



**Hédi  
Bouraoui**

**Thus  
Speaks  
The CN  
Tower**

Translated by  
**Elizabeth  
Sabiston**

Hédi Bouraoui

# Thus Speaks The CN Tower



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*To Betty*



Hédi Bouraoui

Thus Speaks  
The CN Tower

Translation and Preface by Elizabeth Sabiston

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2013





## Translator's Preface

Happy Belated Thirtieth Birthday, CN Tower! Hédi Bouraoui's novel, *Ainsi Parle la Tour CN* (Vanier, Canada: Éditions l'Interligne, 1999, and Tunis: Éditions l'Or du Temps, 2000), was composed in time for the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Tower. It won the 29<sup>th</sup> Prix Afrique/Méditerranéenne/Maghreb, awarded by A.D.E.L.F., Paris, in 2000, the Prix Christine Dumitriu van Saanen of the Salon du Livre, Toronto, 2000, and was short listed for the Ontario Trillium Award. The Canadian version was, appropriately, launched in 1999 at the CN Tower. An Italian translation appeared recently, in 2007, and the following text is the authorized English translation, intended to make the work better known among both the official language groups in Canada, Anglophone and Francophone. Following the Tower's thirtieth birthday in 2006, it is time to revisit her.

Hédi Bouraoui had the conceit of giving the Tower a voice. "Tour" in French is gendered female, despite the phallic appearance of the Tower, and the CN Tower increasingly takes on a female voice and sympathy with the many people who visit or work in her every day. She takes a particular interest in the people who built her with their own hands: the new immigrants/contractors and, above all literally, the Amerindians, Mohawks who, with their mysterious gift for heights, "crowned" the Tower. Indeed, the first major character we meet is Pete Deloon (from *Delune*), the man who caps the summit from a helicopter, and decides, for reasons best known to himself, to leap from the top in a free fall, suspended only on a rope. Soon after, we meet Kelly King, the Beautiful Blonde Human Resources Director, whom Pete's exploit is designed to impress – fruitlessly! Pete finds himself fired for insubordination, and



is forced to walk the streets seeking a series of dead-end jobs. Meanwhile his wife Twylla Blue, left on the reservation with their son Moki, while Pete tries to make a living in the Queen City and support them, decides to follow her husband to Toronto. She finds him having an ill-starred affair with Kelly King, and determines to forge a career for herself. To that end, she accepts an assignment as a free-lance journalist to report on the Menara Tower in Kuala Lumpur. There she meets a fellow journalist, the Malaysian Zinal, who becomes the love of her life, and who returns to Canada with her. It is Twylla who, on a visit to her native landscape, encounters the totemic Moose-Spirit, emblem of the multicultural Canadian soul, which she brings to the CN Tower. It is in turn symbolically impregnated with the Moose-Spirit.

Multicultural players who figure largely in this mosaic-novel include Souleyman Mokoko, the highly educated Sudanese whose culture dates back to the Kingdom of Kush, whose princes became the black Pharaohs of Egypt, but who is reduced, in Canada, to piloting the elevator that speeds up the full height of the Tower – and who is also fired, like his friend Pete. Rocco Cacciapuoti, the cagey, ambitious government functionary, compares Toronto constantly to his native Italy, including the CN Tower to the Tower of Pisa. Fung Chiu, the Chinese accountant, keeps the books for the Tower, and invests in Chinese restaurants. Then there are the Francophones “*de souche*” (native-born), the Quebecker Marc Durocher, and the Franco-Ontarian Marcel-Marie Duboucher (who are practically indistinguishable), who put aside their historical differences sufficiently to hatch a plot against the Tower – but we will not spoil the detective story aspect for the reader. Finally, among the principals, there is the half-mad would-be poet Symphorien Lebreton, the native of metropolitan France, who deposits his poems (a failed symphony) in crumpled

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paper balls around the Tower's stairwells. His mother, the formidable Madame Lebreton, in turn lectures the Tower, urging it to adopt the "correct" French of the stultified *Académie Française*, as opposed to what she snobbishly considers to be the broken grammar and diction of Canada. Then there are the countless "whack jobs" who compete to set speed records climbing the Tower stairs.

The title is a nod to Nietzsche's *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, but the Tower "speaks," in the present tense, and philosophizes about average men and women, not a Superman. The novel is a paean to tolerance, brotherhood/sisterhood, and understanding, and to Canadian, and especially Torontonion multiculturalism, despite all its culture shocks and flaws, as a work-in-progress, an ideal unlikely to come close to realization anywhere else in the world.

The novel comes full circle when Moki, the son of Pete and Twylla, himself climbs, like Spider-Man, the outside of the CN Tower, not only evoking, but also redeeming, his father's controversial feat. Moki goes on to bring new life to the reservation, creating on it a garden of language and love, inviting visitors from all over the world. Thus Moki's language of flowers and the Tower's rocky speech reflect and echo each other.

Bouraoui never loses sight of the factual basis, the real history of Toronto and Ontario (Upper Canada). His imagination plays constantly with the facts. Amerindians did cap the CN Tower in 1976, and Pete's heroic act evokes the famous Toronto *Star* picture of the workman perched precariously on a scaffold at a dizzying height above Lake Ontario.

Lest we take her for granted, the Tower, famously, had her own way of reminding us of her dominance of the skyline during the record-breaking cold winter of February and March, 2007, when sheets of ice froze on her sides. Ice sheets began falling off

the Tower, one as large as a table, with the result that the Tower was responsible for the closing of the Gardiner Expressway, the main east-west road into the city center. Other downtown streets were closed off, including King Street between York and Bay. It was the first time since her construction that ice fell off the CN Tower, imprisoning a number of westbound commuters trying to head home after work. She was described as the world's largest Popsicle, and she once again made headlines, such as "Icy fear freezes city core," blazoned on the front page of the *Toronto Star* of March 6, 2007. It does not take much of an imaginative leap to see the Tower celebrating her thirtieth birthday by asserting herself – and not hurting anyone in the process. Interestingly, the Tower administration remained mysterious about the identities of "a team of high angle specialists hired by tower officials, who rappelled down the walls and chipped away at the icy surface..." (*Toronto Star*, Friday, March 9, 2007: B1). How intriguing it is to imagine Moki and his colleagues rappelling down the Tower by request this time!

In the few years since the novel was first published, the Skydome has become the Rogers Centre, the G7 is now the G8, and the bombs planted in the World Trade Centre in the 1990s have become mere forewarnings of the disappearance of the twin towers from the face of the earth on September 11, 2001 – and the world will never be the same again!

The CN Tower was a prophetic voice in the 1999 novel; she has now had a "facelift" to keep up with the times. Thousands of LED lights have been installed inside the elevator shafts and externally up the entire height of the Tower. On Canada Day, 2007, the switch turned these lights on. And the female CN Tower rejoiced in her necklace of lights, which puts her on an equal level with her predecessor and erstwhile rival, the Eiffel Tower in Paris.

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A prophetic novel in 1999, it is hoped that the English translation will personalize the Tower to a whole new audience in the early twenty-first century. With her “rocky speech,” she has found the words to address both Anglophone and Francophone Canada.

