooglied, gaat het hier om kerkelijk en buitenkerkelijk gebruik van het Hooglied. We raken dit punt slechts zeer kort aan.

6.2.3.1. Het kerkelijk gebruik van het Hooglied.

Persoonlijk hebben we in de duizenden missen die we reeds meegevierd hebben nog nooit eenmaal iets uit of over het Hooglied gehoord. Eerder gaven wij het voorbeeld van Ridderbos die een mooi pastoraal gebruik van het Hooglied realiseerde – in een kader van tal van levensbespiegelingen. Binnen een enkele mis kan het volledige Hooglied uiteraard niet aangewend of besproken worden. Het is naar dit gebruik dat wij hier refereren.

We steunen hiervoor kort op de lutheraan Mitchell. Bij andere bronnen hebben wij daar tot nog toe verbazingwekkenderwijs zeer weinig van teruggevonden. Een Van Der Meyden blijft zeer beschouwend en verschrikkelijk ouderwets. Er is duidelijk een enorme discrepantie tussen de wetenschappelijke interesse in het Hooglied en het pastoraal gebruik ervan. We geven slechts twee voorbeelden, enerzijds met betrekking tot eucharistie rond een thema, anderzijds een kerklied. Mitchell, die zelf sterk steunt op het werk van de lutheraan Paul Nesper, “Biblical Texts for Special Occasions” (uit … 1923), stelt dat vers 8,7 voor moederdag kan gebruikt worden (“Al het water van de zee kan de liefde niet blussen…”). Hier wordt letterlijk uit het Hooglied geciteerd – met begeleidende teksten. We noteren trouwens dat er slechts één vers gebruikt wordt. Mitchell haalt een twaalftal liederen (hymnody) aan die zouden gebaseerd zijn op het Hooglied. De evidentie is meestal zeer smal, zodat de vraag kan gesteld worden wat de relevantie is van deze passage in het werk van Mitchell. Dit soort uitgemolken volledigheid werkt verpletterend. Mitchell besluit dan ook

142 L.H. VAN DER MEIDEN, *Het Hooglied*. *Bibliotheek van boeken bij de Bijbel*, Baarn, s.d., p. 42.
143 *Ibid*., p. 43.
144 S. LAMBERIGTS, *Waarin verschilt het Oude van het Nieuwe Testament* ? in *Tijdschrift Tertio*, 210, 5de jaargang, 18 februari 2004, , p. 15.

ietwat gratuit: “The reader who immerses himself in the Song and keeps his eyes open for signs of its influence will not fail to find illustrative instances in many of the church’s worship resources.”145 Mits enige ‘intertekstualiteit’ zal er inderdaad een massa te ontdekken zijn …!

Twee vragen rijzen er hier: waarom zijn er zo weinig sporen van het Hooglied in de (Rooms-Katholieke) eucharistie, en hoe kan in deze eucharistie gebruikt gemaakt worden van dit Hooglied zodat dat dit het ampele éénverscitaat overstijgt? We hebben er boven reeds op gewezen dat het Hooglied “liederlijk” niet voorkomt in de Kerk. Dat is zeker een lacune; de door Mitchell geciteerde pogingen kunnen best wel goede liederen zijn, maar hebben op het eerste zicht ook niet veel meer dan een éénverscitaat uit het Hooglied. Enkele teksten uit het boekje “Bruidszang bij het Hooglied” van monnik M. Coune werden o.a. gebruikt in het werk van Ridderbos. Het wil een “..poëtisch commentaar zijn bij het Lied der Liederen,…een lied dat we allen, elk op onze eigen manier, met onze Heer en Koning mogen meezingen, stilletjes in de kleine wijncel van ons hart, of luider in de open ruimte van Gods wijngaard: de Kerk.”146 Dit citaat geeft goed het register aan van het vrije en enigszins vrijblijvende werk.

6.2.3.2. Het Hooglied als prinses van de kunst.

Hoewel dit een uiterst boeiend deeldomein is van de studie over het Hooglied, gaan we hier maar zeer kort op in. Jan Ridderbos die in zijn boek over het Hooglied zelf diverse op het Hooglied geïnspireerde gedichten van Judith Herzberg gebruikt, geeft een kort overzicht hoe men het Hooglied in diverse kunsten kan terugvinden. Een beroemd voorbeeld van bij ons is de bewerking van Hugo Claus. Het feit dat een zelfverklaarde paapse beeldenstormer als Claus zijn versie van het Hooglied meende te moeten maken, is eigenlijk al een aanduiding van de moderne canoniciteit van het Bijbels Hooglied. De moderne zij het eveneens getrouwe bewerking door Herzberg beleefde in de jaren zeventig niet minder dan vijf drukken. Op internet vindt men overigens nog tientallen voorbeelden terug van de omarming van kunstenaars van deze oude poëzie.

Belangrijk is hier te duiden op de diversiteit aan bewerkingen. Zo vindt men bewerkingen terug in de beeldende kunsten (beelden, schilderijen, grafisch werk: meer dan genoeg voor een prachtige thematische tentoonstelling147), muziek, strips en literatuur. Voor zover bekend is er geen enkele theater of film door geïnspireerd (met de bedenking dat het thema van het Hooglied het belangrijkste thema van minstens de filmwereld is …). Op grafisch vlak komt men internationaal grote namen tegen (Chagall, Matisse, Dali, Theodorakis,..). Dikwijls springt men zeer vrij om met het ‘basismateriaal’ zoals Willem Wilmink die een oratoriumtekst schreef toegepast op de herenliefde.148 Men komt hierbij zelfs voor inhoudelijke verrassingen van formaat te staan. Zo blijkt de fameuze Mauthausencyclus van Mikis Theodorakis op het Hooglied gebaseerd te zijn.149

Opvallend is het aantal bewerkers dat zegt niet gelovig te zijn. Ook moet vermeld worden dat er zelfs themadagen rond het Hooglied werden georganiseerd, met een mix aan muziek, voordracht en wetenschappelijke toelichting.

145 MITCHELL, *Song of Songs*, p. 543.
146 M. COUNE, *Bruidszang bij het Hooglied,* Averbode, 1992, , p. 5.
147 Vermits we zelf al enkele tentoonstellingen hebben georganiseerd en we reeds langs alle kanten zo diep in het Hooglied hebben gegraven -, hebben we al heel wat interessant tentoonstellingsmateriaal kunnen verzamelen.
148 W. WILMINK, *Een eigen Hooglied,* Enschede, 1996.
149 Zie RIDDERBOS, Hooglied*, p. 12.*

We willen ons hier zeer liberaal opstellen: laat ieder maar doen.150 Belangrijke wetenschappelijke vragen die evenwel in een andere studie kunnen gesteld worden zijn ons inziens:

-kan een christen in een vrije, zelfs openlijk ongelovige bewerking de liefde van God in de menselijke liefde terugvinden?

-welke zijn de basisteksten waarop de bewerkers zich gebaseerd hebben?

-is er een minimum minimorum waaraan een bewerking zich moet houden en kan een bewerking als een verraad gezien worden aan de intenties van de originele tekst?

-kan er een discrepantie zijn tussen een interpretatie van een bewerkte tekst en de bijgevoegde afbeeldingen die slaan op selecties uit of stemmingen rond het Hooglied?151

-in hoeverre kunnen beeldende kunsten, zelfs in een opeenvolging van diverse uitbeeldingen, de dynamiek van de tekst weergeven, of, anders gezegd, welke delen van het Hooglied kunnen en ‘moeten’ verbeeld worden?

150 Overigens hebben we na eerder uitgebreide research geen enkel spoor van een pornografische versie tegengekomen – waar we zelfs niet eens tegen zouden zijn; God zit niet in het Hooglied.
151 Het gebruik van illustraties is per definitie aangenaam voor een onschuldig boek als het Hooglied. Een vraag is of men via de beelden een bepaalde theologische interpretatie kunnen krijgen die eventueel zelfs niet zou corresponderen met (het perspectief op) de tekst, laat staan dat het al op zich juist is.

HOOFDSTUK 7

HET HOOGLIED BAART VEEL NUT.

7.1. Van interpretatie naar nut.

7.1.1. Het lezen van het Hooglied als fiere activiteit.

We hebben hoger gezien dat diverse perspectieven op het Hooglied intellectueel best interessant kunnen zijn, maar meestal toch stuiten op fundamentele hermeneutische bezwaren of zelfs op onvermoede en vervelende theologische complicaties. Net als zeer veel moderne wetenschappers geeft Brenner haar voorkeur aan een exclusieve literaire lezing van het Hooglied. Er rest dan nauwelijks nog wat aan te vangen met het Hooglied: "What remains is to return to a 'simple' verbal or literary interpretation … the rest, the attribution of 'intention' or 'design' to the original composition and its components, is a matter of reader's perception rather than of verifiable theories."152 In hetzelfde jaar zegt Deckers: "De exegese van het lied is een andere, literair-wetenschappelijke era binnengegaan."153 Zelfs indien men dit literaire standpunt aanhoudt is nog het Hooglied niet verloren als baken van goddelijke genade. Men moet dan wel een totaal andere richting uitgaan dan tot op heden gebeurd is. Of anders gezegd: de literair-wetenschappelijke benadering zal voor onze benadering een platformfunctie bieden, een wetenschap in dienst van het Woord, exacter nog; in dienst van de verkondiging van het Woord. In die zin vinden wij een andere conclusie van Deckers, hoewel zeer begrijpelijk, eerder pover: "Een proces van secularisering in de exegese van het Hooglied lijkt op gang gekomen."154 Men moet de zaken historisch toch niet te rap opgeven en men mag a.h.w. dogmatischerwijze wel wat fier zijn over honderden jaren denken en voelen in Onze Traditie, dunkt ons. Neen, het Hooglied literair lezen valt niet noodzakelijk samen met het literair beleven; men maakt hier een enorme logische fout met verstrekkende …….. en heuristische, maatschappelijke en culturele conclusies. Dat zou al te gemakkelijk toegeven zijn. In feite staat of valt onze studie met het herkneden, dus niet ontkennen, van de literaire, geseculariseerde lezing: "Song of Songs, come back home !"155

Het is onze duidelijke en oprechte intentie om in deze kleine studie de nadruk minder te leggen op een wetenschappelijke, interpreterende analyse van het Hooglied, dan vooral het nut van de tekst voor een moderne gelovige (lezer) aan te geven. Wij introduceren daarbij een nieuwe term, nl. het theoreferentieel nut. Bij deze nutsbeschouwingen is de volgende logische overweging belangrijk. Supra kon men reeds lezen dat we tegenstander zijn van een

152 BRENNER, *The Song of Songs*, p. 75.
153 DECKERS, *Hooglied*, p. 23.
154 DECKERS, *Begeerte in bijbelse liefdespoëzie,* p. 12.
155 Overigens kan men zich soms afvragen waar het wetenschappelijk au serieux is van sommige zelfs diepgravende studies. Het moeilijke doctoraat van Deckers stelt in zijn conclusies dat een aantal vragen onbeantwoord bleven want "Het beantwoorden van deze vragen reikt evenwel verder dan de desbetreffende tekst, i.c. het Hooglied" (Deckers, 1991, p. 288). Welnu, twee van de drie vragen die hier aan de orde zijn, werden in de inleiding juist voorgesteld als de twee kernvragen van de studie (idem, p. 12). Hoe zoiets kan in een studie van dergelijk niveau, laat staan in een proefschrift, is onbegrijpelijk en niet minder dan een zelfverklaarde intellectuele nederlaag én schandaal. Zelfs in een schoolwerk zou een dergelijke attitude een buis moeten inhouden. Eén van die kernvragen is trouwens de vraag of het Hooglied oorspronkelijk geschreven is als pure liefdespoëzie.

christologische lezing van het Hooglied. Anderzijds sluit een logische onmogelijkheid van een christelijke lezing van het Hooglied het christelijk geïnspireerd moraaltheologisch gebruik van het Hooglied helemaal niet uit! Het gebruik zal natuurlijk ook een bepaalde lezing inhouden. Maar dat zal gebeuren op de evidentie in de tekst zelf zodat er geen kunstgrepen moeten toegepast worden via ingewikkelde hermeneutische principes. Anderzijds staat hier de aantrekkelijkheid van de tekst bij de lezer zéér centraal. In principe komt het neer op gewoon gezond verstand en een erkenning van een culturele gemeenschappelijkheid in het universele gevoelen van de liefde. Dit zal duidelijk worden bij de behandeling van het begrip 'theoreferentieel nut'.

Hierbij gaan we uiteraard uit van de idee dat het centrale thema van het Hooglied de menselijke liefde is. Ongeveer alle commentatoren zijn het hier over eens. Ook de zee meticuleuze Stoop schrijft het met grote stelligheid: "De resultaten van mijn onderzoek hebben mij verrast en soms verontrust. Het Lied der Liederen gaat, in sterkere mate dan ik voor mogelijk had gehouden, over de menselijke liefde."156

7.1.2. Het lezen van het Hooglied vanuit een begrip van funderingsrelaties.

Elke interpretatie, visie, perspectief, inzicht op een tekst houdt twee essentiële elementen in: de tekst en het perspectief. Deze relatie, die een epistemologische d.w.z. inzichtsrelatie is, kan gekenmerkt worden door een bepaalde vorm van beweging tussen de beide elementen. Zoals het ook zo is dat de vogel niet in het oog komt gevlogen om zich te laten zien, terwijl de kijker hem ziet, maar er hiervoor er een soort van mentale activiteit nodig is om hem te kunnen zien, is het ook zo dat de vogel er al ergens is vooraleer de kijker hem ziet maar terzelfdertijd echt tot leven gewekt wordt door hem te zien. Dit is geen proces van circulariteit, maar kent een zeer specifieke spanning die reeds door Aristoteles beschreven is onder de termen oorzaak en noodzakelijke voorwaarde, en in de fenomenologie een funderingsrelatie (Maurice Merleau-Ponty) genoemd wordt.

Toegepast op de tekst "Hooglied" zouden we het zo kunnen stellen. Doorheen een moderne moraaltheologie rond seksualiteit kunnen wij een betekenis aan het Hooglied geven zodat het Hooglied gezien wordt als toepassing of voorbeeld van deze theorie, en omgekeerd kan deze moraaltheorie als een resultante gezien worden uit een canon waarin dit Hooglied op dit vlak beslissend kan bijgedragen hebben, het Hooglied als draagvlak van de theorie. Dat wil zeggen dat de moraaltheologische lezing van het Hooglied dit zo ethisch gelezen Hooglied in zekere zin veroorzaakt, en omgekeerd, dat zonder dit Hooglied en andere gelijkaardig gestemde Bijbelteksten rond het fenomeen liefde, er gewoonweg geen christelijke moraaltheologie mogelijk zou zijn. De moraaltheologie is de oorzaak en het Hooglied is het noodzakelijk wezenselement in hun beider relatie. Dat de relatie mag gelegd worden kan bewezen worden in de uitleg verderop die hierover gegeven wordt, maar is eigenlijk dwingend: indien er in de Bijbel over liefde gesproken wordt, en indien er over liefde in een christelijke moraaltheologie getheoretiseerd wordt, moéten deze twee teksten elkaar treffen of de Bijbel heeft als authentieke inspiratiebron simpelweg geen betekenis – er rest dan enkel dogmatiek.
Het standpunt der funderingsrelaties betekent per definitie dat een tekst steeds ontsnapt aan een interpretatie, dat hij m.a.w. nooit uitgeput wordt door een interpretatie, maar dat hij, in de omgekeerde spanning, zonder een lezing letterlijk dode letter blijft. Het is ook daarom dat wij in onze twee lezingen, die bijna als een soort metalezingen kunnen beschouwd worden, juist een specifieke, nl. literaire lezing nodig hebben. Daarom ook het belang dat wij hechten aan een deontologisch correcte en retorisch voorbeeldige voorstelling van het Hooglied.

156 STOOP, *Lied der liederen,* p. V.

Anderzijds kunnen wij uiteraard nooit beweren dat onze lezing de laatste zal zijn om de eenvoudige reden dat onze lezing bij latere, nauwgezette kritiek tekortkomingen zal bevatten (fouten die we zelf zouden willen aanwijzen; denk aan de hermeneutische ontsnappingsroute) en omdat door nieuwe contexten nieuwe inzichten, nieuwe lezingen zullen gegenereerd worden.157

Het inzicht in deze funderingsrelatie is van bijzonder belang. Theorie en praktijk, of interpretatie en lezing, gaan onafscheidelijk hand in hand. Kennistheoretisch gezien moet de theorie altijd in de praktijk gefundeerd zijn. Dus freischwebende evidenz wordt niet aanvaard; vandaar onze hogere pogingen tot kritisch onderzoek van bepaalde perspectieven. Filosofisch-historisch gezien gaat de moderne theorie perfect met Zijn tijd mee. Hiermee is niet zozeer de tijd bedoeld van het moment waarin men interpreteert dan wel de tijd van de Bijbel die eeuwig is. Het Hooglied kan doorwerken. De Bijbelse waarheden zijn bovenhistorisch. Enkel de vorm heeft een historiciteit en dwingt ons tot zijn begrip. Vandaar ook het enorme belang dat we hechten aan enerzijds een grondige filologische kennis van de oorspronkelijke tekst, én aan een goed inzicht in de stilistische en prosodische kenmerken van de grondtekst. De Bijbelse waarheden rond de liefde, zoals o.a. uitgedrukt in het Hooglied, zijn niet alleen bovenhistorisch maar axiologisch gezien ook universeel gelet op de algemene positieve receptie van de tekst in talloze andere dan de Joodse cultuur.

7.2. Het moraaltheologisch nut. Het Hooglied als ondersteuning van een moraaltheologie. Een moraaltheologie vanuit o.a. het Hooglied.

7.2.1. Het Hooglied en seksualiteit.

Het is onze bedoeling om op basis van de reflecties op seksualiteit van een erkend modern moraaltheoloog een toetsing van het nut en daarmee de waarde van het Hooglied te geven. We baseren ons op het werk van Roger Burggraeve.158 Burggraeve noemt zijn uitgangspunt "…een integraal-relationele, christelijk geïnspireerde achtergrondvisie op zinvolle seksualiteit…" 159 Concreet willen we hier nagaan hoe het Hooglied, als Bijbels oord van de in vele facetten bezongen liefde, kan getoetst worden aan de voorwaarden van wat Burggraeve een expressieve seksuele cultuur noemt en aan de regels voor het beginnen van een seksuele relatie.

Het feit dat een lezing van het Hooglied deze christelijk geïnspireerde voorwaarden ondersteunt, wil uiteraard niet zeggen dat een ongelovige deze voorwaarden ook niet kan onderschrijven, dat wil zeggen begrijpen, goedkeuren én navolgen. Integendeel! We komen daar later op terug.

We moeten hier opmerken dat het in het Hooglied inderdaad noch uitdrukkelijk noch allegorisch gaat over een (inleiding op het) huwelijk, maar het anderzijds ook niet zomaar als een soort van hofmakerij kan afgedaan worden. Er is inderdaad een soort va-et-vient van

157 Het zou werkelijk van een geniaal heuristisch inzicht getuigen om toekomstige mogelijke lezingen te voorspellen. Volgens ons is dit de hermeneutische kwadratuur van de cirkel. Omgekeerd zal men later ook onze lezing beter kunnen lezen vanuit een objectief want afstandelijk, overzichtelijk begrip van de maatschappij waarin onze tekst ontstaan is.

158 R. BURGGRAEVE, *Zinvolle seksualiteit. Een integraal-relationele achtergrondvisie in christelijk perspectief,* 3de ed., Leuven, 1985.

ID., *Zinvol seksueel leven onderweg. Concrete probleemvelden en belevingswijzen: een dynamisch-ethische benadering in christelijk perspectief*, 5de ed., Leuven, 2002.

159 ID., *Zinvol seksueel leven onderweg,* p. 13.

gevoelens en daden, maar het lied kent zeer sterk uitgesproken citaten over de liefde (zie 5,3 en 8,6-7). Het eindigt alleszins op de uitnodiging van haar aan hem.

Anderzijds is het Hooglied geen huwelijksreisreportage, het is niet door 'Dag Allemaal' uit het leven van twee tortelduiven gegrepen. Heeft het dan zin om in een stuk gestold cultuur waarden van een seksuele cultuur te willen ontdekken? Zeker! Vermits het lied op een sublieme manier eendimensionaal rond de liefde gecentreerd is, ten minste in de leefwereldlijke herkenning van de literaire lezers, betekent dit dat de erin getoonde waarden en belevingen rond dit thema liefde wetenschappelijk te traceren zijn. Al deze waarden rond het thema liefde, worden één-duidig voorgesteld – op een positieve manier. Een groot deel van zijn aantrekkingskracht is inderdaad deze positieve zang, deze lofzang op de menselijke liefde. De positiviteit zindert doorheen de tekst. Nog belangrijker dan de vaststelling van de talloze positieve, verliefde beschrijvingen van de geliefden, de vele uitgedrukte verlangens, is de merkwaardige reflectiviteit van deze getoonde liefde. De liefde kent hier zichzelf en treedt zo ook naar buiten. Ze treedt in sociale (zelf)bevestiging maatschappelijk naar buiten in de woorden van de vrouwelijke hoofdpersoon tegen de dochters van Jeruzalem: "Ik ben van mijn liefste en mijn liefste is van mij" (6, 3). Het wordt zelfs in dialoog verwoordt. Zo vragen de meisjes van Jeruzalem: "Wat heeft jouw liefste wat een ander niet heeft …" (5,9). En zij antwoordt: "Mijn liefste straalt, vol gloed …" (5,10). De liefde uit zich tevens in morele bewoordingen. Ze legt haar eigen normen op: "Ik bezweer jullie, meisjes van Jeruzalem; ….: maak de liefde niet wakker, wek de liefde niet voor zij wil" (3, 5 en als daadwerkelijk refrein op drie andere plaatsen herhaald). Uiteraard denken we aan de beroemde verzen 8,6-7, die soms in huwelijksmissen gebruikt worden, met de mooie woorden over de liefde "als even sterk of sterker dan de dood". Denk ook aan het morele misprijzen: "Zelfs al bood iemand alles wat hij heeft voor de liefde; men zou hem diep verachten". Dit is een oproep voor een intrinsiek en niet voor een renumeratief (Etzioni) gemotiveerd gedrag binnen intieme relaties (LaCocque spreekt in dit verband van "this ethical conception of love"160). Diverse auteurs spreken ook van een vooruitgang van het liefdesgevoelen in het Hooglied (o.a Rozelaar, 1998, p. 46); we gaan daar niet op in.

Dit zijn zovele voorbeelden hoe het Hooglied op een intelligente, poëtische en bijna overzichtelijke wijze (The Song of Songs: a state of the sexual union ?) de liefde kent. De liefde die zich ten diepste uitdrukt in een intieme seksuele cultuur tussen de partners. Het is dus nu reeds thematisch verantwoord om het Hooglied te gaan toetsen aan een dergelijke specifieke moraaltheologie. U kan nu natuurlijk al raden dat het Hooglied deze toetsing zal doorstaan!

Voor een laatste argument om te kunnen beweren dat wij ons voor de voorgestelde analyse inderdaad op dit Hooglied mogen steunen, baseren wij ons, nu eens met instemming, op LaCocque: "The fact of the matter is that the song of Songs sees the man as epitomizing all the lovers; he is the lover. As to the woman, she is also all women, the whole of womanhood; their mutual love summarizes and surpasses all other loves." 161

Burggraeve schetst twee minimumvoorwaarden en twee kwaliteitsvoorwaarden van wat hij een voorbeeldige expressieve seksuele cultuur noemt. We bekijken deze voorwaarden kort en toetsen hen aan de 'evidentie' van het Hooglied.

160 LACOCQUE, *Romance, She Wrote*, p. 179.
161 *Ibid .,* p. 129.

7.2.1.1. Het Hooglied en een expressieve seksuele cultuur.

De 2 minimumvoorwaarden van een expressieve seksuele cultuur: rechtvaardigheid en gelijkwaardigheid.

Burggraeve formuleert rechtvaardigheid als volgt: “Rechtvaardigheid op seksueel vlak houdt de vaardigheid in om ieder tot zijn recht te laten komen als persoon, als man en vrouw, in respect voor hun eigenheid en verscheidenheid in voelen, denken, handelen en zijn. Minimaal betekent deze rechtvaardigheid dat seksueel handelen geen inbreuk mag plegen op de eigen overtuigingen en geen lichamelijke noch emotionele schade mag berokkenen aan zichzelf, de partner en derden”162

Gelijkwaardigheid wordt zo omschreven: “Gelijkwaardigheid op seksueel vlak houdt in dat men de ander evenveel waarde toekent als zichzelf. Het betekent minimaal dat men op geen enkele manier, noch door lichamelijk geweld, noch door emotionele, morele of sociale chantage (bijvoorbeeld door groepsdruk of een bepaald samenlevingsethos) gedwongen wordt tot seksueel contact, dat men zelf niemand daartoe dwingt en dat men geen exclusieve verbondenheid van anderen schendt.”163 Logischerwijze concludeert Burggraeve daaruit dat dezelfde ethiek moet gelden voor iedereen: heteroseksuelen en homoseksuelen, jong en oud, al of niet lichamelijk of mentaal gehandicapte personen.164

<u>Toetsing van deze minimumvoorwaarden aan het Hooglied.</u>

Negatief geformuleerd kunnen we stellen dat er in het Hooglied niets op wijst dat er aan de voorwaarde van rechtvaardigheid afbreuk wordt gedaan. We moeten hier met Stoop op wijzen dat de geliefde, die tegen haar zin in de harem van koning Salomo bevindt, de liefdesbetuigingen van de koning categorisch afwijst.165 Ze blijft haar eenvoudige herder trouw.

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162 BURGGRAEVE., *Zinvol seksueel leven onderweg,* p. 45.

163 *Ibid.*.

164 Hier past een verwijzing naar de “homofiele bewerking van het Hooglied door Wilmink Wilmink: “Toen ik werd gevraagd om voor een festiviteit van homofielen … de teksten te schrijven voor een klein Hoogliedoratorium, schrok ik daar in eerste instantie voor terug. Maar liefde is liefde, van welke geaardheid je ook bent: gesterkt door die gedachte maakte ik “Een eigen Hooglied” met naar ik hoop een voor hen en voor mij aanvaardbare kijk op de vreugde en het verdriet waar het Godje Amor ons op trakteert. Mensen die de Bijbel ondanks alle culturele verschillen tussen de bijbelboeken als een eenheid beschouwen, zullen mijn poging afwijzen, want er zijn bijbelboeken die homoseksualiteit veroordelen. Toch zouden ook die mensen het niet in hun hoofd halen om in onze tijd nog wetsovertreders met stenen dood te gooien, op advies van diezelfde Bijbel die op zoveel andere plaatsen zo ontzaglijk veel poëzie en wijsheid biedt.” (WILMINK, *Een eigen Hooglied,* flaptekst).

165 STOOP, *Lied der Liederen*, p. 526.

Positief geformuleerd kan men stellen dat beide geliefden elkaars eigenheid en verscheidenheid voortdurend (o.a. in de wasfs) bezingen. Op deze manier is de eigenheid en de verscheidenheid van de ene voor de andere niet alleen als dusdanig reeds gepercipieerd maar bovendien ook nog eens een authentieke bron van existentieel beleefd en uitgedrukt genot.

Het vers om de gelijkwaardigheid tussen beide tortelduifjes te duiden is ongetwijfeld vers 2,16: Mijn liefste is van mij, en ik ben van hem." Voor dit vers hebben we bij geen enkele commentator een andere lezing vastgesteld. De Joodse maatschappij was gekenmerkt door een sterk paternalisme: "De vrouwelijke hoofdpersoon van Shir Hashirim weet zich blijkens mijn analyse aan zo'n ondergeschikte rol geheel te onttrekken."166

Essentieel in dit verband is de aangehaalde grote notie van trouw van de vrouwelijke hoofdpersoon voor haar herder: "Zij veracht koning Salomo die 'liefde' koopt. Zij is in haar liefde vurig en trouw, en zij geeft daaraan op zo'n overtuigende wijze uiting, dat Salomo en zijn harem daartegen niet opgewassen zijn"167 (idem, p. 530).

Deze gelijkwaardigheid wordt duidelijk in tegenstelling gebracht tot de manier van denken van de broers over hun zuster, de geliefde: "Wat zullen we met ons zusje doen; wanneer men haar komt vragen" (8,9). Het antwoord hierop wordt door Stoop als volgt geduid: "Tenslotte geeft hij (NB de auteur) de vrouwelijke hoofdpersoon de mogelijkheid haar rijpe maagdelijkheid te bevestigen (Ct 8,10), en aan de geliefde herder de kans haar ten overstaan van de broeders tot de zijne te verklaren (Ct 8,11-13)"168 (idem, p. 548).

<u>De 2 kwaliteitsvoorwaarden van een expressieve seksuele cultuur: tederheid en waarachtigheid.</u>

Tederheid in een seksuele relatie is "… elkaar wederzijds aanvaarden zoals men werkelijk is, met de specifieke seksuele eigenschappen, kwetsbaarheden, onvolkomenheden, rijkdom en kansen, zowel van zichzelf als van de ander….Tederheid is ook elkaar bevorderen om te worden wie men ten diepste kan worden als persoon, als man en vrouw, in de volle zin van het woord."169

Het begrip waarachtigheid benadert Burggraeve op deze manier: "Op het vlak van de verhouding tot zichzelf betekent waarachtig zijn dat de eigen handelingen overeenkomen met wat men voelt, dat men eerlijk achter het eigen gedrag kan staan, dat de manier van handelen de eigen opvattingen en bedoelingen weerspiegelt. Waarachtigheid van partners tegenover elkaar bestaat erin dat hun manier van elkaar benaderen zoveel mogelijk gelijke tred houdt met de intimiteit van de gehele relatie"170

<u>Toetsing van deze kwaliteitsvoorwaarden aan het Hooglied.</u>

In het algemeen zijn de poëtische beschrijvingen en oproepen van de ene door de andere zovele uitingen van intense teder verlangen. Een bijzonder voorbeeld van tederheid is de reactie van de herder op de klaagzang van de vrouwelijke hoofdpersoon: "Ik ben donker maar

166 *Ibid.,* p. 530, noot 8.
167 *Ibid..*
168 *Ibid.,* p. 548.
169 BURGGRAEVE., *Zinvol seksueel leven onderweg,* p. 45-6.
170 *Ibid.,* p. 46.

wel mooi …. Kijk niet op me neer omdat ik donker ben, want de zon brandde op mij" (1,5-6). De herder is erg subtiel, want in zijn reactie tracht hij zelfs niet de oorzaak van deze donkerte weg te rationaliseren. Hij zegt "alleen maar": "Wat ben je mooi, mijn vriendin! Wat ben je mooi!" en richt de aandacht op haar ogen: "Je ogen zijn duiven" (1,15). Wat in een parallelle riposte zo beantwoord wordt door haar: "Wat ben je mooi, mijn liefste ! Wat ben je lief" (1, 16).

Als 'metabewijs' van de tederheid in het Hooglied moet zeker opgemerkt worden dat het voorlezen zelf van het Hooglied van een geliefde aan de andere als een onmiskenbare daad van tederheid wordt gezien.

Eerlijkheid over het eigen denken en voelen toont zich daar waar men ervoor maatschappelijk durft uitkomen. In het Hooglied gebeurt dit inderdaad niet op een geïnstitutionaliseerd vlak, nl. in een huwelijk, tot spijt van diverse commentatoren, maar gebeurt dit wel informeel. De vrouwelijke geliefde laat op dit vlak geen enkele ruimte tot twijfel: "Ik bezweer jullie, meisjes van Jeruzalem; als jullie mijn liefste tegenkomen; weet je wat je moet zeggen; dat ik ziek ben van liefde" (5,8).

Anderzijds worden we doorheen het hele Hooglied met onze neus op een zekere dubbelzinnigheid van de condition humaine amoureuse gedrukt: "La reconaissance de l'irrédutible solitude, de la différence qui fait que l'autre échappe toujours à la prise maintient une distance infranchissable entre eux. Cet écart est cela même qui attise de plus en plus leur désir de rencontre"171 Op die manier heeft de amoureuze ontmoeting een initiatiewaarde: "Elle pousse chacun des partenaires au-delà de ses limites, en stimulant en lui le jeu des polarités masculine et féminine."172 Door dit polariserende spel wordt de ontmoeting van de geliefden geleid naar een "… chemin des noces intérieures et l' ouvre de plus en plus à l'infini à l'amour, à l'innommable communion."173 (idem). Romanens besluit dan ook met één van dé mogelijke citaten van het Hooglied : "Mon bien-aimé est à moi, et moi je suis à lui."

Op deze manier geven de geliefden ons een belangrijke en poëtisch krachtige les tegen het gevaar van de 'twee-eenzaamheid' waar Burggraeve (derde, herziene en vermeerderde druk, 1992) herhaaldelijk in krachtige bewoordingen voor waarschuwt.

Conclusie van deze paragraaf.

Men kan stellen dat het Hooglied voldoet aan de minimum- en kwaliteitsvoorwaarden van wat Burggraeve een expressieve seksuele cultuur noemt. Er is sprake van rechtvaardigheid en gelijkwaardigheid, en van tederheid en waarachtigheid.
Op deze manier is de lezing van het Hooglied mee instructief voor het aanleren van een volwaardige seksuele moraal en kan het gelezen worden door jongeren van 16 en 17 jaar binnen het leerplan rooms-katholieke godsdienst voor het secundair onderwijs in Vlaanderen (bijvoorbeeld binnen het terrein "Bemind worden en liefhebben" in het eerste jaar van de derde graad ASO).

171 M. ROMANENS, *Le désir fait grandir,* in *Le Monde des Religions*, novembre-décembre, 2003, p. 56.
172 *Ibid..*
173 *Ibid..*

7.2.1.2. Het Hooglied en het ontstaan van een seksuele relatie.

De 2 regels voor het aangaan van een seksuele relatie: gelijkwaardigheid en relatiebekwaamheid.

Net zoals we het Hooglied getoetst hebben aan de voorwaarden van een expressieve seksuele cultuur, zullen we dit nu doen aan de voorwaarden tot het aangaan van een seksuele relatie. 'Aangaan' slaat op het beginnen van iets, in dit geval een relatie. Beginnen is kunnen en meestal willen groeien. De volgende theorie is dus specifiek bedoeld binnen een groei-ethiek toegespitst op adolescenten (16/17 jaar = derde graad). Burggraeve onderscheidt 2 minimumvoorwaarden: gelijkwaardigheid en relatiebekwaamheid.

De regel van gelijkwaardigheid is dezelfde regel als hierboven aangehaald en hoeft dus niet meer voorgesteld.

Burggraeve stelt dat men reeds over een zekere relatiebekwaamheid moet beschikken alvorens seksueel actief te worden. Hiermee bedoelt hij minstens: ".. affectie in wederkerigheid, liefst met enig toekomstperspectief."174 Hij meent dat loutere gevoels-aantrekking of romantische liefde niet genoeg zijn, omdat er een persoonlijke betrokkenheid vereist is die al een zekere tijd en realiteit heeft doorstaan. Losse, vrijblijvende seksuele contacten en zelfs losvaste relaties kan hij ethisch niet rechtvaardigen: het zijn geen contexten van tederheid en waarachtigheid en kunnen gemakkelijk leiden tot een banalisering van de seksuele beleving zelf.

<u>Toetsing der regels voor het aangaan van een seksuele relatie aan het Hooglied.</u>

Er is evidentie om te stellen dat de geliefden elkaar gelijkwaardig zijn. Het is duidelijk dat de geliefden in het Hooglied elkaar al goed kennen. Ze zijn m.a.w. met elkaar al een tijdje bezig. Hierboven werd reeds aangetoond dat de geliefden elkaar gelijkwaardig zijn. Sociologisch interessant is de opmerking van Knight: "The girl has met her social equal - a fellow countryman….."175 Talloze sociologische studies hebben alleszins de relatie trachten te bewijzen tussen sociale klasse en verliefd worden/relatie bouwen176

Er is evidentie om te stellen dat de geliefden relatiebekwaam zijn. De geliefden kennen elkaar. De tekst geeft onmiskenbare zekerheid dat de vrouwelijke geliefde onvoorwaardelijk voor haar geliefde herder kiest, tegen de pogingen van de rijkere koning Salomon in. Ze blijft hem m.a.w. TROUW. Ze moet dus zeker gevoelsmatige evidentie hebben én een hoop in een gezamenlijke toekomst om dergelijk standpunt in te kunnen nemen. Trouw vinden wij een absolute aanduiding van relatiebekwaamheid. Trouw is immers een typische uiting van een interne, echte motivering tegenover een externe motivering die kan bestaan uit dwang (coërcitieve motivatie) of een beloning onder de vorm van geld, macht, enz. (renumeratieve motivatie). De intrinsiek gemotiveerde is trouw, in tegenstelling tot degene die gedwongen is of beloond wordt; valt hier de dwang of de beloning weg, dan valt, zonder psychopathologische complicaties, ook de erop gebaseerde motivatie weg.

174 BURGGRAEVE., *Zinvol seksueel leven onderweg,* p. 246.
175 KNIGHT, Revelation of God, , p. 15.
176 P. L. BERGER & B. BERGER, *Sociologie, een biografische opzet*, 1973. Vertaald door P. NIJHOFF (New York, 1972), p. 75 e.v..

We zullen verder bij de bespreking van de rol van het verlangen in het Hooglied nog zien dat Walsh in dit verband de beleving van de vrouwelijke seksualiteit zeer scherp want eerder solitair stelt. Het is er a.h.w. een antropologische categorie die af en toe eens door de een of andere geliefde (herder, koning, …) kan ingevuld of moet bevredigd worden. We zullen met Burggraeve argumenteren dat dit werkelijk te eenzijdig is.

Conclusie van deze paragraaf.

Misschien minder uitgesproken dan in vorige paragraaf kan men stellen dat het Hooglied voldoet aan voor het aangaan van een seksuele relatie. Er is sprake van gelijkwaardigheid en relatiebekwaamheid.