*Elizabeth Sabiston*

*Note.* For a longer academic essay on the novel, see Chapter IV, “*Ainsi Parle la Tour CN: Of Moose and Women... and Talking Towers,*” in Elizabeth Sabiston, *The Muse Strikes Back: Female Narratology in the Novels of Hédi Bouraoui* (Sudbury, Ontario: Human Sciences Monograph Series 9, 2005): 88–119.









*A*ll roads lead to me and the sky is my limit. But who these days is able to crown the most majestic, highest structure in the world? What gives me the right to boast like this? So many glossy flyers repeat the same slogans: a miracle of height, an architectural masterpiece, a place for all people and all seasons... Only the Amerindians could crown me, even if the world's masses made me erupt from this soil which belongs to the Indians in the first place. In God's Country, I am the silhouette of the future, uttering words only in ethnoscape bites. Not to whet your curiosity, but to assert the right to the words which shaped my reputation of Anti-Babel. I, the triumphant concrete swan erected by the financial clout of the silent majority. I won't torment you with the details of my rise above this "place of encounters" named Toronto by the First Nations whose feathers strew the limitless expanse of snow.

At the turn of the century, I arrived to display my splendor and misery, my svelte minaret style and my enormous height of one hundred forty-five floors, just in order to teach Canadians a "lesson of humility." From my crown, circling my width, my eyes blink day and night, broadcasting the best there is to offer of the two hundred eighty-six languages known in this city. Waves of world chatter. Since I am fixed in place, powerful enough to tell you the words of the dispossessed, majority enough to recount a few anecdotes about the minorities. I'm going to speak to you about chaos. I am flexible enough to withstand the hurricane's fury and the storm's destruction. I am strengthened by a carefully designed structure. My Revolving Restaurant makes one revolution per hour, like a serpent coiling, and offers a spectacular three hundred sixty degree point of view. Thus I am going to revolve twenty-four times. Take my word of concrete and steel, not with a grain of salt but with tons of laughter!

At each blink of an eye I make the tour of the city. This checkered page with its Yonge Street, the longest in the world, with its source in Lake Ontario, projecting itself sixty kilometers farther... into a wealthy suburb itself resembling an independent city. The damned of the earth do not live there, but the elect of paradise. This street cuts the heart of the city in two, East and West. Two ventricles where the buildings communicate in a glassy language indistinguishable from that "south of the border." The United States which governs us and which we envy. We, the "little mouse living next door to an Elephant." Endless main street like our history, beginning with the founding fathers, passing through the genocide of the First Nations, ending in a colorless, odorless anonymity.

Attention: a hasty judgment because I tower over everything... I remain on the polished surface of things, like this steely sun after a snowstorm.

His head circled by a rainbow-colored band, the Mohawk, Pierre de Lune, goes to Yorkville for a last puff of marijuana. During long days of nervous tension, he places, with three other tribal friends, blocks forming columns rising, hidden, to the summit of my unique, almost superhuman structure. Now they are ready to connect the four-directional antenna on my crown as if they were planting goose feathers around their heads. From far off the drug pusher recognizes the Mohawk working in the sky, approaches him confidently to display his wares. The corner policeman turns a blind eye. One cannot hassle these inimitable high-flyers, who are the only ones able to confront unbelievable heights without the slightest sign of dizziness. We need these experts revolving in the sky with the same assurance and expertise as hunters of wild beasts in the tundra. Speed and dexterity adjusting to within a millimeter the magic horns they affix at a high altitude, on the summit of summits, despite the

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stain of their “lazy” reputation. His ancestral bad luck nails Pete to the earth from time immemorial, he who “walks the earth” as he “runs across the sky.” He left his Opasquia Reserve in the north-west of the province to settle in a shabby room in the Spadina area north of Bloor. For once, the Queen City needs his services; and, suddenly, she is ready to free him from long days without work, eating his body like a cancer. Now he can nourish his distant family dependent on his wanderings, waiting for a money order which always arrives late. What, in fact, is becoming of his only son left with the mother, counting the days until they can rejoin him? It is hardly two years ago that he married Twylla Blue, an Indian woman as sparkling with life as her copper skin.

Pete Deloon, as they call him in the Queen City, is willing to accept the clichés of “ne’er do well,” “worthless,” “perpetual drunk and drug addict.” He hasn’t two cents worth of philosophy, but he possesses an innate sense of ethics giving his face that air of rigor and wisdom which is not misleading. The Amerindian knows that bitterness was smoked with the peace pipe, like the defeat from which he will never recover. Despite the promises, treaties, and accords, he still cannot hunt in his own way. His salary is not even adequate to cover the cost of beer drunk with friends. However, he knows in his heart that “the people of race” are the cornerstone of history written in all the books, and of the limitless land abandoned to the English. But the Kings, the Queens, and their descendants have forgotten everything. He has a long memory, like a day without beer. And he is dying to erase in an instant the humiliating scar staining the wisdom of his face.

For all his life, he has resisted the temptation of Whites. Refusing to assimilate in order not to lose his purity. Not virginity, he doesn’t believe in that, but the purity of his original civilization,

well-organized tribes, where at daily meetings the Chief and his sacred word built Empires of peace and happiness. The Whites come with a specific mission. Confuse the maps... Change habits... Establish a new order... Disorder not yet defined... Scatter cultures and tradition... Remake the world in their own image... The Indians powerless to fight their invasions! And what else is there to do if not refuse to learn their way of walking and running. They invent machines to dislodge Man. Do his work for him. Rape nature because she is faithful to him. Pollute her so that he can asphyxiate himself. Ignite wars to use up the arms surplus. Pretend to extinguish them to clear their conscience. Invent peace treaties by negotiating in bad faith. Almost never respect these agreements.

Today, April Fool's Day, the weather is overcast, a soft snow melts as soon as it touches the ground, leaving behind traces of treacherous white. Nothing but car crashes and innocent casualties! The minutes are taken of Pete's Odyssey revolving in the milky sky like an eagle drunk on air. He can hardly see the hole where he must place the electrical conductor. At first he hangs suspended from the tight cable of a Russian helicopter whose deafening noise drowns out his instructions. Then free in the air, his muscles flexed like a savage meteor set on accomplishing his mission. Forget about orders and directions! The fool's first day of the month seems to last over three hundred years... An auspicious day for him since everyone is fixed on his movements. Especially on this key he has in his hands, or which he sometimes pins to his chest. Visible magic which will help him tighten the screws. Iron cables will send forth words and pictures, and receive the most bizarre and distant wave lengths. To speak or not to speak is the central value of the country.

Yes, convinced that only communication, its comings and goings, is the major attraction in the space war. After the railway,

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it is speech which rules. Pete feels this extraordinary disturbance stemming from his act. Is he not there to install a piercing iron reed, a device babbling all languages mixed together under the shepherd's crook of English, which he learned to advance his cause without even being able to write it? His body tenses, floating more than five hundred fifty-three meters above sea level, furrows the sky, sullyng it with his expert movements. But the language of this squat body differs from that of the Almighty Dollar, a wooden language sticking in his throat like a cross from days long past.

Drawn by the downwards view, this void which doesn't seem to resist, Pete Deloon wishes dearly that his exploits could be projected on the small screen. The one the Beautiful Blonde Kelly, whom he sees every morning, is glued to all day. Since he has been selected for this labor of love, he dreams of her. He tastes her smile like a Florida orange. He examines her face, in a second, lighting up like a ray of sunshine. What she is thinking, he can't even begin to guess. Does she notice his haste to hold the door for her, his gaze which embraces her mentally, and penetrates her lustfully?

It is doubtless the absence of his wife which forces him to become attached to this unknown woman, both distant and near. The Beauty's confidence sharpens his reflex to conquer. A frustrating quest. He doesn't succeed in attracting her attention. Pete revisits his parentless childhood. In a convent, he clutches at a soutane over the long black gown of a Good Sister. The slightest sign of affection is etched in his memory. To pierce the mystery of his birth. Where does he come from? Why did his parents abandon him to this faith which isn't his? Now, he must transcend it, show his prowess to the world. A talent for mastering the void. A fearful abyss which would make a lion's courage fail. An origin to track down, a love to be woven. Pete

grits his teeth when he thinks of his métissage recovered by the Missionaries. Their “good faith” disturbed by a genuine atavism and his flight at the age of six....

Today, the Blonde didn't smile. Nor did she reply to his vigorous “Hi.” Pete uttered this heartfelt greeting to cover his awkwardness. A bitter taste pushes him to avenge his empty fate. His very being escapes him. His uneasiness evolves into fragile pride. The foreman shouts: “For God's sake Pete don't screw up this job.” It is at this moment that the desire comes over him to dance on the little square at the root of the four antenna branches. The traditional Mohawk dance that his friend can't resist photographing for all eternity. Encouraged by this folly captured on film, he dons a parachute and plunges into this time lapse of the miracle year 1975. So daring a fall that it surprises friends, travelers, passersby.... Except for the Beautiful Blonde who is in the basement toilet, instead of sitting at her little screen... to witness the actions of the master of space!

Next day, Pete, not in good shape after his descent to earth, is fired.

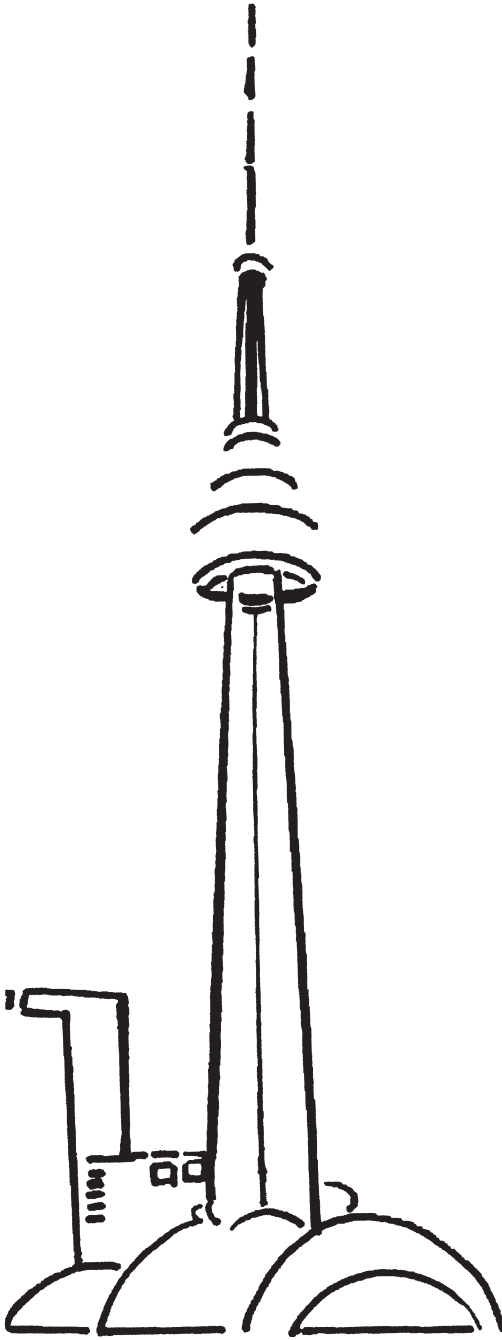
How can I act in his favor? I, the CN Tower. I am nailed to my birth socle, rooted in its depths. Only the fluidity of action holds anyone's attention! I possess only the voice and the pictures which travel. News only passes through me. Then fades at the very second it emerges from my antenna. I need to turn away from this endless flow. Mounting on the crest of waves. Retaining only the hard copy that I put to bed vigilantly. Short sentences in the solitude of my cavern. Avoiding long tirades. Just the love of an atmosphere created in vertiginous dreams. Not a traditional narration. Rather a gathering of events from different times of my stony memory.

I anti-babelize. My inner voice tremblingly whispers before dawn.











Reflecting on my svelte figure and my virginal surges skywards, I ask why I should be blamed for my inner quest? Why shouldn't I draw attention to my fate?

I am firmly anchored on the shores of Lake Ontario, that inland sea, built of our own concrete and flexible steel. No doubt where I belong: I am native and proud of it! I was born on this miraculous soil. I pay my taxes and am a bilingual good citizen. Recent immigrants bloodied their hands planting my three roots in fifty meters of soil. I confess I'm not multilingual like the majority of our vibrant city. In fact, I'm an English Tower, and I narrate in French. Not to boast, but I like to use the language of the official minority. Without condescension or arrogance. Just for the love of other languages sidelined by history, persuading Québec to remain in the lap of the Canadian motherland. Country of the maple, of snow, and of conferences... from which a quarter of the population wants to secede, while nine-tenths of the Third World is dying to belong!

It's easy to keep silent or play dumb when my antenna captures the waves of the whole world! Capture and circulate the *lingua franca*, American English swallowing daily thousands of other tongues. It would be pure cowardice, and bad faith on the part of a revolutionary. With us Canadians, revolutions are quiet. No blood spilled. No spirit exiled in a life always in question. No violence. No iconoclasm. Moreover, who knows what our image is? We will never define it. Rather, we have tacitly agreed: to build our collective identity on negatives. Thus, we *don't* resemble Americans. They go mad, killing each other to create the famous image of the eagle in victorious flight. Endless civil wars to arrive at collective agreement. Noisy shams. We fight around oval tables in endless negotiations! We don't sacrifice our lives, but words by the carload. Verbal diarrhea is

no compensation for the boredom you could cut with a knife!  
Our agreements, quarrels and compromises are the end result  
of prolonged civil procedures!

Referenda, all kinds of memoranda... always discussions  
leading nowhere. No one takes the initiative. Hands refusing  
to dirty themselves, or to die for any cause, however noble. The  
only exception is the Second World War where we protected the  
interests of our founding peoples, and Desert Storm<sup>1</sup> whose  
subtle strategies I transmitted myself.

But Pete Deloon has been fired. Ejected from the system.  
The badge giving him permission to enter me is taken away.  
Excluded, he is no longer anything, he is worthless. This nothingness  
devours him with anguish, shakes his mind and body,  
digs wells, caves of fear and torment, empties him, triggers nausea.  
He hovers beneath my carcass still under construction.  
Shattered. Flashes of eternity out of touch with reality. And he  
lurks, he lurks, going around in circles. A hungry ant climbing  
a bare mountain offering not a single crumb.