7.2.2. Erotiek, verlangen, relatie en God.

7.2.2.1. De talige gedaante van erotiek in een relatie.

Wie al eens gelachen heeft met de uitdrukking ‘de diepste draai’ van pater Versteylen heeft hopelijk toch begrepen wat hierbij de bedoeling was. Men weet hoe moeilijk het is om woorden en uitdrukkingen maatschappelijk te lanceren. Het is Versteylen met deze uitdrukking blijkbaar tot op heden niet gelukt, gelet op de hilarische ontvangst en het gebrek aan gebruik ervan. Maar de vraag blijft! Raes drukt terecht zijn zorg uit over de “ … specifieke schuttingtaal waarmee de seksualiteit in onze cultuur wordt verbonden …”177

Samen met deze taalverwaarlozing op seksueel vlak bestrijdt hij terecht ook een gebrekkige seksuele praktijk. Hij blijft hoopvol: “Toch is een ander betoog over de seksualiteit en een andere seksuele praktijk mogelijk.”178 Het grappige is dat hij in zijn benadering van een alternatief in ongeveer het zelfde verfrissende vaarwater van ene Roger Burggraeve terechtkomt (toch één onder de door hem weinig gewaardeerde moderne, christelijke denkers over seksualiteit en relaties): “De erotische deugd is immers ingebed in waarden als tederheid, zorgzaamheid, genegenheid; zij reveleert onze kwetsbaarheid en verfijnt onze gevoeligheid. Daarom veronderstelt een erotische cultuur ook schroom, wat mede tot uitdrukking komt in een verhullend taalgebruik.”179 Raes pleit in het algemeen voor een ‘ars amatoria’, waarvan een aangepaste erotische of amoureuze taal een belangrijk onderdeel is.

In punt 3.2.3. hadden we samen met Rozelaar reeds kunnen vaststellen dat de metaforische taal in het Hooglied nooit vulgair is. We menen dat dit pragmatisch voldoende bewezen is doorheen de receptie- en de bewerkingsgeschiedenis van het Hooglied. Vanuit dit door Raes aangeprezen ‘verhullend taalgebruik’, zo onmiskenbaar het handelsmerk van het Hooglied, is meteen ook het strategisch belang duidelijk van onze scherpe aanval op de allegorese.
We zouden het belang van het Hooglied nog breder willen duiden als alleen maar het gebruik van een mooie taal: “Erotiek en seksualiteit worden te vlug herleid tot het hebben van gemeenschap, terwijl het Hooglied ons leert dat erotiek zich uitdrukt in de woorden die je spreekt, in het kijken naar en bekeken worden door de ander, in het stille zitten in elkaars schaduw, in armen om je heen, …”180 Op die manier geeft het Hooglied niet alleen woorden aan die verhullen maar toch knuffelen, maar tevens werkt het inzichtelijk. Het Hooglied krijgt een epistemologische functie in de hele problematiek van de seksueel geladen ontmoeting. Dit

177 RAES, *Seksuele bevrijding is ook een ethisch project*, p. 20.
178 *Ibid.,* p. 23.
179 *Ibid.,* p. 36.
180 DRIESSEN, *Wat ben je mooi mijn lief,* p. 54.

kadert perfect in de christelijke moraaltheologie van Burggraeve: "Toch blijft de seksuele dimensie slechts een, alhoewel bijzonder belangrijke, dimensie in het leven van gehuwden, die zeker niet de verzameling is van alle menselijke mogelijkheden tot 'intiem contact'. Vele andere facetten worden immers tijdelijk bewust uitgeschakeld of eenvoudigweg onmogelijk. Seksuele intimiteit wordt dan ook pas menswaardige en 'zinvolle' intimiteit als ze gevoed wordt door de ontwikkeling van een bevredigende interpersoonlijke intimiteit."181 Hoewel Burggraeve niet spreekt over poëzie, denken we dat hij het spreken zeker als een belangrijke vorm van bevredigende interpersoonlijke intimiteit zal zien. Dit spreken kan in het kader van onze studie dubbel zijn; enerzijds een erotisch elkaar toespreken met de taal van het Hooglied als voorbeeld, en anderzijds het expliciete gebruik van het Hooglied in het voorlezen ervan – beide verbale communicaties al dan niet in een intiem kader (bijvoorbeeld als voorspel, of bij de haard met een glas wijn, op flirtend hand in hand op de dijk, enz.). Op deze manier kan dergelijke 'Hoogliedgeladen' communicatie een bouwsteen zijn "… voor een relatie-verdiepende communicatie die de wederzijdse verbondenheid en seksuele harmonie helpen in stand houden én groeien…"182

Men kan allicht alleen maar dagdromen dat er verzen of uitdrukkingen uit het Hooglied zouden doordringen in de Nederlandse taal. Dat is trouwens een realistische droom; hoeveel uitdrukkingen uit de Statenbijbel zijn er niet in het Nederlands doorgedrongen, hoeveel liefdesprevelingen van Shakespeare zijn er niet in het Engels doorgedrongen?! Denken we trouwens aan de titel van Driessen: "Wat ben je mooi mijn lief …." die een colon uit het Hooglied gebruikt om te mijmeren over een "Spiritualiteit van de liefde op de tonen van het Hooglied." In dit geval denken we natuurlijk ook aan de beroemde verzen 8,6-7 die al herhaalde malen in dit werkje aan bod gekomen zijn en gebruikt worden in huwelijksmissen.
Gelet op de duidelijk maatschappelijke nood aan mooiere taal en beleving op het vlak van seksualiteit, stellen we de volgende vraag: waarom zou dit raadselachtige taal- en cultuurfenomeen van maatschappelijke verspreiding en standaardisatie niet simpelweg voor het Hooglied in gang gezet kunnen worden door het verspreiden van een goede want erkende standaardeditie van het Hooglied, die bovendien goedkoop is en dus gemakkelijk kan verspreid worden –bijvoorbeeld op strategische momenten als Valentijnsdag?! Analoog kan over bepaalde specifieke verzen gedacht worden op kleinere dragers als wenskaarten, bladwijzers en dies meer.

7.2.2.2. Volstaat de begeerte van het Hooglied?

Wie spreekt over liefde, over erotiek denkt onmiddellijk aan verlangen, aan begeerte, aan lust. Welke Nederlandstalige humaniorastudent kent niet het gedicht van Hooft hierover waarin hij een etymologische verklaring voor het woord verlangen geeft: hoe meer ik aan de geliefde denk, hoe verder zij van mij is, hoe langer de afstand tussen ons wordt. Er is in het Hooglied inderdaad voortdurend een beweging van komen en gaan: het "Ik zoek hem, maar ik vind hem niet" in (o.a.) vers 3,1 is een leidmotief. Veel commentatoren hebben hier terecht op gewezen.

Geen enkele wetenschapper heeft zo veel nadruk gelegd op het element verlangen of begeerte als Walsh in een studie die specifiek aan dit element gewijd is: "Exquisite Desire. Religion, the Erotic, and the Song of Songs" (2000). We zullen de idee van dit werk vergelijken met de belangrijke theorie van Burggraeve. Hierbij hanteren we de term 'begeerte' als vertaling van 'desire; het is inderdaad sterker dan het begrip 'verlangen' en niet zo beladen als 'lust'.

181 BURGGRAEVE., *Zinvol seksueel leven onderweg*, p. 322.
182 *Ibid.,* p. 324.

Walsh stelt in het algemeen dat "Desire is about wanting more than about getting."183 Dit is een sterke uitspraak die een vorm van waarheid bevat. Wanneer we nogmaals denken aan het beroemde gedicht van Hooft, kunnen we begrijpen dat het blijvend willen begeren zonder te krijgen, te 'consumeren' een menselijk motief kan zijn. Men zit dan echter op een redelijk gevaarlijk spoor. Grijpen we even terug naar ons verklaringsbegrip van de funderingsrelaties. "Ann begeert Piet" betekent in deze context dat Piet eigenlijk door Ann gecreëerd wordt (of geconstitueerd). Voorheen bestond Piet niet voor Ann, of alleszins niet op deze wijze (eventueel al als vriend, klasgenoot, enz.). Omgekeerd wil dat zeggen dat Piet voor deze begeerte van Ann een noodzakelijke voorwaarde wordt ; hij wordt letterlijk een zaak van alles of niets. Hij is de aanleiding waarop de begeerte van Ann zich a.h.w kon storten en wordt er vooral het zinvolle doel van. Daarom is Piet belangrijk voor Ann en het zal de ambitie zijn om dit wederkerig te maken, om Piet eigen te maken. Hier zit juist de spanning van het begeren ; men wil de noodzakelijke voorwaarde als een identieke oorzaak maar dat is helaas helemaal niet evident. Indien Piet niet 'gerealiseerd' wordt, indien hij verdwijnt (door zijn dood of desinteresse of ..), moet Ann lijden: haar voorwerp van begeerte appelleert willens nillens niet aan deze begeerte. Hij wordt zelf geen oorzaak van begeerte die de noodzakelijke voorwaarde in haar vindt. Op deze manier wordt Ann in haar begeerte oorzaak zonder grond. Het is een beetje sterven (zonder noodzakelijke voorwaarde geen oorzaak). Ann kan op drie manieren reageren:

1. treuren en trachten de grond van haar begeerte te relativeren en op die manier haar begeerte laten uitdoven (ze kan hierbij wel een goede herinnering koesteren);

2. ze kan haar begeerte op een ander richten, wat dikwijls gebeurt maar meestal dramatisch afloopt gelet op de oneerlijke motivatie ervan;

3. ze kan de grond van haar begeerte idealiseren (dit laatste moet zowel ideëel begrepen worden, nl. dat Piet een aanbeden ideaal in het hoofd wordt, als psychopathologisch, nl. dat Piet bijvoorbeeld gestalkt zal worden). Wat Walsh dus beweert, is eigenlijk slechts het derde van de drie vormen van omgaan met de begeerte. Zij identificeert het begeren botweg met één van haar modaliteiten. Dit is dus psychologisch gezien een verkeerde stelling.

Straffer wordt het wanneer Walsh haar wetenschappelijk uitgangspunt toepast op het Hooglied: "The Song is concerned with the provocative question of wether the exquisite sensation of wanting the other could surpass in any realistic sense the pleasure of sexual consommation. The surprising claim that it can does seem to be the premise of the Song, which stays focused on the experience of yearning, not its relief"184 (onze cursivering). Dit is inderdaad een ongelooflijke conclusie. We hebben er al op gewezen dat Walsh met de behandeling van haar kernbegrip 'begeerte' (desire, yearning) fout zit. Met betrekking tot het Hooglied maakt zij echter nog een andere fout. Zonder in te gaan op de gehele bewijsvoering van de auteur, moeten wij opmerken dat zij zich eigenlijk alleen maar laat leiden door de fameuze va-et-vient van gevoelstemmingen, bezoeken e.d.m. tussen de geliefden. We komen daar straks nog op terug. Wat eerder als een spel kan gezien worden om, banaal uitgedrukt, nu eens veel intermenselijk verlangen literair aan het woord te laten komen, om gewoonweg een uitgewerkte tekst te maken over een bepaalde liefdesrelatie, wordt door Walsh werkelijk opgeblazen als de boodschap over begeerte van de auteur. We hebben vermoedelijk in de bovenstaande analyse i.v.m. de voorwaarden van een expressieve seksuele cultuur tussen partners kunnen aantonen dat deze cultuur er is tussen de partners in het Hooglied. Tederheid

183 WALSH, *Exquisite Desire*, p. 22.
184 *Ibid*., p. 23

en rechtvaardigheid, om maar twee voorwaarden te noemen, vloeken met de idee van de begeerte an-sich. Het durven schrijven "Not having this couple consummate is the point and the power of this book."185 is gewoonweg naast de kwestie. In feite valt Walsh in dezelfde val als de vele commentatoren die daadwerkelijk klagen dat er geen sprake is van een huwelijk in het Hooglied.

Waar Walsh wel scoort, is haar opmerking over de ontdekking van de vrouwelijke seksualiteit in het oude Israël. Maar ze gaat daarbij weer te ver: "The Song blasts past genders toward human desire … It is an assertion, a victory of the autonomy of sexuality … The woman's voice becomes the instrument for the assertion and celebration of one's own personal power and delight in one's surroundings."186 De seksuele begeerte verschijnt hier niet minder dan als een soort eigen categorie die maar eens bijna per toeval kan ingevuld worden door wat omringenden. De volledige intermenselijkheid, door ons uitgedrukt in de spanningsvolle funderingsrelatie, verdwijnt eenvoudigweg. Deze idee culmineert in de behandeling van Walsh van het laatste deel van het Hoofdlied: " The woman's desire is undergoing a transformation within this final chapter, where she dispenses with the lover who is absent anyway, and proclaims instead her own sexuality."187 Daarvoor is volgens ons geen evidentie in de tekst. Walsh moet het doen met de finale lokroep van de vrouw: "But somehow the desperation is gone. By this point she is no longer expecting a response, and so the book ends without one."188 We willen antwoorden met een "so what"!? Het Hooglied kan toch niet oneindig verder worden geschreven? De vrouw had toch haar trouw reeds uitgedrukt aan haar geliefde; laat haar inderdaad maar het laatste woord van oproep. Walsh baseert zich op vers 8,12 ("My vineyard, my very own is before me") om te concluderen: "What she does is reclaim her sexuality and her passion for herself ..."189 Maar bij de meeste auteurs spreekt hier de … man en geen 'she' (cfr. Rozelaar, Drijvers, Stoop)! Zelfs indien wij Walsh toch deze pericoop laten toeschrijven aan de vrouw, hebben wij nog een argument tegen haar redenering. Zij stelt hier immers de eigen seksualiteit van de vrouw in feite niet op zich, maar tegen de pretenties van de broers: "She is now sole owner, the brothers no longer having the land rights they presumed to have with her in 1,6 …" 190 Wat de vrouw, in deze lezing, dus zou claimen is niet meer of minder dan haar recht om tegenover de druk van de patriarchale maatschappij, vertegenwoordigd door de broers, haar eigen geliefde te kiezen, m.a.w. te kiezen voor die unieke noodzakelijke voorwaarde van haar bestaande, levende, poëtisch uitgedrukte begeerte en dus helemaal niet voor haar begeerte op zich. Een recht dat zich inderdaad voor de eerste keer uitspreekt en terecht is.

Het klopt natuurlijk dat de vrouw meer aan het woord is als de man, en dat dit op zich reeds merkwaardig is voor deze paternalistische samenleving. Het klopt ook dat het gebruikte erotische, seksuele woord van de vrouw in die Joodse culturele context uitzonderlijk is. Walsh maakt echter, vanuit haar verkeerd begrepen idee over het begeren, een veel te grote en verkeerde stap. De begeerte wordt bij Walsh gehypostaseerd (zie boven: geïdealiseerd, onder twee vormen). Ze denkt dat begeerte "…is as much a yearning for the other as it is a yearning to transcend oneself . We want to find ourselves in love with the other. And oddly, in part, this has little to do with the other."191 We herhalen nog eens dat deze 'transcendentie' als modaliteit kan, maar op zich is dit niet het begeren. We begrijpen trouwens niet waarom

185 *Ibid.,* p. 35.
186 *Ibid.,* p. 142.
187 *Ibid.,* p. 167.
188 *Ibid.,* p. 168.
189 *Ibid..*
190 *Ibid..*
191 *Ibid.,* p. 169.

Walsh dit soort begeren zo interessant vindt. Ons lijkt het eerder ziekelijk en ethisch verkeerd. De vrouw uit het Hooglied verschijnt hier eerder als een soort Don Giovanni voor wie vrouwen eerder aanleidingen waren om lusten bot te vieren dan wel partners. Bovendien, en dat zullen we direct ook bij Burggraeve verder toegelicht zien, wordt het begeren, hoe dit ook begrepen wordt, op zich op een veel te hoog schavot gezet. Stoop heeft dit lucide verwoord: "Shir Hashirim is de wat de Bijbel betreft unieke, weergave van de wezenlijke liefde – met inbegrip van de erotisch-seksuele dimensie die daaraan eigen is – die de gehele persoon, lichaam en ziel, van twee mensen blijvend bindt."192

In de bespreking van Burggraeve waarom we eigenlijk verliefd worden op iemand, en dus die iemand beginnen begeren (en we zien in deze tekstuele context van het Hooglied duidelijk dat dit ook uitgesproken wordt – wat op zich niet altijd gebeurt), analyseert hij het beeld van de verliefde over de geliefde: "De ander verschijnt dan ook steeds als de 'fantastische' partner, en dit in de dubbele zin van het woord. De ander is fantastisch en wonderbaar omdat hij precies met mij klikt; hij is echter ook fantastisch, dat wil zeggen meer een beeld van mijn dromen dan zoals hij werkelijk is."193 Welnu, deze beiden elementen van het dubbele karakter van de fantastische partner, vinden we ook in het Hooglied terug. Het eerste aspect is minder geduid, moeten we eerder afleiden. Dat de partners met elkaar klikken, kan te maken hebben met hun zelfde maatschappelijke achtergrond. Boven, bij de toetsing van de regels voor het aangaan van een seksuele relatie m.b.t. het Hooglied, hebben we in verband met de gelijkwaardigheid hier reeds op gewezen. We citeren daarvoor nogmaals Knight: "The girl has met her social equal- a fellow countryman…."194 In dit verband spreekt Burggraeve van homogamie, waarmee men de graad van gelijkheid van streek, afkomst, e.d.m. van huwelijkskandidaten bedoelt.195 Het tweede aspect van het fantastisch beeld van de partner wordt werkelijk doorheen het hele Hooglied gestrooid, in dromen over elkaar, in het elkaars bezingen in de wasfs, enzovoort.

Belangrijk nu is dat Burggraeve zeer sterk dit gevoel, deze bron van begeren nuanceert als aanzet voor een relatie: "Het verliefd worden is dan ook geen echte partnerkeuze. Deze grijpt pas plaats door de langzame ontdekking van de ander als ander. Deze keuze kan in de beginnende verliefdheid zelf nog niet, of zeker niet voldoende gebeuren."196 Burggraeve stelt dat een hechte en diepe levensrelatie een langzaam en moeizaam ontwikkelingsproces is: "In dit groeiproces spelen seksuele aantrekking, verliefdheid en liefde, kennismaking en vriendschap elk hun eigen rol."197 Begeerte, in de gedaante van seksuele aantrekking of verliefdheid, speelt een rol, niet dé rol. En zeker niet de vervormde rol die Walsh in het Hooglied eraan toeschrijft op brakke tekstuele gronden.

Is er dus in het Hooglied sprake van gelijkwaardigheid en rechtvaardigheid, van tederheid en waarachtigheid, en van een in de manifeste trouw uitgedrukte bepaalde vorm van relatiebekwaamheid, dan moeten we om te kunnen spreken van een echte volwassen partnerkeuze uit de tekst treden en geloven in de uitgesproken trouw (door de vrouw) en het feit dat de tekst eindigt op een finale uitnodiging (door dezelfde vrouw). Méér zeggen is amenderen. Meer denken ligt wel alleszins voor de hand, maar is niet zeker. Maar we kunnen

192 STOOP, *Lied der Liederen*, p. 530.
193 BURGGRAEVE., *Zinvol seksueel leven onderweg*, p. 123.
194 KNIGHT, Revelation of God, , p. 15.
195 BURGGRAEVE., *Zinvol seksueel leven onderweg*, p. 123.
196 *Ibid.,* p. 123-4.
197 *Ibid.,* p. 99.

deze pretentie tegenover het Hooglied ook niet uitspreken: de tekst is wat hij is. We gaan hier verder op in, in de volgende paragraaf.

We stellen nu ook al de volgende belangrijke vraag: als het zo is dat menselijke liefde, bij gelovigen, geïnspireerd is door goddelijke liefde, en als het zo moet zijn dat beginnende verliefdheid geen echte partnerkeuze is, en dus niet zomaar kan gelijkgeschakeld worden met dragende liefde, wanneer krijgt of ervaart men dan in dit hele proces deze Goddelijke liefde – of is het enkel een geloof?

7.2.2.3. Heeft het zin om over (het gebrek aan) het huwelijk in het Hooglied te spreken?

Diverse commentatoren spreken hun verwondering of ontgoocheling uit dat er in het Hooglied geen sprake is van het huwelijk – als een logische voltrekking van het liefdesparcours dat de geliefden doorlopen. Dit is vooral zo in de christelijke besprekingen. Driessen klinkt zelfs bijna doctrinair verontwaardigd: “Het is ongetwijfeld in strijd met de rest van de Bijbel: over kinderen is in dit liefdeslied geen sprake. Dat is op zijn minst vreemd, als je weet dat voor de bijbelse mens de vruchtbaarheid van het leven onlosmakelijk verbonden is met biologische vruchtbaarheid.”198 Opvallend is dat de uiterst wetenschappelijk-objectieve ingestelde Stoop het ook kort over deze boeg gooit in haar conclusies: “Opmerkelijk is dat het vermeende gericht zijn van de man-vrouw relatie op procreatie geheel buiten beschouwing wordt gelaten.”199 Uiteraard spreekt ook Burggraeve in zijn moraaltheologische beschouwingen over dit verband.200 In eerste instantie moeten we antwoorden dat de notie van biologische vruchtbaarheid effectief altijd in de Bijbel moet teruggevonden worden wanneer er sprake is over menselijke liefde, wil de opmerking van Driessen op zich reeds steek houden. Daar kunnen wij ons nu niet over uitspreken. Nochtans heeft Driessen wel een bepaald punt: “Sommigen denken dat het Hooglied wil aantonen dat liefde geen doel heeft tenzij zichzelf. Maar het wezen van de liefde is juist de vruchtbaarheid, want zo is God ook. En je kunt er niet omheen: er is geen sprake van kinderen, maar met de regelmaat van de klok duidt het lied een of ander symbool van vruchtbaarheid aan. Wijn, noten, appelen, bron, graan, …”201 Het is inderdaad opvallend hoeveel vruchten en dergelijke in het Hooglied aan bod komen. Hoger zijn we niet erg diep ingegaan op het erotische karakter van het Hooglied, maar met vele commentatoren kunnen wij deze elementen eerder duiden in een erotische dan wel een vruchtbaarheidssfeer. Nu is het wel zo dat de notie vruchtbaarheid niet mag verengd worden tot de toepassing ervan in een huwelijk. In een moderne wereld die gekenmerkt wordt door én een overbevolking, en daar rekening wij zeer zeker ook België bij, én tegelijk een fenomenale kinderverwaarlozing, moet men o.i. iets genuanceerder spreken over deze notie. In elk geval hebben de opmerkingen van Driessen ten opzichte van het Hooglied in feite geen zin. We willen nog eens herhalen dat er maar staat wat er staat. Dit soort denken is in feite zelfs geen interpretatie; het is gewoon pretentie. Het wil bijgevoegd of uitgevlakt zien, al naar gelang de achtergrond, en voegt daar, ironischerwijze, ook niets bij toe – dan verwarring. Interpreteren is nog iets anders.

Los van al dit soort eerder vervelende pretenties lezen wij graag de badinerende Ridderbos: “Wat zou het mooi zijn, wanneer het Hooglied geëindigd was met een bruiloftsfeest ...Voor ons zou het prettig en geruststellend zijn wanneer die twee jonge mensen uit het Hooglied het

198 DRIESSEN, *Wat ben je mooi mijn lief,* p. 139.
199 STOOP, *Lied der Liederen*, p. 530.
200 R. BURGGRAEVE, *Zinvolle seksualiteit. Een integraal-relationele achtergrondvisie in christelijk perspectief*, 3de ed., Leuven, 1985, p. 370.
201 *Ibid.,* p. 140-1.

goede voorbeeld hadden gegeven. Een passend slot voor dat boek. Sprookjesachtig. Ze leefden nog lang en gelukkig."202 Wel, zoiets lezen we graag. Net als het vervolg: "Echter, niets van dat al. Het Hooglied eindigt met een mysterieus vers."203 Op dit vers badineert Ridderbos rustig verder ; hij betrekt het o.a. op een niet geforceerde analoge wijze op het Pinksterfeest. Dergelijke benadering heeft tenminste een pretentieloosheid en bijna daardoor reeds een zinvolheid. Men mag terecht de verwondering over dit gebrek aan besluit in een huwelijk uiten, andersom zou in een christelijke perspectief eigenaardig zijn. Maar laten we er ook niet teveel zware bespiegelingen aanhangen, dan bepaalde analogieën en, waarom niet, vrome wensen. Een christoloog als Michell gaat dan ook veel te ver: "To elucidate the message of the Song, this section seeks to define the significance of marriage as described in the Song and employed in the nuptial theme of the Scriptures."204 We hebben al eerder gezegd dat zijn christologische benadering hermeneutisch onaanvaardbaar is. Ter volledigheid moeten we nog zeggen dat zelfs een vrijzinnige als Lalou aan dit huwelijksinstituut moet denken. Het werd reeds eerder geciteerd: "Tous les principes religieux du mariage y sont bafoués."205

Een en ander betekent wel dat de veel gebruikte termen 'bruid' en 'bruidegom' in een correcte tekstversie niet kunnen aangehouden worden. Zo spreekt de betrouwbare Stoop eenvoudigweg van de vrouwelijke hoofdpersoon en van de geliefde herder.

Volgens Stoop is het overigens om evidente want biologische redenen zelfs onmogelijk om van een huwelijk in het kader van het Hooglied te spreken: "De vrouwelijke hoofdpersoon bevindt zich in een leeftijdsfase, dat een meisje naar de in die tijd gangbare regels huwbaar is, maar zij is daarvoor lichamelijk nog onvoldoende ontwikkeld."206 Nochtans is er voor deze idee van het huwelijk, gezien als een vaste relatie, wel enige evidentie. We hebben het al gehad over de belangrijke notie van de trouw in de relatie van de geliefden: "Deze liefde is uniek en trouw. Daarover gaat Ct."207 Het verband van de notie trouw en het huwelijk is uiteraard evident. Mulder merkt verder op: "Het Hooglied is, zonder dat het deze dingen met veel woorden zegt, een lied tegen de promiscuïteit, tegen hen, die het egoïstisch in wisselende 'vluchtige begroetingen' zoeken."208, zonder dat er wordt "..gedacht aan of gerept over zulke 'ethische' zaken als de voortplanting van het menselijk geslacht, of dergelijke op zich gewichtige problemen."209 Daarom was in bovenstaande paragraaf een grondige kritiek van de begeertestelling van Walsh ook zo belangrijk. Ook hebben we boven trachten aan te tonen dat er in de relatie tussen de geliefden sprake is van aanwezigheid van de door Burggraeve opgestelde regels voor het aangaan van een seksuele relatie.

In dit verband is een interessante lezing van het fameuze eindvers van belang. We hebben in de vorige paragraaf nog gezien welke eigenaardige interpretatie Walsh hieraan gaf. Een volledig andere lezing vinden we bij LaCocque, een lezing die onze waardering meedraagt: "Nothing has been resolved; the lovers have not settled down. No wedding comes to soothe the burning passion; no ceremony occurs to give ultimate vindication to societal customs."210

202 RIDDERBOS, *Hooglied,* p. 73.
203 Ibid..
204 MITCHELL, Song of Songs, p. 67.
205 LALOU, *Rendons le cantique aux amoureux*, p. 55.
206 STOOP, *Lied der Liederen*, p. 522.
207 Ibid., p. 550.
208 MULDER, *Hooglied*, p. 76.
209 Ibid..
210 LACOCQUE, *Romance, She Wrote*, p. 189.

LaCocque, die eerder reeds beweerde niet in een huwelijksinterpretatie te geloven211, mag dit inderdaad constateren. Hij leest niet meer dan wat er staat, of, anders gezegd: hij leest juist nog wat er niet staat. Zijn conclusie is inspirerend: “And thus the poem, …, has no other choice but a ritornello and to start all over again – like the love it sings.”212 Dit is een zeer aannemelijk lezing. Dit is vooral een belangrijke levens- want liefdesles. En we mogen zeker spreken van lessen in een lezing van de Bijbel: ”The long-term effect is immense since the reader is drawn to take biblical texts as role models for religious and social behaviour.”213 Zo bekeken kan ook het Hooglied een immense belangrijke pedagogische functie hebben! En de les is: in welke relatie we ons ook bevinden, is het nu een gewone liefdesrelatie in volle ontplooiing (zoals allicht hier), of een gedragen huwelijk, we moeten altijd opnieuw opstarten. We moeten altijd tussen elkaar fris blijven, ja, elkaar altijd een klein beetje blijven afstoten om weer terug te komen. Geen hart is definitief gerustgesteld, verzadigd of veroverd. Een kloppend hart klinkt luider met een klopje van de buitenkant.

7.2.2.4. Is er een verband tussen de menselijke liefde in het Hooglied en de Goddelijke liefde?

Komen we God tegen in het Hooglied?

We kunnen God in het Hooglied theoretisch op 4 mogelijke manieren tegenkomen: hij wordt (letterlijk) vernoemd, hij wordt allegorisch getoond, hij verschijnt zelf in een theofanie of hij toont zich doorheen de inspiratie van zijn goddelijke liefde. We bekijken deze verschillende mogelijkheden.

1. Wordt God vernoemd in het Hooglied? De Yah.

In punt 4.4. is dit reeds besproken. We hebben ons niet echt uitgesproken gelet op de zeer vele meningen hierover en ons gebrek aan kennis van o.a. het Hebreeuws. Alleszins voelden wij ons het meest aangesproken door de vertaling van Drijvers die het had over een “goddelijke gloed” omdat hij op deze manier zowel kiest voor een woord dat versterkend is en ook rekening heeft genomen met de Goddelijke interpretatie.

2. Vinden we God in een hogere lezing van het Hooglied? De allegorese.

In een allegorische lezing kan hij wel taalkundig maar niet logisch genoemd worden; daarover gaven in punt … reeds uitgebreid onze mening.

3. Verschijnt God in het Hooglied? Een theofanie?

Wanneer God verschijnt, toont Hij zichzelf, en is er sprake van een theofanie? Kuntz geeft de volgende uitgebreide, werkbare definitie van een theofanie: “The theofany, then, may be defined as a temporal, partial and intentionally allusive self-disclosure initiated by the sovereign deity at a particular place, the reality of which evokes the convulsion of nature and the fear and dread of man, and whose unfolding emphasizes visual and audible aspects generally according to a recognised literary form.”214 Het zal a.d.h.v. de kenmerken van deze definitie duidelijk zijn dat wij dergelijke zaken niet aantreffen in het Hooglied en dat er bijgevolg geen sprake is van een theofanie in het Hooglied. Nergens neemt God het initiatief

211 *Ibid.,* p. 7.
212 *Ibid.,* p. 190.
213 M. E. MILLS, *Images of God in the Old Testament,* London, 1998, p. 79.
214 J. K. KUNTZ, *The self-revelation of God,* Philadelphia, 1967, p. 45.

om een deel van Zichzelf te tonen gepaard gaande aan enige schrik bij de menselijke waarnemer.

4. Wat toont God in het Hooglied: Zijn goddelijke liefde in de menselijke liefde?

Deze vraag is allesbehalve duidelijk te beantwoorden. Maar ze wordt wel veel geopperd: "Is een verwijzing naar de liefde van Jahweh voor de mens in Ct aanwezig ? Op het eerste gezicht geeft Ct, …, tot zo'n verwijzing niet direct aanleiding; Jahweh's naam komt niet in Ct voor. Maar is daarmee alles gezegd? Een volwaardige beleving door twee mensen van hun wederkerige liefde geeft hun toegang tot de diepere lagen van hun persoon, waar een dialoog tussen hen op het niveau van het zijn mogelijk wordt. Het is daar dat de Onzienlijke zich ontmoeten laat …"215 Dit is natuurlijk m.b.t. de tekst speculatie. Bovendien is deze tekst niet duidelijk: betekent deze bewering dat we God ontmoeten doorheen een liefdevolle beleving zoals in het Hooglied, of is een goddelijke ontmoeting zelfs mogelijk doorheen een tekst als het Hooglied (zoals we een mystieke tekst zouden lezen)? We vermoeden dat de eerste idee aan de orde is.

Als we doorheen een beleving van een liefde, zoals degene van het Hooglied exemplarisch kan gesteld worden, deel kunnen nemen aan de goddelijke liefde, rijzen er drie kernvragen m.b.t. de Goddelijke liefde:

1. Wat is goddelijke liefde in relatie tot menselijke liefde?
2. Hoe komt deze goddelijke liefde tot bij ons?
3. Hoe en wanneer ervaren wij deze goddelijke liefde?

We trachten dit uit te werken, minder in de zin dat we tot zekere antwoorden zullen komen, maar vooral in de zin van het formuleren van de noodzakelijke vragen.

1. Wat is goddelijke liefde in relatie tot menselijke liefde?

In het beeld dat wij in het Oud Testament van God krijgen is een enorm verschil. Daarbij moeten wij zeker opmerken dat wij niet weten welk Godsbeeld er overwegend was, in de mate dat wij ons zo mogen uitdrukken, in de tijd van dat het Hooglied werd geschreven. We zullen hier dus geen diachronische analyse en vergelijking kunnen maken van en tussen deze menselijke liefde van het Hooglied en de goddelijke liefde. Nochtans kan men niet zeggen dat we dan maar noodgedwongen een uitgebreide, synchronische analyse van het godsbegrip moeten hanteren in een begrip tot zijn relatie met de menselijke liefde. De vraag is zelfs of we geen godsbegrip moeten hanteren dat past bij het begrip van de menselijke liefde!

God verschijnt in de Bijbel onder talloze beelden, metaforen: men ervaart God als rechter, koning, vader en zelfs moeder, echtgenoot, en zowaar ook als pottenbakker. Belangrijk zijn de volgende elementen: metaforen en teksten. Mills verbindt duidelijk specifieke metaforen van God aan specifieke teksten: "In this approach one can talk not of 'God' but of many 'gods', since each image of the divine is to be taken seriously in its own right as the image of God belonging to a unique piece of text."216 In deze variëteit aan beelden kan zij geen rangschikking zien: "The writer has preferred to leave the reader with a tapestry, or even a patchwork quilt, of divine figurations rather than to end by subordinating the variety to one common theme."217 Nochtans zou men kunnen zeggen dat één thema van de relatie tussen

215 STOOP, *Lied der Liederen*, p. 531.
216 MILLS, *Images of God in the Old Testament,*p. 14.
217 *Ibid.,* p. 150.

de mens en God er met kop en staart boven uitsteekt: de liefde. Het is zelfs geformaliseerd in het belangrijkste gebod: "Bemin één God". Boven alle zaken die er na te volgen, te geloven zijn, moeten wij God beminnen. Dat moeten we niet alleen begrijpen als het beminnen van alleen déze God, in tegenstelling tot de mogelijkheid van het beminnen van andere goden. Het moet binnen de bedoelde Joodse cultuur en haar waardensysteem geduid worden als de belangrijkste zaak. Daarmee is er een duidelijke hiërarchie in waarden gegeven. De vraag is: moet hiermee niet tevens één beeld van God passen, dat daarmee ook het hoogste en belangrijkste is in voor de rest als patchwork quilt voorgesteld beeld van God? En wil dat dan niet zeggen dat hiermee alle mogelijke onderlinge tegenstrijdigheden in de beelden opgeheven worden?

We hebben hoger gezien dat de Joden zichzelf als gelovigen inferieur aan God vonden en dat deze blijk van manifeste ongelijkwaardigheid geen grond kon zijn voor een geallegoriseerde liefdevolle relatie tussen God en de mens. Immers, tussen de mensen moet er blijk zijn van gelijkwaardigheid wil er sprake zijn van ware liefde. Nu spreken we echter niet op een allegorisch maar op een werkelijk beleefd vlak: de ervaring van de goddelijke liefde voor de mens. Deze is, vermits er anders geen liefde is. God kan niet eisen dat wij Hem liefhebben indien hij op Zijn beurt ons niet liefheeft. Liefde is per definitie dubbel-zijdig. Welk godsbeeld moeten wij dan stellen dat samenhangt met dit liefdesgebod? Het kan enkel maar een beeld van gelijkwaardigheid zijn, net zoals de mens naar Gods beeld geschapen is. Transcendentie van God is dan van een andere taalorde; het gaat over hetgene dat we gewoon niet begrijpen (zoals de schepping en een bestaan ervoor). In die zin is het dan nog zinvol te spreken van een superioriteit van God, niet (meer) in de relatie van God tot de mens. Alle vormen van boosheden, dreigementen e.d.m. van God zou men dan kunnen interpreteren in de zin van Zijn kwetsuur in de trouw van Zijn geliefde, in dezelfde zin dat iemand die de goddelijke liefde niet ervaart God kan verlaten.

Belangrijk is de dubbele betekenis van liefde tot God in het Oud Testament wat een goed begrip van de relatie goddelijke liefde/menselijke liefde helemaal niet eenvoudig maakt. Het liefdesbegrip dat in Hooglied gebruikt wordt is ahab/aheb: "The term is frequently used for the desire or attraction of one person to another of the opposite sex, with the end goal sometimes marriage, but sometimes primarily a sexual encounter."218 In een religieuze context wordt het ook gebruikt om de menselijke liefde naar God te benoemen (zie het eerste gebod). De waarde is heel specifiek en zeker niet vergelijkbaar met wat onder menselijke liefde begrepen wordt: "Here the love that God commands from Israël is not primarily a matter of intimate affection, but it is to be expressed by obedience to God's commandments, serving God, showing reverence to God, and being loyal to God."219 (idem). Is er dus in het Hooglied wel een gelijkwaardigheid theoretisch mogelijk vanuit een goed begrip van de term "ahab", en we hebben gezien dat deze gelijkwaardigheid ook feitelijk aanwezig is tussen deze geliefden, dan is er in een begrip van de term "ahab" m.b.t. God sprake van een zekere ondergeschiktheid. Dit bevestigt onze opinie over de onmogelijkheid van een allegorese van het Hooglied, zelfs met het behoud van de term ahab!

Hoe is er dan een relatie mogelijk tussen de loyale liefde van de ahab tussen God en mens, en de begeerlijke liefde van de ahab tussen mensen? Blijkbaar wordt deze relatie gelegd door een ander begrip van liefde in het Oud Testament: de hesed. Ook hesed wordt gebruikt op gewoon menselijk vlak. Het is in het Nederlands net als in het Engels eerder onvertaalbaar. Het slaat

218 D.N. FREEDMAN (ed.), *The Anchor Bible Dictionary ,* New York, 1992, IV, p. 376.

219 *Ibid..*

op gedragingen die ertoe strekken hulp te verlenen, waarbij deze hulp van vitaal belang is, en waarbij men de vrijheid heeft om moreel te beslissen tot hulp over te gaan. Men zou hier eventueel de term toewijding kunnen gebruiken. In elk geval vullen de menselijke ahab en de menselijke hesed elkaar zeer goed aan Seksuele aantrekkingskracht en toewijding; samen met een voldoende inkomen heeft een relatie werkelijk niet nodig om vruchtbaar te kunnen leven. Maar waar is God? De term hesed heeft ook een theologische betekenis en is als dusdanig " … a central term for expressing God's relationship to Israël… The Hebrew term hesed compactly incoporates all three of these dimensions (commitment, provision for need, freedom) in a single word."220 Onze belangrijke liefdesvoorwaarde van de gelijkwaardigheid, dat men ook zou kunnen invullen met de vrijheid in een relatie, komt nu opmerkelijk op de proppen: "Thus in speaking of Israël's hesed to God, Hosea is able to convey both the freedom of Israël within the covenant relationship and also the deep and urgent desire of God for Israël' s free response."221 Er is een gebod voor liefhebben, maar dat staat geen vrij antwoord in de weg: Israël c.q. elke gelovige staat gelijkwaardig aan God. Wat het verband tussen beide liefdes is, wordt duidelijk in het volgende lange citaat: "Although Hosea speaks only of Israël's hesed, his climactic introduction of true human hesed as God's gift to Israël is connected to divine hesed as an expression of God's commitment to the human community… From an OT point of view any human loyalty, kindness, love or mercy (to refer again to the translation options for hesed), is rooted ultimately in the loyalty, kindness, love and mercy of God."222 (onze cursivering).

Het verband tussen de Goddelijke liefde en de menselijke liefde, met name de analogie tussen beide en de oorsprong van de tweede in de eerste, is vervat in een begrip van de hesed. Het verband van de menselijke hesed met de menselijke ahab moet aldus begrepen worden dat seksuele aantrekkingskracht of begeerte alleen te weinig is voor een liefdevolle relatie. Onze beschrijving van het Hooglied a.d.h.v. de moraaltheorie van Burggraeve heeft aangetoond dat er in het Hooglied voldoende tekenen aanwezig zijn van een volwaardige liefdesrelatie. We hebben voldoende de stelling van Walsh aangevallen waar zij tracht aan te tonen hoe overwegend de idee van de begeerte in het Hooglied is. Waarmee hopelijk aangetoond is, dat de menselijke liefde zoals ze getoond wordt in het Hooglied, analoog is aan de Goddelijke liefde.

We kunnen het dan voor een zeldzame keer niet eens zijn met Stoop: "Wanneer men in deze liefde (NB tussen de jonge man en vrouw) een beeld ziet van de liefde van God voor de mens dan wordt de boodschap van Ct miskend. Er wordt dan een stap overgeslagen, een stap die essentieel is en die inhoudt, dat deze menselijke liefde heilig is met inbegrip van de erotisch-seksuele dimensie ervan. Die erkenning heeft in het verleden een aantal malen plaatsgevonden, maar ook vaak niet, omdat men ervoor is teruggeschrokken. …een nadere gecoördineerde multidisciplinaire studie van deze menselijke liefde kan tot verhelderende en bevrijdende resultaten leiden."223 Stoop verwijst daarbij in een noot naar de recente bijdrage van Raes et al. 224 die we in dit werk ook al (even) aan het woord gelaten hebben. We menen, zonder valse bescheidenheid, voor de eerste maal na alle boeken en artikels over het Hooglied deze erkenning geduid te hebben, nl in de toetsing van het nut van het Hooglied aan een moderne moraaltheologie. Het is de verdienste van Roger Burggraeve hiervoor een dankbaar schema aangereikt te hebben. De wisselwerking tussen beide is prachtig. Waar de

220 *Ibid.,* p. 378.
221 *Ibid.,* p. 380.
222 *Ibid..*
223 STOOP, *Lied der Liederen*, p. 550-1.
224 L. VERGOUWEN (ed.). *Religie en erotiek. Balanceren tussen lust en liefde,* Tilburg, 2002.

moraaltheologie het Hooglied vanuit zijn oogpunt laat zien als nuttig ter illustratie van het belang van de aangevoerde theorie, verschijnt anderzijds het Hooglied als een historische open hand waaruit deze moraaltheorie noodzakelijkerwijze moet plukken. Historisch, want Burggraeve heeft waarschijnlijk tal van andere handen (h)erkend waaruit hij dankbaar theoretisch kon putten; noodzakelijkerwijze, vermits het Oud Testament eenzelfde bron van genade is als het Nieuw Testament en als dusdanig samen dé hand vormt waaruit Burggraeve niet anders kon dan zo te plukken. De verdienste van de auteur van het Hooglied, én een motief voor een modern begrip van de opname van het Hooglied in de canon, is dat hij deze bronsmaak herkend heeft – een ander woord voor de werking van de goddelijke Geest ? Het Hooglied is dan een poëtisch genot, niet enkel omdat technisch gezien een goede poëtische verwerking gebeurd is, maar zeker omdat de grond zo herkenbaar zuiver is. Dat is al meteen een natuurlijke reden dat ook ongelovigen die "zuiver van hart" zijn de tekst (h)erkennen. En misschien maken zij een sprong van deze tekst, het Hooglied, naar de rest van de Bijbel, het boek door de goddelijke Geest ingeblazen. Dat zien we in het stuk over het 'theoreferentieel nut' van het Hooglied.

2. Hoe komt deze goddelijke liefde tot bij ons?

Analoog aan vorige redenering (maar zonder enige referentie daarnaar) stelt Driessen de relatie tussen menselijke en goddelijke liefde als volgt: "Mensen hebben maar lief omdat God hen liefheeft en zoals God hen liefheeft. Dat is de boodschap die we mogen lezen in het merkwaardige bijbelse liefdeslied, het Hooglied."225 (onze cursivering). Los van het feit dat Driessen deze stelling o.i. in haar boek nergens krachtig uitlegt (wat erop kan wijzen dat dit een evidente thesis is), laat staan uitlegt aan de hand van de evidentie uit het Hooglied, is het belangrijk een korte analyse te maken van deze beweringen omdat zij zeer belangrijk zijn.

"omdat God hen liefheeft" :

Hoe valt dit te begrijpen? Is God begrepen als noodzakelijk element in de liefdesrelatie tussen Hem en de mens of als oorzaak? Wat valt er te begrijpen met de opmerkelijke exclusiviteit van de 'maar'?
De 'omdat' wijst op God als oorzaak van de menselijke liefde (zie ook het 'rooted' op BLADZIJDE …). Nu kunnen er voor eenzelfde noodzakelijke voorwaarde verschillende oorzaken zijn. Omdat het regent, wordt de straat nat. Maar de straat kan ook nat zijn, omdat er een lek in de waterleidingen is. De 'maar' als exclusieve is dus onlogisch en dus onjuist. Het is zeker ook onwaar want dat zou willen zeggen dat ongelovigen niet kunnen liefhebben, wat uiteraard nonsens is. We nemen aan dat Driessen zich vergist tegenover de idee van de exclusieve 'maar' zodat overblijft: Gods liefde als oorzakelijke grond van de menselijke liefde.

Omgekeerd betekent dit ook, aangezien de menselijke liefde noodzakelijke voorwaarde is, er geen goddelijke liefde kan zijn zonder menselijke liefde. Dit is onze unieke relatie met God. Dit werd ook in vorige paragraaf kernachtig uitgedrukt: "… the urgent desire of God for Israël's free response..". Deze inherente spanning van de liefde, op welk niveau ook, werd m.b.t. de bespreking van het verlangen ook reeds aangehaald. De oorzakelijke liefde wil de noodzakelijke voorwaarde als een identieke oorzaak maar dat is helaas helemaal niet evident. Ongelovigheid is dus een logische evidentie, geen afwijking.

225 DRIESSEN, *Wat ben je mooi mijn lief,* flaptekst.

Schematisch krijgt men het volgende verband:

*Goddelijke liefde	menselijke liefde
*Oorzakelijk, niet noodzakelijk	noodzakelijk: zonder menselijke liefde geen goddelijke liefde. Element van spanning.
*Dat wil ook zeggen dat de menselijke liefde veroorzaakt kan zijn door een andere grond (een eigen grond ?), nl. bij ongelovigen	*de menselijke liefde getoond in het Hooglied, gesteund door een moraaltheorie, kan ook erkend worden door ongelovigen (voor de literaire lezing is dit nu al een feit)

“zoals God hen liefheeft”:

In de vorige paragraaf hebben we reeds gewezen op de belangrijke parallellie tussen de hesed van God en die tussen de mensen.
Maar hoe komt deze goddelijke liefde in godsnaam tot bij ons?
Via zijn Woord – via de boeken van Bijbel, zoals het Hooglied er één is. We moeten dus lezen (in de Bijbel) en luisteren (in de Kerk en naar goede voorbeelden als heiligen).

Maar hoe komt deze goddelijke liefde in ons?

We denken dat er in deze relatie tussen liefde van God/mens en tussen mensen de gemeenschappelijke noemer van de “genade” moet gebruikt worden. Driessen suggereert ook iets dergelijks: “Het is werkelijk genade te mogen zijn waar je g(G)eliefde is. Je wordt ernaartoe getrokken zonder dat je er bepaalde prestaties voor moet leveren, tenzij het aanbieden van je verlangen en ontvankelijkheid.”226 De andere, de geliefde is er dan zoals God zichzelf definieert: “Ik ben die ben”. En dit begrip kan alleen begrepen worden als een sprong, in een openbaring, een existentiële zijnservaring van erkenning én daarmee verbondenheid die elke rationalisatie ontspringt. De enig mogelijke rationalisatie is dan de uitwerking hiervan. Voor de liefde tussen mensen betekent dit dan een noodzakelijke uitwerking onder de vorm van een opbouw van een relatie. Voor de liefde van mens naar God betekent dit een mogelijke uitwerking onder de vorm van mystiek en de vorm van een maatschappelijke uitwerking binnen een religieuze gemeenschap. Al deze zaken kan men echter niet terugvinden in de contouren van het Hooglied, tenzij in de oproep van de geliefde vrouw tegen de dochters van Jeruzalem over haar geliefde en over de liefde. Hiermee geeft zij door een externalisatie van deze liefde een belangrijk constitutief element aan van de opbouw van de liefdesrelatie: ware liefde is niet geheim, openbaart zich. Van de liefde van God naar de mens vindt men in het Hooglied helemaal geen spoor terug behoudens in de analogie tussen de liefde van God naar de mens en de liefde tussen de mensen.

We staan enigszins afkerig tegen de idee die o.a. door Burggraeve (zijdelings) wordt geopperd van een aanraken van het goddelijke in de opperste vervoering van de seksuele daad. Dit heeft volgens ons meer met een natuurgeloof te maken, net zoals het gebruik van geestesverruimende middelen met gewoon geloof te maken heeft. Men zit dan immers in een situatie van een soort extreem verlies aan existentiële gebondenheid, waarbij via een marginaal bewustzijn (men heeft nog een ampele notie van tijd en zelfbewustzijn) zogezegd een kosmische verbondenheid wordt gesuggereerd – een verbondenheid die positief moet ervaren worden . Dit zet de deur open voor allerlei charlatanerie zoals men overigens dikwijls tegenkomt in bepaalde godsdiensten (zo waren er zelfs prostituees in sommige godsdiensten). Er moét een gevoel van verbondenheid, van geborgenheid overblijven om van geloof te

226 *Ibid.,* p. 23.

kunnen spreken. In dit afgewezen inzicht zit ook een inherent gevaar van middel/doelomdraaiing: de 'overtreffende situatie' zal om zichzelf gezocht worden, wat begrijpelijk is, maar in fundamentele tegenstelling staat tot een religieuze basishouding die er een is van ontvankelijkheid. We zijn er ons wel van bewust dat we met deze redenering twijfel induceren bij de religieuze credibiliteit van pogingen tot mystieke ervaringen.

3. Hoe en wanneer ervaren wij deze goddelijke liefde?

Waarom zien wij als gelovigen die inspiratie van de goddelijke liefde en waarom zien ongelovigen dit niet? Waarom zou een ongelovige lezing van het Hooglied, een bijbelse tekst waarvan wij stellig overtuigd zijn dat die door een ongelovige wel aan de hand van de moraaltheologie van Burggraeve kan gezien worden, deze God uiteindelijk toch niet ontdekken –waarbij het theoreferentiële nut dus geen uitwerking heeft? Of, waarom mogen we hopen dat een ongelovige toch die God in dergelijke tekst zou kunnen ontdekken ?

Burggraeve ziet volgende band tussen een seksuele liefdesbeleving en de aanwezigheid van God: "In hun seksuele liefdesuitingen kunnen gelovigen dan ook de liefdevolle ondergrond vermoeden die hen schraagt en blijft uitdagen, over alle mislukkingen heen. Hun seksuele beleving wordt als het ware opengebroken naar een dieper wonder toe. Ze worden stil van dankbaarheid en ervaren in hun meest intieme momenten hoe een liefdevolle Aanwezigheid hen overstijgt. Voor die gelovige gehuwden is hun seksueel genot een vindplaats van God, een spoor dat naar zijn aanwezigheid heenwijst."227 (onze cursivering en onderstreping). Wat hier onmiskenbaar opvalt, is de tautologische verklaring voor het verband tussen diepe menselijke liefde en God, ook mooi een 'liefdevolle Aanwezigheid' genoemd! Burggraeve spreekt immers van 'gelovigen' respectievelijk van 'gelovige gehuwden', niet zomaar van mensen. Dat is ook heel eerlijk, want accapareert niet het andere, niet-gelovige deel van de mensen – dit in tegenstelling tot Driessen die veel breder en daardoor onjuist redeneert op dit zelfde vlak.

Verschillende zaken kunnen hier bij Burggraeve benadrukt worden:

*waarom is er geen sprake van goddelijke liefde, maar van 'liefdevolle Aanwezigheid'? Aanwezig zijn roept in elk geval het meest essentiële van God op: "Ik ben die ben".

*de vermelde kennisacten:	vermoeden ervaren heengewezen worden
*de vermelde kennisobjecten:	liefdevolle ondergrond die schraagt dieper wonder overstijgende Aanwezigheid

Op het eerste zicht is hier zelfs sprake van een tegenstelling, niet zomaar banaal in de evident moeilijke poging tot verwoording (dieper tegenover overstijgen), maar in de relatie tussen God en mens: hoe kan wat schraagt tegelijk overstijgen? Hoe kan wat een fundament is, overkoepelen? En hoe legt men de liefde op deze bewegingen? We gaan hier nu niet verder op in.

227 BURGGRAEVE., *Zinvol seksueel leven onderweg*, p. 326.

De vraag, wanneer wij deze goddelijke liefde ervaren als fundament van de menselijke liefde, is belangrijk in die zin dat er een verschil is in de graden van de menselijke liefde. De titel van het werk van Burggraeve spreekt voor zich: "Zinvol seksueel leven onderweg. Concrete probleemvelden en belevingswijzen: een dynamisch-ethische benadering in christelijk perspectief". We zijn onderweg in een onderlinge groei-ethiek. Daarom ook zijn er minimumvoorwaarden voor het aangaan van een expressieve seksuele cultuur! Vanaf wanneer fundeert de goddelijke liefde dergelijke groeiende liefde – of is dit een al te theologische vraag.

We ronden dit deel af met de volgende pregnante opmerking: "I suspect that professional theologians do not like the Bible that much. It is too folksy and too intolerant, too biased, imaginative rather than cerebral. They read it because its their chief source-book for the events and people who gave them their faith, but they change its language quickly into their more acceptable doctrinal and philosophical talk …"228

7.2.3. Algemene conclusie m.b.t het moraaltheologisch nut van het Hooglied.

Op basis van de voorgaande intensieve analyse kunnen we dan ook stellen dat het Hooglied en de moraaltheologie van Burggraeve een funderingsrelatie aangegaan zijn: het Hooglied kan zinvol bekeken worden vanuit deze theorie, en omgekeerd, is het Hooglied een steunvlak van waaruit dergelijke theorie kan gegroeid zijn. Doorheen de resultaten van de moraaltheologische visie op het Hooglied kunnen wij ook het theologisch dogmatisch geponeerde verband duiden tussen de goddelijke liefde en de menselijke liefde in het Hooglied. Hier is echter nog veel verder uitdiepingswerk te verrichten.

7.3. Het theoreferentiële nut van het Hooglied.

7.3.1. Introductie en verklaring begrip "theoreferentieel nut".

7.3.1.1. Uitleg stam van het begrip.

In de taalkunde noemt dergelijk begrip een hybride woordvorming. De stammen zijn immers respectievelijk van Latijnse en Griekse origine. Het Griekse 'Theos' betekent uiteraard God. Het Latijnse 'referens' komt van 'referre' dat terugbrengen, opzoeken, ophalen betekent. Het 'referens' is dan de Participium Praesens Actief: opzoekend, terugbrengend, ophalend. Het verband tussen de twee bestanddelen van het begrip is eenvoudig: de theos is het lijdend voorwerp van het referens.

7.3.1.2. Bedoeling van het begrip.

Zéér belangrijk is dat bij uitbreiding de theos van het begrip niet alleen als God wordt beschouwd maar ook als de Bijbel. God kennen we, op de weinige uitzonderingen na die de eer hadden van een theofanische ontmoeting, enkel door het lezen of het horen van het Woord van God. Dit Woord van God is, voor alle duidelijkheid, te begrijpen in zijn breedste betekenis, d.w.z. zowel het Oud Testament als het Nieuw Testament. De God die vanuit het Hooglied kan gevonden worden is de God van de canon waarin het Hooglied is opgenomen en van het Evangelie.

228 J.C.L. GIBSON, *Language and Imagery in the Old Testament*, p. 13.

Essentieel is de dubbele betekenis van referre, zowel opzoeken als terugbrengen. Opzoeken gebeurt vanuit een vertrekpunt. Dat vertrekpunt is in ons het geval het Hooglied, maar het kan ook een andere bijbeltekst zijn. Het Hooglied verwijst naar de hele Bijbel als Het Woord van God. De lezer zoekt vanuit het Hooglied naar God, naar meer woorden van God, geraakt geïnteresseerd in een verdere lezing van de canon waarvan een tekst als Hooglied een deel van is. Daarbij is het onze hoop en bedoeling dat de lezer aangesproken wordt door de inhoud van het Hooglied c.q. Bijbel zodat hij er zelfs zijn handelen naar kan richten. Ongelovigen, of spreken we beter van nog niet in de Blijde Boodschap gelovenden, worden a.h.w. verleid om hun zingevingssysteem open te zetten en te toetsen aan een nieuwe boodschap, en de goddelijke grond ervan. Wie weet zit er meer in, in deze opgewekte interesse; een weg naar het geloof? Deze sprong kan gemaakt worden via een aangeboden, goede trampoline.

7.3.1.3. Welke zijn de evidenties voor dit begrip?

Hoe we zelf tot deze idee gekomen zijn weten we zelf niet (meer). Waarschijnlijk was er uit onze intuïtie (misschien gebaseerd op jaren commerciële ervaring) een gevoeligheid ontstaan voor diverse opmerkingen van zowel gelovige als ongelovige auteurs. We vinden het dus belangrijk om deze verschillende leesontmoetingen te citeren.

Walsh spreekt letterlijk over ‘the disinclined’ m.b.t. het lezen van de Bijbel: “The song thwarts our biblical expectations by not delivering a God in action. This absence plays a vital role for readers of the canon, however…through the sheer brunt of its curious eroticism, it can often summon even the disinclined to a reading of the Bible.”229 Ze verbindt deze leesmogelijkheid aan het specifieke erotische karakter van het Hooglied.

Note heeft het dan weer over een ander boek dan het Hooglied, het boek Ruth waar het nu eens niet gaat over erotiek. In plaats van de ‘disinclined’ heeft hij het dan weer over ‘gewone lezers’! Met betrekking tot de Nieuwe Bijbelvertaling die binnenkort moet verschijnen, zijn er reeds enkele deelvertalingen gepubliceerd. Joris Note besprak het derde deel in de Standaard der Letteren 230, een derde deel waarin o.a het boek Ruth, Amos, het Lucasevangelie staan – een disparate selectie. Hij stelt dat hij begon bij het boek Ruth en het herhaalde malen herlas: “Het behoort bij de teksten die zogenaamd gewone lezers tot bijbellectuur zouden kunnen verleiden: een min of meer zelfstandig verhaal, helder verteld, met veel dialoog, zonder moeilijke beschouwingen” (alle citaten op p. 15). Na een voor-stelling en bespreking stelt Note vast: “… zonder grote moeite kun je het als relevant voor het heden ervaren”. Dat is een belangrijke vaststelling: Ruth spreekt de ongelovige moderne lezer aan. Note stelt dan twee belangrijke vragen. Eerst vraagt hij zich af of een bijbeltekst in een godsdienstige houding moet gelezen worden of ook als een literaire tekst kan gezien worden: “Daar zijn zinnige dingen over te zeggen, maar ach, is dat mijn probleem eigenlijk, iedereen mag zijn zin doen”. Maar in een godsdienstige houding gelezen of niet, belangrijker is de momentane vaststelling dat de lezer met dergelijke tekst ondertussen bezig is, en hij er een boodschap kan uit oppikken, verwerken en eventueel toepassen! Toch zal verder blijken dat een moraaltheologische duiding van deze teksten essentieel blijkt in een goed begrip van de term “theoreferentieel nut”!

Een belangrijker probleem ziet Note in de vraag of je de Bijbel, allemaal teksten die ouder dan 2000 jaar oud zijn, naïef kunt lezen zonder een pak verklarende kennis erbij: “De tegenstelling is dan niet die tussen een gelovige en een literaire lectuur, maar tussen een

229 WALSH, *Exquisite Desire*, , p. 196.
230 J. NOTE. *Allochtoon. Standaard der Letteren*, Rubriek Het balkon, 04 december 2003, p. 15.

lectuur met en zonder (enige) kennis van zaken". Hij laat de vraag open en houdt terecht een klein pleidooi voor enige naïviteit (we kunnen dit vergelijken met de klassieke Grieken; hierbij leest men ook niet steeds een enorm notenapparaat e.d.m.). En hij besluit open: "Vele vragen dus, maar ik lijd er niet onder, ze vergallen mijn plezier niet. En ze zouden niemand mogen tegenhouden om af en toe een paar uur met zijn neus in de Bijbel te zitten. Er bestaat geen spannender boek".

Opvallend is dat zowel Walsh als Note, vertrekkend vanuit één specifiek boek, is het nu het Hooglied of het boek Ruth, onmiddellijk de veralgemenende term 'Bijbel' gebruiken – als object van aanprijzing! De beide delen worden hier letterlijk richtingsaanwijzers naar de gehele canon, de Bijbel zelf – dat zelfs een spannend boek wordt genoemd.

De bewerking van het Hooglied door Willem Wilmink hebben we boven reeds aangehaald. Hij verdedigde zich tegen zijn homofiele interpretatie. In zijn verdediging schrijft hij nog kort het volgende: "… diezelfde Bijbel die op zoveel andere plaatsen zo ontzaglijk veel poëzie en wijsheid biedt."231 Wilmink bedoelt natuurlijk niet, hoewel het niet onmogelijk is, dat hij de ontzaglijke hoeveelheid poëzie en wijsheid in de Bijbel via het Hooglied gevonden heeft. Maar, door én citaten uit het Hooglied te gebruiken, én door deze stellige/imperatieve wijze van formuleren geeft hij een duidelijke voorzet aan de lezer – en de trainer noch het bestuur zijn hier gelovigen.

Ridderbos geeft dezelfde hint voor een begrip van ons begrip vanuit zijn op badinerende wijze verwoorde christelijke achtergrond: "Lied der Liederen, voor sommige ouderen een liederlijk boek ; voor vele jongeren hét boek der boeken. Als dat boek in de Bijbel staat, dan valt het misschien nog wel mee met dat oude boek"232 (onze cursivering). Met dat oude boek wordt uiteraard de hele Bijbel bedoelt.

Laten we tenslotte Kees Fens in een interview aan het woord om ons begrip toe te lichten: "'Wat ik gepoogd heb, is boeken onder de aandacht te brengen die verder nooit besproken werden'. Af en toe komt hij een lezer tegen die hem laat weten dat dit is gelukt. "Ze overhandigen altijd eerst hun geloofsbrieven, zeggen steevast dat ze niet religieus zijn, maar dat ze nu toch bijvoorbeeld Augustinus zijn gaan lezen.'"233 Hier gaat het nu helemaal niet meer om een tekst uit de Bijbel, maar over christelijke literatuur of filosofie. Dit wijst erop dat bij ongelovigen die open van geest zijn is er dus door een aantrekkelijke voorstelling van belangrijke teksten een psychologische predispositie wordt aangesproken die hen al minstens op een leesweg zet die zij misschien vanuit zichzelf nooit hadden ingeslagen.

Vanuit deze laatste voorbeelden kunnen we volgende belangrijke elementen onthouden:

-er moet een inhoudelijk aantrekkelijke tekst zijn om reclame te kunnen voor maken;
-er moet een goede bespreker zijn om deze reclame te kunnen maken;
-er moet een medium met uitstraling zijn waarin de bespreker kan werken (NRC Handelsblad, De Standaard, …);
-de boodschapper moet geloven in de ontvankelijkheid van de lezer.

231 W. WILMINK, *Een eigen Hooglied,* Enschede, 1996, flaptekst.
232 RIDDERBOS, *Hooglied,* achterflap.
233 C. VLOET, *Interview met Kees Fens*, in *NRC Handelsblad. Cultureel Supplement*, 09 januari 2004, p. 19.

7.3.2. Het begrip begrijpen vanuit een moderne evangelische context.

Als we spreken over reclame binnen een godsdienstige context, over media en besprekers, over aantrekkelijkheid van een boodschap van een tekst, spreken we dan niet over een moderne vorm van evangeliseren? Het begrip 'theoreferentieel nut van een bijbelse tekst' is dan vergelijkbaar met wat men in de marketingterminologie een 'teaser' zou noemen. Een kleine en aantrekkelijke vis die men uitgooit met de verwachting meer binnen te halen. Heuristisch kan deze functie van het Hooglied vergeleken worden met de functie van heiligen die een letterlijk voorbeeldige functie in de Kerk uitoefenen: "Ga hun levens bestuderen, tracht hen na te volgen!" Op die manier is het een woord dat past in een missionerende, evangeliserende context, is het een nieuwe pastoraaltheologische term. Hoewel evangelisatie een recente term is, is het altijd een deel van het (buiten)kerkelijk leven geweest. Het is zelfs zo dat de Kerk er één van haar ergste tegenargumenten in gevonden heeft, met name in de vorm die te vuur en te zwaard opgelegd werd aan o.a. de Amerikaanse Indianen. Een moderne omschrijving van evangelisatie luidt als volgt: "Evangelisation is the process of proclaiming the good news … and enabling the good news to be accepted more readily by those people disposed by grace to receive it …In its programmatic sense, evangelisation covers all those activities that seek the renewal of the Christian community and its connection with those who are not members or are not active members. Its methods could include preaching as well as mass publicity."234 We onderscheiden drie belangrijke elementen: 'good news', 'grace to receive it', en 'mass publicity'. Welnu, deze elementen hebben we reeds teruggevonden op het einde van de vorige paragraaf. Op deze manier kunnen we rustig besluiten dat ons begrip thuishoort in een moderne theorie van de evangelisatie.

De 'mass publicity' waarvan sprake vullen wij in met de pers in het algemeen én de uitgeverijen van boeken (en mogelijke andere dragers). We betreden dus de markt. Deze marktbenadering is essentieel omdat wij ons in de eerste plaats concentreren, niet op "the renewal of the Christian community", maar op de anderen: de reeds geciteerde gewone lezers, de jongeren, degenen met 'on-geloofsbrieven' – m.a.w. alle normale buitenkerkelijken én de jongeren in het onderwijs die rooms-katholieke opvoeding genieten maar er van thuis uit veelal niet veel meer mee in contact komen. Het is bij hen dat er nog iets te 'winnen' valt, dat er een God terug te brengen is, in de tweede betekenis van 'referre.'

7.3.3. Communicatietheorie en opportuniteiten.

Met deze specifieke teksten als Hooglied willen we naar buiten treden. Wat weten we reeds van deze communicatieketen? Toegepast op de basisbegrippen van de communicatietheorie hebben we de volgende situatie:

-boodschap = het is een bijbelse tekst; ONAFH. AURA
-code = *(we willen) een inhoudelijk en vormelijk aantrekkelijke basistekst; we vinden ontzettend vele interpretaties terug; wij geven zelf (moraal) theologische duiding en willen evangeliseren;
*we hebben) veel kunstvarianten ;
-zender = *christelijk;
*kunstenaars;
-ontvanger = ongelovige (we rekenen hier de kunstliefhebbers bij ; uiteraard zijn er gelovige kunstliefhebbers, maar die hebben hier minder belang);

234 P. E. FINK, S.J. (ed.), The New Dictionary of Sacramental Worship*, Dublin, 1990, p. 464.*

-context = een grotendeels geseculariseerde, door de markt overheerste en via een schoolsysteem zich opvoedende maatschappij.

7.3.3.1. De boodschap van de tekst “Hooglied”.

We hebben gezien dat het Hooglied interessante poëzie is. Als liefdespoëzie is het bovendien vanuit een “personal perspective” geschreven (zie hoger?). Het blijft echter een deel van de canon, het is een bijbelse tekst. We zijn niet ingegaan op de discussie wat de ware boodschap van het Hooglied van het Hooglied zou kunnen zijn.

7.3.3.2. De code van de tekst “Hooglied”.

(We willen) Een inhoudelijk en vormelijk aantrekkelijke basistekst; we vinden ontzettend vele interpretaties terug; wij geven zelf (moraal) theologische duiding en willen evangeliseren:

De gewone literaire lezing is voldoende maar niet uitputtend. Een moraaltheologisch nut van de tekst werd erkend. Belangrijk zijn voor een publicatie: een aparte literaire tekst en een korte, eropvolgende moraaltheologische duiding.

In een ‘evangeliserende’ uitgave kunnen we in een inleiding wel refereren naar de diverse interpretaties, maar gebruiken we de literaire lezing. Daarvoor is een correcte en welluidende tekst nodig. We moeten m.a.w. een compromis vinden tussen exegetische waarheid en poëtische zeggingskracht, of tussen een Stoop en een Falk. We gebruikten in deze studie Drijvers, maar met de verwerking van de recente Stoop voor de boeg is het duidelijk dat in het Nederlands naar een nieuwe tekst moet gezocht worden. Pragmatisch stellen we nu reeds voor dat indien we een mooie, poëtische tekst kunnen vormen die qua betekenis op hetzelfde neerkomt als de betekenis na een strikt filologische analyse, we de eerste versie nemen. De samenwerking met een dichter of dichters is absoluut noodzakelijk. De door het publiek ervaren schoonheid van een grondtekst is van kapitaal belang.

Daarbij wordt kort maar duidelijk de (moraal)theologische waarde van de tekst geduid in de zin zoals we in een volgende, ruimere publicatie met Burggraeve zullen doen. Deze duiding is ons inziens essentieel om de ongelovige op het spoor van de Bron van de bijbelse teksten te zetten. Op deze manier kan de lezer de drijvende kracht achter de Woorden theo-logisch begrijpen.

Veel kunstvarianten:

De grondtekst van daarnet is eveneens belangrijk voor verdere variaties door kunstenaars, zowel voor taalkunstenaars, die juist dit domein volledig delen met de bijbelwetenschappers, als de beeldende kunstenaars die op basis ervan selecties voor beelden maken of associaties maken.

Er wordt al eens retorisch gezegd, zeker in een politieke context, dat het origineel altijd beter is dan de kopij of opvolging ervan. In de wereld van de kunst is dat gezegde vooral van toepassing in de filmwereld; er zijn duizenden verfilmde … boeken. Juist dit medium kent bij ons weten geen enkele bewerking van het Hooglied. In Ridderbos235 krijgt men een kort overzicht van bewerkingen van het Hooglied in literatuur, muziek en beeldende kunsten (het

235 Zie hiervoor RIDDERBOS, *Hooglied,* p. 87. Het overzicht bevat vooral muziekwerken en weinig beeldende kunsten.

internet bulkt van verwijzingen naar kunstbewerkingen). Drijvers gebruikt in zijn uitgave de twaalf etsen van Salvator Dali rond het thema.

7.3.3.3. De zender van de tekst “Hooglied”.

De christelijke zender:

Indien onze redeneringen uiteraard au serieux genomen worden, en men de evangeliserende kansen inziet die geschetst zijn, dan moet er een en ander wel centraal georganiseerd worden vanuit kerkelijke hoek (zie verder voor het Centrum voor Religieuze Kunst en Cultuur).

De kunstenaar als zender:

We leven uiteraard niet meer in een tijd dat de Kerk het overwegende betekenis- en verwerkingssysteem is wat betreft de kunst. Behoudens het geschetste belang van de grondtekst, dat een geprivilegieerd domein van de gelovige wetenschappers zal blijven, moeten de kunstenaars volledig losgelaten worden. Overigens hebben wij in onze diverse onderzoekingen geen enkel spoor van pornografische verwerkingen van het Hooglied tegengekomen. We zijn daar op zich niet tegen, omdat er toch geen sprake is van God of historische personen, maar vermoeden dat het door de fijnheid van de tekst ook niet zou lukken. De pornografie zou de erotiek, en daarmee zijn brontekst, verjagen.
De Kerk die, het weze nogmaals herhaald, we zéér breed begrijpen, kan hier eventueel tussenkomen als organisator van thematentoonstellingen, besteller van beelden, oratoria e.d.m. rond het Hooglied.

7.3.3.4. De ontvanger van de tekst “Hooglied”.

We rekenen frontaal op de openheid, de positieve naïviteit en de culturele en ethische nieuwsgierigheid van de ongelovige lezer. We hopen op een religieus ontwaken.
Is deze openheid terzelfdertijd niet het probleem?

Een essentieel element van het theoreferentieel nut van een bijbeltekst, de openheid, de klaarblijkelijke wereldsheid, is tevens een probleem. Het kan best zijn dat de geïnteresseerde lezer van het Hooglied bij deze lezing blijft steken (net zoals een klant niet steeds op de reclame ingaat). Dat is dan maar zo, maar we starten de feestmaaltijd voor de eerste lezer van Kees Fens die ook zijn geloofsbrief afgeeft (zie hoger?). Hier raken we het onderscheid aan tussen overtuigen en overreden; een God te vuur en te zwaard, dat kunnen we uiteraard en gelukkig vergeten. Dat wil niet zeggen dat men niet overtuigd en professioneel tewerk moet gaan.

Het is natuurlijk zo dat ons begrip én enigszins defensief én enigszins offensief verschijnt. Defensief: inderdaad, want er wordt toegegeven dat God hier in deze bijbelse tekst niet genoemd wordt, dat men de tekst ook gewoon literair kan lezen. Offensief: inderdaad, want we willen evangeliseren op een markteconomische manier (door een economische aanbieding te doen die niet in de economische wetmatigheid ligt, nl. geld verdienen). Terzelfdertijd zeggen we dat ook deze tekst Hooglied deel uitmaakt van de canon omwille van een specifieke reden: liefde in al zijn facetten erkennen, trouw eren, e.a. zijn kernbegrippen uit een christelijke moraal.

Ons begrip is natuurlijk maar op een beperkt aantal teksten uit het Oud Testament toe te passen (Hooglied, Ruth, Wijsheden, PREDIKER? Psalmen, ...?), en al zeker niet op het Nieuw Testament.

Een ander probleem van deze openheid is hoe men het refererende kan leiden. Indien men start met een reeks van boeken met een vooropgezet theoreferentieel nut, leidt het ene boek a.h.w. naar het andere van de reeks. Maar wat met de rest van de Bijbel waaruit niet zal geput worden, maar waar zoveel interessante zaken staan? Denken we hierbij in de eerste plaats aan het Nieuw Testament, waarvan we al zegden dat het niet in aanmerking komt ter uitvoering van onze theorie. Denken we terug aan ons citaat van Wilmink: "… diezelfde Bijbel die op zoveel andere plaatsen zo ontzaglijk veel poëzie en wijsheid biedt". We zegden dat hij een voorzet aan de lezer gaf; maar welke voorzet? Naar links, naar rechts, middendoor: Wilmink geeft deze mogelijkheid tot ontdekkingen ongeduid aan. Een mogelijkheid is dat we in een appendix aanduiden waar er in de Bijbel thematisch analoge teksten zijn. Anders moet de lezer dus zelf gaan zoeken. Maar misschien is dit nadeel voor de lezer die graag geleid wordt een voordeel voor die lezer die het allemaal wel eens zelf wil uitzoeken maar alleen eens een klein duwtje nodig heeft – een duwtje van de zich op de markt goed bewegende christelijk geïnspireerde uitgever, of de leraar? De enige inhoudelijke duw die we zeker geven is de (moraal)theologische duiding. Maar dit is een duw in de diepte van de refererende tekst zelf – zou dit kunnen volstaan voor de sprong naar het geloof?

De opbrengst van het theoreferentieel nut van een bijbeltekst kan ook niet gemeten worden in een operationaliseerbaar begrip, in dit geval een aantal bekeerden. In die zin is dit theoreferentieel nut geen marketingterm want hij heeft enkel een hoopfinaliteit. Het theoreferentieel nut is in een geseculariseerde wereld een uitdrukking van hoop in de verbreiding van de Blijde Boodschap in en door een techniek van de geseculariseerde wereld. Enkel op deze bemiddelende manier geduid kan het Hooglied een rest van een christologische betekenis houden. De echte christologen als Mitchell zullen deze werkelijk minimale christologische lezing van het Hooglied ongetwijfeld verwerpen maar kunnen anderzijds de ware christelijke bedoeling ervan ("Gaat en vermenigvuldigt U") niet ontkennen.