Forever locked against him, the door leading to my guts. The  
security guard refused him access. However, my slogan shouts,  
*Welcome, let your spirit soar.* This invitation is a dead letter.  
Again I witness Pete's body flying freely to the top, descending  
again in a free fall, defying the law of gravity. From my summit  
anchored in the sky, his body fell while mine rose. You could  
say he broke the law and work ethics. No, today's world does  
not tolerate fantasy. *In flagrante delicto* to have the slightest  
imaginative spark. Why did this son of the First Nations not  
follow literally, to a fault, the order given him? Please note: personally  
I admire his spirit, his rebellion, which I can't admit. It is difficult  
to don the uniform, accept the mold that kills all

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<sup>1</sup> The novel, published in 1999, but clearly prophetic, is equally relevant to the war in Iraq today. *Translator's Note.*

initiative. I would have behaved like him. Tearing off the mask of civility, revealing defiance.

The days follow one after the other, all alike when you don't rise in the morning to go to work. Without work no surprise, no unexpected happenings. Sanctions weigh heavily on this skilled man's shoulders. Burdened, he nonetheless holds his head high. He drags himself through the streets, if only to catch a glimpse of the Beautiful Blonde. He sees her arrive on time. Proud of her job, not deigning to glance at unhappy Pete. Her father confided in her that this Amerindian fired for grave reasons resembles, like two drops of water, the old Ovide Samedi, that joker he put the screws to, nearly twenty years ago. The affair was inconclusive. There was a trial. There was no evidence to prove he was the killer of a tribe member – I don't remember his name – who had stolen the white woman he loved. Judge Robert King has only one daughter, Kelly, the beautiful blonde. Thus he doesn't want to take Pete's case on. In any event, what he knows is that she was ordered to fire him, she who didn't even see his perilous leap of the century.

Kelly King knows that Pete's piercing look pursues her like a hungry vulture. He forces her to submit to his mysterious power. She can't explain it to herself, especially after expelling him from her mind. She rejects this Indian's boldness, who wanted to prove his skill and his hidden feelings to her. But every time she crosses the street, going or coming from work, she is seized by torment. Her face closes up while a flower blooms within her. Her body wilts, but the bent stem straightens to follow her impulse. Thus she just didn't understand it.

This employment counselor sulks in front of her files. She is only diverted by encounters with unknown men. Each time, she flexes her muscles with power inherited from her forebears. Facing her, the Quebecker Marc Durocher, *pure laine*, with a

chip on his shoulder, bearded like Christ, under a dirty cowboy hat, expends his energy in honeyed clichés. Just to please her, buy time to insure “his job.” But tomorrow, the only thing in his head will be anarchy celebrated secretly. Setting fire to the foundations.

For the time being I need a translator to satisfy the bilingual politics of the two solitudes, which doesn't prevent turning our backs to each other out of habit. Each one is captured *in flagrante delicto* to transmit through my antenna the other cursed language. They spend their time competing with each other. One lawsuit more ridiculous than the next, to avoid disavowal.

Marc puts on the charm the very day he is hired. A defense mechanism helps him swallow the daily routine. He winds himself up, like a watch without a battery, for countless confrontations over the merest trifles: to sign the washrooms in both languages. It's the same for the stairs, the entrance doors, the exits, the emergency or fire doors, the names of rooms or food courts, the souvenirs or publicity slogans... As if the five percent of Franco-Ontarians don't know how to decode a treacherous word of English! while the whole world knows that the Queen's English is everywhere king: in the least frequented places and in all the laws. Moreover, those “Outside of Québec” are “chilled hot dogs.” They are only good for showing the blind “that they are finished.” There is only one hope for them: come back to the mother of all mothers, to the Fleur de Lys Province, this French island in a sea of Anglo-mania. And Marc encourages the Francophones *de souche* or the recent *Dé-souchés* that they must disobey the unilingual signs and not pay fines. Not to stop at the “Stop” sign which means nothing in the Langevin language, heir of Voltaire, when he got up on the morning of a strike. Master Joe Vito convinced the tribunal: “If the panel doesn't respect the bilingualism prescribed, it isn't legal.” One can then ignore it and break the law with com-



plete impunity.

Astride the law, Marc, having won his suit, feels all the more courage to seduce Kelly. She represents his physical ideal: six feet tall, 32-inch bust, weight 110 pounds. If her body turns his head, her ideas frighten him. In principle, he takes the opposite point of view. Without speaking of her political opinions which make him sick at heart and even physically ill. Kelly treats him with velvet gloves covering iron fists. A spoiled child, with wild eyes, Marc envies and is jealous of the one responsible for recruitment who creates the storms and the good weather. What a miracle! Everything she touches, she puts "in reserve" to defrost on a day of intense fog. Then each of them defends his priorities. The Director disposes of the personnel on the checker board of blue ribbons (Progressive Conservative) and red (Liberals). The NDP is too far to the left for her taste. She puts them on hold while awaiting the thaw, one of these weeks of four Thursdays! The rainbow variations that the Ethnoculturals promote touches her profoundly. She pretends that these colors fascinate her. But her tenderness never appears transparent. She buries it all the more so that its antennae don't emerge from her slim body. Submerged, like a wave rolling in, her emotion is quickly contained by coldness baffling even the most perceptive. With one exception, the head of maintenance of physical plant, one Rocco Cacciapuoti, nicknamed "little Napoleon."

Rocco blushes to the root of the one remaining lock of hair on his completely bald head. His eyes narrow, squint behind glasses prescribed for myopia. Thus he gives the impression that he is scrupulous and careful in all his commercial affairs. Sales and rentals have made his fortune. Immediately invested in a castle planted in the middle of Forest Hill. His children are proud of him, with their neighbors and at school, which doesn't prevent them from picking up, behind his back, all the big tips he leaves

in restaurants. Simply because they are ashamed. These little gestures hide faults he is anxious to conceal. I myself wonder how he managed to change positions. From construction, he moved to building maintenance, a lucrative function he completely controlled. When he finds stones resembling sacred cows – even if he is far from Indian – he would like to milk them... A little milk for all eternity. A tour de force which dazzles Pete, the permanently unemployed. The supervisor Kelly cherishes a hidden friendship for him. Only Marc Durocher suspects that he hibernates for the moment, waiting to find the weak link in the chain.



Here is Souleyman Mokoko who pushes the buttons in my elevator. Puzzled, he contemplates the daring math which installs him, a political refugee, in a mechanical system whose speed is 360 meters a minute without his being able to change it. Even when strong winds shake the building, a roof detector lowers the speed so that the sky travelers do not suffer discomfort or nausea. At each ascent, the floor-to-ceiling window not only allows the travelers to observe the landscape, but to detach themselves from the descent, mastering it. And Souleyman cannot help thinking about all the mechanisms propelling him in this job, corresponding neither to his education nor his experience. He arrived in Canada armed with diplomas earned in his native land and in Europe, naming him “Engineer of Bridges and Roads,” but found that he was unconvertible currency in this land of welcome which sees itself as one of the most hospitable in the West. In Africa, he knows the traditions. A goat is offered to the potential boss, and he is assured of work in his special field. But his friend, Little Napoleon, explained at great length to him how things are done here:

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“It’s no use to offer a herd of goats to cut the grass of the Big Boss’s land, he never eats that meat, but will raise them as domestic animals. He adores family pets, and protects them like the pupil of his eyes. This is not the chance of your lifetime!”