7.3.3.5. De context van de tekst "Hooglied".

Een voorafgaandelijke vraag is of wij van elke tekst, die wij een theoreferentieel nut toekennen, moeten zeker zijn dat hij reeds behoort tot de eerder vermelde canon van de wereldliteratuur. Met het Hooglied is dit zonder meer het geval. Met de Bijbel is dat natuurlijk sowieso het geval, maar strategisch moet dit, zij het zonder enige ironie, anders bekeken worden. De erkenning van de Bijbel als wereldliteratuur zal immers bij veel ongelovigen geen punt zijn, de letterlijke leesverwerking ervan uiteraard wel. De strategische vraag is dus: hoe voor deze lezers een ingangspoort tonen en openen? Bij het Hooglied is deze weerstand inderdaad om tal van redenen geen probleem; hoe zit dit met andere potentiële teksten? We zouden ons met enige schroom in een cirkelredenering willen begeven: juist door de ons voorgestelde aanpak zouden deze andere teksten meer dan nu én op zich deel kunnen gaan uitmaken van de canon van de wereldliteratuur waardoor zij op hun beurt juist meer tot de verbeelding van een later publiek zullen kunnen spreken. De redenering is dus logisch-synchronisch een cirkelredenering, maar niet diachronisch.

We richten ons op ons doelpubliek enerzijds langs de markt, anderzijds langs het onderwijs. De markt is het instrument waarlangs men het ongelovige publiek wil bereiken en naar de Kerk wil krijgen.

Men kan natuurlijk boekjes gratis uitdelen maar psychologisch zal dit waarschijnlijk als verdacht overkomen. In feite kan de markt een zekere slinksheid verdoezelen. Door gewoonweg (bijvoorbeeld) het Hooglied als aparte tekst aan te bieden, werkt men op de consument a.h.w. onbewust in, minstens in de zin van niet-belerend, niet- …evangeliserend. Daar is ethisch niets mis mee. Men kan dit uitgangspunt zelfs open en bloot op de cover zetten indien dit in eigen uitgave van de Kerk gebeurt. Denken we hier aan één van de doelstellingen van het Centrum voor Religieuze Kunst en Cultuur uit Leuven: "… de hedendaagse religieuze kunst en cultuur in al haar uitingsvormen bevorderen" (recente voorstellingsfolder). Men moet inderdaad zelf uitgeven; men kan het initiatief eenvoudigweg niet aan de markt overlaten omdat er een andere boveneconomische logica wordt gehanteerd. Dit kan via uitgeverijen die onafhankelijk zijn maar interesse hebben in religie (cfr. Lannoo) of via meer verbonden uitgeverijen (cfr. Carmelitana).

Het schoolpubliek is het tweede doelpubliek. Het werken vanuit onze optiek zal, strategisch gezien, vooral interessant zijn in het niet-confessionele onderwijs waar er een duidelijke nivellering naar onder is in een soort concurrentiestrijd met het vak zedenleer. Uiteraard is de aanpak ook nuttig in het confessionele onderwijs.

Specifiek voor het Hooglied kunnen we in het kader van het onderwijs ook nog eens wijzen op de aandacht voor en opvoeding in de talige gedaante van erotiek in een relatie (dit zal in een latere publicatie uitgebreid aan bod komen).

7.3.3.6. De opportuniteiten rond de tekst "Hooglied".

Tussen bepaalde speciale dagen in het jaar en bijbelteksten met theoreferentieel nut is er eventueel een opportuniteit om meer aandacht te krijgen op de bijbeltekst. We denken i.v.m. het Hooglied uiteraard specifiek aan Valentijnsdag. Speciale acties kunnen hierrond ondernomen worden. In elk geval mag een tekst als Hooglied in geen enkele poëzieafdeling van een boekenwinkel ontbreken – wat nu zeker het geval is.

7.3.4. Van nut naar geloof!

We kunnen nu tot een conclusie komen m.b.t. de betekenis van het begrip "theoreferentieel nut" van een bijbeltekst.

Het theoreferentieel nut, sensu stricto, is de mogelijkheid van een bijbelse tekst, door zijn hoogstaande literaire kwaliteit, het persoonlijk perspectief en de manifeste afwezigheid van God als personage, om een niet-gelovige lezer op weg te zetten naar een lezing van andere bijbelteksten.

Hier wordt de nadruk gelegd op het opzoekende.

Het theoreferentieel nut, sensu lato, is de mogelijkheid dat door een verdere lezing van de Bijbel, en met het inzicht in een (moraal)theologische duiding van de refererende bijbelteksten, de ongelovige de sprong kan maken naar de bron die achter de Bijbel zit.
Hier wordt de nadruk gelegd op het terugbrengende.

De inbreng van een ondersteunende moraaltheologie vormt dus een essentiële vanuit de zender te voorziene functie, waarzonder de sprong o.i. zeer moeilijk zal zijn. Hier, in de

erkenning van de theologische dieptelezing van de bijbelteksten, zit de potentialiteit van de geloofssprong. Voor het Hooglied is dit het belang van het inzicht van de goddelijke liefde als bron van de menselijke. Paradoxelerwijze is op deze manier, deze 'wereldse', op het eerste zicht van God geabstraheerde bijbeltekst 'Hooglied', net als de hele Bijbel, waar zij op een intrigerende want bijna dubbelzinnige manier van uitmaakt, eveneens aanduiding van Gods genade. En gelet op de onmiskenbare centrale plaats die de liefde in de Bijbel inneemt, is meteen ook het belang van het Hooglied zelf duidelijk als strategische tekst in een moderne evangelisatiepoging.

CONCLUSIES.

God als personage, als naam of als verschijning komt inderdaad in het Hooglied niet voor. Maar God is niet verdwenen in het Hooglied. Hij is op een dubbele en intrigerende manier aanwezig. Enerzijds doordat Hij als het ware geprojecteerd bekeken kan worden vanuit het Hooglied in andere Bijbelteksten door de gewekte interesse bij de niet-gelovige lezer. Anderzijds via Zijn bron van de goddelijke liefde in de menselijke liefde van het Hooglied. Een moraaltheologische benadering van het Hooglied is waarschijnlijk een primeur maar werkt zeer verhelderend. Ze steunt hierbij op de literaire lezing die als dusdanig niet bekritiseerd wordt maar aangevuld.

Het Hooglied werd bekeken als een tekst waarmee men kan evangeliseren. In dit verband werd het begrip 'theoreferentieel nut van een bijbeltekst' .....SPREKEN VAN BIJBELSE LIEFDESLIERIEK?? TITEL!!! ....ingevoerd. Evangeliseren betekent op een specifieke manier communiceren; bevindingen uit de communicatietheorie werden door ons m.b.t. het Hooglied toegepast.

Belangrijk is de bevinding dat deze oude tekst ook kan ingeschakeld worden in de moderne verzuchting, zowel door gelovigen als vrijzinnigen geuit, om een nieuwe mooie erotische taal te maken. Evangeliseren en een brede maatschappelijke erotische taalontwikkeling kunnen zo hand in hand gaan.

Welke zijn tenslotte onze mogelijke hermeneutische ontsnappingsroutes:

1. We hebben voor gewone citaten gemotiveerd gebruikt gemaakt van de editie Drijvers (1996; ondertussen is er trouwens een tweede editie uit). Een zeer grondige vergelijkende taalstudie is evenwel nog nodig om tot een nieuwe basistekst te komen. Voor een publiceerbare tekst moet wel de medewerking van dichters voorzien worden;

2. Wat is de waarde die in onze tekst gehecht wordt aan de oorspronkelijke intenties van de auteur van het Hooglied? Hoewel meerdere commentatoren het hierover hebben, zijn wij er niet op ingegaan. Is het weten van deze intentie eigenlijk wel interessant voor onze benadering? Wat is het verband met de canonisering van de tekst?

3. We zijn onkritisch geweest tegenover de moraaltheorie van Burggraeve. In hoeverre is zij in de wetenschap en de Kerk aanvaard?

4. Drukt de idee van het theoreferentiële nut niet de andere Bijbelteksten weg die dit nut niet hebben? Geven we niet vooral een aanzet tot een geloof in de moraal van het christendom en minder in het geheel van het religieuze gebeuren?

5. Het verband hesed/ahab moet zeker dieper uitgewerkt worden.

Als laatste opmerking het volgende. Net zoals we een beetje verwonderd én fier zijn dat we toch een aantal nieuwe lichten kunnen werpen hebben op het Hooglied, hopelijk zonder in enig fanatisme of andere overdrijvingen te vallen, blijft het op die manier spannend. Spannend, want wie gaat de handschoen opnemen om ons te weerleggen? Spannend, omdat we met wetenschapsfilosofische zekerheid weten dat er nog andere perspectieven zullen komen, waarvan we, behoudens de weerlegging van onze eigen standpunten desgewenst via de door onszelf aangereikte zwakheden van onze tekst, in de verste verte niet kunnen vermoeden over wat ze zullen gaan. Eén ding is zeker: het Hooglied zal nog lang gelezen worden. Dat de inhoud ook moge doorwerken!

En, geachte lezer, mogen wij afscheid van U nemen met deze liefdeshaïku die in de natuur- en schoonheidssfeer van het Hooglied geschreven is:

schoonheid is jou hartelijk welkom
je bent zelf zijn eerste gast
je venster altijd open voor de hoge zwaluw

VERDER MOGELIJK EN GEWENST ONDERZOEK ROND HET HOOGLIED.

1. Er moet een goede Nederlandstalige grondtekst gemaakt worden waar rekening wordt gehouden met alle moderne filologische, stilistische en prosodische eisen van het Hebreeuws en er anderzijds een mooi Nederlandstalig resultaat wordt behaald, dat op zich poëtisch verantwoord klinkt.

2. Er zou een onderzoek van oudtestamentische boeken moeten gebeuren om na te gaan welke teksten buiten Hooglied, Ruth, … ook het theoreferentieel nut hebben.

3. Er moet een zeer stevig hermeneutisch onderzoek gebeuren op basis van de theorie van Gadamer van de belangrijkste interpretaties van het Hooglied van de laatste 100 jaar.

4. Een receptiesociologische studie van de interpretatoren (hun achtergrond en interpretatie) kan revelerend zijn, maar is een beetje moeilijk. De enige poging tot nog toe hierover beslaat enkel de Renaissance (M. ENGAMMARE, *Qu'il me baise des baisiers de sa bouche. La Cantique des Cantiques à la Renaissance. Etude et bibliographie,* Genève, 1993, p. 169-73).

5. Het doctoraat van Stoop zou het best in het Engels vertaald worden

6. Een studie rond de datering van het Hooglied en de vaststelling van het toen prevalerende Godsbeeld van deze periode om de relatie tussen God en zijn zogenaamde afwezigheid in het Hooglied na te gaan.

7. Een intrigerend onderdeel van de studie rond het Hooglied zijn de vele bewerkingen in diverse kunsttakken. Hierrond zijn vele studies mogelijk (mogelijke onderwerpen werden boven reeds aangehaald).

8. Is er een verband met de schrik voor het Heilige (Otto), waaronder God ook moet begrepen worden, en de schrik om zichzelf te verliezen in een totale overgave in een menselijke liefde?

9. Een verdere analyse van de concepten liefde in de Bijbel; zijn er nuances in liefde tussen naasten, ouders/kinderen, geliefden, …, en het verband met de goddelijke liefde ? Wat is het verband van de Goddelijke liefde met de vele beelden waaronder Hij zich getoond heeft?

10. En tenslotte, wie gaat er nu eens een echt lied(erencyclus) van het Hooglied componeren?

.....

The Artist and His First Wife, Peter Paul Rubens and Isabella Brant, in the Honeysuckle Bower, Peter Paul Rubens (1577 - 1640), oil, 1609, Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen, München.

T.I.S..

.....

The deposition or the descent of the cross. Rogier Van der Weyden (circa 1399 - 1464), oil on oak panel, circa 1435, Prado, Madrid.

in preparazione

The Oralgasm or poetry in the sexual experience. Woman reading a letter, Johannes Vermeer (1632 - 1675), oil, circa 1662 - 1663. Rijksmuseum Amsterdam.

+ The Penitent Magdalene, El Greco (Doménikos Theotokópoulos or Δομήνικος Θεοτοκόπουλος , 1541 - 1614), oil, 1576 - 1578, Szépművészeti Múzeum Budapest.

+ NOTE: For specific reasons, Part 1 will only be completed so published later, likely in April/May. It is *T.I.S.*. We felt that Part 2, with the finished interviews, could be interesting or useful in itself, especially for our one loyal reader on the Virgin Islands.

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Introduction. On orgasm, eargasm and Oralgasm.

T.I.S.

1. The Oralgasm or poetry in sexual experience.

T.I.S..

1.1. General considerations regarding the use of poetry in the experience of sexuality.

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2. Goedele Liekens, eternal media figure and the erurotic on the subject of orgasms (besides being a hottie, we mean on face value, because unfortunately, as far as she's concerned, we're not erurotic).

Goedele Liekens, La Liekens, or simply "*Goedele*" is the undisputed erurotic for the Low Countries, Belgium, the Netherlands, and parts of South Africa, or the most erudite woman in the field of eroticism, and also the generally recognized head educator on the related, even partly overlapping, topic of sexuality. Theoretically, of course, because the eroticism she might employ, and at a higher level, so to speak, actively, perhaps better, hotter, more intense, more stunning, softer, more pleasant, more creative, more empathetic, or... even beyond what we learn from her words, is something we are not allowed to explain here: strictly forbidden by her in our preliminary emails! She has broadened her pedagogical horizons to include Germany and the United Kingdom, where she is also a television star, eagerly sought after for her stories, charming tics, and, of course, her ever-mobile beacons, once called "*the pious sisters*" by a famous Dutch writer and poet. In other words, La Liekens fills the void left by the nuns in Catholic education in European countries for centuries, and until just before her. Now - she is barely sixty (just a bit more...) - she is on her way to the Maghreb and then further into the deserts. Wishing you much, much courage, Goedele; keep your thumbs up, and their penises down!

Before meeting her, we shaved perfectly, or as smooth as ice, even though we were, like simple macho men, hot with excitement. After receiving half an hour of hugs and mouthwatering kisses from her, while we had to process all her perfumed emails for weeks with their slightly too intoxicating scent, La Liekens immediately began in her usual horny voice, saturated with acres of tobacco: JM, thank you for the invitation to my place. You know I'm attracted to important men. As long as they're shaved on top and bottom, because let's face it: with all that hair = brrr." We felt even more excited because she probably confused us with the late Etienne Vermeersch, undoubtedly an important Belgian philosopher, while we were more like the lovable (?) loser. But we didn't say no to her hospitality, which included, among other things, "*half an hour of hugs and...*"! I was a fan from the very first hour of poetry in the audience, she now begins enthusiastically. I was even there beforehand,

because I was backstage at that lecture series about love! So Goedele was already there during the preparations for the very first performance of "*Saint'Amour*" We're sitting where we wanted to be, and hopefully, we'll stay grounded and not be capsized by her importance - besides (hee hee) her feminine, so genuinely feminine presence!

+ NOTE: Saint'Amour is a long-standing and well-attended lecture series on love, by many writers and organised by the Belgian organisation "*Behoud De Begeerte*" + see: https://www.begeerte.be/p/saint-amour-2/ For the sake of clarity, our text on poetry and sexuality has its own originality and it was only during the editing of this text that we were able to establish that this lecture series is still running, currently (early 2026) under the name "*Love as a Source*".

But let's just leave the pressure Goedele Liekens has already exerted on us, not even building up, but immediately exploding, aside for a moment, so we can release it. We'll open a window ourselves, if it's in our shared space and her house that's about to explode, and welcome the Fresh Wind, the Eternal Spirit. Pronto!?

Goedele Liekens was blessed by nature and her parents. She is gifted, and indeed with something that apparently most men overlook and therefore don't even see. Their eyes are only interested in her in one way: staring at her and using her many public photos as a pin-up girl. You undoubtedly know the expression "*Nomen est omen*" or "*The name is an omen*." That's not the case here! It's even much better! This very old expression, already used by the Romans, is of no use to us in her case. It's about the pure beauty of the sounds of this name, this combination of first name and surname. Her name, and - we repeat immediately - the combination of them, can be considered downright phen-om-enally attractive! A beautiful woman, with a beautiful name: what more could a man want, and a woman much less (unfortunately)? Her first name, "*Goedele*" is, of course, a reference to the important Brabant saint who also gave her name to the Brussels cathedral. By the way, she has a double name: Saint Michael and Saint Gudula. So, Goedele, who's your Michael, or are you now a bit of a woke with a Mo..., a Modern and especially hit-making Mozart perhaps? But of course, she tactically cleverly missed that. Her first name is beautiful in itself, a fresh expression of more than a thousand years of living Brabant tradition. And!? Hasn't Brussels been the capital of Europe for ages and forever, and even, with one exception, the capital of the entire world? That leaves perspectives or opportunities for this wonderful woman, because she's also a business woman, and a full-fledged media figure for several decades (!!!). And she also has something to say and write. When you pronounce the first name Goedele, you hear as if a small, pure stream is babbling next to your ears from the centuries-old, still partially untouched, nearby Zoniën-forest. Her first name has also become a brand name for Flemish and Dutch people. Anyone who encounters this first name in Dutch knows the whole word. But do they also feel that fresh, crisp sound in their ears?

Her surname, Liekens, is no less beautiful than her first name, a double gift for which she can naturally be deeply grateful to her parents. With her first name, it even forms an intimate chamber concert. It's like Schubert Revisited, as if he, the Olympian yet simple inventor of the musically set word, had set her name to music for just one of his remarkably many incredibly beautiful songs. The surname "*Liekens*" is therefore closely linked to the musical giant Franz Schubert. We won't be tracing Goedele's family tree, but we'll give her this explanation in advance. This surname is truly connected to the Dutch and German lovers of the "*LIED*" (Song in English is "*Lied*" in German and the same word, albeit without the capital letter; "*lied*" in Dutch).

1) The diminutive of "*Lied*" in the Flemish dialect is a "*Liedeke/Liedeken*, "*a little song*";

2) Through syncopation, a very common morphological phenomenon in Dutch, "*Liedeke/Liedeken*" is then shortened to "*Lieken*." And that, too, is perfectly understandable and usable in the Flemish dialect as "*a little song*";

3) "*Liekens*" should then be understood according to Dutch linguistic tradition (the suffix "*s*") as "(*originating) from Lieken*." Or her family calls her "*Van het Lied*" = *From the Song*"! With that already beautiful first name preceding it, "*Goedele Liekens*" should therefore be understood as "*Goedele From Song (of Songs)*"! Goedele, indeed, the same Goedele Liekens whom, after weeks of emails back and forth, we were able to meet here in person and at home and ask about sexuality and poetry. Our explanation brought tears to her eyes. JM, I am truly and eternally grateful to you for this, because I had never heard this before. It's so beautiful. Woman, you are so erudite and creative. Stop now, Goedele, because soon we'll have to move on, and even in front of you, I'll be blushing twice as much. She laughs and places one hand on our arm. And we think (can this even be called thinking? It's the production of hormonal words): two... three... four... oh God, why, why, why (three times!!!), why (so four times!!) aren't we Octopus? Why w..., isn't she, She, Octopussy? The water enters all the fluid-providing places in our bodies, but that's too little space, maddeningly too little, to create a sea we could dive into together, like Octopus with Octopussy, a water where she could try out even more new antics ('positions'?) because the water allows everything, the water is "*endless freedom and inner triumph*" ("*is eindeloos vrij zijn en inwendig zegevieren*.")

Een zwemmer is een ruiter. Paul Snoek (1933 - 1981 + from *Hercules. Gedichten*, 1960.

Zwemmen is losbandig slapen in spartelend water,
is liefhebben met elke nog bruikbare porie,
is eindeloos vrij zijn en inwendig zegevieren.

En zwemmen is de eenzaamheid betasten met vingers,
is met armen en benen aloude geheimen vertellen
aan het altijd allesbegrijpende water.

Ik moet bekennen dat ik gek ben van water.
Want in het water adem ik water
word ik een schepper die zijn schepping omhelst,
en in het water kan men nooit geheel alleen zijn
en toch nog eenzaam blijven.

Zwemmen is een beetje bijna heilig zijn.

.....

The name isn't all that's blissfully and softly glistening about La Liekens, like old gold... We can safely say it publicly, and we don't suspect, but we're almost, almost certain, that no one will object to the next highest possible enumeration of Belgian femininity! Goedele Liekens, along with "*La Reine Future des Reines Futures*" Princess Elisabeth and a third Belgian lady,

whose name we can't and won't reveal here, is among the most attractive women of the last half century in the Land by the North Sea. Thank you, JM, for that compliment, but stop spouting all those beautiful words now, or I'll swoon. I've never heard it said that about myself before - and we can still hear her whispering quietly to herself that, as a seasoned businesswoman, she'll be able to use this information in some way. There's one major difference between La Liekens and Princess Elisabeth. Goedele - you can call her that too, because she's very, very approachable! - is truly like old wine, which, remarkably and even more impressively, can always be re-bottled in new bottles. As she grows older - the word...older... - she becomes even more attractive...= doesn't a woman's true beauty only emerge, say, when she no longer has anything attractive to prove!? Could you express this more vividly, succinctly, or flowerily? Do it!

Something's tickling the insides of our brains, and it must be our brains with a question. This question: are you a regular at the world-famous "*Wellness Luce*" in Ra... Ra... a? How did you guess, JM? A plane ticket from Brussels to Bologna and back costs less than a one-hour session with her. La Più - what a woman with everything she has to offer, says La Liekens, not at all jealous but genuinely proud of her equal - then picks us up in her flashy car and brings us right back - after her blisssssfullllll treatments. For a moment, it seems as if Goedele is already thinking about her orgasms in the same way we will soon... We've almost become Best Friends with Her by now. Although that doesn't get me a discount, she suddenly remarks, somewhat surprised, as if we're suddenly air on which no critical comment can take root. And JM, you can imagine; the Italian taste for beauty is truly everywhere - in Italy. We - JM - have one comment to make, but we don't think it's appropriate here, so we'll keep quiet, are silent. Sometimes that's gold, usually lead, in heart and shoes. We squeak: there is one difference with Princess Elisabeth, just because of their significant age difference. If she, Elisabeth, also becomes even more beautiful with age, like Goedele, what will that mean? Or ultimately, a Belgian queen who, as "*The Barbie of the World*" will only improve the "*GNH*" or "*Gross National Happiness*" of our country. Now La Liekens is in for a bit of a rough patch, because this term for "*GNH*" instead of "*Gross National Product*" or "*GNP*" was invented by her very close friend Steve (Steve Stevaert, 1954 - 2015). He was, among other things, a powerful socialist politician as well as a complete womanizer. But the latter would probably be too much for him... And he would commit suicide. One of the most difficult times of my life, La Liekens sobs as she uses my shoulder as an ad hoc sink. Several of my books about sex have been deeply influ... by hi... - she finally interrupts her coming confidences. Although we can't reveal anything here, or as far as he's concerned post mortem, about our respective copyrights, she's immediately caught again. Politics and eroticism, I know all about it because I'm in almost all political parties, but I can't write about it, La Liekens sighs in two different ways: out of modesty and sadness, but also because of the lost revenue because - too much fear! We can only nod our head because a book like that would have become a bestseller! But honestly, JM, to get to your topic: from Steve's usually delightful, and among other things, perfectly clean-shaven mouth, I've never heard a single poem, other than some attempts at stammering the familiar "*sweet words*" Or if he's had one too many, La Liekens shrugs, the usual barroom banter.

We're alert now, in a way we've barely been able to be alert for ten years now, even for a little while, because of those stupid, slowed-down brains. Getting older has its charms, it has its flaws. Could you perhaps be a little more specific about his "*sweet words*"? Did you, if we may ask so discreetly, have a "*pet name*" with him, invented by him and written on your unique and eternally horny body, and sometimes even literally in your steaming fuck sweat? She looks at us with a murderous look and honestly; for a moment we think of

sadomasochism, but we know better what's healthy for us at this age. You understand that I still cherish The Steve very much, she says measuredly and decisively, Jean-Marie, rolling that "*r*" as if her tones were waves that really want to crash like an hurricane - on us. But - quickly calmer, as if the Holy Steve within her had calmed the sea with one compelling laying on of hands; you've given me an idea, JM. We jump at her suggestion. But...

Dear Goedele, I'm here for you, but honestly, less so for your ideas about, say, The Steve. We have an idea too, if we may, because why did you let us into your house? We're here so you can explain everything, or at least the core of your erotic thinking about orgasm. Steve was immediately forgotten because our (...) Goedele was immediately willing - again - and in any case, the most qualified to explain to us, in understandable terms, not too many sentences, what the word "*orgasm*" actually means.

First, we dare to admit something to her, which you must read along to, but which we explicitly ask you not to laugh about - or at least not behind our broad backs. We, we JM, have never asked a woman with whom we... The Deepest Turn..., whether she had developed an orgasm, one to, say, twenty, during this encounter: never. We dare to say that to the orgasm expert of the Low Countries. After which she immediately gives us a slap on the ears; wonderful, and thank you, Goedele!

Technical or practical, there followed an explanation of... also... about... which, with our older brains, which had softened by ten years, made us, men, completely dizzy. We certainly understood the gist of it, because we, as men, can't understand anything about it! Because an orgasm is like bearing children; reserved only for women of all countries, although in quite a few countries, that second part is the only thing for which they are allowed - at best - an orgasm! So it became a bit... too technical for us... to be honest, she might still be talking, but we were so overwhelmed, so overwhelmed, that we transformed ourselves into a shadow and, therefore, took the fastest route, through the ever-moving clouds, briefly escaped. We recommend you read one of her more than ten publications on sex:

1993 - 69 vragen over seks, waar je nooit het juiste antwoord op kreeg ("*69 questions about sex that never gave you the right answer*")
2005 - Het vaginaboek ("*The Vagina Book*")
2006 - Het penisboek ("*The Penis Book*")
2008 - Ons Seksboek ("*Our Sex Book*")
2009 - SOS Seks ("*SOS Sex*")
2010 - Sterke Vrouwen ("*Strong Women*")
2011 - Haar Orgasmeboek
2012 - Start 2 sex (idem)
2015 - Superseks in 10 stappen ("*Super Sex in 10 Steps*")
2016 - Help, mijn kind denkt aan seks! ("*Help, My Child Is Thinking About Sex*!")
2019 - Het seksboek ("*The Sex Book*")
2020 "*World Wide Wet*" (this last book is about the sexual fantasies of women worldwide, and men weren't asked about it because, as has been known for centuries, they have no imagination at all because: it's all about it, it's all about it, it's all about it, it's all about the next thing!).

+ see also: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orgasm

Meanwhile, Goedele has noticed our absence and has pulled out all the stops to fly us towards the vast clouds that seem to have hovered lazily, if not stationary, over her domain. Indeed, JM, a beautiful and very, very peaceful place, our clouds, for continuing a more or less subdued conversation. Unless you're forgetting all the planes and satellites, not to mention all their crashing debris, we think to ourselves. Anyway, space is the prelude to heaven, and so we've already arrived in the Sixth Heaven with our Goedele. A little panting from her effort to reach us, she (therefore) pants conspiratorially: JM, what did you think of the expression "*to experience a Little Goodle*?" Man, how suddenly quiet things can get between people, with such a great lady versus a dimwitted man! She quickly recovers, this ultimate businesswoman, and we land together, back at her house. We honestly have no idea or experience whatsoever about poetry in the sexual activity, she looks at us slightly reproachfully, you naughty boy. About groaning, yes, the fantastic eargasm - I've written and spoken a lot about that. But enthusiastically; I can really see that new sex toy of yours, JM, something sensible and beautifully expressed about experiencing sexuality with the aspect of poetry in it: everything is allowed and nothing is required... with... so... this game too, the wordplay!!! So Goedele, to avoid misunderstandings, you're not thinking about the millions of poems that, even if world-class, you could call refined adolescent desires? No, JM, it should be, as you fully intend to introduce, about poetry IN the experience of sexuality between men and women. In the background, then, in our empathetic foreground, we can already hear her cleverly considering creating three editions, a second for homosexual love and a third for lesbian love. And will it stop there, La Liekens? Together we briefly review the few examples we can think of of how poetry can be effectively used in sexual activity. And ... apparently, they don't excite her enough to naturally try them out with us - well, fair play to all, and at our next in-person meeting, we'll just have to be a bit more attractive - with poetry!

But she speaks. And we listen. Applying, utilizing, and allowing slam poetry to "*happen*" during sexual activity - that, JM, is the poetic egg I'm already brooding over. The problem is, I love poetry but don't know a thing about it. And for that, I'm eyeing a collaboration with the young and very flashy Yousra Benfquih, according to her website a "*writer, poet, and spoken-word artist*" (see https://yousrabenfquih.com/) and a remarkably intelligent woman (she holds a PhD in law). Pardon me, is she a beguine?, are we squeaking in surprise, Because that doesn't seem like a Flemish or Brabantian name to us? Sorry JM, but from someone with a lot of education like you, and especially as a philosopher, I would have expected a more fitting comment than this ridiculous pun. So, no, or a big yes, JM: Yousra Benfqui is a thoroughbred with many talents, and, incidentally, one of those women who, had they been born in her parents' homeland, would have had infinitely fewer to no opportunities in life; rather, as a missionary's daughter (in one position, La Liekens blusters, or the great specialist and promoter of multi- and trapeze sex, to the orgasmic advantage of women, of course), giving birth, producing children, and maximally pleasing her husband. Secondly, but I can't elaborate and stick to our topic of sexuality; I still haven't had any lesbian experiences, La Liekens continues, but I know quite a few men who are crazy about Belgian-Moroccan women. They seem very active or enterprising in bed, in a word; creative, even call it creating a double life. It was on our tongues, already dripping a little like saliva - or was that the first drool? - but we were able to prevent it in time, that we might be one of those men... who... But the word, The Word is La Liekens's! Who, by the way, is La Liekens's own ghostwriter? A question that has been burning on our lips since before our visit, and even longer than our longing for her, but which we naturally don't dare utter at the risk of never... now... ever again... being...

We agree to keep in touch by email. Please don't bombard us with all sorts of questions, because our brains have softened over the years, we suggest gently but firmly. By the way,

JM, what percentage do you want on my copyright? We're being stabbed in the heart like a needle. But we remain outwardly calm, which means that while we never play poker or participate in any form of gambling, we still put on our poker faces. Goedele, give that to the good children in your Africa, in the form of picture books full of poetry. Well spotted, JM, says the Goodwill Ambassador of some social fund under the broad umbrella of the UN (hey, UNFPA) amidst all her commercial activities. And! Two cultural and commercial birds with one stone. So, you shouldn't have copyright on that second, third... book either, JM!? We burst out laughing and hug each other briefly, but more modestly, because... Oh God, God, Eternal Almighty God from the Seventh Heaven and us - yes, us!!! - now in that Sixth, the Seventh so close: why doesn't a laugh, her laugh, last as long as these kinds of hugs? We remember that La Liekens discovered a loophole in her sex culture: reading and listening to poetry during You-Know-What-But-Apparently-Still-Insufficient. That she knew a lot about the somewhat adjacent groaning associated with sexuality. And that brings us seamlessly to the next lady on our list, Luce Caponegro, or once Europe's uncrowned queen of the Hottest Film, where one of her greatest attractions was her endless, lustful groaning, her eargasm!

It takes a little longer for us to break free from La Liekens's embrace, who, to our amazement, actually kisses both our hands, in gratitude - she says between cat kisses - for our compliments, which made her so incredibly happy. And which she now wears like a rosary around her heart. She insists on driving us to Zaventem Airport herself, while she also books our flight via her onboard computer, hands-free (because with her right hand sometimes on our left buttock and our middle penis). Thank you, Goedele, and who knows, maybe next time other compliments from us, to you! But of course, we can't even think that deeply sincerely for every encounter, so we shouldn't try to repeat it every time. But surely there's something else for that: poetry, by Pietro, by Hugo, by ...! She takes us in her arms, her two perfectly romantically coordinated arms, looks into our blinking eyes like the Mermaid finally caught by her Sailing Fisherman, but who now has to throw her back within a minute - into the World Wide Wet. Her Hottest Kiss - one minute.

La bella Italia; how much more warmed up can we now swiftly jump over your Romantic Rubicon!?

.....

Her favorite oralgasmic poem.

Coito Pietro Aretino (1492 - 1556)

Fottiamci, anima mia, fottiamci presto
perché tutti per fotter nati siamo;
e se tu il cazzo adori, io la potta amo,
e saria il mondo un cazzo senza questo.
E se post mortem fotter fosse onesto,
direi: Tanto fottiam, che ci moiamo;
e di là fotterem Eva e Adamo,
che trovarno il morir sì disonesto.

- Veramente egli è ver, che se i furfanti
non mangiavan quel frutto traditore,
io so che si sfoiavano gli amanti.

Ma lasciam'ir le ciance, e sino al core
ficcami il cazzo, e fà che mi si schianti
l'anima, ch'in sul cazzo or nasce or muore;

e se possibil fore,
non mi tener della potta anche i coglioni,
d'ogni piacer fortuni testimoni

+ Note for our readers who speak Dutch. A translation can be found on p. 147 (titled "*Coitus*") in: Frans Van Dooren, *Gepolijst Albast. Acht Eeuwen Italiaanse gedichten*, Baarn, 1994 (NB: this book only contains translations, not the originals either!). Because La Liekens is indeed a very fortunate and living monument, and admittedly after some grumbling and groaning from our publisher X56 (we cannot possibly give up the name of this, even to us, stupid macho for the following reason, also because we do not know him ourselves) who still cannot accept that with Saint'Amour of 1992 he never got further than briefly shaking La Liekens' polite hand, we present a second favorite oralgasmic poem by Goedele Liekens. With her addition: Steve, what a phenomenon. But Hugo, absolutely the end. This poem is generally considered one of the most beautiful in the history of the Dutch language.

Ik schrijf je neer. Hugo Claus (1929 - 2008), "*De Oostakkerse gedichten*", 1955.

Mijn vrouw, mijn heidens altaar,
Dat ik met vingers van licht bespeel en streel,
Mijn jonge bos dat ik doorwinter,
Mijn zenuwziek, onkuis en teder teken,
Ik schrijf je adem en je lichaam neer
Op gelijnd muziekpapier.

En tegen je oor beloof ik je splinternieuwe horoscopen
En maak je weer voor wereldreizen klaar
En voor een oponthoud in een of ander Oostenrijk.

Maar bij goden en bij sterrenbeelden
Wordt het eeuwig geluk ook dodelijk vermoeid,
En ik heb geen huis, ik heb geen bed,
Ik heb niet eens verjaardagsbloemen voor je over.
Ik schrijf je neer op papier
Terwijl je als een boomgaard in juli zwelt en bloeit.

PS. After La Liekens finally realized we were gone, that we were practically the first man in her expansive life to dare let her sit, stand, or walk around wherever she was (deeply sorry, girl), we received a flood of emails asking for another "*rendezvous*". Given our necessarily energy-efficient lives, we promised to read this poem by our national top poet aloud to her sometime (with the option for more if...), either at her home or on the beach in De Panne, with its real dunes shielding us from the evil world, from the Evil Eye.

Post Post Scriptum. May we momentarily break our roles as writers and special interviewers with relevant women on the topic of "*poetry in sexuality*"? You understand that we are going

to answer YES to this question, because it's our own, and on our own pages. NO is the answer. Goedele Liekens is undoubtedly a monument, because without all the lame, obvious jokes and the usual Flemish/Belgian/European (?) jealousy of successful people, and especially if a woman, and even more so with a very attractive woman like La Liekens, we feel it's appropriate to ask this question here: when - finally - a fitting tribute - which can be plural - and especially during life - to this person-cum-monument. We cannot judge, and certainly cannot decide, about an honorary doctorate; but shouldn't it also be considered 'somewhere' at a European university, now that 'even' women become rectors? But there is that 'more' - sorry, rectors - certainly on a website like ours; ART or an interesting portrait of her, as a painting, a sculpture, an installation even, as a film perhaps. But preferably one of the first two. And why not by a few, or rather, several Belgian and other European artists, ranging from ordinary to top-tier artists. Our great friend Luc Tuymans (born 1958) certainly won't do it, because he always wants to play the deprimate, which, to our astonishment, apparently works with a very influential in-crowd. The more, let's say, magical-realist-oriented and also Belgian, yet internationally highly regarded, top painter Michaël Borremans (incidentally, a year mate of La Liekens, but he was not around her because he studied in Ghent and La Liekens - elsewhere) would certainly be technically capable of such a portrait (drawn or painted, or both) - or even an installation. But how magical does he want to go for or through her? Anyway. We're, as it were, throwing a stone into a remarkably quiet pond or sea of artists, all of whom, at least in this part of Western Europe, have undoubtedly heard of La Liekens, seen her in various media, and even read some or all of her work - and perhaps, perhaps, learned from it with great pleasure and zest for life. Because that's what this lady has done, in her own way, as a pioneer: providing greater insight into so more pleasure of - ..uh...!!!

3. Luce Caponegro, once Europe's favorite hottest movie star, about the eargasm. But even better, because she was essentially the very first inventor of the ... Oralgasm!

On to la bella Italia, because via Brussels to Bologna and then to ...

Miss/Misses Caponegro, you've been known for years as a successful businesswoman and even a nerd in the wonderful world of wellness. You strive to make women more beautiful and therefore happier, by instilling more confidence in them. And - even with one specialty for men: to ... their increasingly balding heads! Moreover, you constantly launch - what energy you have, Mother of God; if you and your Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni were to stand together in one place, it would instantly create a moderate earthquake! - all sorts of initiatives, such as a recent wine series with erotic names, which we assume are also aphrodidodingdong ... er ... Anyway, they are very delicious. So you won't be surprised when we briefly revisit your time as the legendary star of the Italian and European Hottest Films, and try to solve the mystery of your famous song from back then, your groans.