“But then, how did you escape the vicious circle?”

“Simple as daylight: with the support of several friends who put their hands to the task. We arrived at a high building, the employment agency, which will take ten percent of your salary for three years.”

“I am a landed immigrant, and I’m supposed to have the same rights as Canadians, am I not?”

“Yes, on paper. In practice, it’s a different story. It’s not the time to complain. Tell yourself you’re lucky to be paid to climb and descend this tower. Moreover, *getting there is half the fun!*”

“And what’s the other half?”

“It’s to fly through the air, in a yellow and glass shell, and be busy in any job that comes along.”

Souleyman feels pain twisting his handsome black face. The complaisance of this white creep torpedoes his guts. Stunned by this story leaving him with a bad taste, he hesitates to lift his finger from the button so the engine will start. Bitterness doesn’t help him digest his loss of dignity. It imposes defeatism he cannot overcome. The passengers’ faces seem to say, “If he has a job, this guy, it’s just because he’s a member of the visible minority.”

I, the CN Tower, lead a life turning in every direction of the compass. I resemble the Great Wheel of Indian mysticism. Circling the Universe to the rhythm of the life cycle. Not linear like the masculine principle, but circular like female nature. I perfectly embody this paradox of the eternal return which never assumes the same appearance. It recaptures time, seeks it in

all the viscera without finding it. Each time lapse is colored with its own ingredients.

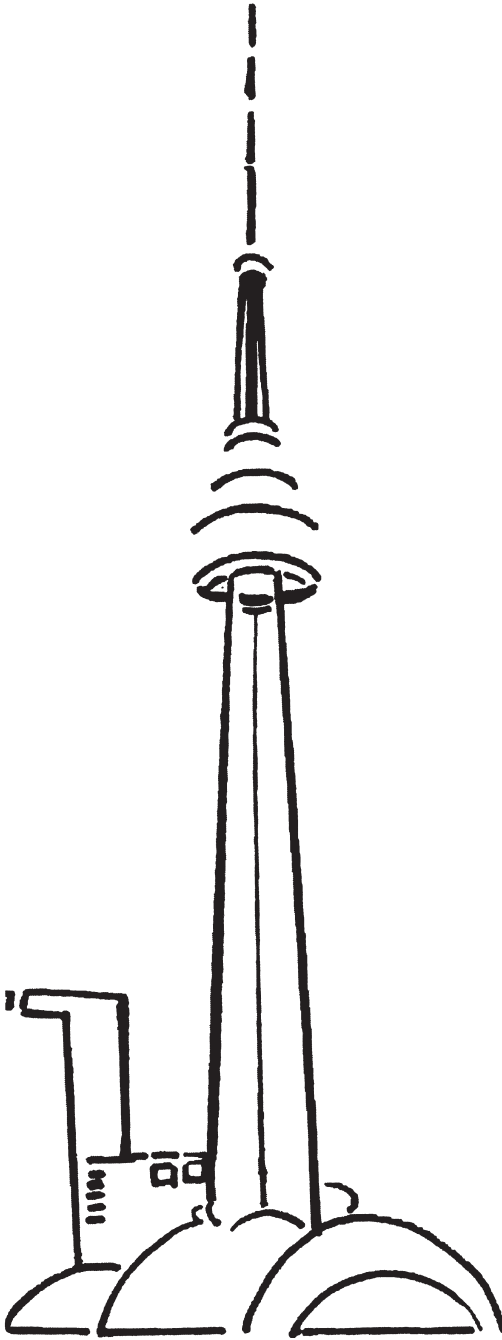
Thus I turn on myself three hundred and sixty degrees each day of the three hundred and sixty-five days of the year. In tune with the life cycle which structures itself. Stable and unstable. Mobile and fixed. Surging into life, I pursue my stops and starts. I discover my growth. I grow, perched on the north bank of Lake Ontario, dominating the south, each time that I turn the head of my antenna. I dominate the United States frontier and Niagara Falls. But I don't nurse illusions. Nor, moreover, jealousy! I didn't copy the Empire State Building, born of necessity. Manhattan is only an island built on a rock, and they had to build skyscrapers to house its citizens in a restricted space. This very tall building hasn't been duplicated. It's too high in case of fire or other emergency. The Americans still remember the bombs planted in the World Trade Center.<sup>2</sup> But as for me, I don't emerge as a rival jealous of this tower known throughout the world which makes the five continents tremble. More modestly, I am connected to the information circuits and I communicate. More privately, I surrender the steering wheel and devote myself to everything that can surpass me!

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<sup>2</sup> The reference is to the attempt to blow up the World Trade Center in the 1990s, an event which foreshadowed the total destruction of the twin towers on September 11, 2001, which was to change the world forever. *Translator's Note.*







3





*I*n the year of our Lord 1980, I was barely four years old. No one celebrates my birthday, except the handsome black who works inside me. Every day, this Elevator operator smilingly takes thousands of curiosity-seekers to the bulbous structure two-thirds up my height. The end of the road for these glass elevators encased in a yellow shell which wink sometimes during the night in a crazy, erotic coming and going. The visitors disembark as if they were on a plane landing in mid-air. The *Skypod*, a seventh sky linked by two panoramic bridges, greets them on the seventh level. Awe confronting these fleeting cubic perspectives. Souleyman Mokoko leaves them to their instant ecstasy and descends again to pick up a new load. Today, he thinks of the meeting agreed upon with Pete, whom he knew during the period of rejections blowing your mind. Just at the main exit where he is pacing back and forth. Only to kill time. This time unwilling to take his side. Refusing to bend, to yield a drop of joy. They go to console themselves, one for having lost his job, the other for having gotten one, seasonal, thanks to the Mafia. A favor that sticks in his craw. He has shoulders as large as this observatory no one wants to leave. And Pete hasn't the heart to celebrate the birthday of the woman who betrayed him simply by obeying orders. Nevertheless, he will invite his friend to have a Chinese meal at The Dragon Restaurant on Dundas Street. No secret escapes my antenna.

"Hi, Pete. Delighted you came to Toronto, and as I'm the one who's working, I'll pay for the dinner."

"You don't have to. I'm not asking you to share the bill as almost all our compatriots do... with the exception of people of color."

"Agreed, it's not part of our tradition. Tell me first how you left Manitoulin Island?"

"You know that when the *Gitchi Manitou*, the Great Spirit, cre-

ated the world, he kept the best part for his *face*. This land is Manitoulin, God's Island. But when we were expelled from the world, we could do nothing except wait for his wishes."

"Do you mean he found you work?"

"Yes, for the time being, I'm the Ferry Master linking the island to Tobermory. In fact, I'm in a more precarious position than you. I sail on crystalline lakes and wander in virgin forests. In a word, I have come back to my natural home."

"That may be true, but I feel you're not very happy. You would like to live near the tower whose summit was erected by your own hands."

Souleyman didn't pursue his thoughts to their logical conclusion. He hesitates, nods his head, makes large circles with his long arms, then says breathlessly:

"They hired a gay Franco-Ontarian *de souche* for the turnstiles, Marcel-Marie Duboucher."