You did indeed have some specialties as a movie star, hence the numerous film awards. But there's one that we think deserves a bit more attention: indeed, your legendary groans, or your so-called "*eargasm*" also a trick of your directors to make you even more attractive. She starts laughing uncontrollably because we ourselves, for once, wouldn't have seen what follows coming, neither from far away nor from close up, nor from anywhere at all. Jean-Marito, that groaning also had to do with my great love for Puccini (Giacomo Puccini, 1858 - 1924)! More specifically, with his profound attention to women! Don't you see that we - Puccini and I, Luc'Amore - had and still have a deep shared interest in the seemingly eternally tragic fate of women, as they have been exploited by men for centuries.

We listen - we mean: we close our eyes, which is very difficult in this human proximity because, God, this woman remains so unrealistically attractive, or truly, like the deepest red wine that has been maturing for years - for us? - in the catacombs of Rome and can now finally be tasted by ... us, a fully bleeding, living human being! We let our ears do the interview work:

Puccini was not only a traditional Italian with his love for our wonderful musical tradition. He was also very progressive, although he was partly on the same wavelength as Verdi, La Luce almost begins to lecture. Keep it short, Miss/Misses Caponegro, because we can't go into extensive musicological analyses here, we suddenly find ourselves curtly reprimanding her.

Pronto, Jean-Marino, mio piccolo bastardo. Oh, what a witty man you are, a real interviewer with interest in human man-woman coexistence.

Prego. Puccini created four phenomenal operas, each centered around a single woman, and each time she was the victim of one man, or even several men. That's too much of a correlation to dare call it a coincidence. La Lucella, a fervent practitioner of group scenes at the time in her Hottest Films, quickly lists four female operas of which in three out of four cases the opera bears the name of the heroine or victim:

1) La Bohème (1896) with "*Mimi*";
2) Tosca (1900);
3) Madame Butterfly (1904);
4) Turandot (1926).

Okay, Miss/Misses Caponegro, that seems particularly interesting, but we still don't understand the point of your seemingly professional eargasm. What do those Puccini operas have to do with your legendary groans during almost all of your Hottest Films?

Listen, mio delizioso Jean-Mario Cipollinata, I was bound by very strict contracts that stipulated what was and wasn't allowed, both on and off the set. Naturally, I could not, at any time and in any way, criticize the perpetual exploitation of women, especially not sexual exploitation. And that was precisely Puccini's main theme!!! So, even outside the film set or publicly, I couldn't offer any direct commentary because of those **** contracts. Although I must say - she suddenly looks at us with a somewhat confused look - that it did generate a tremendous amount of income for years. While I was like an active Stromboli and Vesuvius simultaneously, unstoppably spewing hot steam and molten rock, the money poured in from all sides like inverted lava, but much faster. She treats us to an original metaphor. So this woman already has poetry in her!

As I said, I was and still am a huge fan of Puccini. Even as a child, my mother sang ... - but I digress, she responds when she sees our surprised expression. I truly adored one aria, which, by the way, almost everyone loves because it's from that incredible opera "M*adame Butterfly*". That opera truly captivates from the first note to the last; it's an absolute masterpiece. By the way, O Mio Babbino Caro, did you know that as a child I was crazy about anything that could fly, like birds, but of course butterflies too? And this is the aria: "*Un bel di vedremo*" or "*One good day, we will see*".

+ see: https://www.liveabout.com/un-bel-di-vedremo-lyrics-724337

She now looks at us intently, and suddenly we hear almost nothing but this mixed media words. Think of those legendary final lines of Madame Butterfly's, Don Juan Maria, where Madame Butterfly's hope is so infinite, while we, as listeners, naturally know what will truly happen, or have to endure the greatest tragedy a woman and mother can experience: the loss of her child, her beloved child:

Tienti la tua paura,
io con sicura fede l'aspetto.

...

Hold back your fears -
I with secure faith wait for him

Prego, and now the answer to your question: precisely this passage from this famous aria from this brilliant musical and politically significant opera by my beloved Puccini - I hummed or groaned these lines constantly, or like a mantra. And that was what people simply heard and interpreted, besides lustfully, as an eargasm! By the way, mio Jean-Mare, mio piccolo monello, listen for yourself now with the utmost concentration. Or perhaps you should immediately resort to the most modern musicological computer techniques. Because then you will certainly understand these words of mine clearly, or see me as Madame Butterfly! She now literally says:

Il mio gemito era una canzone nascosta .../My groaning was a hidden singing ...

My groaning, my so-called eargasm that the men, first our directors and especially our clients, loved to hear because it gave them extra stimulation, so that, frankly, we could also sell more films, had a different purpose for me! I pulled out everyone's leg - haha. Which makes us automatically think that we would gladly have had our two legs and arms and everything else pulled out by her.

Suddenly she speaks in a darker voice and in the third person as if giving the floor to Judith, who is beheading Holofernes in Michelangelo Caravaggio's (1571 - 1610) poignant painting (see Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Antica at Palazzo Barberini, Roma):

Lei, Selen, gemeva sempre forte durante il sesso/
She, Selen, groaned always loudly during sex.

Back in the first person and in her normal voice, she repeats:

Il mio gemito era una canzone nascosta .../My groaning was a hidden singing

A moment of silence. And how hot it is with such an unearthly attractive woman as Luc'Amore beside us, the male earthworm who, for the first time, sees the light that the sun gives to the earth above ground.

I hope at least the women understood my message then, she says, her voice now very soft!

(NOW again FIERCE, as apparently only Italian women can change their moods, and that with their legendary body language) Many asshole men promise women heaven on earth and it turns out to be the opposite, forever. You know how it ends in this opera; her child is even taken from her by that bastard Pinkerton, who only returns to Japan a few years later but with another woman who is now his wife - screams Luce Caponegro, La Beata Lucella, Luc'Amore, Lulu-Luce, or La Più!

(back CALM and now very PROUD) In my career as the famous diva of the Hottest Film I wanted to do two things;

1) To spread a message of sexual liberation and female empowerment;

2) Simultaneously denounce societal abuse, and especially the sexual abuse of women. What I've been doing openly and professionally for years now as a wellness specialist and teacher, I did back then in the only possible way, because it was covert.

Dear readers, we need a moment to recover from this information. So, here's how it went: this woman's famous rousing groans, her eargasm, intended by this world of the Hottest Film as an extra commercial gimmick to sell more films, was secretly and cleverly used by her for the opposite: to denounce the injustices men face against women! We're practically falling off our knees with astonishment, but you understand that, in front of this woman and after these words, this would be highly, highly inappropriate. So, in short: Luce Caponegro's eargasm in her Hottest Film days was already a form of Oralgasm! It wasn't really additional, adjacent, or supportive language like poetry, but a language used as a companion tool of communication, even to offer social critique! Luc'Amazing ...

We momentarily lose our cool concentration as interviewers, but Japan and China aren't that far apart. We tell her we know that for centuries Chinese women used a secret language, having developed a language exclusively used by women. So the - dominant - men could never truly understand them, allowing them to communicate more freely. This unique custom died out in the early 20th century. But silly boy, I thought you, as a philosopher and researcher, knew so much about hidden messages. We're certainly looking at her stupidly now. I, La Beata Lucella, have been addressing you, Jean-Marito, for years now through all sorts of hidden messages, through all sorts of t channels: see even ... And she whispers a series of examples to us first in our right ear, then in our left, thus creating her aura around half of our head like a sickle, We look at her stunned, confused, and - yes, also - disheartened. But, we whisper back barely audibly, and suddenly, as if the Holy Spirit has placed the Dove in our mouth so that she mans and serves our tongue, we do indeed address her in Her language, Italian:

*Non hai mica un *** contratto adesso, vero? E io non sono un direttore?*
*You don't have a *** contract now, do you, and I'm not a director?*

You know from life's rich riches how silence can take on all sorts of forms. Sometimes it's like the calm before the storm. Sometimes, and preferably, it's a blissful silence, a sound that heals in what is all too often a jungle of noise: oppressive sounds, unnecessary, harsh, ... words. Between people, even with their expectations and desires, silence is often the voice of shyness.

We realize why we're here with Lady Luce Caponegro, because indeed, now that we're here anyway (sic), we're trying out her interest in poetry in sexuality. Oh, mio asino testardo, poetry with acting in Hottest Films; none of us female actors ever thought of that back then. And our male colleagues ... And the viewers - pfffft.

Now I'm starting to regret a little what I missed in the poetic form of Oralgasm, she adds understandingly. We see her contemplating, and then hopeful, or ...? Perhaps I should redo some scenes, or even devise and direct a new script for a Hottest Film, effectively using poetry as - for example - a warm-up? And she looks at us intently, as if we might (certainly, certainly con Dio, certainly!!!) become her co-star there, as, among other things, he who wants to read for her, immortal verses for an immortal woman. Her eyes soften like those words of Massimo Troisi in Il Postino, perhaps the most poetic Italian film of all time. A film about ... poetry. By the great poet Pablo Neruda, who was then residing in la bella Italia!

Miss/Misses/Misstero Caponegro, you appear constantly and with great pleasure on all sorts of public and personal social media. Incidentally, you have a melodious and practiced voice. May we make a humble request? Si, prego, forza, mio piccolo Don Giovanni. Could you at least read aloud for one minute every week on your own social media, a poem, of course, from the rich Italian tradition to this day? Si, si, si, si! We'll discuss this with my manager and our team. We interrupt her because ...

... May we have just a moment longer, because our request to you is twofold. Misstero Caponegro, you yourself have said how much you love Puccini. You quoted his famous aria "*Un bel di vedremo*". Why wouldn't you, with your love for your language and your long experience in the wide world of entertainment, occasionally read these famous arias as well? You could use some of their music in the background, too? La Più looks at us with a moment's emotion, then looks away to a distant horizon in the Adriatic Sea where, as a romantic woman she wants to See – perhaps... - the smoke of a Steamboat approaching? And begins softly humming, groaning melancholically, the lyrics from "*Un bel di vedremo*." What else could we expect!? And murmurs these words as if embodying the modern oracle of Delphi:

Tienti la tua paura,
io con sicura fede l'aspetto.

...

Hold back your fears -
I with secure faith wait for him

When this lady transitions from an overwhelming, downright dramatic groan to a scream that announces the explosion of both Stromboli and Vesuvius, we, the eternally timid and guilty macho, decide it's time to leave very quietly. With this muttered wish to her, from her Jean-Marito:

Che un giorno, un giorno pieno di luce, tu possa finalmente vedere l'uomo della tua vita.

May one day, a day filled with light, you finally meet the man of your life.

,,,,,,,,,,,,,

Her favorite oralgasmic poem (besides, of course, the lyrics to "*Un bel di vedremo*"):

Portami il girasole ch'io lo trapianti Eugenio Montale (1896 - 1981).

Portami il girasole ch'io lo trapianti
nel mio terreno bruciato dal salino,
e mostri tutto il giorno agli azzurri specchianti
del cielo l'ansietà del suo volto giallino.

Tendono alla chiarità le cose oscure,
si esauriscono i corpi in un fluire
di tinte: queste in musiche. Svanire
è dunque la ventura delle venture.

Portami tu la pianta che conduce
dove sorgono bionde trasparenze
e vapora la vita quale essenza;
portami il girasole impazzito di luce.

Voor onze Nederlandstalige fans and followers geven we deze vertaling, van de hand van de ongemeen verbluffende vertaler Italiaans/Nederlands Frans Van Dooren - een mens die men echt waar eeuwig mag bedanken. Hij heeft ook de Divina Commedia vertaald, en van een zeer interessante inleiding voorzien! Al raadt hij daar iedereen aan en alleen al voor dit geniale werk, Italiaans te gaan leren...:

Dorstend naar licht.

Breng mij de zonnebloem, opdat ik haar
in mijn brak land verplant en haar gezicht
de hele dag felgeel en smachtend naar
de azuren hemelspiegel staat gericht.

Wat duister is zoekt steeds naar klare lijnen,
lichamen kwijnen, vloeien weg en gaan
in tinten op, en deze in klank. Verdwijnen
is de uiterste bestaansgrond van 't bestaan.

Breng mij de plant die heenvoert naar waar stralen
van glanzend blond opgaan in 't vergezicht
en 's levens geur verdampt bij 't ademhalen:
breng mij de bloem die dronken is van licht.

4. Valerie Van Peel, the new important Belgian party leader and, thanks to her new poetry, henceforth and definitively a fantastic Happy Ex Single.

With those famous mixed feelings, including a tremendous sense of melancholy that we were once again... a woman who..., we landed on our sacred ground of Belgium after a short morning flight from Bologna, even if it was only the tarmac of Zaventem Airport. We didn't

have much actual luggage, except for a little... besides... While, in fact, we had already left all our spare clothes at La Beata Lucella in case of Il ritorno di Ulisse nella sua patria, la bella Italia. So we could quickly enter the reception hall and go straight from there to... But between dream and reality... stands here and now: Goedele or La Liekens! Indeed, who is waiting for us here and now, conspicuously visible, because with a very large sign with the rather familiar initials "*JM*" in huge letters: La Liekens!!!! It was as if she'd experienced a momentous regression to puberty, because around "*JM*" she had very clumsily, yet equally charmingly and endlessly endearingly, drawn a "*heart*" in thick red lipstick - ... Some people never really grow up, seemingly never become 'truly' adults (yuck). And that's nothing but a blessing. That plate was so large that it certainly obscured Goedele's luscious face and tender shoulders, but what was most identifying - above all - to be seen: her divinely preserved and hopefully long-to-remain divine breasts! Because ladies and gentlemen, and lovers of the history of the West - as far as that is, Europe - had the brothers Romulus and Remus been able to suckle on these breasts, the Roman Empire would certainly still exist today. Although we are far from fans of those *** Roman pederasts!

After first, and now not half an hour but almost a full hour (!!!) of "*hugs and licking kisses from her*" - JM, my darling, I didn't thank you enough last time for those unique compliments you gave me and for which I actually need a new life to give them to you...

You're getting to know me a little better now; I've been writing about and for women for almost half a century, but I'm completely obsessed with men: "*Ich bin von Kopf bis Fuß auf die männliche Liebe eingestellt.*" ("*I am set on love from head to toe for male love*"). She immediately corrects herself: on that of important men. But recently, women in our national politics have been raising their heads and their voices. So, she gives us a meaningful look, I have to jump on that newly launched boat of power, networks, and revenue! You understand that we can only nod to 'something like that', as if it were a verb that implies affirmation. And in the meantime, one party has been the strongest for years and has just chosen a woman as its new chairperson, with a Stalinist score, by the way: Valerie Van Peel.

You know I don't have time anymore, JM, to practice my therapeutic work as a sexologist. Books and TV reach a much wider audience and generate a thousand times the profit, she says coquettishly indulgently. She interrupts and laughs like a female being who perfectly embodies the passion for men:....

... But first! Time for us!!! And she pulls a clearly well-used Ibis Zaventem hotel key from her cleavage - we don't have a smartphone so we couldn't take a picture, but we're not on social media anyway, haha - with her favorite room number on it: "*69bis*". For both her and our reputation's sake, we can't tell you what happened here and now. The fact is that some time later, Goedele took us to the headquarters of this Belgian political party, in downtown Brussels. There, we were welcomed by the party spokesperson, who first offered us our famous glass of fresh organic milk, which we drank down in one gulp. After which, with a fresh milk beard, we practically begged for a second, even a third, glass, given all the energy we'd invested this morning, which now needs to be renewed.

And then, equipped with an extra (glass!) bottle of organic milk, we arrive in the very spacious office, furnished with Flemish Renaissance furniture and modern Italian design, of another "*La*"; La Valerie, Valerie Van Peel. This is the second La Passionaria of Belgian politics in recent times, alongside - and lo and behold - a leading lady within this same political party, or her illustrious party colleague and now multiple-time minister, Zuhal Demir

(born in 1980). She is known, among other things, for her motto: "*Demir. Altijd Demeer! Nooit Deminder*!" ("*Demir. Always The More! Never The Less*!").

And because Goedele enjoys quick sex, but especially - from our perspective - slow driving, we came up with something during this car ride: The Plan! From the Man! For the Woman! For finding - the... Man! Some time ago, La Valerie had turned to clinical psychologist and sexologist Goedele Liekens, desperately hoping that this expert could finally cure her, La Valerie, of her long-standing illness: "*Being Unhappy Single*"! JM, Goedele told us very quickly, matter-of-factly, and decisively, I emphatically ask you to keep your hands to yourself next to the rest of your body, but instead, and optimally - so that I don't hear any complaints afterward, JM - to use your mouth and your brain. Now to the point: that poetry of yours, I can totally see it in Valerie Van Peel, in Miss Van Peel. Come up with something around that topic, and above all: with perseverance, with a broad scope, with a deeper heart, with... Remember that this woman is constantly exhausted by all the daytime politics.

We were born in 1963 – let's just check our passports... just a moment... indeed! Somewhere around 1980, still in high school, and we don't remember exactly why, we thought that Flemish nationalism, due to the increasing federalization of the Belgian nation, would one day cease to exist, or at least become politically significant. Because it would no longer be of any importance, as there was nothing left to fight for – except independence for Flanders, a completely insane idea, pure economic suicide. We were clearly mistaken then, because it was tempus fugit, but apparently, Flemish nationalism not only remained but – tremendously strengthened, because how: leading the country, Belgium!

Now that the seemingly eternal chair of this most important Flemish party has actually become the country's prime minister in early 2025 - another major surprise - his successor is a woman. And she's no ordinary one. Or another major political surprise, surrounding that Flemish nationalism. To be honest, we were and never will be, Flemish nationalists. Because - that's why.

So, Valerie Van Peel is the new chair of the currently (we're talking the mid-2020s) leading party in Flanders, the NV-A. Congratulations and all the best with your political... Okay, Jean-Marie, because my political honeymoon is already long over, the otherwise very friendly but eternally a bit too witty Valerie Van Peel interrupts. And, may I call you Jan, because Jean-Marie: too long and, of course, too French, and it reminds me of Jean-Marie Le Pen!

No, you certainly shouldn't, and preferably, and in perfect French, use a hyphen when you write to us, dear chairwoman.

Valerie is so stunned by this rigid riposte that she asks the cameraman to rewind everything. She rewinds it herself, a smart woman, this still very young politician. Although we cannot provide details about the methodology of her own brainwashing.

So. We're starting over and hoping that we can now truly discuss our theme: poetry in the experience of sexuality, although here we're going a bit broader, a bit more existential; simply relational, naturally incorporating sex, eroticism, sensuality - the finer drama.

Here you go, Jean-Marie, it's great to finally meet you in person and hopefully with some excitement. My press officer has set aside an hour and a half for us, because we've heard through the grapevine that after an hour of truly human, direct communication, you usually

start to nod off, going out like a candle that stays oily enough, but whose wick... Now follows a completely incomprehensible and, frankly, quickly very irritating and completely unnecessary explanation about her annual holiday jobs at "*Spaas Kaarzen*" ("*Spaas Candles*"), where she has become a lighting specialist, by candlelight, of course. While, in her spacious office, fluorescent lights are burning: feminine logic?

So we lost an estimated half hour of 'being together' because we fell asleep anyway - what can one expect after the drama of La Beata Lucella and now about candles... Madam President or Chairwoman - call me Chair, she had said prettily at the very first second of our meeting, as if we had been planning something else, but was nevertheless kindly pointed out by her press officer to our irresistibly onset of sleep and it sounded: OUCH!

I'm sorry, Jean-Marie. I can't really receive you like that - do we already see the first rays of a mischievous smile on her face, always a sign of the noble art of self-reflection? We look at her as an old, eternal, and incorrigible macho, threatened with personal and categorical extinction, now still trying to manifest himself for a moment, a bit caught out and glum, but we sincerely thank her anyway: Thank you, Mrs. Van Peel, thank you so much - thank you. Call me Valerie. Thank you, Mrs. Valerie. Which breaks the ice, which, incidentally, wasn't there at the time, because we never drink our fresh organic milk on the rocks. We're not going to tell you what Mrs. Van Peel - a Flemish nationalist - drank in the meantime: Spa Petillant!

Well, let's set sail, though I've got my anchor ready to...

(we reluctantly) Dear Mrs. Van Peel - she looks stern.

Mrs. Van Peel.

But please, finally, address me as Valerie, this whole Mrs. (Valerie) Van Peel thing - fuck it.

Okay... er... Valerie... We're not only going to respect your wish now, but that's essentially why we've come here, and for the greater good: more poetry in human life, including... sexuality. We see her look startled as she quickly glances at her press officer, who might also be her bodyguard, while in our eyes he looks more like a wimp because - those wimpy new Flemish people wouldn't have been accepted on the battlefield of Groeninge in 1302! But that's beside the point, because we barely have any speaking time left with - Chairman Valerie!

You recently complained publicly about...- no, you're not going to... start... too, because it was MY LAST TIME I gave an interview about THAT!!!!! the Lioness of Flanders now roars not only in our ears but throughout Brussels.

Calm down, calm down, pardon me, our apologies! It's about your statement about being so-called "*Unhappy Single*" which you've already approached Goedele Liekens about. She looks at us suspiciously: How do you know...? Oh yes, Goedele brought you here, of all places - we'd forgotten. We're sorry I have to go back to the past Valentine's Day celebration, Valerie, which is increasingly becoming a kind of unofficial holiday.

Valentine's Day, yes, must be something for a Valentino like you, she sneers, blissfully soft, but with growing anticipation for 'something' surprising, from our benevolent lips.

We diplomatically ignore this remark and continue unperturbed, albeit very engaged. As a Flemish nationalist, you should be sensitive to our language, Dutch. We have a gift for you, a linguistic gift, to be precise. It's even twofold, so we let you choose, if you accept the gift anyway. But didn't a famous poet say:

'"*De Vlaamse taal is wonderzoet*
voor wie haar geen geweld aan doet.".

"*The Flemish language is wonderfully sweet*
for those who use it as a greet."

We understand that you politicians often live day by day, being lived. Can I give you a little test? What was our special day the day before yesterday? She laughs... confidently, yet shyly... Valentine's Day! Yes, we can now talk about you.

Your first name, Valerie - actually Valerie-Ann, but let's just call it Valerie - is your point of contact and starting point! That name is very beautiful, but we can restyle it in an original and engaging, even successful, enticing way! Note: you must remain completely yourself, authentic, and honest, as always. By the way, we say, half-lecturing, half-conspiratorially, Valentijn; just compare that to... Valerie. Then we have two excellent possibilities that will suddenly save you a lot of sex sessions with Goedele, we add, not sarcastically, but to the point (a politician like Valerie Van Peel simply has little time for these kinds of sessions!):

1) From Valentine/Valentijn + Valerie to "*Valterietje*" as a new - intimate - name. And that can be shortened or even more emotionally connecting as "*Rietje*"!

2) From Valentine/Valentijn + Valerie to "*Valerijntje*" and that too... as "*Rijntje*"!

These are actually two, four possibilities (two by two) of diminutives, so when you use them yourself or towards you, the loving radiance from you and towards you is increased tenfold!

Valerie is surprised and... No, she starts dreaming, day-, week-, year-, she starts dreaming of a new, vivid eternity. She stares at us as if she's reliving that first "*Wizzard of Oz*" before her eyes. She even gives her arm a sharp squeeze - pardon, she says in Flemish dialect or in .. French (it's "*verontschuldiging*" - apology - in Beautiful Dutch), because in all the commotion, she hadn't noticed it was our arm, which, incidentally, she wasn't squeezing too hard at all. Goedele, that's a real pincher.

You... you mean I, ... man, men, can write to That One Man! ... like that and then expect them, that he, that He...?

Of course, to diminish oneself in language is always to expand oneself in style. Using the diminutive is a weapon, or rather a stylish device, that our Dutch language readily, if sometimes too infrequently, uses. We teach very briefly, not forgetting, albeit silently, that some Slavic languages truly have far more possibilities in terms of diminutives, and for that reason alone should be learned as a second or third language by Flemish/Dutch and other Western Europeans as well. She looks at us not with understanding but with deepening anticipation, as if we were truly a magician who will help turn her life into a real fairy tale.

Now that your predecessor and prime minister is increasingly moving towards European and even international affairs, you will undoubtedly also be confronted with these kinds of supranational, informal political contacts. Your nickname will catch on there under the variant "*Va-Va*". Be careful with your French neighbors to the south, though, because they are, by definition or by design, hot-headed. French politicians are constantly at loggerheads, but also constantly in bed, all parties mixed up. She chuckles briefly that this seems a bit far-fetched, but... We interrupt her to share our last thought, all conceived during the healthy or safe car ride La Liekens took us to these party headquarters, while she was constantly fiddling with our left buttock and middle penis - her new mindfulness!?

Miss Van... Valerie... Valerijntje/Valterietje... Rijntje/Rietje..., we say almost audibly now. We have something even more poetic for you, one that aligns with your newer, more poetic identity, one that will, as it were, open up and transcend your personality, in addition to ultimately making you more physically and mentally fertile. Here, the creative poem that suddenly and irresistibly arose for you through Goedele's inspiration, about Valerie Van Peel as: "*Rietje, the happy woman*" who wants no more unhappy singleness or forget-me-nots. She reads it silently first... once, twice, three times and... Can I have this... she stammers, intensely delighted? Of course, it's your gift, because you yourself are certainly a valuable gift to Belgian politics, finally a woman at the helm of a leading political party. And what a woman; one with integrity!

Jean-Marie, may I... read it to you...? We nod warmly.

We hear the calm voice, unbreakably beautiful as Venetian glass blown into a 'form', of Valerie Van Peel alias Valterietje alias Rietje:

> **Houdt me.** (Ex Unhappy ex Single Valerie Van Peel, 'Valterietje' alias 'Rietje', 2026)
>
> Houdt me, houdt me vanuit die rauwe rouw
> Wees mijn godendrank mijn heer en mijn schelm
> Laat mij jou nooit zuinig opzuigen door mijn rietje
>
> Maak me blind en doof nooit, verhef me en bedwelm
> Wees me trouw als vrouw.
>
> Alleen in res publica, jouw vergeet-me-nietje.

You understand that with these poignant and almost emblematic words, and with the husky voice and her "*rrrrrolling rrrr*" so eloquently uttered by La Valerie... er... Valterietje... er... Rietje, as if she were/is/will remain the declamatory Maria Callas of Belgian, and thus European, politics, we, the eternally timid and guilty macho, have quietly slipped away.

In the morning, sent late at night, we receive an email from La Valerie that, thankfully, unlike La Liekens's, isn't perfumed but clearly not dry - if you understand us. With words like... Jean-Marie, we thank you very much... would you like to help us write our press articles from now on, perhaps exclusively... the party has plenty of money... We naturally thanked for the latter offer graciously, but we firmly refused it. We are simply nowhere and never or: we are not for sale.

But then it happened... You renewed me, you gave me new courage and hope, I'm a new Valerie, "*the New Valerie-Ann*". Or - you can see her, through that email, on her side of the PeeCee, roaring with laughter at her own discovery: "*the NV-A*"! The new chair of a party with the entirely horrific name "*Nieuwe Vlaamse-Alliantie* (*New Flemish Alliance*)" or... "*NV-A*" is now even this woman: "*the NV-A of the NV-A*"! Who could have dreamed of this remarkable linguistic entity? It's quite something, returning melancholically from la bella Italia of the elusive La Beata Lucella. Unexpectedly but oh so cheerfully greeted by the ever-delightful Divina La Liekens, and then a new female political face, a highly skilled communicator, self-trained but still lost in the all-too-masculine world, aka the wilderness of politics.

Let's conclude by saying that we would love to live long to see if Valerie Van Peel, aka Rietje, also...!? Because, what more could a man, an eternally timid and guilty macho like us, want? Than an influential and upright politician who expresses herself - through poetry!

.....

Her favorite oralgasmic poem:

EGO FLOS (Guido Gezelle, Kortrijk, 17 november 1898 + 1830 - 1899)

Ik ben een blomme
en bloeie vóór uwe ogen,
geweldig zonnelicht,
dat, eeuwig onontaard,
mij, nietig schepselken,
in 't leven wilt gedogen
en, na dit leven, mij
het eeuwig leven spaart.

Ik ben een blomme
en doe des morgens open,
des avonds toe mijn blad,
om beurtelings, nadien,
wanneer gij, zonne, zult,
heropgestaan, mij nopen,
te ontwaken nog eens of
mijn hoofd de slaap te biên.

Mijn leven is
uw licht: mijn doen, mijn derven,
mijn' hope, mijn geluk
mijn enigste en mijn al;
wat kan ik, zonder u,
als eeuwig, eeuwig sterven;
wat heb ik, zonder u,
dat ik beminnen zal?

'k Ben ver van u,
ofschoon gij, zoete bronne

van al dat leven is
of immer leven doet,
mij naast van al genaakt
en zendt, o lieve zonne,
tot in mijn diepste diep
uw aldoorgaande gloed.

Haalt op, haalt af!...
ontbindt mijn aardse boeien:
ontwortelt mij, ontdelft
mij!,.. Henen laat mij,... laat
daar 't altijd zomer is
en zonnelicht mij spoeien
en daar gij, eeuwige, éne,
alschone blomme, staat.

Laat alles zijn
voorbij, gedaan, verleden,
dat afscheid tussen ons
en diepe kloven spant;
laat morgen, avond, al
dat heenmoet, henentreden,
laat uw oneindig licht
mij zien, in 't Vaderland!

Dan zal ik vóór....
o neen, niet vóór uwe ogen
maar naast u, nevens u,
maar in u bloeien zaan;
zo gij mij, schepselken,
in 't leven wilt gedogen;
zo in uw eeuwig licht
me gij laat binnengaan!

Post Scriptum. We subsequently contacted the Dutch-speaking and multilingual, intensely European language virtuoso Paul Claes (1943) in a friendly, sympathetic, enthusiastic, and forward-looking manner - as we always are, were, and will remain. For La Valerie felt that this was indeed a task for us, because "*I really have to use my limited time very efficiently*."

At the end of the interview, Valerie Van Peel managed to share this frustration of hers with us.

I deeply regret that only Michel Seuphor (alias of Fernand Berckelaers (1901 - 1999), an Antwerp native who emigrated to France as a young man, has translated the top Flemish and European poet Guido Gezelle into French. That should be emulated in several world languages, she said, almost emotionally decisively and to the point (a point??? With the same meaning as later with ... Barbarian???). Through my political group, we are going to take the initiative in that area with the Flemish Community. There will be a parliamentary working group "*Poetry for better or with more sex*", she announces enthusiastically and with great practical foresight, because such a political chairwoman can decide, and the party members

simply nod and follow. Bart must be dissatisfied now that he is no longer chairman of our party. Oh dear, she exclaimed like a Native American cry and looked at us intently. Knowing Bart De Wever, as Prime Minister of our country, he will raise that theme of "*poetry in the experience of sexuality*" via his jokes, which have by now become very popular, at all European summits - or even ...!!! And La Valerie is turning bright red now; perhaps he will even do that at the upcoming NATO summit? He can likely recommend it afterwards, later in his St. Petersburg dacha to his closest neighbors and friends Gérard Depardieu and former Syrian President Assad, we try our hardest to read through her panicked thoughts. A suggestion she completely ignores bravely and clearly already partly hardened and armored by the ruthless political presidency. That must be something, too, to still have the time and desire for sex, with or without poetry, after first having to take off such armor, we absolutely do not think aloud.

In any case, your strategic suggestion regarding Paul Claes is an excellent idea. Together with the party, we are going to immediately initiate a project grant for him to create a "*Wild anthology*" that is as internationally oriented as possible. Hopefully, we will get some Dutch-speaking and especially Flemish poets in it, because I have been missing good sex way too much for ages. But good poetry to accompany good sex; where is that in my life and in that of the hard-working Fleming?

5. Barbara Baert, alias Barbarian, professor of art history, on Jan Vermeer's painting and his specific depiction of the Oralgasm, as the completely wordless yet wordy experience of sexuality! And with her world premiere of "*Iconography as sphincterology*", or sex is the end and beginning of all our sentences.

See: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Woman_Reading_a_Letter_(Vermeer)

Good day, most honorable professor at the Catholic University of Leuven. May we call you Barbara Baert? And give you greetings from Valerie Van Peel? Excuse me, that's a slip of the tongue, because she didn't ask us anything; she was too enraptured - by poetry!!! More so; reportedly - gossip circulates through every political nook and cranny - she now dreams of the real man, because The Man Who Measures The Clouds!!! Who could that be?

(Slightly startled but she recovers within a nanosecond) Of course Jee-eM and especially hello Jee-eM because we finally meet. Isn't it great that you could move Valerie Van Peel to.... ! You are clearly not an Unmoved Mover or more of a Prime Mover. We are a bit startled by so much ancient philosophy from the mouth of a generally contemporary professor at this university where the philosophical school of neo-Thomism seems to have completely disappeared; apparently the believing Saint Thomas (or Aquinas + circa 1225 - 1274) has now become the unbelieving Thomas (1st century after and especially during Christ!)?

We can't dwell long on the intellectual "*sic transit gloria mundi*" at this oldest university in the Low Countries, because this professor is unstoppable. And she's barely begun! By the way, Jee-eM, you're really starting to make waves with all your writing. I can indeed tell you, with pride and a tiny bit of envy - hee hee - that my students are absolutely devouring your website, the section about "*MOST ATTRACTIVE WOMEN IN HISTORY*." Although I suspect some of the students are incredibly jealous of your connections with La Più! - she looks at us meaningfully, and lo and behold: she winks! And that from a female professor versus this eternally timid and guilty macho. Well, even the five-century-old Catholic University of

Leuven (KUL) is clearly no longer a production house of and for student bigots. So, she doesn't react unperturbed to our objection, which she can't hear anyway, but as a specialist in iconography, she likely suspects directly from our facial expressions. But, she even adds, somewhat mischievously, It's a shame you're not a bit stronger and younger and therefore don't publish enough. Besides! If I may offer you some kind, heartfelt advice: leave those *** war studies aside, even if you're working on a life's work. She smiles now like the truly beautiful Lorelei, who has nevertheless descended from her high and fatal rock below to show every attracted skipper the way to - their life's goal. You understand that we nod, as if that were a verb implying confirmation. But we are, of course, more than grateful, or thankful to Heaven, that we, and perhaps even the first Westerners ever, were allowed not only to hear Lorelei but also to see her so closely, while she, moreover, whispered to us calmly and helpfully: the New Woman = not to seduce to use but to be seduced by for common love use!

It's becoming even more surreal, as it were, and it keeps coming, rolling and steaming from this professor's freshly blow-dried mouth: I'm actually shaving my current partner's head so he - while I'll stay with him because... and she winks meaningfully at us, as if to say, "*You know men...*" - can also enjoy her specialty, the tricopipopulo. And my guy, of course, will look better afterward. Why doesn't she just leave her guy's hair alone, do we... Oh well; it also sounds like a conspiracy has been formed around us, because now La Beata Lucella is suddenly involved as well. With Goedele Liekens, or three other ladies, surrounding and together with this Barbara Baert - pfffft.

We then laugh, somewhat forcedly politely, because a red light burns in our brains, which we try to dim so it doesn't shine blindingly on her, Barbara Baert. Because wouldn't she know '*THAT*' too? After all, she, this same Barbara Baert, has been affectionately called "*Barbarian*" for decades by various colleagues both intra and extra muros, and especially by her students! Admit it, a fitting name for a professor of art history! Well, that's not so far-fetched linguistically, is it? Because it's almost certainly the logical-deductive conclusion or synthesis of the alliterative "*Barbara + Baert = Barbaer = Barbaar/Barbarian*". That nickname also conceals a rather thick irony, because wasn't her great childhood sweetheart, as is generally known through thick gossip, the one and now lonely Jan Fabre (born 1958)!? Both were inseparable "*Knights of Despair*" or "*Warriors of Beauty*" from an early age. We still are, she barely whispers, while it's now truly clear that she can't even read our facial expressions, but even understands our inherently intimate, therefore internal, therefore secret thoughts immediately, greets them, or iconophotographs them. I learned everything about Life and Art from my Jan. He is now, unfortunately, albeit temporarily - isn't True Beauty Eternal! - a bit burnt. But he didn't teach his people, and me along with it, to "*read*" again, to look at, and thus to love - art. You see: not a question mark, not even an exclamation mark! And that will soon receive a very special follow-up explanation from La Barbara, excuse me, Barbarian! Fasten your seat belts now and please stay put - read!

Before we truly begin our interview with this international authority on art history, and more specifically its crucial component: iconography, we must mention that this professor won the highly prestigious Franquin Prize in Belgium in 2016. This prize is more difficult to appreciate internationally, as it is, of course, a direct tribute to the genius Belgian artist, specifically the comics phenomenon André Franquin (1924 - 1997). He launched the remarkable "*Marsupilami*". But of greater philosophical and pedagogical importance is his truly astonishing "*GASTON LA GAFFE*" known as "*Guus Flater*" in Dutch and simply "*Gaston*" in English. Gaston is, quite simply, and internationally speaking, one of the greatest inventors of the entire 20th century and a true multi-talent, an absolute genius and pioneer in

so many diverse fields! It's no wonder that a major scientific prize awarded annually in Belgium is named after "*the Belgian inventor of this universal inventor*". Although, let's not overdo it, Barbarian does look a bit better, and certainly more dressed up to the latest fashions, than the eternally sloppy Gaston. Not all scientific phenomena look sloppy. Just take a look at Professor Barbarian's wonderfully presented lectures: the content (of the course) and the format (of the instructor) are all excellent or tip-top!

We won't be going so far geographically with the twentieth-century cartoonist Franquin, but rather further back in time and the medium; we'll look up the painter Barbarian selected for us in our discussion of "*poetry in sexuality*" - thanks, Mrs. Baert... er... Barbarian, or - we've lost our train of thought for a moment. That is:

Woman reading a letter, Johannes Vermeer (1632 - 1675), oil, circa 1662 - 1663. Rijksmuseum Amsterdam.

Barbarian, as already mentioned, and it bears repeating because she will soon prove it, is a highly experienced professor of art history with a worldwide reputation in iconography, or rather, the art of looking, or more precisely, of first lifting skirts and blankets and similar coverings and coverings to see what's "really" underneath, what's in the tub. It should now be clear to readers why our eternally clever, quick-witted, and wonderful networker Goedele—or is she primarily sincere and eternally helpful, like The Great Mother Hen who wants to take all those stupid male-cocks under her immensely wide and warm wings?—then why La Liekens sent us to this Barbarian as an iconography expert. In other words, this specialist—one in sexology and this one in iconography—is a kind of intellectual midwife in addition to a sexologist! In short, or rather, in full force: Barbara Baert is a world specialist in the eternal quest for sex and eroticism, all covered up with a few masks of color and strokes of paint under the names of beautiful paintings. As here, with the supposedly innocent reading, by a morally respectable young woman, of a 17th-century letter in what was then, and probably now, even more supposedly peaceful and certainly money-hungry, and therefore essentially utterly boring, Holland. And it's true of all times and regions: where there's a lot of money, there's a lot of sex.

And it begins. Her explanation. And it gets even more impressive, infinitely more impressive, albeit with a truly exceptional ending!! Make it easy on yourself, because we're going to a pedal point that essentially encompasses a complete toccata by Father Bach. What are we saying? We're going to have to compare it to Bach's entire, unparalleled organ work! With Barbarian as our organist.

The professor lectures, also for us as the only spectators and listeners in the auditorium of our short life together: what is striking is, of course, the reading of a letter by a woman, in a beautiful and subdued, quiet interior. You don't have to look long or even hard to see that the letter is just above the belly of the reader of this letter, a woman. And this belly is somewhat wider, or indicates...! Indeed, Jee-eM, in principle, the somewhat swollen belly indicates a pregnancy, and since there is not a single dove or pigeon to be seen in the work, her expectant child was not conceived by the Holy Spirit but by a - man, she sounds almost triumphant, as if she were about to climax and scream herself and - why not? - suddenly give birth to an artificial child by her long-time love, Jan Fabre. You see, or rather, hear: the old Dutch proverb also applies to Barbarian: "*On old days the light freezes, and the most beautiful snowmen are rolled from fresh snow*." Would Jan, by the way, still be able to finish after thousands of hectares of tobacco? Tell me, Jan! Because we hear so little from you anymore!?

But, Barbarian looks at us intently, albeit calmly or not at all erotically, but purely intellectually curious; her belly might have been staged with a pillowcase, the professor's somewhat slower, yet sharper voice now clearly instructs. Interesting, very interesting, we hear ourselves say loudly, nodding, as we usually do with the most attractive women.

May we ask a question, dear professor? And fortunately, we did ask Barbarian in our minds, but didn't use that form of address - Barbarian - or it would have only just begun and already been done. Yes, certainly, but not for too long, because I still have a whole... Uh, so thank you very much; those yellow and blue bows on her stomach and above it! What should we, or rather, what can an internationally renowned iconographer like you, understand about this? She's lecturing a little more triumphantly now; you've noticed and questioned that well, Jee-eM, and especially to the right person. The bows refer to what is announced in the letter, or the allusion to the future desire to open up the woman by stripping her naked, and at the same time, of course - she adds in a haste that doesn't sound entirely professorial but rather purely moral - her desire to open up by removing her clothing, together, as an entrance - do we hear her say "*Eingang*"? - of, of intercourse, the penetration of the male letter writer. He who hasn't yet impregnated her - that's the grand suggestion, simultaneously subtle deception—but will soon do so. All of this is suggestive or off-screen, of course, because otherwise it would be blatant pornography. And she stops her sentence and looks disturbed. The letter is, in the best Christian tradition, now completely bourgeoisified here, nothing more than a variation on the theme of the Annunciation, she says triumphantly again. And not, as in the famous Annunciations, as in the 15th-century master, and perhaps generally still far too little recognized as a genius painter, Fra Angelico (1395-1445), an announcement by an angel - the Angel Gabriel - to Mary that she will soon become pregnant, of the Lord and Savior, or/and of the Word (NB: Fra Angelico would, incidentally, paint several Annunciations, each one better or more intense than the last)! We are here in a Protestant environment or a place where the Word was allowed to be read, where from the beginning of Protestantism enormous emphasis was placed on the spread of reading and writing, while for centuries Catholics were allowed little to nothing, not even their own Word - the New Testament - at home, let alone to read it themselves or without the intervention of a trained person - a priest, a father...!

So, if we understand correctly - we say "*slowly*", because as an eternal reader, deeply moved - this painting is about the miracle of Reading, about the miracle of Writing, about the miracle of the conception or pregnancy of Knowledge! You're very close, and this interpretation is actually sufficient. But for us, now she glows like a glowworm illuminated by the light of a Byzantine-radiant nimbus of a saint by Giotto (1267-1337), we iconologists, we go further, citius, altius, and fortius. To the very bottom, or more often, to the very top, she now suddenly looks up, as if she sees her reflection or twin sister, Lorelei, again; hadn't she stayed below?

Jee-eM, I first have to address a second nuance to this image, this iconic painting in itself. We're taking a moment to pause, because this is a lot of new information for our dimwitted minds, and we'd really like to drink something decent and quick, like in a basketball game during a timeout a quarter liter of our wonderfully soft and mild Belgian Spa Reine or the eternally sparkling San Pelligrino. But further, deeper, better, higher, or brought to Olympic intellectual heights by - Barbarian! You know that artists, while applying thin layers of paint, simultaneously used multiple layers in terms of meaning, one of the loving mysteries of my specialty, iconography within art history, she says, not without genuine pride and ordinary human joy. So it's about knowledge, but not self-evident, because it's presented in multi-layered ways, or with layers of meaning that intertwine and reinforce one another. Because, she winks (and by now we're so tired of all those feminine winks or pinches in our... but we

remain diplomatically cool, therefore warmly, listening with interest); It is definitely also about sexuality, but in the sense of building up through love between this woman and her partner/husband – present because he exists by this letter.

Let's delve even deeper into our Vermeer painting, and we nod our heads in genuine encouragement, of course, even though we long for a break and a glass or a whole bottle of Spa Reine. Jee-eM, from you as a man and as a philosopher and lover of art and women (that *** wink again...) I do expect some imagination, but, she lectures now, with the index finger of her right arm raised, always based on facts, nothing but facts, the true facts - which must therefore be present in this painting. We nod... but Barbarian certainly doesn't see that, because she only has eyes, brains, and tongue for the - painting!

§1. We see that rod, the lower metal bar or tube or support of the map. It served a purely functional purpose, keeping the map neatly horizontal, so that in a light breeze that might have entered the house and this room through an open door, for example, the map would simply remain unmoving. Incidentally, we art historians are absolutely certain that this map was designed at the time as a map of Holland and part of Friesland. and still in existence to this day in museums. But the iconography! Essentially, this pure functionality reveals a double layer, at least if one understands and accepts the entirety of our interpretation. She looks at us obliquely and slightly expectantly, yet with a largely superior, confident gaze, worthy of a Franquin laureate. This rod clearly runs straight through her letter - not literally, of course, but you can perfectly see how it continues on the left side of the letter being read; that is both the disadvantage of two-dimensional objects like paintings and here, as so often, an advantage, for the sake of suggestion. Crucial is not just the rod itself, but the end with its spherical structure on the left, which is clearly visible. Incidentally, when you look at this work in the museum, you look almost exclusively straight on, as is usually the case. Turn your head to the left, and you'll see the rod running from top to bottom, and you'll unmistakably see how central this rod is to the crucial letter! And what stands out even more than in a 'normal' face-to-face view of the painting: the end, or if you will, the beginning of this rod. And what is prominently present there, in itself a piece of design not only from this period but in many others: that sphere! She now looks at us almost wildly, and for a moment we think about turning our perspective on her slightly, tilting our heads - right or left; would that make a difference here and now, and from how many perspectives must her Jan not have viewed, drawn, painted, sculpted, and - loved her? But it's not she or Barbarian, but her explanation of the reading woman and her situation, that's important here, even though, as everyone knows, the thinking person is often a content-wise, multi-layered, tormented animal. She lectures in a firm voice as if she's now concluding her lesson: the rod is the penis, and the bulb on the left is the hard head of the penis of the man who wrote and sent this letter. It's perhaps the only moment in this scene that's more or less lewd, or even clearly erotic. The core of her argument seems to slip by, and you can guess what impression this makes on us, but we must remain alert - or focused. Because Barbarian continues to explain technically or iconographically quite well: subtly, of course, he emphasizes that the entire situation shouldn't be shown, nor the entire map, nor the double-barred topmost rod, which in itself would be idiotic, completely redundant, even misleading, because only one rod can pass through the letter at a time - or through the... woman. And only one penis can be engaged - she says that word literally... - because this is clearly not about a courtesan who, for example, might enjoy a threesome, with two men both in her - the famous/infamous "*sandwich*", she adds with deep disdain, as if she swears by her own homemade ... sandwiches!!! The map itself represents the entirety of their world, which will come through their love and their child or children, will continue to develop, in time and space, albeit always from this shared home. Through each of

their children, their world then changes, a different or larger map can be hung, she triumphs as if she can actually peer into Jan Vermeer's kitchen cupboard and already see larger maps there for later use. This map always represents their present and immediate future, from this room, from this house. The house will remain, the maps can change, she concludes.

§2. And so we can finally explain the last important part. The young lady is standing. The chairs are, of course, also normally upright. But that's just the silence before the real movement: soon both of them will lie down like this, copulating, giving blowjobs, going down on her, scratching, kissing, biting, caressing, fucking or making love - we look stunned at what we just heard from the lecturer's mouth, now, as it were, stirring up the audience (us and???). Just as before and forever, procreation keeps on creating or is always pro for the future. Those chairs represent the structurally organized togetherness, if you will, Jee-eM for their breakfast - and she laughs as if butterflies are flying into her auditorium - but of course not just that bed, but the entirety of the so-called static domestic organization that every couple needs to fulfill countless human functions. And, of course, to experience, day after day, the most important interpersonal intimacy; being together at the table and in bed. Think Jee-eM, she says suddenly, deeply dejected, of the Dutch expression for divorce: first (sic) happens the "*separation from table and bed*" (the legal separation or the 'stage' before divorce). I can't go into that now, Barbarian adds somewhat regretfully, because she remains, above all, a top art history professor, but this painting is actually also an attack on much of the admittedly excellently painted openness, even the coarseness of eroticism, present, among other things, or especially, in the work of his contemporary, the equally brilliant painter Jan Steen (1626 - 1679). Jan, Jan Steen was very successful during his lifetime, selling like a baker or producer of the Hottest Films before his time: his voluptuous paintings sold like hotcakes.

§3. We'll return to your question about those bows. Which are the dominating... She corrects herself and speaks of the dominant colors, and also answers us: white, of course, because we're with Vermeer, and brown next to blue. The latter color, along with yellow and red, is one of the three primary colors. What is the eternal meaning or symbolism of the color blue, she asks again, as if we're allowed to answer something, which, in the logic and structure of her argument, she naturally does herself, and which we happily allow: ....+ ... +.... +... +... +... So, these are all very positive qualities, right Jee-eM? We nod - affirmatively, and for once, not just diplomatically, because we understand a lot, although, to be honest, we prefer green, in all its shades: Mother Nature! Moreover - she interrupts our reflection, which she naturally found difficult to see because we didn't express it, out of obvious respect for this world authority in the incredibly important field of iconography - it is striking that white appears several times, both on the young lady herself, in a few shades of white, but crucially in the central letter. We see the white - of the letter - both on the top and bottom of the hands holding it. And there's no doubt; the color white symbolized purity, sincerity, and fidelity, then and now. And then we see a color that is completely absent: the gold or yellow of a ring, a wedding ring, or even an engagement ring. Here, we iconologists love temporary doubts until we can resolve them indisputably, and I've long been a pioneer in this regard. This is certainly debatable, since the wedding ring is traditionally worn on the right hand, on the so-called ring finger, of course. In principle, this was and is worn on the lowest phalanx, or the part of the finger closest to the palm. Take a look, Jee-eM; you can't help but notice the curvature or position of the fingers on her right hand. The thumb seems completely absent, while we can see the thumb on her left hand. In that position, you could certainly hold and read a letter; it all seems perfectly realistic or logical. But the bottom three fingers of that right hand are, as it were, almost completely bent, or the three - always maximally present -

phalanges are clearly visible. In our view, this is anatomically almost impossible - or simply not possible. The presence of a wedding ring on the - I repeat, usual - right hand is, from these premises, practically nonexistent.

It would be rather easy to resign ourselves to this, she ponders, as she continues to stand there, looking questioningly at us as we immediately make preparations to lie down at her instructing feet. At the same time, opposite where the gold ring on her ring finger should be, there's a ribbon that differs strikingly from the entire blue dress she's wearing: that ribbon is yellow or gold! And the already central presence of the color yellow is further accentuated or reinforced in its prominence by the fact that this young lady also has a similar gold or yellow ribbon at the end of her left sleeve. This also means she has the same yellow ribbon on her right sleeve. This painting can't show that in perspective. There's no mirror, but there is a map to her right. Consequently, it's entirely certain that she's wearing three gold or yellow ribbons, that these yellow ribbons form a triangle through or around her, a powerful geometric shape. Let's try to see if the Holy Trinity is here..., we... But suddenly, for the first time and thankfully also the last time, she looks at us with a truly devastating look, as if she - this art history professor knows her classics, has apparently inhaled them, and even partially incorporated them - is now Judith, wanting to behead us like Holofernes - brrrr. You see what happens when you want to ask a world-renowned professor in action; once they get going, there's no stopping them. So, for our personal safety and especially for the integrity of this necessary interview, it's out of the question that we should dare ask anything more, or specifically, whether there isn't a small beginning here of an interpretation of a special form of fidelity, the legendary or universal love triangle, anyway? This is certainly very meaningful; we don't see the entirety of that gold or yellow ribbon because it's somewhat obscured by the letter the young lady is holding and reading. Or maybe we do, and again, triumph rings out in Barbarian's voice. We see a very minuscule piece of gold or yellow ribbon just below the letter and against the young lady. It's not entirely clear whether this is a second gold or yellow ribbon on her front, or simply the continuation of that single ribbon, because we see a very delicate stripe of yellow across the front and down to the hem of her blue dress. It appears to be one large yellow ribbon tied around her chest or opposite the letter as a bow. And then we arrive at the core of the color symbolism and the shape symbolism of the rod and its spherical end. The rod extends not only through the letter but also through the gold or yellow ribbon! This means that either the young lady is already the wife of the man writing the letter, or she will very soon become so, and an engagement has already taken place. As you know, Jee-eM - we nod and she continues unperturbed or concentrated - premarital sex was rather rare in those days. Unless one went to the brothels that abounded in Holland at that time, we think again of Vermeer's wilder colleague, Jan Steen. But, and she looks at us most resolutely as if she has just explained a mathematical theorem to us, that situation is completely excluded in this painting.

Finally, or to wrap up that story about those colors, I just mentioned that red is one of only three primary colors, while blue is also one. The latter is also dominant here, in her dress and the chairs, both of which are intrinsically linked to the intimacy of the letter-reader and the letter-writer. The dress and chairs are not painted red, she says, raising her voice slightly. It is, however, technically a primary color, but symbolically or culturally, above all, the color of love, romance, and eroticism. The use of red as a dominant color would have been too obvious, perhaps even brazen or vulgar, she now nods approvingly at the subtle worldview and art of her Jan Fabre, pardon Johannes, or Jan Vermeer. Besides, and while I'm at it, sharing centuries-old secrets about Jan Vermeer. You know, and she looks at us in a truly strange yet very yearning way: "*The Man Who Measures The Clouds*!" Based on a woman,

she says very emphatically, as if declaiming these syllables at a walking pace. On... - this apparent, or rather, formal silence of Barbarian is not hesitation at all, but a stylized device that this both stylish and ultra-culturally learned woman naturally employs, because even in her verbal expressions, and especially when it matters existentially for her, she expresses herself with cultural formal control; on - ME, BARBARA. For JAN I am, I play The Eternal BARBARIAN!!! I, I am The Clouds, dear Jee-eM, and she actually caresses my shoulder as if she wants to touch something of the Earth beneath those clouds - to get off that Cloud, to go away, Barbara and/or Barbarian? It is my Jan who measures the immeasurable dimension of the vagina or Heaven for the Man, knows himself small in comparison, and actually worships the Clouds - Me/Mine..., My Vagina. So the clouds represent my feminine center, she says now, so hoarsely, as if she had just smoked two cartons of Jan Fabre's own beloved cigarettes in two minutes.

A mutually agreed-upon necessary silence. The legendary academic fifteen minutes at the beginning of a class; we'll keep that for now. You, as a reader, can make use of it by, for example, going to the restroom, looking out the window, and there, through the perhaps much-too-small window, greeting the... clouds? Why are toilet windows always so small, after all, are we digressing with you? - but it is, nevertheless, a fifteen-minute silence for us, and therefore for all readers.

§4. Let me briefly elaborate on those chairs in this painting, she says, as if asking our permission, which we obviously don't even have to give, but we're still longing for a glass or pitcher of - water. They're practically the only furniture in this room, where only a piece of a table is visible. I didn't have to explain to you that the table represents "*table + bed*" and therefore also a lasting relationship. With lasting sex included, she adds, as if that information were on the edge of the necessary, the morally permissible, the...? But we all allow that, because who can even privately experience such an encounter with a world-renowned specialist in iconography, or the art of looking, or more precisely, the first lifting of skirts and blankets and similar coverings, to then see what's 'really' underneath, what flesh is in the tub - and how willing that flesh almost always is? Although, we think to ourselves, who has sex on a table, especially if there's a bed or a sofa - preferably a triple recliner—in the same house, perhaps even in the same room where that table is, which, moreover, might not even have been cleared by this young lady, so that pure or even very loving, but almost always stormy, sex can cause pots, pans, and cups to fall - and break - while very useful utensils like food and drink can also fall and stain the entire floor, so that after a while it starts to stink like a toilet or even a cesspool? Presumably, by focusing on ourselves, because of our rather lengthy deliberations during all of Barbarian's iconography, we missed some of her words, but that turns out not to be the case, because she... No wonder there are two chairs, which points to both their personal need to sit down - after, say, that long standing reading. We both burst out laughing simultaneously. And of course, they represent their male-female bond, she giggles briefly. But, she says now, almost conspiratorially: two makes three. Or: you can already see the crib before your eyes, where we see a momentary glaze in her eyes, as if she's thinking of her Jan Fabre and what never happened between them. Or rather: her unique impregnation of his magical and eternal knowledge and skill of art, the absence of which must always cause something internal chafe for the student, thus the eternal outsider of this art. Shouldn't every professional, every writer on art and art history, have shared at least 'sufficient' times with a real artist?, we muse again, with our own interest in thinking and writing about art - and women. We respond to her brief remark: honestly, we don't see anything in an actual child's bed ourselves - in this painting, anyway - nor in processing this interview, because while we can come to this conclusion to some extent, it still seems somewhat speculative. Suppose, by

the way, that this woman and her Jan actually lie down every day, even several times a day, copulating, giving blowjobs, scratching, kissing, biting, licking, caressing, fucking, making love - all of this, or only in bed, never on any table - but that no conception occurs, no child is born, or the child is stillborn? We all jump to conclusions, because Barbarian doesn't see this musing and continues her lecture undisturbed.

The chairs are the same color as the young lady's large robe, but are rather intense or dark blue, while the young lady is dressed in a light color, while her back or shadow is dark blue. In my opinion, that last difference is iconographically meaningless, because the light in this room, and therefore in the painting, clearly comes from the left, so that... she doesn't finish her reflection. We nod, thinking we understand what she clearly hasn't said. The blue here formally plays the role of the well-known and universal psychological mechanism of "*transfer*".

+ NOTE: As omniscient - hee hee - authors of this, we wholeheartedly admit that we can no longer find the correct psychological term in the once-thick acres of our memory, and Barbarian, this world authority on all the meanings of all paintings, had also lost the meaning! We are 100% certain that this technique is used very commonly, especially in films, as it is constantly in "*Vertigo*" (1958), presumably the best film by the infinitely skilled super-craftsman, or one of the greatest film directors of all time, Alfred Hitchcock (1899–1980). For example, you'll find it inescapable in the apartment of Kim Novak (1933), where James Stewart (eternally) brought her after rescuing her from her jump into San Francisco Bay. She's showered or cleaned up, and returns to the living room where James has been waiting next to the window. And look; that window has a curtain, and that curtain is red. He suddenly sees her appearance - her aura or beauty or... - and then very logically (sigh) touches the reddish curtain 'since' she's wearing pajamas of the exact same color. So we understand that he... in her... This isn't about the well-known psychoanalytic concept with the same name as "*transfer*" but they do have a certain commonality! As an excuse, we've only just read years ago the famous interview book by François Truffaut (1932-1984) with Alfred Hitchcock. In it, the Master asks Himself if he - Truffaut - has seen the frosted glass carried up the stairs by actor Cary Grant (1904-1986) to his bedridden, frail wife, Joan Fontaine (1917-2013) in "*Suspicion*" (1941). Whereupon Truffaut... whereupon the Master... On the internet, we once found a very penetrating and truly astonishingly instructive analysis of the use of color in the film Vertigo - well, anyway. Incidentally, millions, if not more, of 'films' are made and posted or shared on the world wide web every day, and thus also viewed, while virtually NO ONE among them has even a nanosecond of knowledge - and therefore can never use it!!! - of anything like film, symbolism, and the like - a lack of culture, you call it. The transference in Jan Vermeer's painting is clear through the color blue:

1) central: the blue color in the dress of the woman reading the letter;
2) from this or from 1): the blue color of the leather upholstery of the two chairs, hers and the letter writer's;
3) from 1): even the tablecloth is light to heavy or deep blue to black;
4) from 1): on the tablecloth lies a light blue piece of cloth, presumably the pouch of the pearls lying next to it, which themselves naturally have a white sheen, the color of the letter;
5) from 1): there is a very subtle, barely noticeable blue sheen or reflection of the left blue chair and of the blue sphere on the part of the - white - wall just in front of the letter reader's belly and the letter;

6) finally, or in addition, the young woman's brown undergarment shows a deeper or darker variation of the predominant brown color of the map or - their both, soon to include their child(ren), ever-expanding world!

When "*Vertigo*" (1958) was re-released much later, along with a few more masterpieces by the Master from the 1950s, we, as students at the time, were quick off the mark: we saw the film five times in a short time. That number fits the somewhat silly name the film was given in French, something like "*She Who Lived Twice*". It's about impossible love, of course - something that happens to almost everyone at some point. And about the message: "grab" what you can. Well, you understand us, or consider the well-known "carpe diem": not only is there "*tempus fugit*" but sometimes that second chance with "*The One*" truly doesn't come, never again. We're startled from our musings, which we apparently shared aloud with the venerable Professor Barbarian. Because... Do we now see a shudder run through her because she has to - has to - think about what ultimately, or especially NOT, happened to her and her Jan, their all-too-impossible love? She stares away from us and talks, lisping, more like muttering, as if momentarily immersed in this film itself, in one of those famous scenes where the - double! - lead actress (naturally always played by Kim Nova) is in a trance. We shyly try to point out: in this famous film, too, light blue is constantly used as a leitmotif for the actresses... We see Barbarian fall silent, staring and muttering, and it's as if that famous light bulb starts to burn inside her. Apparently, she sees a new article appear here: "*The Comparative Use of Color in Johannes Vermeer and Alfred Hitchcock. An Intro...*", by Barbara Baert, KUL. What a fool like all of us, thinking more exaltedly, is denied from the mouth and mind of a venerable professor. And how professors everywhere in the world and in whatever fields find all sorts of useful things from lectures or encounters with students, impregnated, even desired, with pregnancy.

After her sudden respite for us, Barbarian seems unstoppable, and how happy and even proud we are that she shares this enormous scoop on the newer iconographic vision of this famous painting with us, the eternally timid and guilty macho, now in prime time or exclusively. We can see with her, and she with Jan, that this young Vermeer woman, as if it meant no effort for this young woman, intimately and powerfully lets her belly inflate with sexual and existential excitement. As if she were already pregnant, for her, and then, the ultimate goal of all sexuality. Your idea of poetry in sexuality, for example, can certainly contribute to this, says Barbarian rather pragmatically, as preparatory work - call it a form of homework. This young lady can - I say "*can*" as a necessary, cautious iconography professor often does, because the Renaissance poets of the time in the Low Countries also worked extensively with double layers or images - have an excellent prima vista sex here without real - call it body-situated sex or physically conditioned sex! But - Barbarian smiles promisingly, and we glow with curiosity, while we also begin to glow a little at this suddenly so lustfully appearing, albeit only scientifically greedily radiating mouth! Because, dear dear readers; discovering new, important science, and even as here from the mouth of a top performer, it does something to a person, even if we are but a piccolo monello in the infinite, universal, and eternally churning ocean of knowledge.

But so, while it seems as though Barbarian has gradually begun to think and, above all, speak in such a sublime manner that she has ended up ex cathedra, as if on a pulpit - gradually more of a sex cathedra? - where she admittedly no longer looks at us but does address us. Perhaps our letter reader is actually having 'more' or better sex, is experiencing more intense sex - she pauses for a moment and looks at us again, penetratingly 'naturally' but with the concentration of a learned professor, and thus certainly not of the woman turned on by lust which she

probably always was for and by her Jan. For passionate love is reserved exclusively for The One - she says not so much with certainty as she posits it, proposes it, considers it, as a working hypothesis. Do we hear and see a hesitation in her thinking after all? Perhaps our letter reader is actually having 'more' or better sex, having more intense sex due to the oral aspect or the purely verbal experience or translation, the occasion of love she experiences through that letter, in the actual reading or the pure and naturally doubly enjoyable reading of the certainly excellently written letter. But also due to the certain expectation of what is to come; the ever- or steadfastly intimate sexual intercourse to which that letter, of now, then - again - continues to contribute, not as a marginal memory but co-constituting or shaping their existential unity. She is now so in her element that what comes out of her mouth is what one calls actualizing or seeing eternity in 'old' art. Is this not also a danger, we reflect, of overinterpretation or of overestimating our current knowledge of that of the past? But let us listen to her nonetheless, for she is, after all, a professor and, moreover, a winner of the Franquin Prize! Viewed from that perspective, in this present in which messages - the 'messages' or not real letters - are written with dumb and ultra-fast taps, or rather tapped down and produced with lightning-fast movements of the fingertips, and then sent immediately because one expects the answer to one's own message, as it were, even before sending it - the letter, the written, handmade, and thus slowly and durably produced message, is something - not so much a technical anachronism, but, as is fortunately shown through this magnificent painting, the extremely important reminder of the value of slow sex, or call it rather - she says a moment too hastily - of slow, and thus deep, steadfast love. Sometimes, she says now more calmly and at a professorial lecturing pace, I find it a pity that I am primarily a specialist in historical iconography and am not also engaged with the most modern art, and should even be allowed to commission contemporary artists; to try and translate this situation of this 17th-century woman, with her letter from her partner, into the present – and, looking gloomily ahead, to see the great difference: the enormous loss of universal human culture, of interpersonal depth, of living together.

We look at Barbarian, or rather iconography professor Barbara Baert, as if she had just won not only the Franquin Prize but even the Nobel Prize. How pleasantly stunned, moved, and deeply, profoundly grateful we are for this multifaceted knowledge and life experience: thank you, truly thank you, Madam President of the Universal Iconologists - thank you so much! Barbarian continues unperturbed: the letter reader has sex beforehand and is far removed from the pure physicality of her partner - her husband or husband-to-be, of course, probably not a lover, although... - now that aside, we hear quickly and we follow meekly. Yet that partner is physically, concretely, materially present with and through his letter. Let us not forget, she continues resolutely, that letters were first written, then sealed with one's own saliva, an extremely important part of lovemaking, and especially resembling magical semen. That they were ultimately sent, which also required time and energy. It required a whole physical process and a lot of time, preparation, and effort. So no, and she now looks at us with open admiration and approval because she knows we only have a Stupidphone (and therefore no Smartphone), a few button presses, and then - send! For her, that letter is truly something like the host or the representation of the Body of Him or His incarnation - her partner, to be precise!

We are surprised by this comparison in terms of content, but not surprised topologically either; after all, this is and remains a professor at the oldest Catholic university in the Low Countries. And let's not forget; she was trained by and later served as assistant to the phenomenally skilled professor of 15th-16th century art history, Maurits Smeyers (1937-1999). He is, among other things, or primarily, the author of the standard work on the

unforgettable, breathtakingly beautiful, and remarkable "*Flemish Miniatures*", a unique phase in European art history that barely preceded - even our own Jan Vermeer! We are not going to profane Jesus, she says, because He, the Immeasurable Source of Love, cannot be limited in any way. I call that "*Barbarian's Third (artistic and psychological) Law*". Now, it's a bit of a shock for us, and probably for you as well. Her first and second laws are... She lectures with a very intense explanation that is barely comprehensible to us. Meanwhile, we sat down in her living room on the quadruple sofa of "*Poltrona Frau*" and apparently fell asleep there, also because we really desperately needed a decent break.

We are awakened by the warmth and caring of her smile, which she directs at us as an eternal woman-mother. Yes, Jee-eM, there is one lesson we can learn from this famous painting, a lesson of personal, but certainly also of great social significance. The earnestness of her voice now belongs not to the art history professor, but to the universally good pedagogue and teacher. That voice is adorned - or reinforced? - by something you, as a man and as a human being, or rather as a student, might call an enigmatic smile: "*In der Beschränkung – des bewegten Bildes – zeigt sich erst der Meister*" ("*In the restraint - of the moving image - the master first reveals itself*"). Or Jee-eM: "*The less - naturally - female nudity is shown, let alone the less movement, the more naked the man sees the woman in that image*". And she continues to surprise us: for our Muslim friends, naked women in public are, ironically enough, a solution to their visually oversexed problem. She continues to lecture undisturbed or uncensored. With which she demonstrates that the iconography of older, in this case, traditional cultural images can unlock a wealth of updated meanings for multicultural times. It's intellectually amusing, yet socially and personally deeply tragic that more and more Muslim men are demanding their wives walk around "*maximum covered*" - publicly, that is, Barbarian meaningfully states, that even young girls barely 14 have to be so 'dressed up'. Because it's precisely the covering up, THE suggestion, that makes them even more attractive to everyone else - to other men, she now actually shakes her head. And makes these other men more aroused than they were, so to speak, born - or, she glances around, raised. By the way, Jee-eM - and she glances around again - she realizes that in our modern history and art history departments at all Belgian universities, there are few to no Muslim students, even of the third or fourth... generation. As if they have little or no interest in either our contemporary history or the long and inexhaustibly rich history, she says now, almost indignantly - and again, or for the third time, she quickly glances around. Now, of course, we understand her; she knows her classics and what partly happened to Her Jan. She's afraid of the Evil Eye and its Evil Tongue.

In any case, this profound and surprising, yet highly understandable, theory makes us dizzy and immediately launches us into Himmelhoch Jauchzend (Heavenly Jaunty). What truly revealing, both human and socially profound knowledge from the former Franquin and soon-to-be Nobel Prize winner, Professor Barbara Baert! Now that she's touched on Goethe, she continues a bit, declaiming. While she's actually violating our agreement to reveal her favorite poem to readers only after the interview. Naturally, we are not only diplomatically courteous, as we usually are, but above all deeply impressed by Professor Barbara Baert's general art historical knowledge alongside her truly dazzling creative insights. Therefore, we gladly grant her the poetic word here:

Klärchens Lied (aus: Egmont + Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, 1749 - 1832)

Freudvoll
Und leidvoll,
Gedankenvoll sein,

Langen
Und bangen
In schwebender Pein,
Himmelhoch jauchzend,
Zum Tode betrübt -
Glücklich allein
Ist die Seele, die liebt.

But we're not at the end yet, or rather, we're at the beginning of our New Latin! So I'll continue, Jee-eM, because I see you're looking at me admiringly... Not true!!! We gape at her because. Or not true either. Because. This is a woman of pure, unadulterated, or multiple class, so we disguise "*gape*" as "*look at*". This isn't a purely accurate representation, but all the more true; we thank you, Barbara Baert, thank you, truly thank you, thank you! This hypothesis still requires some research, and I definitely need to spend a weekend in Amsterdam for some final investigation, she nods in agreement. My question there will be: was this woman, or Vermeer's model, just as Dutch and just as sensual, or as much electrically static and dynamically charged with sex? Was she a pioneer of the normal, therefore multi-cared-for, and constantly practiced sexual experience? Like the well-known, sometimes somewhat infamous - why, actually? - Xaviera Hollander (1943 + born as Xaviera De Vries)!? After having caressed, massaged, kissed, licked, blown and fucked from front to back, from left to right, women and men on about half a continent. Admittedly, this never happened with everyone at the same time, although it was often close. After such an intense, both traditional and spicy sexual life, our Xaviera (Barbarian who speaks of 'our'...!?) actually gave totally cool lessons on sex or what did you think! Yes! She lectured on: *Sex without touching*, non-physical and yet intimate-inter-human, a lived in each other's closest possible presence... er... sexual intimacy. Or simply put, *sex with words only*. We blink our anyway masculine eyes and all our equally masculine sphincters suddenly go on and off at breakneck speed as if the power plant of a large transport company has gone haywire and its sectional doors are going up and down like crazy. We spout these words as if we have to move them with a bicycle pump from our brain to the mouth and then to the ears of this remarkable professor, in any case highly revered because ... - well, you already know that. Madam Professor: is/was Xaviera Hollander perhaps the inventor of the - Oralgasm, the real oralgasm, of the use of words, such as or even especially poetry in sexuality, whereby that sexuality is even experienced completely verbally!? *'Things can change*" ("*Het kan verkeren*"), said the famous and also very Dutch poet Bredero (1585 - 1618)

Barbarian has understood that it is becoming a bit too much for us, her unique and valuable 'heap' of information. That we are literally being overloaded in our little grey cells by her words, her insights, by sharing in her human wealth. We settle ourselves as if on an imperceptible command - and she collegially with us, or anyone on the other side designated for that purpose - into her quadruple seat of "*Poltrona Frau*". As time goes by, even during this necessary cat nap.

In a professorial tone, we hear her wake us up with: back to the letter – the belly – the pregnancy – the reading – the love – the knowledge! And indeed, that rolling "*r*" of this woman who has been working for decades in the centuries-old Duchy of Brabant, buttttt (we are trying to render it this way, with thanks for your understanding regarding any shortcomings, since in any case we did not record a single interview on tape): the most important thing about the letter is what we do not see = the written and read sentences within it! And what do all the sentences have in common and we do not consider this a question

directed at us... And indeed, Barbarian continues in one go as if she has started a long sprint towards her scientific final victory, of the top race, the world championship of track racing perhaps, or rather – points race?! They all have ZEROS or the digit and the letter "O" and thus POINTS! Barbarian looks at us so conspiratorially now that, on her command, we immediately switch from cat to tiger; we are ready to pounce on that new science and sink our teeth into it!

I have now helped you find what I consider a fitting illustration for your texts regarding "*poetry in sexuality*". We thank... But she interrupts us lightning-fast so that we can no longer pronounce the third word "*you*" and it is better to note it down here for the sake of clarity. After all, an attentive reader needs every word! Indeed Jee-eM, I am going to give you an incredible scoop today, hic et nunc. Instead of feeling delighted, we actually feel almost pinched by the balls by her, although that is understandable coming from an old love of Jan Fabre who was known for pinching many ladies. Who behaved differently in those days, anyway? And the ladies usually pinched much more, much harder - for they wanted to be thoroughly fucked afterwards by their art-ificial stallion, which they had hyped up even more. A scoop?, I heard you say. Sex is everywhere, she begins, sex is the alpha and omega. And we fall asleep almost immediately from such a worn-out statement, as if she had added all kinds of camphor to our organic milk - shaken not stirred.

Look, LOOK again at the painting, at the rod. That silly thing, a piece of metal designed, admittedly, in a culturally understandable because desirable form, expertly crafted, and skillfully applied. Formally speaking, it can take on several geometric shapes, and the simplest and also cheapest is the thin or relatively narrow and straight-lined rod. We look somewhat bored and nod to the rod: presumably. This is clearly a round rod, which we can see with certainty and only from that sphere. We stop nodding because we finally have that suspicion again that Barbarian is effectively up to 'something'. But, would that still be possible after her deep and rich sea of knowledge that she has just disenchanted from us, eternal sailors, swimmers, and divers in the ocean of knowledge? The sphere is clearly recognizable in itself or by its shape, and together - a wink to us that almost passed us by, but we don't even nod anymore because we are so strained right now - we have also recognized it more deeply: that penis, isn't it? Incidentally, the incidence of light on this sphere is indicated by the light source coming from the left of a window with almost certainly two horizontal sections. As a result, the light incidence here rotates, as it were, clearly indicating that this surface has a spherical shape. The rod is therefore certainly round itself as well. Let us now conduct a brief experiment and consider the famous "*Arrow of Zeno*" (Zeno, circa 490 - 430 BC).

See: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zeno%27s_paradoxes

Well, we think, for it seems as if we are floundering like on constantly changing waves of Barbarian; now we suddenly have to pay a visit to the Ancient Greeks? Look Jee-eM, visually speaking or in real life, that arrow arrives quickly at where it was shot to. But! Mathematically and philosophically, it has to bridge all the intervals, which you can increasingly subdivide into the next half. Or; the next half you in turn have to divide into two halves and so on, infinitely on. Or always that second half, which has to be bridged by our poor arrow, she sighs with almost pity for this arrow. Or is it pity for the archer? Could it be!?, we think in our deepest secret innermost being, could the great love of her life perhaps be a.... Archer? To whom Her Arrow of Love never, ever reached, no matter how hard she tried? No matter how many arrows she shot at him? That way the arrow will never land, she smiles, briefly shyly, as if she only needs to incorporate this level of, all in all, simple

mathematics and philosophy into the noble art of iconography. Now let's repeat the same thought experiment regarding the flight of the arrow with the entire round rod in our painting by Jan, Jan Vermeer. Let's divide, cut, or chop, or however, this rod piece by piece into slices, always smaller until .... ! What do we get then, Jee-eM? ... Uh ... Lots of small pieces of metal, we venture soberly. And presumably all copper pieces, because fortunately they didn't have that plastic junk back then, we add in a very modern way. And what do you think or see?, completely ignoring our pedantic and stupid remark about that plastic, she now asks emphatically. Don't you see that these pieces ... are empty! For why use a solid rod, Jee-eM? That would turn out to be far too expensive and, moreover, far too heavy for that map, so that it would almost certainly tear one day. Imagine, she says now in an elevated voice; that map or the symbol of their shared world starting to crack!? To be honest, nothing concrete is beginning to emerge for us yet, but we wait in lingering suspense for Barbarian's ultimate revelation. We see an enormous pile of discs... she pauses briefly before her triumph, her umpteenth scientific triumph, arrives: .... We all see ZEROS! We nod diplomatically, as it were, for why this triumph - again! - on her - for THIS? Because she had expected more from us in terms of pure understanding and empathy, and thus enthusiasm for her explanation, she looks away for a while, genuinely visibly disturbed. That silence. You know from life's rich riches how silence can take on all sorts of forms. Sometimes it's like the calm before the storm. Sometimes, and preferably, it's a blissful silence, a sound that heals in what is all too often a jungle of noise: oppressive sounds, unnecessary, harsh, ... words. Between people, even with their expectations and desires, silence is often the voice of shyness.