"He must be saying he's plugged into the Tower. His role of minority member victim threw out a challenge. Christ, these cursed English gave me a shitty job."

"Not only that... he commits blackmail and the more he complains, the more he rots. The more he spits out his rage and jealousy, the more they take care of him. I'm very much afraid that the charming Kelly yields to his whims. Perhaps she loves him? Perhaps she wants to correct an injustice?"

"Then she's fooling herself! The petty linguistic quarrels are not at all comparable to the genocide of our race the other side of the border, the deculturations of this system of transplantation, this farming out of our children, the sexual abuse of these children in the name of progress and of the 1842 law decreeing that 'the Indians will have to be confined within reservations'....., the wholesale theft of our lands by these people, the supposed founders! Forget it..."

*Thus Speaks the CN Tower*

Papier mâché puppets are set in motion. They are made to act and talk. Then, why am I forbidden to take the floor and utter ideas that make people think and dream? Perforated cards may sing. Then, why do they condemn me to the silence of a calcified, stony monument? Robots of every kind, every color, are programmed to eat and drink. Why then deny me the faculty to transmit the thoughts of those who keep me working? The unutterable appears in ads and publicity. No one is offended. To the contrary, they obey to the letter and to their Holy Ghost. As for me, they put obstacles in the wind which is my essence. Nonetheless, I'm the only one to circulate the information that governs the world.

Each instant, I make the city travel across its lakes and hills, its parks and buildings... a zest of life and hope making people want to live and prosper. In the final analysis, all collectives are the same, from the Pharaohs to the exploding universe of this century's end. You are not going to begrudge me a few pure, hard thoughts? Today, I feel again their expansion. That doesn't often happen to me. But I'm in a bad mood. Despite the increasing number of visitors come to stuff themselves with happiness and escapism, washing their eyes with dazzling panoramas, nonetheless there is a lack of work for everyone. What cements our society is work. Work harnesses men and women to the most varied tasks... gives them a sense of solidarity, of dignity... of individual and collective values. Now we are passing through a period of unemployment. This cancer of nations that no government can erase. If I seem to be moralizing, it is to lighten my antenna. Whenever I feel depressed, I turn my eyes to see clearly. It's the paradox of death which makes us live. In my case, that is translated by the chaotic winks of my security lights.

Certain privileged individuals make me function or, rather, serve as wheels to make my wheels turn: a machine of inter-

changeable parts servicing my immovable structure. The only one to seize eternity, I won't make a list of those responsible for the entrances and exits. It's too long. These employees are controlled by electronic boxes so there is no possible error. However, I will say a few words about the turnstile appointee, the aforementioned Marcel-Marie Duboucher. Hired temporarily to show that we don't discriminate against our Francophone minorities, nor against homosexuals, nor against perpetual whiners, nor against those called "Invisible Men" *de souche*. It's true that they have modified the expression borrowed from the great African American writer Ralph Ellison by adding to it an honorific slogan: "*de souche*." Just to affirm their authenticity, which is a little shaky. Does anyone ever know the exact date of their immigration from the *Belle Province* to the Trillium?

Others take charge of food courts, souvenir stands, visitors' guides, and radio or television broadcasts. I will point out to you other actors who have distinguished themselves in my entrails. Ants following the same path in a monastic silence. Each one is bent over the task assigned to him. A frightening silence producing no echo.

The psychologists finally sounded the alarm: such a gigantic depersonalization will have after-effects. People will never recover from a wounded soul ... A rumor spreads that Marc Durocher was beating his wife almost every night. Just out of love. For no reason except to show her he's the Boss, he knocks her against the wall. Like ice pellets thrown against the snowy mountains flanking the streets. His wife begged her friends to help her kill this son of a bitch. No one came to her aid. Her pleas fell on deaf ears. Perhaps also she didn't know how to sound like a victim? You have to get up early to play the downtrodden. Marc Durocher, past master in this art, didn't transmit this skill to his wife. Every time he empties three-quarters of a

bottle of whisky into a belly already swollen with beer, the beatings become fiercer and fiercer...

When Souleyman is sometimes given the opportunity to climb my east or west faces, he thinks himself a writer listening to my entrails. Can he at least be objective? I know from a trusted source that he has written only reports of unfinished work. Just to justify his salary? Here, in his yellow module, calculator in hand, he registers the daily number of visitors. A floating figure which baffles the Personnel Officer Kelly King who looks at him suspiciously. As if he had killed her father. It's this antagonism you could cut with a hatchet – in these precincts, it's forbidden to carry a knife – which facilitated the dialogue between the Amerindian, Deloon with his crown of bitterness, and the African-Canadian who has trouble finding his "place in the sun." And even if he has swept clean the slate of his past, his ambitions, and his fantasies, he can only count on the ascents and descents of his elevator. It's a warm meeting of these brothers in uncertainty, whose spirits are filled with the complaints of the marginalized. Members of the army of the potential unemployed, real and virtual, they nonetheless are anchored by the unshakeable pride worthy of their ancestors. Brows furrowed with sorrow.



If I top the skyscrapers bowing at my feet, I cut off neither their breath, nor their voice. On the contrary, a good democrat, I let them speak. Broadcast and publish without intervening. But to assert their power, they need to cry out loud. Cry on the rooftops. Cry on everyone's head. Cry on the waves and cry on paper. Sometimes just for the sake of crying. Make people listen who try to forget them.... Bristling with radio and television stations,

they broadcast programs in Italian, Greek, Polish, Korean, Chinese, Japanese, Spanish, Portuguese, Arabic, Czech, Russian, Hungarian, German, Norwegian, Swedish, Thai, Urdu, Indian, Pakistani, Hebrew, Yiddish, Ukrainian, Danish.... What can I say? One hundred fifty-seven languages have gained the “right to speak” in this city, the most cosmopolitan in the world. Luck without order or control. Without adhering to each other. Without forming snowballs. No snowman either. Moreover, we haven’t boiled these immigrants down in the American Melting Pot, reducing them to the lowest common denominator, the American Way of Life.

With us, there is no room for arrogance or disdain. To the contrary, we have opened our identity to thousands of these searchers after bones, collectors of finished works, so they may earn their daily bread and that of their families waiting their turn to come here. A legal or clandestine migration. A stampede towards a golden age: to work in a world of unemployment no longer knowing how to manage leisure time. Simply time itself.

With us, we have encouraged these immigrants to hang on to their culture by their teeth. *Hang in Baby!* With their sad hearts, with the money they couldn’t make at home. And as they are very disciplined, they shut themselves into ghettos. Built by their own hands. With the meagre funds of their compatriots. These islets form the famous “Canadian Mosaic.” An immense Solitude shining with its hundreds of solitary fragments. The Third Solitude that our ex-Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau wanted to stick between the first two solitudes, founders of this country, just to make them stretch their legs, burst with joy, rather, to inject them with the solitary worm, this miraculous sperm about to give birth to the famous Moose, to the music of our deepest culture. I’d like to remind you that this great deer-like creature of the Northern Canadian marshes

*Thus Speaks the CN Tower*

is called the Moose. He has a deer's antlers, a horse's head, a camel's hump, a goat's beard, and webbed feet for water- or snow-skiing... all the Skidoos, all the Seadoos. I greet warmly this Moose born from our womb whose image puts paid to this surplus of regionalisms.