But we must move on; science never waits, wants to go further, deeper... we hear admonishingly. Barbarian is indeed a true scientist, even nationally awarded that prestigious Franquin Prize. ZERO, Jee-eM, every ZERO, my dear student (we now burst into uncontrollable laughter together, causing her annoyance and our slight disappointment to vanish in a flash like snow before a radiant sun), stands for or is a symbol of the COITUS, of the CONATUS, of the Iron Law of Life = life is living on, life or creation is procreation. And this rod, this collection of zeros, of coitus, is infinite - up to the next sphere, she now bursts into laughter herself at this kind of for her apparent relativization of her recently explained and, frankly, yet again sensational theory. We'll just forget about that second sphere or second penis, we now hear ourselves say aloud as the student who is finally catching up in class. For, dear professor, that would indicate a... threesome. She nods calmly in confirmation with a professorial understanding. But do we not detect a tremor in her nodding chin, as if, as a human being, as a lover of love itself, she feels something deeply fragile stirring? Could Jan - a man who can do anything, what a man - have perhaps asked her for 'more' at 'that' moment, wanted to add an extra chair...? What she could not/would not/... too well-behaved, too disciplined, too anxious, too-too-too after two thousand years of a partly but structurally suffocating Christian experience of sexuality?

Whoever thought Barbaar was going to leave it at this, with this already barely comprehensible and abundance of extremely fascinating information, lessons, ...!? Well, they may or must read on. Just read on.

We look back at the central letter, Jee-eM. That letter is, as we already understand, penetrated by the rod or by his penis. We now know that this must involve relatively young people. At least, she is quite young, so he probably will be too. Or at least he will still be sufficiently fertile or possess fresh, sparkling sperm. So, there will be making love here for decades to come, she lectures now as if she were a professor of dogmatics, pardon, evolutionary theory, pardon, demography - or was it the science of...? Please wait a moment, for she is about to

reveal that immediately, her new science! So that is a very long and therefore a particularly fine prospect, she suddenly looks very glum again, for apparently she is thinking of her Jan again and always very sadly. There is that 'more' again, she recovers, and we gradually get the feeling that she is about to finish, that she is about to 'come', that she is going to fertilize us all as listeners and readers with the core and objective of her science and even realize a new branch of science, she the Brabantian, the Belgian Barbarian and worthy successor to André Franquin, world-famous as "*the Belgian inventor of the universal inventor Gaston*". The letter is, of course, being read. It contains all sorts of things, and that will almost certainly not be a cipher, a practice, as you naturally know as a researcher, that was used only in the highest circles or primarily for diplomatic and military reasons. The letter is secret to us anyway, because we see it as a form, but never in any way can we read it, can we see its content. We start nodding slightly again, but not for long, for she continues: it is about that text, the words, the sentences, she says now in such a didactic tone that the end of her long explanation is finally audibly in sight.

It goes without saying that we can never know the sentences that were written and read. We do know, however, that it is a letter or a text exchanged between two people: the reader/woman and the writer/man. We know, of course, that this painting and the letter date from the same 17th century. In that sense, that work is a contemporary painting. Now, Jee-eM, have you ever seen the very first letters, in a museum or at a collector's? We shake our heads no and are very surprised; indeed, we as avid readers only know texts from roughly 500 BC, and then typed and printed in the modern era. Surely there must have been some evolution preceding that, I am actually thinking aloud now. To which Barbarian responds triumphantly: indeed, I have recently specialized in iconographic paleontology. And she completely ignores our bewildered expression. In the first decades, letters were written with...? And we, eternal naive ones, answer: with a quill pen! No, you fool, she says, almost bright red with sudden indignation in which we think we detect glimpses of genuine rage: with POINTS in the form of ZEROS! So .. uh .. so you've discovered that the first humans wrote letters full of zeros and that they ended sentences that way - and began them. Indeed, you are starting to understand.

So now not only world expertise in iconography but the apparent discovery of a new branch of it: iconographic paleontology! Or was it iconographic archaeology, do we see her recoil noticeably in surprise at our admiring remark? And that, ladies and gentlemen, is accompanied by a very obvious blush; ah, even professors and even world-renowned ones are only human or can make mistakes sometimes, we think now, truly deeply moved by her emotion. From that branch of iconography we know that the first people who wrote our Western languages naturally did so in what, by current standards, you might call somewhat cruder spelling. But... - that look on our faces again... say it now, NOW, Barbarian, dear professor and innovator, say it; that they forcefully finished their sentences time and again with a ZERO - 0. Naturally, people began to write more and more, and thus to read. All those ZEROS that appeared - pffff. For reasons of pure economy or saving time and energy, they switched to ... - the POINT, we say triumphantly, because that made writing and reading so much easier. You are the True Disciple, and you are after my own heart - come, let me ... you (not intended for readers). For after she has become fully professorial again, she begins to lecture, the core of her argument which is by now quite long. Have you noticed, by the way, Jee-eM, that the ZERO itself consists of an infinite number of ... POINTS! And that, that is surely ironic, and how am I supposed to place that in my own theory, she remarks dryly, deep in thought, and ignores our presence while we naturally continue to look at her. Isn't "*Zeno's arrow*" logically applicable here too? Because those points form a circle in that ZERO, and

that circle is also a form of straight line of which the next half of the half of ... must be reached again and again, if ever of course, because in theory never. Well, these considerations are for another time; it remains an open hypothesis. Back to the future and past of the ZERO and the POINT. Do you see them in a rod, in the flight of an arrow - the arrow of love - do you constantly encounter them in letters as points, the final or definitive reduction of that zero; it is all sex! You know that zero, as a mathematical element, is called the absorbing element. But it has a unique twofold function, for as a mathematical element it is also a beginning of all additions and subtractions, of all possible calculations, in both a positive and a negative sense. Think even of time and years; before or after a certain zero point. And here is my most brilliant analysis or discovery. Here is my most important invention, for I never rest on my laurels. I always go further, deeper, altius... Jee-eM: every point is both feminine at one moment and immediately masculine at the same time, and it always has to do with sex. At the end of a sentence, the point plays the role of the feminine; sucking up, sucking off, giving a blowjob (hehe), swallowing, receiving coitally, wallowing in. But the point has its second primal function. Then it is immediately the masculine element for the next sentence as well, because the point is then also constructive, propelling, erective unto ejaculatory - until the ... next point. Sex, very emphatically and declaiming every syllable perfectly as if she were just taking a diction exam; sex is the end and the beginning of all our sentences. That is also why it is far from a coincidence but the very logic of our writing and reading culture that in English and Dutch, senses (zintuigen) and sentences (zinnen) are virtually the same in terms of content and form, in terms of form and meaning.

We wish to ask her, within the context of her reasoning, presented here just as fervently and thus, for her, entirely convincingly, what then is the meaning of a final point? Or, as the French so aptly put it, "*le point final*". Whether that sentence is not merely feminine, or whether that does not even imply that all preceding sentences, or the entire always-preceding text, is merely feminine? Where, then, would the masculine element reside, and whether the woman, therefore, ultimately represents all the power and meaning of Knowledge and of Life? But we do not dare, for she is a professor; she has been awarded numerously and very officially. Would we not then stir up 'something' around her Jan, the macho and brilliant artist Jan Fabre, the most important Belgian artist of the post-WWII era in terms of content or artistry, the man who, right from his first appearance around 1980 as a still young lad in distant New York - which was then virtually unapproachable for let the little Belgians - certainly woke up Flanders, which had been reasonably dormant and surviving since 1585, now collectively or as a society?

She has nothing, absolutely zero noticed these profound reflections on our part, regarding her theory. For she continues. I am not quite finished yet. The ZERO and the POINT as the extremely reduced zero; they are cultural or existential sphincters! The human sphincters are almost all entrances, and thus closures, to the human body. They are also almost all, more or less, the erogenous zones par excellence, actually with the exception of the erogenous zone of the breasts. Just check it out, and we actually start listing simultaneously, as if in a duet:

+ the mouth certainly;
+ the eyelids partly;
+ the stomach opening certainly because: first good food and drink and then making love;
+ the vulva is, as it were, out of competition, as we now both wink at each other as agreed;

+ the .. anus - and we laugh demurely because we are, each in our own right, simply somewhat traditional, in that respect.

I suspect that because of what I am now revealing to you and will soon tell the world in a scholarly publication, I will receive the Franquin Prize again, or for the second and very exceptional time. And perhaps even the Nobel Prize, although, she says, totally unexpectedly for us, that does not exist for art history. Then it will just have to be for Literature, she continues with great, particularly strong conviction. This is truly the crux of my professorial engagement with art, with the art of iconography, for I see, I am... Her eyes, that silence, the .... I am the discoverer of "*iconografie als sfincterologie*"! Or as I will soon describe it emphatically internationally, because I am publishing it: "*iconography as sphincterology*". She is really on a roll now, excited as if she is - almost, anyway - performing the sexual act herself, and that literally or figuratively, before our innocent eyes and nose. Procreation keeps on creating or is always pro for the future, she repeats. The conatus, the desire to keep living by constantly putting words into action - she laughs, for she remains a professor with deep Catholic roots - to add flesh to our flesh, the restrained or better the wild fusion, the coital mingling of two bodies, of man and woman and... We see in her again that look as if Jan, 'her' one and only Jan Fabre, is with her again, no, is penetrating her, artfully and tenderly-hotly penetrating her to merge deeply within her with her so that she again, again, forever - Jan, stay in me, love me, fertilize me with your seed, with your aura, with a little love for art but most with love for me, Jannnnnnnn!!!! - that she, he and her, or them together, be, and will become "*Knights of Despair*" or "*Warriors of Beauty*". So that we must demurely but lightning-fast avert our gaze, because we have no smartphone, no internet, and are in any case a voyeur in someone else's intimate kitchen or in their other forbidden rooms.

This multifaceted, or rather challenging and nuanced, new theory by the specialist in iconography as sphincterology, Barbara Baert alias, to us and colleagues and students, Barbarian, will be published within a certain time by her - who else? - in the leading art historical journal "*Iconologies*" (ASP Editions), so in English. I am also a member of the editorial board, so that saves time when lobbying, she winks meaningfully, blinking frequently. But she adds that for the Dutch-speaking plebs, an edition - even necessarily vulgarized - is provided on her website: "*My Vulgate edition*", she adds coquettishly.

Let me now conclude with the sexually charged analysis of this masterpiece by Jan Vermeer, she lectures again. It cannot be a coincidence that this painting bears a strong resemblance to this other masterpiece of painting, though created earlier and, above all, quite a bit further away:

The Penitent Magdalene, El Greco (Doménikos Theotokópoulos or Δομήνικος Θεοτοκόπουλος , 1541 - 1614), oil, 1576 - 1578, Szépművészeti Múzeum Budapest..

Let us compare with this masterpiece, considerably older and naturally from no Protestant but deeply Catholic quarter, the extra harsh Spanish of the 16th century. See the colors that ... the breast that ... the book that ..

But that second painting and the accompanying explanation, however good and interesting, passed us by completely. We needed a power nap. We suddenly wake up, and it turns out to be just in time, as the professor hadn't noticed our sleepiness. Finally, we briefly ask Barbarian how she arrived at this specialty of iconography. Her answer disconcerts, at least us, because of her complete honesty, even if it is presented as a true motive that is utterly

foolish. She actually mutters the following words as if she - also she or the Belgian variant? - embodies the modern Oracle of Delphi: I myself am an icon of female superiority through my unique combination of superior intelligence and superior beauty. We have even experienced something of this listening experience, striking in both content and form, quite recently, and we are startled.... And the Image, the Image of the Eternella La Bella Lucella, emerges as if she - now in the concrete, tangible, audible, even largely understandable guise of La Barbara - was truly created by Raphael (Raffaello Sanzio da Urbino, 1483–1520) himself. Or how, far from this Italian beauty, and even (well, sort of) alongside and through a Belgian beauty, we now only see the true image or the "*vera (true) and Greek eikon (image)*". Could it be that the apostle Thomas is at work somewhere, not with hands of course - we touched neither La Beate Lucella nor Barbarian, we wouldn't have dared, though... but anyway - but at work with the mind, "*the little grey cells*" as our old friend Hercule Poirot liked to call them?

Barbarian seems so enthusiastic that we can still hear: ...now it seems a bit too early to me, but I do expect, from my retirement onwards, or when I finally become The First Lady of His Harem from the Emir of Oman, to be thoroughly and variedly taught by my latest and the new generation of students, she says briskly and truly pregnant with expectation. Her belly even seems to swell to the rhythm of this sentence, as she too, the professor, imitates the young lady from her favorite painting by Jan - or... IS!? We are immersed in this kind of mixture of the magical and realism in our limbs and in our eyelids. And we even cut out all the ice cubes above our heads to regain our proverbial cool, proverbially speaking, that is, because there are no ice cubes to be found around us.

For the first time, an interviewed woman can baffle us, truly taking us beyond our intellectual comprehension. Okay, leaving aside her digressions on her personal uniqueness. Besides, how can one engage in top-level science without some 'exaggerated' personality? But her enormously broad or deep explanation of iconography as sphincterology. Or how sex is ingrained in all writing and reading, via the ZERO, via the POINT. You understand that we are deeply moved, extremely happy, of course. Pure language is infinitely full of sentences, or sometimes very short ones like in epigrams, but always, always, she says now incantatorily - so she repeats for the third time already - always full of points. A sentence ends on a point. So that the next sentence can... Until the end. And how is that indicated; by a "*point final*" or an endpoint, she says now almost speaking in a superior tone as if...? Once again, we dare not say anything about this point (sic) of her theory, which in our view is once again shaky: that endpoint. Hopefully, she will reflect on that and publish it someday in the eternal "*later*"? But in any case; wasn't our question about "*poetry and sexuality"*, and haven't we gone very far now, at least in her thinking? If truly all written and read language is full of sex, how can we still use poetry in read aloud and listened to language? What does all that have to do with poetry and sex, we ask her cautiously, for we are completely student-like and obedient to this ultimate winner of the Franquin Prize?

EVERYTHING! - she shrieks out with a massive surge of pressure, as if the barometer needs to be invented now if it hasn't already been invented. All sentences are by definition full of sex, feminine and masculine. Poetry in sexuality is then an extra layer of sex or more joy, more lived or multifaceted sensuality. Plus, she says subtly, in a way as if we suddenly have a somewhat more champion of women's rights standing before us: the possibility of raising or lowering the feminine or the masculine part through the type of poetry. Completely eliminating it is of course impossible - because then my whole theory falls apart, she says. It is about:

Love for Words
and
Love in Words

Barbarian has not only overwhelmed us with her boatload of knowledge, but also captivated us immensely with innovative knowledge that is personally and consequently of societal interest to everyone, along with several intriguing open questions. It is nothing short of a positive thunderclap, or perhaps we should use the metaphor of a lightning strike. A lightning bolt that does not blind, but brings so much energy and light that it - illuminates, brings eternal light, even to us as students or interviewers, a second aspect we ourselves must not forget amidst the immense fire of her argument. So that we would still like to ask one question. If I understand correctly, an age-old saying is no longer valid due to your new and truly stunning theory:

"*Scripta manent,*
verba volant"

You understood that quickly and perfectly, dear Jee-eM, as we watch her hesitate whether she should still accept an old but still fine grazing and, above all, mating buck like us as an assistant. We must indeed look at it the other way around - she bursts out laughing now with a form of triumphant certainty pleasing to the others regarding her latest scientific discoveries. That will be the nec plus ultra of my upcoming article. She hesitates for a second, but the urge to share that with us - us - is stronger than any scientifically so-called collegial suspicion, and she whispers to us:

"*Scripta..,*
verba..."

(So, dear readers; these dots stand for her new version. But you had probably already understood that before this explanation – thank you anyway for taking the time to read this, many thanks, good readers).

That will be the new formula, and I think for the coming decades, if not centuries, she further suggests with her infectious and sincere enthusiasm, as if she had just won the Nobel Prize for Literature!

But what...? We hesitate for a moment, for after all, this is a distinguished professor and even the rare only annual winner of the Franquin Prize. That the points or the concentrated zeros in sentences are therefore sexually charged, or are actually sex itself: molto capito. But Madam Professor; surely there are more punctuation marks than the admittedly very common points. What to think of those other punctuation marks connected to language? What to think of the question mark and the exclamation mark? How are we to understand them in light of your tremendously innovative theory? That, dear student Jee-eM, is the nec plus ultra of my new theory. The "*!*" and the "*?*" are actually the easier-to-note derivatives, symbols, or... icons - there is the specialist again! - of the HEART or of TRUE LOVE.

We are now utterly astonished, for never had we expected to witness, during our meager lives, such intelligence - and from the inventor's very own mouth at that. We quickly reflect upon the fact that she will likely write and publish later the correct relationship between 'ordinary' points and the question mark and exclamation mark, or more precisely, the correct

relationship or balance between sex and love. As a lover of science, one can hear the future of that science announced, but not yet fully know it. We cannot help but bow before her, before her mind, her mouth, her enthusiasm, and we truly kneel down. A deep, as it were, sacred silence descends upon us, and although we share no mutual or true love whatsoever, we share all the more the love for knowledge and for language: our language, indeed the many European languages that have as their origin sexuality, call it the eternal conatus or the will to procreate through sexuality. And. Our languages share as an essence - love, not love for its own sake, but for the life of people in the written and read Word!

The last word, or how should we call that spoken word, that whisper, that almost heavenly verbal lingering with Barbarian? That last word, then, belongs to Barbara Baert.

I spoke to you about the three primary colors, Jee-eM. Sometimes they can be dominant, like in this painting by Jan Vermeer with the blue. You know the essence of that word because it comes from "*dominus*" or LORD/MASTER. Strangely enough, my life is not so much dominated by the visual arts alone, but also, and above all - as the primate of primates - by music. Above all, we nod in unison as if we are already beginning to hum along to the melody that Barbarian is about to produce as her leitmotif, like the famous melody by Bernard Hermann (1911 - 1975) in "*Vertigo*", or the certainly even more famous leitmotif by Ennio Morricone (1928 - 2020) in the equally indestructible and arguably generally much more moving classic "*Once Upon a Time in the West*" (1968) by Sergio Leone ((1929 - 1989). You surely know something about musicology, Jee-eM and ... - we instantly turn dominantly red like a rooster about to be snarled for a very cheap soup. Because we love music but theoretically know absolutely nothing about it, or really nothing at all - .... she continues undisturbed and cheerfully. Normally one starts with the beginning or the notes

"*Do, Re, Mi, Fa,...*",

she goes through the familiar sequence as well. For me, however, things are a little different. And we feel the crescendo of gliding violin strings, the vibrations in her voice, deep, magmatic vibrations that are the irrevocable announcement that the Being of this Lady is about to be revealed. We now stand rooted to the spot for the first time, thus escaping that cauldron of soup. Not only out of admiration for the immeasurable knowledge and creativity of this unique scientist-woman. But for the profound secret of this woman, which we suspect, no, are absolutely certain, will now appear to us and to the world. We nod in advance, for we are trembling from our toes to our heads, for we are just as masculine as the female La Dietrich: "*Ich bin von Kopf bis Fuß auf Kennis eingestellt*." ("*I am set on knowledge from head to toe*"). The floor is Barbarian's again, now apparently her true final word.

My own, my most personal, my life-giving, my life-dominating notes are slightly different. Myyyyyyy ... My basic notes are

"Dobre, Rebre, Mibre, Fabre..."

You understand that we, the eternally timid and guilty macho, had truly fled by the second note, for by the very first note we understood her inner, her existential logic. For we understood, of course, above all that that logic fitted her so good. For, being slightly polyglot, we know what "*dobre/dobry/dobri..."* means in several Slavic languages: GOOD. Jan Fabre is forever her Lord, her Master. Point final

How does one dare, as a human being, to witness the truth, the deepest truth within another human being? Fascinating and... Fascinating. But. Almost inhuman to be allowed, or required, to know the other's profoundly human side?

Appendix:

As we like to dream, we like to think. Sometimes we are practical, and that is also what every human life constantly demands. So this question appeared on our lips, guided by those eternal little grey cells that aren't so grey, content-wise. We are going to leave them grey or black or virginal white now anyway, although we hope our lips won't take on these colors as well, because that - transfer!? Indeed, we wanted to ask Barbarian: what if the letter the young lady is reading was simply a shopping list? Such as; my underwear must go to ..., buy my weekly ... at ..., deliver the pearls to your older sister.. Etc. or all at the request, or rather demand, of her partner, tasks to be performed by her and ASAP and only for him. So that she is fully ready upon his return, and can serve him as before and afterwards. And that she does not forget to put on her dark blue, grey, and functionally repulsive veil when she goes out into the wicked world of men, a veil which, as we can all clearly see, already lies ready on the tablecloth. But we had vanished from her, Barbarian or Barbara Baert. And you know that every question needs its time; not posed at the right moment and in the right tone, it loses resilience, loses importance, withers away or - kills. It becomes an arrow that shoots right back - like a boomerang, the inverted or deadly arrow of Zeno. Also with the open question, the hypothesis.

Her favorite oralgasmic poem, besides, of course, all the blue ballpoint pen drawings by her Jan Fabre, which after all - well, is that even possible? - are all without... a point,

I would have liked to have drawn a poem from German from the once again brilliant anthology by my former colleague Paul Claus (1943). See the bilingual - German/Dutch (on the left and right pages respectively) – *volume De blauwe bloem. De 101 beste Duitse gedichten*, Amsterdam. 2024. Paul Claus belongs, together with the multi-phenomenon Herman Teirlinck (1879 - 1967) and my Jan – she says now in a single flurry of sentences, as if she were a hen laying her egg every day, as if every egg experiences that miracle of new life on the eternal world of the earth up to the clouds – to the greatest cultural giants the land of the Belgians has produced in the last century. And Paul, she smiles happily like an adolescent standing before her favorite teacher, full of intellectual and other life-shaping intoxication and admiration, Paul is still alive. And that means: he writes, writes. So that, or for the sake of us, we may read.

But I am going to keep focusing on us (did we hear the word "*us*"?), the Vermeer painting, and choose a poem that fits well with it. She nods in agreement for once to demonstrate just how well she masters the iconography inter-artistically, down to every fingertip. As a woman, I would also like to choose a top female poet, although that is difficult, because how to choose between two absolute world-class poets - and incidentally, compatriots - like Anna Achmatova - Akhmatova (А́нна Андре́евна Ахма́това + born Anna Andreyevna Gorenko/при рождении Го́ренко + 1889 – 1966) and Marina Tsvetaeva (Марина Цветаева) (1892 – 1941)? And with two poems of Anna that closely connect with that Vermeer painting: about the melancholy surrounding receiving, or not receiving, or giving and hopefully being read, a letter, a message, a sign of life via an old-fashioned medium on paper. I ask you, Jee-

eM, and the world: who writes, and therefore reads, anymore - letters? Who still makes the time, as an 'ordinary' human being, to truly communicate with the other 'ordinary'?

Er is vandaag geen brief verzorgd voor mij. (Anna Achmatova, 1912)

Er is vandaag geen brief verzorgd voor mij;
Hij is 't vergeten of hij is vertrokken;
De zilveren trillers van de lente lokken,
De schepen wiegen zachtjes op het tij,
Er is vandaag geen brief verzorgd voor mij...

Hij was de mijne nog maar kort geleden,
Vervuld van liefde en van tederheid,
Maar dat was in de witte wintertijd,
met 't voorjaar is de droefheid ingetreden,
Hij was de mijne nog maar kort geleden...

Ik hoor de trillende lichte klanken van
Van een strijkstok als in de doodsnood beven, beven,
Ik vrees dat straks mijn hart het zal begeven,
En ik dit vers niet meer voltooien kan...

Lief, verkreukel mijn brief niet, maar lees hem. (Anna Achmatova, 1912, Tsarskoje Selo)

Lief, verkreukel mijn brief niet, maar lees hem,
Helemaal tot het einde, schat.
Ik ben 't beu een vreemde te wezen,
Om een vreemde te zijn op jouw pad

Want ik ben je geliefde, de jouwe,
Dus vanwaar die vertoornde blik?
Herdersmeisje noch edelvrouwe,
En niet langer een non ben ik -

In mijn dagelijkse grijze kleren,
En op hakken die afgetrapt zijn ...
Maar de kus is nog steeds vol begeren,
Grote ogen vol angst en pijn.

Dus verkreukel mijn brief niet, mijn liefje,
Laat om heimlijke leugens geen traan.
Stop het weg in je knapzak, dit briefje,
Stop het helemaal onderaan.

+ NOTE. Readers should understand that we cannot reproduce the Russian original here, but who knows (that eternal 'but') perhaps in a later edition!? The first poem is from her first collection, "*Evening*" (1912). The second is from her famous second collection, "*Rosary*"

(1914). From: Anna Achmatova, *Werken*. De Russische Bibliotheek, 2007. Translated from the Russian and annotated by Margriet Berg and Marja Wiebes (fantastic work, ladies!): pp. 41 + 40 and pp. 109 + 108 for the original Russian version, respectively, and the Dutch version to the right. This beautiful edition contains most of her work and is part of the magnificent series "*De Russische Bibliotheek*" ("*The Russian Library*"+ published by Van Oorschot in Amsterdam). Several of these fascinating, almost essential, bilingual editions of world poetry have been published in Dutch, with the original on the left and the translation on the right. A fantastically useful initiative that deserves to be emulated in all EU countries, including - or especially? - the so-called larger languages.

Anna Achmatova! Without any exaggeration or the slightest certainty - we do our best to be objective - the grande dame could be called The Most Attractive Woman in History. Frankly, one has to look at her photographs, simply before the time of the Russian Revolution (1917), an event that would profoundly impact all of Europe, the world, and of course Russia, and would result in countless, countless, and countless victims, inside and outside, and indeed the world - and this continues to this day. If, until then, this - sorry, dear people and Lady Anna - had been an objectively incredibly beautiful figure, then her literary work is of such an unimaginably, yet, if at least indeed read, conceivably high level, that this quality intensifies her entire charisma to such an extent that it becomes a competition for... We will just add that we somewhat regret not having lived as a contemporary of this grande dame, or we would certainly have visited her. At least until the Russian Revolution, because afterward there was the extreme hatred and suspicion and murder and mutilation and destruction, everything she herself experienced all too well, towards those deeply loved by her, towards herself, and almost her entire society, including that totalitarian, communist attack on - language.

6. Ann Fransen, Federal Prosecutor of Belgium, on poetry in ... Or even better: on Lady and Sir Justice.

6.1. The secure, discreet location of the discreet meeting. Among plants and birds.

You could have guessed, for it was La Liekens again, or as we may call her by now, "*Our Goedele*", who had arranged a meeting for us with none other than the semi-presidential federal prosecutor Ann Fransen, or "*Ann D'Arc*". Moreover, this took place in a magnificent location, namely the splendid setting of the National Botanical Garden of Meise.

See: https://www.plantentuinmeise.be/en

And you know; we love: books, women, and – trees! So that we could be surrounded or treated by two of our top hobbies hic et nunc, or at least within a few minutes - categorically speaking, at least. Several decades of continuous fame on television and in magazines, naturally revolving around a reasonably appealing theme like sexuality; it has undoubtedly made Goedele Liekens one of the most networked inhabitants of the land of the Belgians, and how far beyond these borders? She was quite strong on the subject this time, for an additional reason she gave us with a mischievous grin: as a young student, I sometimes came here with boyfriends - she winks (so even La Liekens is guilty of this terrible winking...). Because nothing could turn me on back then as much as the sight - not the smell!!! - of the giant arum or "*Amorphophallus titanum*". Incidentally, in Dutch, that famous plant is also called the "*penis plant*". We know this again now, this personal biographical news: that the birth of La Liekens as Europe's most renowned sexologist began here, with a plant, a penis plant. We simply forgot to ask her if there was also, and certainly when she was still very young and

almost innocent, a "*vulva plant*", or a "*clitoris plant*", or...? Anyway, that list shouldn't be that long, and the namegivers of the plants, which are in themselves virtually countless, couldn't have been so infinitely creative. Could a new plant have been discovered and named in the meantime and thus relatively recently, the "*Amorphophallus Goedeltitsitanum*" - which has since become the infinite among garden and planter enthusiasts, because it blooms every day and thus always brings bliss?

Apparently, Our Goedele still knows the Meise botanical garden very well. She guides us seamlessly to the staff car park while, as is her custom - at least with us - she massages our left buttock and middle penis. By now, we are so used to this from her that we enjoy it so much that it lulls us to sleep: therapeutic massage via buttock and penis, so it is possible! Suddenly, she snaps quite hard at one part that we really do not want to mention right now, because as she drives through the gate of the Meise estate, she hisses - really, does this eloquent and ever-delicate woman hiss sometimes? - at us not to make at least two mistakes with Ann Fransen. Because: I know you, JM. Definitely do not make language jokes about her surname "*Fransen*". So, an association with the French language, with France, with la douce.... It is so obvious, JM, that you probably wouldn't do that either, we hear her remark these words somewhat hurriedly now that we have arrived here. And you certainly won't slip up by using her nickname. Since her Joyful Entry into the Public Prosecution Service years ago, she has been given the nickname "*An D'Arc*", because of her - and now La Liekens suddenly speaks slowly and almost solemnly admiringly, as if she were taking her oath as a sexologist again in the hands of supreme sexologist Bo Coolsaet - because of her already legendary "*courage, work ethic, insight, and dedication to the country*".

A man forewarned is a man forearmed, as the age-old saying goes. How much would that be worth to an eternally timid and guilty macho like us, especially now that we are sitting in Goedele’s car for the umpteenth time as passengers next to her, allowing her to fiddle with our left buttock and middle penis once again? All good things come to an end, says another age-old proverb; so we muse, slightly sadly, about that of "*Goedele From Song (of Songs)*" as well! We immediately compose ourselves, for we are going to meet an amazing woman, an event for which we want to have all our concentration ready, so that not a single relevant impression, whether explicitly intended or informal but merely characteristic or revealing, is lost. To put us at ease and loosen our tongues as a warm-up for the upcoming interview, La Liekens grants us another half hour of hugs and mouth-watering kisses. That is actually not too bad in itself, although that is neither a question, let alone a requirement, for any lady we wanted and were allowed to interview for the "*poetry in sexuality*" project. Nor is it something we particularly expect from the upcoming lady, Ann Fransen. Although you know us; we are always open to surprises, and not always the most pleasant ones. Except for the proverbial knife in the back, a technique in which ladies, mind you, are incredibly adept, either through their legendary, apparently universal, talent for intrigue and gossip, or can very quickly become so. Even a man warned by La Liekens has already warned himself through certain general knowledge, or has been warned three times, which we, in essence, consider rather excessive, or existentially and mentally extremely burdensome. Then La Liekens rushes away, wasting and emitting some expensive gas over the nearest plants of this famous botanical garden, while we immediately hear admiring, lustful whistling, indeed from several places! It is more than clear; This meeting with one of the country's top magistrates is being very well attended, albeit 'quietly', by the absolute top security of the federal police. And you know; there are hardly any ladies among them, but plenty of sturdy hunks, real machos—of whom, strangely enough, we have met quite a few throughout our lives, excluding ourselves for the sake of clarity, although Princess Elisabeth has reportedly been making frantic

attempts for years to convince our personal manager, Black Mamba, that we, of all people, would want to join her personal escorts. With - whoever wants to catch a fish usually throws a smaller, albeit sufficient because biteable, big fish first - suddenly a double-paid contract, or just a strange situation for us as eternal do-gooders. Do this top security of the federal police, by the way, also belong to La Liekens' concrete network? Or merely to the countless fans and followers and stalkers of this, admit it yourself, even if you do not belong to her fans and ..! - an unreal Belgian female phenomenon, in heart and mind and flesh, flesh as saignant, à point of très bien cuit. And, always keeping the proportions, the reasonableness in mind, she remains after Princess Elisabeth just about the best woman the country could produce in recent decades, infinitely better even than our already world-renowned Belgian chocolate - yet happily feasting on it herself when that rare but.... nice macho attempts to satisfy her?

6.2. The discreet meeting.

It is lonely at the top, but not with her, "*because my door is already open*". That remark, innocent, even very friendly to her, makes us unwantedly pregnant, pardon blush. Because for a certain time we had a girlfriend who regularly said to us: "*Our little gate is open*". Which meant we didn't have to say anything ourselves and weren't even allowed to crack a joke along the lines of: "*Open Sesame*". We think of Our Goedele's warning and nod, cough... - making it suddenly seem as if not only this prosecutor's door is always open, but her windows too, even though we find ourselves together in the park in Meise. Strange guys, those Belgian machos. And look at that court or Justice. Allegorically represented in the West and a large part of the world for over two thousand years by Lady Justice; Justitia was the goddess of Justice in the Roman Empire. And according to our elementary school knowledge, in reality, that was a woman. And according to our more than thorough historical knowledge, Justice was primarily a bastion of unilateral power, ergo abuse of power, by the upper class against the rest. Or a place with little to no justice. Could it be, could it be possible, for it is quite self-evidently highly desirable, that precisely through the professional entry of women into the Judiciary, which in Belgium only happened after World War II (sic - and sick), and while - it must be repeated here - that precisely that professional judiciary has a Woman as an allegory, that gradually more Justice, or the ideal core business of the Judiciary, would enter, and preferably permanently!? That is far from a discreet but very public matter, and that judiciary, too, is finally beginning to stir on that public level, via press conferences among other things, to… justify itself. Or hold on tight, for intellectually it is nothing short of hilarious: the start of the professional, publicly expressed Justice that… justifies itself!! As we already know from her audience, and as will also become specifically apparent shortly through the interview, Federal Prosecutor Ann Fransen contributes her fair share in her characteristic, highly balanced, and motivated manner to this unique and extremely necessary, even very self-evident because logical historical process of Self-Awareness, of Self-Becoming.

6.3. Rubens; hurray for poetry, and yet?

You understand, Jea... Mr. De Dijn, that from my position I cannot speak about sexuality in society, and certainly not about the goings-on surrounding it among all my colleagues, magistrates, and police officers. And yet. She looks at us intently, and we hope, slightly or perhaps already too enthusiastically, that her decision - which will in any case be strict and just - will come now. Your theme regarding "*poetry in sexuality*" is naturally interesting. I will certainly give you my favorite oralgasmic poem later, she says with slightly flushed cheeks - which gives her a different face or appearance. But let us wait a little longer before using warming metaphors around her. Once again, you understand that I cannot address that

publicly, nor here and with you, repeats this virtuous and happily married woman and exemplary top magistrate of our special Land on the North Sea.

You are on a new track, albeit touched upon elsewhere and earlier or thus centuries-old, and that is very good, she lectures as if she were already a professor of law, a role she will probably take up later with all her experience and with somewhat calmer energy, a matter we already applaud. And dear reader, you understand for yourself that we cannot respond to her reservations here and now. If only because we must listen, in this interview and in the context of all other interviews. For every part of our process of reflection on "*poetry in sexuality*", and thus these interviews as well, are part of the two great goals of our lives: contributing to the promotion of beauty and justice.

Naturally, we - Ann Fransen is using a pluralis majestatis for a moment, but she is indeed the leading or directing head of an entire team of employees - must constantly occupy ourselves with 'cases' or specific matters/events to be studied and pursued in our entourage. The bigger picture remains crystal clear: democracy or civic spirit. As she utters that last word, she looks at us for a very brief moment with a wry smile. We nod, as if it were a verb containing an affirmation, which in this case naturally fits together perfectly, and an attitude we must constantly adopt because such a thing is simply called integrity, even though there is also such a thing as humor, the mischievous side like to pull out somebody's leg.

Your theme of "*poetry in sexuality*" is therefore a bit too spicy for someone in my public office to approach fully, or even somewhat cautiously. Yet something useful occurs to me. Given your enormous interest in women and art, you might already know something about women. She genuinely cannot suppress a broad smile that appears on her face as if the rarest rose species from the botanical garden is now blooming from her, and naturally every thorn has been definitively and definitively removed by all the caring gardeners involved in this national botanical garden, a Belgian jewel of tranquility, beauty, and science. And art, too, about which you know more, less, or something equivalent to that of women, as if she is once again allowing the analytical mind from her legal life to prevail, for naturally this woman is not going to question us about our knowledge of women. You certainly know Rubens (Peter Paul Rubens + 1577 - 1640), whose artworks I occasionally go to view nearby in the Museum of Fine Arts during very heavy cases. We dream, very briefly, but you know how lightning-fast that happens in the brain, especially when it is allowed to perceive a very interesting woman before it through the eyes and ears. We dream that we have been there quite regularly, usually alone but sometimes with company and SO why not with... no, impossible: perhaps or preferably with La Liekens? But not with this married woman, for there are simply conventions that must be respected, and not only by us. And moreover, we now burst into a controlled laugh, noticed by her in any case, would she, Ann Fransen, then also be escorted by top secret agents? To start hugging, kissing, and pinching a beautiful woman in front of a painting that warms even the heart and the rest of the body, and then be pulled away from her and floored respectively with a perfect judo hold and judo throw!? Even for less principled people and even the real perverts, that is not an interesting prospect.

You said: Rubens?! Indeed. I love his work and have read quite a lot about it and bought books on the subject. To our surprise, and naturally we cannot elaborate on this due to her high and delicate social position, but she mentions how much she enjoys buying books and prints at the Brussels antique markets, such as... We cannot provide these addresses either for security reasons, although naturally there are no infinite number of places where one can find these items. Besides, everyone knows that between the Brussels Palace of Justice and the

Museum of Fine Arts there is an awful lot to be found in this regard; a paradise, week in, weekend out! So anyway: should you ever meet Ann Fransen there, know that she is happily married and, above all, surrounded by plenty of covert but very close security. A warned reader or other amateur is worth a lot there!

You said: Rubens!? Indeed. I have read a lot about his life and work, or is it his work and his life, she remarks now as if we are not present there at all. So we do not answer this question either, for we do not regard it as an open question, even when asked of us. We view it always diplomatically, philosophically, or pedagogically, as a fine aside regarding our own, ever-unstoppable spiritual forces within and of ourselves. Did you pick up anything special while reading?, we ask anyway, not only so as not to leave the conversation entirely to her, but also in the hope that she might just move in our direction, or pick up on the reason for our visit! Indeed, dear Jea... Mr. De Dijn, Rubens was a phenomenon in any case, in terms of artistic level but also in terms of production, given that he not only possessed an unimaginably great energy and ambition himself. He also led a flourishing studio or had very good collaborators as painters. In turn, we think of her expression just used: "*because my door is already open*." But to ask a question, even with a diplomatic joke, and now make a comparison as if she were the Rubens of Belgian magistrates? Even for us, as lifelong joker and arrogant macho man, that seems like "*a bridge too far*". And where, by the way, is the emergency exit in such an enormous park? There are various contemporary testimonies, mainly from foreign visitors to him in Antwerp, who witnessed that, while painting, he let himself be - READ ALOUD from literature! As she speaks these beautiful and also very surprising words, she looks at us with a unique and mysterious smile, as if Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519) had found his model for the "*Mona Lisa*" a few centuries too early and hundreds of kilometers too far away. And again that shared silence with the woman being interviewed by us; interviews built on silence?! And you see, dear reader, that we must use capital letters, for Ann Fransen pronounces the word "*READING ALOUD*" with tremendous emphasis, and incidentally at the same time extremely sonorously, as if she enjoyed taking singing lessons as a weekly pastime at the nearby Brussels Conservatory with the world-renowned singer and vocal pedagogue José Van Dam (1940 - 2026). Oh dear, José passed away recently.... We dare not dwell on that and do not even wish to offer her condolences, for who knows, perhaps Mrs. Fransen, out of piety and great sorrow, has not yet decided which other singing teacher will continue to guide her weekly. Although we hope, above all, that with this new teacher, those eternal bodyguards of the federal police are not present either. Just imagine being stopped as a suspicious citizen in Brussels or elsewhere and specifically questioned by singing Belgian police officers.

You said: Rubens having books read to him!? Indeed. And she is bursting with enthusiasm and is clearly very empathetically prepared for us, for our interview! What an honor for us, but also; what a wonderful, or more than exemplary, civil servant. What can we do in an already very complicated and so-called developed country with mere paper-crunchers!? What one might call "*a broad general education*", with something uniquely constructive but almost indefinable as "*the sense of the civil service*", which in our thinking centers around "*civic spirit*"! That should, so to speak, or as a human and societal ideal, never be a pleasant surprise, but nothing less than a matter of course, not even a requirement! By the way, what do the recruitment conditions look like for magistrates of all kinds, from the smallest local judge to the highest prosecutor? Must they, as has been the custom for centuries, no, for more than two thousand years, in the great Chinese cultural tradition, which is at least as old, if not considerably older, than the roots of our Greco-Jewish roots, also possess knowledge of "*the classics*"? Or, moreover, be well-versed in the noble art of poetry?

We may interrupt our musings again, because we must listen! You also know that Rubens was a sort of pre-modern workaholic who worked terribly hard. The man was already up around four o'clock, went to mass (she diplomatically avoids our gaze), and then went on almost immediately for the greater part of the day - painting. And, she emphasizes now in a somewhat more ordinary tone, yet still convinced of this great quality of this brilliant painter, he had historians and poets read to him! We are falling off our chairs, although we cannot go into detail about what kind of garden chair the very diligent staff of the botanical garden, almost certainly together with the bodyguards, had cleaned and placed for both of us. It was, in any case, of excellent quality, so this falling is entirely our fault, and certainly that of Ann Fransen due to her unexpected - or perhaps not? - remark. So that is how this top magistrate had prepared for our interview! Even if we had engaged in the usual lightning-fast thinking or probing about which poetry... which poets... and so on.... We could not subject this busy lady to that, and perhaps we would have been discreetly but decisively put at the end of our conversation, not by her, but by that one closest, best-hearing bodyguard: respect, stick to the matter, with Madam Federal Prosecutor! Incidentally, that very role of the 'closest' bodyguard changes, for we know from a reliable source, or via the "*via*" that is also sometimes and often all too familiar to you, that Ann Fransen once devoured the film "*The Bodyguard*" (1992) as a doting teenager. For there were some fine characters walking around in it, including the... bodyguard Kevin Costner (1955). He guarded and actually 'did' something more with the world star, actress, and top singer Whitney Houston (1963 - 2012). So Ann Fransen knows everything that happened there as well, and she was surrounded very, extremely cautiously from the moment of her appointment as federal prosecutor, by staff and thus also by her bodyguards. Tragic for that film, but still funny for our top magistrate; having to be on your guard against those who are essential to protecting you to the maximum.

Rubens, indeed, what a phenomenon, we hear ourselves remark affirmatively, dutifully, and completely uselessly. But. Thought is stronger than ourselves. No, thought 'is' ourselves, and after all, we are surrounded by safe plants and birds, even by safe police officers. Excuse me, Ms. Fransen, may we interject? Go ahead but don't go away yet, she attempts - apparently a legal joke to which we did not respond at the time, but only realized upon editing this interview that this apparently represented something like professional humor. That reading of history and even poetry; it is the first time we have heard of that, and naturally, it makes us very happy. You can certainly use that as an example in your article on "*poetry and sexuality*", she interjects immediately, as if we hadn't thought of that ourselves right away. Yet, we thank her politely under our breath for this fine tip, for we suspect, idealistic opportunists that we are (or is it the other way around?), that with her, we have certainly gained another female enthusiast of "*poetry and sexuality*". While she may also share that love with her husband. Or how the miraculous multiplication of the loaves and fishes of a certain Jesus is also realized in this way: good ideas belong to no one, for they belong to everyone.

We have also read a bit about Rubens .... have about fifteen books just about Pieter Paul Rubens. . ...uh... Butttt. .... We try to chime in stammering.

Now more decisive, or at least fluently intelligible. Apparently, that reading aloud had little influence on his wife, at least on his second and last wife. His first and much-loved and esteemed wife, Isabella Brant- we mention briefly as a point of reference - would die of the plague. And this second and last spouse, Hélène Fourment, was 16 years old when the slightly older, or nearly forty years older, and completely infatuated Rubens married her. One can imagine, Ann Fransen’s lightning-fast mind chimes in, how many beautiful and sweet words

or poems he himself read aloud to her and sent to her first. We discuss briefly the eternally interesting theme of a very large age difference between partners. The man is always much older than the woman in such cases, Ann Fransen now observes somewhat coolly. And we are apparently letting that special subject rest, partly because we ourselves are bored with it for the reason that... blah blah blah.... Anyway, we dare to say to her- not so much asking concrete questions - that we had just wanted to read his own verses madly in love for the very young Hélène Fourment. You can be reasonably certain, Mr. De Dijn, that Rubens himself could not work on a single painting at the same time as writing his own love verses. But he did create magnificent works of art around and through her, inspired by life, love, and great happiness. I would have liked to have had such a man myself, she adds, to our astonishment but also our general understanding. Mr. De Dijn, you understand that I cannot be personal with you, nor can I ask you anything personal. But I think that the most beautiful human work of art is that intimate human relationship, which arose finely, even unexpectedly. That endures, no, she regains her composure. That develops as if it always remains the same, and meanwhile changes eternally. That - and she looks at us with her sincere, convinced, and persuasive eyes as if we could use a wash or a fully permissible brainwashing in our own brains: do we effectively wash our thoughts and ideals every day, or do we merely brush our teeth daily? A relationship that is the human, familial, and societal foundation. No real or chronologically measurable silence follows now, while these words do not linger overwhelmingly, vibratingly as if they were overly heavy bell chimes, but like gentle raindrops on a nudist beach, continue to caress and penetrate our bodies. That is why I would have liked to have had a wedding portrait with my husband, say, every ten years. Made by such an excellent painter. But Rubens is dead, she still mutters, visibly that little bit of disappointment. We cannot hold back our tears at her remark. And you painters of all countries; you have hereby received an excellent, because truly universal or eternally applicable, tip.

We ..... listen ..... Now, strangely enough, both somewhat moved and momentarily distracted from this special theme of lifelong, deep love. We listen simultaneously with restraint to the musical backdrop of this unique place, the eternal song of the birds. But we must not pause at this moment, and so we must return briefly to that second wife. May we just ...? It is very well documented that Rubens was still able to prepare a perfectly divided will, precisely in his final days, we say semi-businesslike. That was a very fair or balanced will that included not only all existing next of kin like this spouse and her children, alongside the children from his first marriage, but also various 'third parties'. And yet 'it' would happen. Ann Fransen now raises one eyebrow very slightly, for she is, of course, a born and bred jurist who knows that the world has much ingratitude, in addition to being rained upon and pelted by jealousy and greed. With all the consequences for people and society; lawsuits. You had already figured it out; This second wife, now a very young widow, who had been very well or very properly and very prosperously provided for by her great painter and husband P.P. Rubens, would initiate a legal case or a trial against his two sons from his first marriage, her stepsons Albert and Nicolaas. That would take years! And Hélène Fourment, quite coincidentally known then or during her lifetime as a most attractive woman, she would later marry into a very wealthy, if possible even wealthier, and higher up the social ladder.

We are both looking at the tips of our shoes because of this bitter and true information. That silence. You know from life's rich riches how silence can take on all sorts of forms. Sometimes it's like the calm before the storm. Sometimes, and preferably, it's a blissful silence, a sound that heals in what is all too often a jungle of noise: oppressive sounds,

unnecessary, harsh, ... words. Between people, even with their expectations and desires, silence is often the voice of shyness.

Okay, Mr. De Dijn, perhaps we will meet again later, here or elsewhere, while she lets her wistful gaze, sway through the natural poetry of this enormous botanical garden. It is now experiencing one of its eternal four seasons; it is always different and the same. Everything flows, in any case, but here there is that eternal, beneficially flowing rain that always yields and provides us with growth, beauty, and peace. We may return to this later, Mr. De Dijn,

6.4. On the 'normal', principal love for Lady Justice, Sir Justice - for Justice

To our surprise, and yet not at all, wo/man, with what fascinating women we have been allowed to help shape this small but ambitious project around "*poetry in sexuality*"! For what do we hear? And it is as if all the birds from the botanical garden not only hold back their breath and their own unbridled, alluring singing tongues, no, they adjust it hic et nunc or ad hoc in a modulating manner, for they actually begin to accompany her - this woman, this human being - like a choir! This top-tier societal woman, in our presence as a simple interviewer and eternally curious for building for man and society, suddenly begins to sing softly, to that famous melody of "*Un bel di vedremo*", which has already been used here - here or with a totally different lady, but in any case a woman. With - once again, heavens, how popular those words are, and presumably not only among women, here certainly always top-tier women! - what else but these 'final' words;

Tienti la tua paura,
io con sicura fede l'aspetto.

...

Hold back your fears -
I with secure faith wait for him

In any case, let us call us trained or educated as classical, with the embellishment, and sometimes disillusionment often caused by our own arrogant and provocative sides from childhood. But classical nonetheless. Naturally, we know that repetition/repetitio is both an extremely important stylistic device, especially in the millennium-old oral storytelling tradition, and a very important didactic tool - to this day and forever. But this goes way too far, or almost seems like a conspiracy against the, all in all, seriousness of the part of the interviews in our project concerning "*poetry in sexuality*". For the SECOND TIME these same sentences from the same aria - pfffft. Sorry. This really won't do!!!!!!! This interview project cannot become a cheap romance, nor can it be a B-movie, even if it is directed by a phenomenon like "*The King of Cult*", film director Roger Corman (1926 - 2024).

STOOOOOOOPPPP!!!!!!!, we shout and show with all our redundant communicative capabilities.

You can hear this stop cry all the way to you, but we jumped up and held one arm - was it the left or the right, only the camera footage from the security at the time can reveal that - up as the universally most known stop sign. Everything as you can understand, and can easily reenact for yourself at home, on the beach, or in the bedroom with your partner, happened in a lightning-fast moment until... Until... And wasn't that to be expected, in hindsight, or rather,

seen beforehand? Until a pair of iron-strong arms held us in a lightning-fast and technically perfectly executed judo hold; the top federal agents of this federal prosecutor, of course!

No such thing as "*of course*"! For who would have thought that the strongest arm of the law would be a male, extremely muscular, and trained double arm, who would even have hoped, so to speak, that this officer of fast and efficient service to Ann Fransen would actually be a woman, with a body to die for, not necessarily viewed for her femininity, but rather for her athletic abilities; all wrong!!!! Who intervened decisively now!? ... La Liekens, Our Goedele - please, tell me.... JM, I warned you not to make jokes, and a small apology for this kind of behavior towards you now. You are sufficiently known as arrogant, and I should have warned you about that too. But anyway; you should have known better, because "*Know Thyself*". And with these almost relativizing, even empathetic, or rather slightly almost lovingly spoken words - yet again, thank you Goedele for your clear, everlasting loyalty! - she smiles at us. And then at Ann Fransen. Ann Fransen, meanwhile, was equally super alert, had remained extremely calm and composed, and, even during La Liekens' judo hold around our body - which, all in all, had become far too old and which, moreover, had never been trained in the noble art of judo -, would softly but very clearly command: "*DOWN*!". As if this security guard were almost a trained police dog. You understand that in this situation, we could not make a single remark about this observation, let alone a 'fitting' or defusing joke.

We were left with nothing but some uncomfortable physical and mental bruises from this impressively quick intervention by most attractive woman Goedele Liekens for the benefit of her colleague most attractive woman Ann Fransen. And oh well. We immediately forgot the justification for the existence of these imperfections due to the stunning result.

YOU ARE TOO QUICK with leaps of thought, Jea... Mr. De Dijn, we are immediately reprimanded, in any case, by this highly responsible and impeccably trained and educated lady. And meanwhile, the birds from the park and the brothers and sisters of birds lured here by them are chirping away again. DO NOT JUDGE TOO QUICKLY, Mr. De Dijn, she repeats emphatically. And you know, this lady is not going to repeat that a third time, because in this nature park, which has been so familiar to her since childhood, there is not a rooster. Ann Fransen addresses us calmly. Fundamentally shaped by the strength of her inner conviction, formed in part by her classical or traditionally solid education, formal and clearly informal or through self-study. And she paraphrases, thereby bypassing an entire deductive structure, knowing that we have been trained primarily as philosophers in any case: "*UN BEL DI VEDREMO GIUSTIZIA*". Or "*One good day, we will see Justice*".

May we not now, not even with a very suspicious disposition but cheerfully scientific, or maximally objective and curious, raise the hypothesis that a networked intra-European women's collaboration is at work here, or feel free to call it a cheerful, almost adolescently joyful conspiracy of strong women against us, the age-old, stupid macho? Not only to make the outstanding bill with THE woman and ALL women from our own lives be paid, but at the same time to use us as an example for ALL men who have many, irritating, and de facto countless outstanding bills with just as many, or even many more, women? You know this from history and the rifts in quite a few so-called political revolutions: centuries-old resentment feeds itself, is negatively constructive! Or is it a little different here after all, or perhaps positive, truly constructive?

In the meantime, we cannot disappear at all, as we sometimes wish, or rather, as we are constantly compelled to do. Which was never very pretty, of course, as a macho who... But let

you understand; even a macho is only human. But you also understand: La Liekens has remained here as a witness. And perhaps again as security. And we know that she loves touching many parts of our bodies. And you know, just as we know, how much we love that. Why not immediately put us back in a nearly or quasi-hidden amorous judo hold, and "*en passant*" show this top magistrate how women can hold their own? But. We must remain absolutely certain right now, because this top woman of society, of such a high intellectual and moral standard, cannot possibly have a - call it melodramatic - mood here, let alone a mental breakdown. So; what else but a simultaneously natural societal motive must lie behind her sung words? Or who is the HIM in that more than legendary "*l'aspetto*"? Or is it a translation error and is it a - HER!? Or both "*HIM + HER*" at the same time?

Ann Fransen nods graciously at us because, empathetic as she is and presumably also slightly mischievous, something of the young, inquisitive, and reportedly cheeky scout girl within her seems to still live, to shine, to vibrate, to move her; she has, of course, guessed our question. Perhaps, indeed, perhaps she even provoked that question!?

Dear Jea... Mr De Dijn. along with the great female film star La Dietrich, I can give you my second motto: "*Ich bin von Kopf bis Fuß auf die Liebe für Frau Justitia eingestellt*." ("*I am set on love from head to toe to Lady Justice.*" You know how the relatively many statues of Lady Justice, mainly displayed in our courthouses, portray her. She is a female figure of whom I am generally in favor, but -and regarding what follows we are somewhat surprised, or rather, no chair in the world is big and high enough to be ALLOWED to fall off of... - to us, the image could perfectly well be represented by a - MAN. We remain silent and forget to nod as well. Here before us sits a woman, or a non-male being and citizen, who, as one of the few women, has reached the top of the Belgian magistracy. For centuries, no, millennia, that was the exclusive domain of men. Or "*the administration of justice*" took place exclusively in what was sometimes very euphemistically called a stronghold of men. And she pleads, albeit in her light, almost businesslike but decisive and therefore convincing tone, for a man as a symbol. For a SIR JUSTICE!? So we arrived at this top magistrate, admittedly on tiptoe, albeit very expertly, and thus warmly prepared by the eternal rousing and curious La Liekens, who, as mentioned once again, has remained present as a brilliant witness, we are now rooted to the spot on this garden chair. Fortunately, the giant arum or "*Amorphophallus titanum*" is not in the midst of its stinking bloom, for then Our Goedele would undoubtedly take off running immediately - La Fransen would remain imperturbable, like a North American before the white invasions with his restrained and innate "*ataraxia*" (Αταραξία).

A person who symbolizes "*Justice*". You understand, Jea... - and now for the very first and, as it would turn out, the last time, she nods, albeit shaking her head or briefly disapprovingly of herself - Mr. De Dijn, that the modern discussions surrounding gender and such... Or she does not finish her reasoning. She looks at us for a moment quickly or timidly (?) as if we could guess an opinion, which we are therefore not allowed to guess with certainty. An opinion that we are naturally not going to question either. And therefore do not wish to express here at all. Perhaps, in the Belgian way, Mrs. Fransen is not only "*eingestellt*" to love but also to compromise. A person who symbolizes Justice, she begins again, is a representation of 'something present' with the two most important symbols for me at least: on the one hand the sword and on the other the scale. Those attributes seem sufficient to me, or rather necessary. And, just imagine - she looks at us steel-blue now, as if the famous Liège steel had for centuries been cooled only by water from the Norwegian fjords - that we could have asked an artist and a human being of the unfathomable caliber of Rubens for the new, persuasive, because convincing to the majority of Belgians, design of the symbol or allegory of Belgian

Justice. We hear not a single question mark, not a single one, behind this indeed self-evident wish and ideal, which could now perhaps still be realized by current talent. Or appointed by me, she adds calmly as a top civil servant, for there is almost always one person who has to make the final decision. That fits very well with my personal motto, as it is already publicly known and which is apparently known to you as well, and which has drawn you to me, she chuckles. God, how attractive is such an intelligent and at least formal-looking and being woman. And fortunately Ann Fransen isn't walking around here in a professional toga, because for her position that would be even more fiery red, we think as we change knees. Or rather, while we change the position of one leg and place it on the other knee for a change, allowing the stiffness to drain from the previous leg so that we have more time, energy, or space for eye contact with this outstanding woman; what more can we learn from her? You can learn this, she says, not as if, but because she clearly reads our revealing thoughts and agrees with them, also because they are simply her... own thoughts. Indeed, Mr. De Dijn, you know my personal motto "*Coniunctis Viribus pro Justitia*" ("*Working together works for justice*").

But, and now she shifts up a gear and raises her voice a notch; this is not enough. We are surprised once again, for isn't she a federal prosecutor or the highest magistrate in this country of that part of the magistracy that essentially seeks out offenses big and bigger, and proposes to have them judged - read: condemned - by the others, the sitting magistrates? It is not Justice who should truly take center stage, she says now very emphatically, as if speaking with certainty as a future professor of law, though not yet, or perhaps not at all, in a detached, didactic manner. My motto is intended for internal purposes above all else. As you know, my door is always open; that is, open to all my collaborators, members of Lady Justice. Or, if you prefere, she immediately saw our raised eyebrows, Sir Justice. She laughs exuberantly now, as if the Girl Scout Ann is indeed skipping around again with her age group, here in Meise, familiar to her for decades, and especially in their beloved botanical garden.

My true, or rather more principled, motto is not much different, because... She doesn't blush, because shame is for immature people - or is it not? - but let's move on. The authentic principle of our life must be: personal, familial, and societal happiness and well-being. Now, I simply cannot summarize that analytically, and stylistically it would come across as a monstrosity, as well as being unpronounceable. Besides, she suddenly mutters, looking at a passing gardener transporting all sorts of new plants in his wheelbarrow: who still studies and knows General Latin? Uh... Mrs. Fransen, what is your motto then, for we can certainly guess, but our current Latin is far from fluent and, to be honest, was never "*panta rhei*" ("*πάντα ῥεῖ*") or "*everything flows*". And it is certainly not like your knowledge, since we - alas and yet not alas - followed the mathematical track in secondary school. Excuse me, as a philosophy graduate from a Belgian or European university, didn't you study Latin, and therefore Greek either, she asks us, deviating from our actual subject and now utterly astonished? To which we nod or confirm what she actually asked us, without attaching any irony to it; facts are facts. Well, she concludes, my most principled motto is "*Coniunctis Viribus pro humanitate*" or "*Working together works for humanity*".

What else can we say to you other than that this is a fine motto, perhaps also better communicated to the people should you ever give another rare press conference, in plain Dutch. Or, if necessary, in English, for right here near our Meise lies Brussels, until further notice, and hopefully for much longer, the second most important city in the world in terms of such extremely important diplomacy. She nods. But what does that mean? We do not wish to question that, for we are, or remain, impressed by this lady anyway, of whom we already had

very high human and, call it functional, expectations beforehand. It is now time to ask our deepest question, but... She beats us to it, again! Or rather; she has once again read our thoughts - thoughts that had just reached our tongue but had not quite been spoken - with extreme empathy. Or the Belgian Federal Prosecutor is not a mind reader; she is a reader of tongues! Mind you, in quite a few European languages, "*tongue*" is synonymous with "*language*". What a country, this land of the Belgians. What an almost surreal image of this society in so many and such high positions!

6.5. The national park briefly a "*jardin secrèt*". Ann D'Arc's unknown favorite story about Joan of Arc.

Now that we, the trio, can enjoy a unique experience here, a form of revelation on a multifaceted intellectual, even existential level, you can imagine that we, as eternally curious souls, still have several questions for La Fransen, which can be further spiced by the equally eternally curious and ever-divine La Liekens. And lo and behold; she has questions too, as we can see from her mischievous and eager gaze! For you know how that goes, or how it normally should happen; the curiosity and openness of one person allows the other to taste this meal. They want to eat more and more of that food. Knowledge, true scientific knowledge, is the only food of which there is virtually no excess, let alone that diarrhea can be the result. Although, qualitatively and quantitatively speaking, a foundation is the most important thing of all. Aren't the so-called great principles, as with every house built over centuries and centuries, the foundation of all knowledge?

Whether the real sun went down during our conversations, laughter, and roaring in our "*jardin secrèt*", we no longer know ourselves in retrospect. At a certain point, the 'real' top security of the federal police also came to sit with us and apparently listened attentively, although they did first bring us soft, well-filled sandwiches and drinks - Spa Reine, of course. Which they very diligently gave first to the Federal Prosecutor, and then to La Liekens, Our Goedele. Very presumably, as they are indeed only male police officers, they also came there primarily to offer 'Their' Goedele a tasty sandwich and the refreshing water. You understand, even within your own professional service, an opportunity is always welcome for afterwards, out there (out there! because we were here...). And they were also trained in this way by their supreme leader in a certain, similarly caring manner, and even always or every working day. Because: it is lonely at the top, but not with her, Ann Fransen, "*because my door is already open*" - also in gardens like her.

You undoubtedly still remember from part 6.1 the warning that Eternal Goedele gave us. She did so with great emphasis, as almost only this woman can do, with the greatest possible human conviction of a true pedagogue who, primarily out of love for her fellow man, addresses this fellow man, especially if it is a man like us, oin an equally beautifully packaged, because genuinely loving, manner. Moreover, it seems every time to be a personal theatrical performance, always accompanied by the most convincing body movements stemming from her sensual and maximally aesthetic appearance, and in doing so, sometimes/regularly/often shares something of her physicality with parts of her body during our time together. It is a bit arrogant and also reveals a certain poverty of language, but we find ourselves compelled - also, or perhaps most of all, out of respect for La Liekens - to reproduce her words from that time perfectly here, and thus simply to quote her, although we omit a small part of it for obvious reasons:

"Because: I know you, JM. Certainly do not make language jokes regarding her family name "Fransen". So, an association with the French language, with France, with la douce.... It is so obvious, JM, that you probably wouldn't do that either, we hear her remark these words somewhat hastily, now that we have arrived here. And certainly do not slip up by using her nickname. Since her Joyful Entry into the Public Prosecution Service years ago, she has been given the nickname "Ann D'Arc", because of her now already legendary 'courage, work ethic, insight, and commitment to the country.'"

You understand that from the moment this not merely delightful but wondrously delightful woman addressed us in this way, we could do nothing but ponder how we could not simply disregard this warning. But rather how we could apply this warning in a, let's say, cultural or beautifully human manner, naturally to the benefit of the reader, who after all always wants to be kept awake by "*trouvailles*". For you simply cannot like our website at all.

You also recall from part 6.3 that Federal Prosecutor Ann Fransen herself began to instruct us during this conversation about the Rubens phenomenon, his first name known, but his surname infinitely more known. And surely she could not ignore that as a subject now raised by us? For how can one refuse a delicate dish that a cook offers, or at least promotes, by constantly tasting it himself while cooking!?

You still remember our shared (haha - you know, this empathetic trick always works, although we don't know if it's universal; for next time we need to do some intensive anthropology study)... You undoubtedly still remember our shared interest in and even love for Pieter Paul Rubens, we now cheekily address Ann Fransen. She nods as if she immediately senses that we are setting a mousetrap to catch her, who is, after all, no mouse at all as a top civil servant, but the exemplary opposite, and pin her down to something more daring. Even though we, we don't even have to swear this out loud, have absolutely no intention of letting her serve up her favorite oralgasmic poem here and now or finally.

As a great Rubens fan, you know that the man P.P. Rubens himself possessed an enormous art collection. She wants to enthusiastically pick up on that, but it is perfectly clear to both of us that she wants to control the situation or simply continue on this innocent theme - so, vain idea, Madam Ann Fransen, for we really do not intend to do that!!! - do everything in her power NOT to present her favorite oralgasmic poem to us, and thus to the public. It was King Philip IV of Spain, in particular, who, directly through his brother who held political leadership here in Flanders, was able to purchase the greater part of Rubens' personal collection upon his death. You are .... well informed ... we chat a bit about ..... and then comes it, our ... for which Our Goedele ....

So Philip IV didn't buy up everything, we make clear. She nods, for what was left then, she is probably thinking? There was certainly one painting from Rubens's personal collection that Philip IV would never have wanted, even if he could have bought it for a bargain price, so to speak. She senses it; the bait is almost being set in the mousetrap, but how quick-witted, clever, agile, alert, she is - and go on for 10% of any dictionary. You think, Jea... about - and we both burst out laughing because we naturally know what she knows and isn't saying yet, so we just say it ourselves.

Rubens presumably made the first sketches for a painting of a famous lady around 1620, or well over twenty years before his death. This was, for once, not of his first nor his second wife, and certainly not of the Virgin Mary, although in a sense it leaned in the latter direction.

It was a kind of portrait of... Jeanne D'Arc (1412–1431), the legendary lady who helped deliver France from its almost eternal rival, England! After much wandering, the work can finally be admired in the USA, in the city of Raleigh, North Carolina.

See: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Jeanne_d%27Arc,_atelier_Rubens.jpg

It is known in that English-speaking world as "*Joan of Arc*". There is much uncertainty surrounding this painting, although it is certain that Rubens made the sketches and, naturally, kept it in his personal possession for twenty years. And then it comes AFTER ALL: He should have given it to me, Ann Fransen bursts into a gigantic fit of laughter, startling many birds around us and causing them to fly away. And naturally; security intervenes immediately, but both Our Goedele and the All-Belgian Ann Fransen ordered them straight away: "*Back to your posts*!"

We chat a bit about Rubens, Joan of Arc, and this painting, of course. And now something truly conspiratorial happens: Jea.. Mr. De Dijn, I may confess something now. We can hardly believe our ears, because is that or.. poem really coming? At the very last minute, but within the contours of this study? We stop cheering already, because Ann Fransen likes to keep the reins in her hands. Back when I was still allowed into the USA, you know (winking) "*Before the Trump Two period*", I went with my husband - an even bigger Rubens fan than I am because ....blablabla .... - to North Carolina to take a look at that museum. The painting is perfectly restored and you could clearly see that she - "*Joan of Arc*" - probably had rather little sex in her young life. We ... With such a suit of armor on, she bursts out laughing. Her beautiful long hair had a hair bun – and, indeed, Ann Fransen turns a quarter turn and shows us and without a wink (...), exactly the same hair bun!!! You could that bun so clearly because such a suit of armor naturally didn't protect her head, and her hair, and Ann Fransen bursts out laughing again. The helmet was naturally present in that painting, stood on the ground behind her, and was in the same color and style as her entire suit of armor. And that helmet, Mr. Know-it-all Jean-Marie De Dijn....

Ann Fransen showed us, with a very cheeky yet almost defiant smile, as the one who had become serious but remained eternally adolescent, her "*Cap of Darkness*" or "*Helm of Hades*". And she placed it on her head, which, with her spirit, had been so intensely present with us here. With her entire body, all the top security of the federal police vanished from this magical botanical garden, as if by a collective magic wand. We remained behind, slightly surprised but overjoyed. We, Our Goedele and us. And the national plant of Belgium, her penis plant or the "*Amorphophallus titanum*", smelled that intensely. It wanted, begged, demanded, to be fertilized by all the bees and other small and large winged creatures.

Her favorite poem:

You understand that we must use this subtitle, because in the context of this rather intense study on "*poetry and sexuality*", this is merely half a title here. Guess which word is missing... Ah, even a half-madman and double idealist like us could not expect a top magistrate like the Belgian Federal Prosecutor to share her favorite oralgasmic poem with us and subsequently with the public. And we assume, as a matter of general human and logical logic, that she has such an or... poem! Although throughout just about every minute of our meeting in the botanical garden, we were extremely alert to see if that opportunity might not present itself at some point, so not to wring that or... poem out of her... uh... but simply to hear it. Or, for example, to see if a bird - take a bird of paradise - would land next to her, or at least directly

within the reach of her eternally awake eyes, so that we might have suggested 'something' fittingly associative. But we did not forget to let such a fitting, albeit orchestrated, scenario pass us by, following the advice of Our Goedele. While, of course, that park was full of top-notch security who would suddenly have expertly caught, plucked, roasted, and devoured that bird of paradise. And then, too, in one swift and expert catching movement; Our and Their Goedele?

Our Goedele had also warned us not to make jokes about her surname: "*Fransen From Frans + From French-men*." Which is, in itself, a very suitable name, especially for a federal prosecutor in a federal country with several language communities. A great starting point for people who enjoy learning languages. For French is a wonderful language, of course, and was the lingua... uh... franca for so long, and is, incidentally, an easy stepping stone for learning interesting languages like Italian and Spanish. I choose poetry from the French tradition, she says almost brusquely, as if she knew in advance of Goedele's warning to us. I am going to take the introduction to one French poem and a second one in its entirety, just the way you like it so much, she blushes. Both share a theme that is close to my heart. You are, of course, familiar with the famous expression "*Carpe diem*", although I do not entirely agree with it, because... Please stick to the matter of poetry, Your Honour, Madam Federal Prosecutor, we must necessarily intervene. For it is time to conclude her contribution and with it this long, intense study, you probably know that by now. As a teenager, I was not so much concerned with the transience of beauty. I don't even believe in that, she adds lightning-fast. For true inner beauty endures through time, and it grows or even deepens, in my opinion. But what fascinates me to this day, and what guides me as a general societal and personal human being, is the ideal of "*SEIZING OPPORTUNITIES IN LIFE*." So we are certainly going to... Ronsard, we attempt, with a voice sounding equally euphoric. Indeed, Jea...: "*Cueillez, cueillez votre/notre.... - temps*".

I am a rather cautious person and I naturally love tradition. Like so many people of my generation and before that, I grew up with this deservedly famous French - at the sound of this word, we raise our eyebrows a few millimeters; wasn't that too much, Goedele?! - poem. Perhaps it is a little too somber. Which is perfectly understandable in itself, for the poet Pierre de Ronsard himself had a rather difficult life. Despite his enormous talents, he never found true happiness with any woman he adored. Women whom he wanted, as it were, to quench with his poems, to bathe in them. For just read for yourself; his poems sound milk-soft. Well, she considers soberly for a moment, perhaps this saying already applied in our Middle Ages: "*Diamonds are a girl's best friend*?". He was not taken seriously by women, nor considered attractive. Even though he possessed such a unique poetic voice that resonates even to this day and will continue to do so tomorrow. But then again, from an early age he was almost completely deaf; apparently, by female logical consequence, he never had any luck. That so-called weak sex always preferred a fully fit, a strong man. I was able to read that story in detail in the unsurpassed and now hard-to-find booklet by Anton Van Duinkerken (1903 - 1968, alias of Wilhelmus Asselbergs), *De mensen hebben hun gebreken*, Hilversum, 1935. I can recommend that reading to you, Mr. De Dijn.

A pity," she adds, still almost dejected. That Ronsard did not live in our 20th century. And she quotes this famous sentence, which we ourselves know, appreciate, and use so well, this famous closing line of "*Some Like It Hot*" (1959) by the unlikely filmmaker and screenwriter Billy Wilder (1906 - 2002, born Samuel Wilder or in Yiddish ווילדער שמואל or Shmuel Vilder): "*Well, nobdody's perfect*".

L'examen de minuit. (from "*Les Fleurs du Mal*", 1857, Charles Baudelaire, 1821 – 1867)

La pendule, sonnant minuit,
Ironiquement nous engage
A nous rappeler quel usage
Nous fîmes du jour qui s'enfuit:

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Examination of Conscience at Midnight (Translated by William Aggeler, The Flowers of Evil (Fresno, 1954)

The clock striking midnight
Ironically invites us
To call to mind what use we made
Of the day that is fleeing:

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Ode à Cassandre (1545 + Pierre de Ronsard, 1524 - 1585)

Mignonne, allons voir si la rose
Qui ce matin avait déclose
Sa robe de pourpre au soleil,
A point perdu cette vesprée
Les plis de sa robe pourprée,
Et son teint au vôtre pareil.

Las! voyez comme en peu d'espace,
Mignonne, elle a dessus la place,
Las, las ses beautés laissé choir!
Ô vraiment marâtre Nature,
Puisqu'une telle fleur ne dure
Que du matin jusques au soir!

Donc, si vous me croyez, mignonne,
Tandis que votre âge fleuronne
En sa plus verte nouveauté,
Cueillez, cueillez votre jeunesse:
Comme à cette fleur, la vieillesse
Fera ternir votre beauté.

We thank Ms. Ann Fransen for these contributions, which will certainly serve as a refresher or even a first dive into French poetry for many readers. But let's be honest, there is still something to explain. And so we had to reopen the interview briefly and, above all, boldly.

Which wasn't very difficult, because before reading this poetry, she had come back and was seated in her garden chair.

JM, Jean-Marito, Jee-eM, Jean-Marie De Dijn, EU, first edition March 2026.

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The Rokeby Venus, Diego (Rodríguez de Silva y) Velázquez (1599 – 1660), oil, 1647 - 1651, National Gallery London.

T.I.S..

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Venus and Cupid with a Honeycomb, Lucas Cranach The Elder (der Ältere + circa 1472 – 1553), oil, circa 1531, Galleria Borghese Roma.

T.I.S..

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Virgin and Child in Flower Garland with Angels, Peter Paul Rubens (1577 - 1640) and Jan Brueghel The Elder (1568 - 1625), oil, 1621, Musée du Louvre, Paris.

+ Pierre-Joseph Redoute's School of botanical drawing in the Salle Buffon in the Jardin des Plantes. Julie Ribault (1789 - circa 1839). Watercolour and graphite on paper, 1830, The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, United Kingdom.

T.I.S..

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Virgin and Child with Two Angels, Sandro Botticelli (born as Alessandro di Mariano di Vanni Filipepi, 1445 - 1510), tempera, circa 1490, Akademie der bildenden Künste Wien.

T.I.S..

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Virgin of Gósol (the inspiration of the face for the portrait of Gertrude Stein by Pablo Picasso - 1881 - 1976 - during 1905 - 1906), wood and polychrome, second half of 12th century, Museo Nacional d'Art de Catalanya, Barcelona.

T.I.S..

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Woman reading a letter, Johannes Vermeer (1632 - 1675), oil, circa 1662 - 1663. Rijksmuseum Amsterdam.

T.I.S..

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Žena s vtákmi a jablkami (Woman with birds and appels), Valeria Zusana Benáčková (1924 - 2021), Reverse glass painting, s.d., private collection.

T.I.S..

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