And they still continue to serve snacks in the many ghettos of ethno-culture cultivated in the fertile fields of the Moose. They especially need drinks on the rocks! They have been gifted with bursaries and funds. They have acquired the "eating, not drinking" syndrome, and have all been struck with this contagious and nonetheless rare sickness, Subventionitis. Each shell closes and develops acute navel-gazing, proof against all attacks. No one cares about anyone. Neither care, nor medicine. It's going to take a lot of money to eradicate this virus that, in the final analysis, they have a vested interest in propagating. It's more marketable for elections than any scientific discovery. Certain ghettos flourish in the tabernacle of faith. Others disappear through the cracks. Others spring up like mushrooms. Others, in advance of their time, establish bases for new conflicts. This life goes on, rainy days, sunny days. Days of snow and ice, days of sunshine and spring breezes. Nights of clouds and nights of moonlight. Nights of storms and hurricanes, nights of blue sky and shooting stars. At the top of the Canada Life Building, a barometer in the shape of the Eiffel Tower indicates the temperature with luminous ascents and descents. This rise or fall of the lights reaches the box of green for good weather, red for bad, white for snow. Visible in the very midst of the city, this tower is no competition for me. It exists in my shadow. It serves only to nourish Torontonians with meteorological forecasts. The more money they make, the less time they have to look at the weather report. However, everyone wants to carry the temperature with him and only for him...





If I insist on this egotistical fashion of pocketing the weather or the sky, it's to signal to you the efficiency of our methods! We never stop someone who works in the Tower to gain riches by excess of zeal. As for me, I am only the daughter of necessity. I surpass myself in height to broadcast the message the skyscrapers block with all their power. Nonetheless I am only a blank in the serene sky. A reflection in the mirror of consciousness, and my neighbors spend their lives envying my structure. It doesn't matter! I feel comfortable inside my carcass of glass and concrete. Poured into an immense finger perpetually on guard. I import and export news beyond comprehension. And the news is well broadcast, here and there, in the everyday world. No one accuses me. If I defy the sky, its arch suffers neither from my power, nor my control. Far from competing with it, my logic is diametrically opposed.

No faith is peddled. Not that I'm against religions, but for the love of media neutrality. Whatever happens, I belong to the Ontarian capital of the land of Kids' money, as an American woman said, convinced there is no dollar but the U.S. greenback. Thus, you perceive that I must protect my discourse from all fanaticism and hegemony. While always trying to distinguish myself from Uncle Sam. Compared to this Giant, I am only the little sorceress of grey steel with eyelashes of giant antennae. My steel bulb shines in the sun. My stomach isn't made of brick, but wrapped in cotton. Like an Inuit sculpture, I revive the forms of expression of songs and traditional tales. Like Davidialuk, I interpret the story of a young man – in my case, a young woman – who broke the taboo against whistling in the presence of the Aurora Borealis. While his friends observe the scene, the lights turn and seize the young man's head to make a balloon.

*Thus Speaks the CN Tower*

In my tale of stone, I feel myself decapitated from my antennae.  
Sown to the four winds by goads, my head is chased by a cloudy  
sky.

I leave you to guess if the game is worth the candle.







*F*oggy weather. I can't see the city. I'm sure it also misses me. This blurred vision makes me depressed, coiled up upon myself, waiting. A little thrust, even malevolent, even a stray ray of sunshine, would give me the illusion of life. But the fog is thick. Kelly is also in a bad mood. She hasn't closed her eyes all night. She tosses and turns in her bed, imprisoned in the burning body she would like to flee. Finally, she gets up, her eyes swollen, her mouth woolly. A few cups of strong coffee don't offer her any energy. Today, she has a meeting with the boss to report on my operations, and especially my marketability. Everything revolves around me: how to present me so that I can bring in money proportionate to my immense size? We're in a time of budget cuts. The operation "spectacle of height" must make money. Thus they have to cut into the flesh of the staff who literally keep me running. They only have to get their hands a little dirtier... that would give them weight!

Even if she is in charge in her position, Kelly can't help thinking about those rejected on the S.E.E. list (without steady employment). She asks herself how to make up for her silence which cost the position of the bronzed Amerindian. She stretches out on the boss's sofa, like a satisfied cat. Her lifted skirt reveals honeyed thighs making onlookers thirst for her. But the boss placidly throws out the figures she dictates to him, as cold as the snowy Rockies. Supply and demand no longer match. Vainly she crosses her legs to attract his eyes to her behind, but nothing happens. The male facing her lives in fear of prosecution for sexual harassment, who took so much time to deflower his wife.

Kelly looks at this old, stout, bald gentleman who looks like her father. This reminds her that she always loved her dad without being able to tell him. Even with stifled sighs! He never touched her. His greetings came from a distance. Never

a handshake, a caress, a word of praise. She smelled his after-shave every day, which drove her crazy. Her nostrils flared. She remembers that her jealous mother said to her just before her death: "Your father will never need you, nor anyone else after my death." And that hurt Kelly to see her mother die, thirsting for love. Agony to the bitter end. The coldness of a father whose mask covers any feelings. In the place of her boss who doesn't stop working on spread sheets, she sees her father floating at the North Pole, her mother being devoured by cancer, and the acrobat Pete, who fills her with happiness tasting of sweet grass and patchouli. Even his absence is scented. Because he has disappeared from circulation, Pete occupies a larger space in her solitude. She burns to see his eyes sparkle like the spring-time sun, and the thrust of his eagle's body in a free fall. She only saw it as a television image. Does she really regret Pete's dismissal as a scofflaw? In fact, she didn't lift a finger to help him. Better still, she ignored him so that he wouldn't entertain any notion of conquering her...

That would be a role reversal! For to seduce her, one needed to get up early in the morning! Speculations belong on Bay Street, not to the Tower overlooking the city. Moreover, I assert myself, the CN Tower, not as a seductress of the landscape, but as a phallus impregnating the heavens, like a female talespinner of passionate tales. A drug I can't live without. I also continue to lock myself in the entrails of the unique structure, that powers this tower represented by this model employee who never leaves the building all day. Kelly is afraid to lose her job and find herself pounding the pavement, like so many others her age!

Instead of going outside to lunch, to enjoy the fresh, hazy air, the boss invites Kelly to share a sandwich she will pay for herself. She will carry the half she can't finish in her doggy bag. Her throat tightened when Souleyman cast a suspicious look at

this bizarre couple. Kelly is always frightened by steady looks which undress her against her will. Attraction and repulsion leave their traces on this soul who is sensitive to the tips of her golden hair.

Kelly King remembers her childhood when she huddled against her paternal aunt to attract her father's attention. She cried uncontrollably without her dad's ever taking her into his arms. He was proud of her, he saw her crying, but never touched her. Contrary to her aunt's husband, a Pakistani, who covered her with kisses everywhere. Which is an aberration in this whole family. They even suspected him of being a pedophile. One never knows with foreigners. They practice bizarre customs without caring about those of their adoptive country! The little girl began to feel a bittersweet love for the man who responded to her approaches. Frustrated and deprived of a father's loving embrace, she lodged her affection in the thick beard of her uncle. During all these contacts, the absent mother kept busy in the kitchen making delicious meals nobody noticed. Words of tenderness, of comfort were rare...

And now I'm confusing Kelly's life with images and words. Born twenty-five years before I appeared in all my splendor in 1976, she is a part of this generation which has something to say to the world, without knowing what, or how! Blocked by a speech which only comes to her when she is in a trance. The rarest of all occasions, except at a moment of extreme crisis. But she's lucky to have succeeded in finding a job ... and not a bad one. From the beginning, she was pushed to the top of this administrative structure, envied by the whole world. At this time universities were turning out the unemployed in every category: Honours B.A., M.A., and Ph.D. in every field. Historians, mathematicians, information specialists, lawyers, businessmen, tacticians, teachers of every imaginable subject,



physicians, chemists... so many S.E.E. thrown out on the job market. No one knows how to use them.

They stir the numbers in a wicker basket. They placard statistics on all the TV and computer screens. They wait in line in front of recruitment and training bulletin boards. They read small and large classified ads in cheap newspapers and illustrated magazines. Glossy paper triggering murderous envy. As we see everywhere in the world where nuts shoot viciously at the innocent. Killing thirty children before committing suicide. Bombs planted by fanatics for the slightest chance of appearing on TV or in the newspapers. Kamikaze martyrdom operations, killing themselves in order to go directly to paradise, dragging with them dozens of the dead and wounded. Ethnic purifications of all kinds to safeguard a nonexistent "purity." Operation "Desert Storm" supposed to establish a new world order. Humiliation, famines, a lack of rudimentary care for children and the elderly. All this for a few oil wells. In the interest of a big fish who is never named, of a President who flexes his muscles, a megalomaniac, a totalitarian, to whom they sold weapons to display his virility to the universe... Operation "Grapes of Wrath" with the slaughter of women and children lodged in "a security zone" and taken hostage. A tragic blink of destiny's eye. Without stopping the shots of Katioucha, he pursues his electoral campaign, afraid that the electoral vote may rebound on him. It's the law of Talion... Oh yes, my stomach is full of this information flashes that my antennae capture and transmit.

I put a tremendous amount of myself into this because I belong to the country of non-belligerence and neutrality. Thank God, this greatest country in the world has earned the reputation of immaculate whiteness. Perhaps because it's covered with snow more than six months of the year. It's often called upon to mediate all the troubles of the planet. Especially not to soil

one's hands when political or ethnic groups kill each other. On my manicured lawns reaching as far as the gravel, everything is transparent. Or so they say. Behind the scenes, it's a whole different story. I try to rescue it from time by following these few individuals who earn their daily bread in my body. Transparency doesn't mean indifference. To the contrary, I know what weapon to use. I protect myself by opening my doors to all nations. I welcome all languages without emasculating them. I let them circulate in the space they have created.

You can get on better alone, Souleyman often repeats to me. This point of view troubles me, but I contained it. One must pay off debts to one's country of origin and country of adoption. On the one hand his Africa idealized to the very bottom of its uprooted trees. Although he has not carried his country in his shoes, in his heart, it eats him like a cancer. Like a wild beast, it pursues him, tracks him, even if he never dabbled in politics or sought a leadership post. His only crime is to have committed himself to teach his compatriots an imported freedom. That was his mistake. On the other hand, this welcoming country made him reflect on the future in total freedom. On top of his rights of man and of chimpanzee. Something to dream about day and night. All the machinery of democracy is in place to launch you in whatever direction you choose. The Golden Fleece at your disposal. It's enough to think for yourself, and be completely indifferent to the fate of average mortals. The world is there, it surrounds you, that's enough. For the ten years he has been in Toronto the cosmopolitan, Souleyman Mokoko could only obtain part-time work – during the tourist season, visitors descend on me from the whole world. His badge, “unemployment... Whose turn?” on his head, even during the slack seasons, Souleyman knows that his skin color is his main strength, as well as his losing card. A widely accepted difference you don't measure,

but deny. That makes part of his life in this very expansive world of light, of skyscrapers invading the atmosphere. The faces, on the contrary, are sad and dismal. Only the variety of colors breathes life into their faces. Life catching its breath with holiday ardor. In reality Souleyman's coexistence with his Canadian compatriots leaves him under the sign of ambiguity and distance. But that's a long story which I won't tell for the time being.



Marcel-Marie Duboucher made advances to him. Souleyman has no taste for that kind of flesh. The Franco-Ontarian *de souche* detests him from the bottom of his heart. All the more so because this new arrival from the desert speaks the language of Molière better than he does. How can he sound like those cursed French who abandoned his ancestors to the mercy of England? A colonial, no doubt. French colonization in Africa succeeded better than with us.

"Holy Mother of God: ... when I think I wanted to say nice things about that Mokoko monkey to the big boss... so she'll renew his contract for the winter...instead of the shit on the B.S.... and he put me in my place... Christ. He set me down on a pile of shit. Whatever he thinks, I only sleep with guys I love...

This sickening shit Kelly pesters me to run after her like a stupid cow. As if I were the Golden Boy in this hole of a country. I'm not going to eat that honey. Worse, if she comes here to ask me to fuck her, I'll send her packing to the Canadian Club. I'll say more: get this for once and for all, I hate you..., go fuck yourself on the cursed tower. Worse, when she plays the shitty Businesswoman, she thinks she's Queen Mary... and everyone runs after her. She has me in her bones, like the Pope's holy

water. But hers isn't sacred! Don't worry, I don't screw women... I've another project to bury myself in...."

Marcel-Marie's advances, sometimes subtle, sometimes gross, don't stir the heart or the head of Souleyman, who remains neutral. Even if tolerant, provided he looks elsewhere. What also annoys the African Canadian is that this "*de souche*" drags visitors in constantly. Some of them complained to the Administration, which closed its eyes to it, shut its ears, in order not to trigger a long, onerous legal process. But he also suspects that Kelly protects him. She defends him for the slightest infraction.

One day, a student of the Toronto French School, accompanied by his teacher and class, is taken aside by Marcel-Marie.

"You want to spend the evening having a beer with me?"

"But I'm not what you think."

"A little fun doesn't hurt anyone."

"Are you nuts, or what?"

"No, I find you handsome, appealing, and I already love you."

When the student reported this conversation to his teacher, they decided to report the proposition to Personnel. But they were as offended by the poor quality of the French as by the unwelcome proposition. And the harassment is shoved under the rug in order not to pour oil on the flames of this peculiar scandal. If Marcel-Marie, in a few months, has placed behind the turnstiles numerous friends from the gay community, it remains true that his field of action is shamelessly extended. All the same, this public relations gate remains closed for all other Francophone citizens. One must apply to the official minority in order not to be taken *in flagrante delicto*. Not to serve the Ontario public only in the majority language. The one spoken by nine and a half million inhabitants.

Souleyman is perfectly bilingual, but he can't easily manage the second official language – of the minority, it goes without

saying. However, he can keep his elevator operating efficiently and safely, and sail freely and easily from earth to sky. There can be no possible electrical malfunction. In me, the CN Tower, everything is anticipated in the event that... No, not failure: an electronic brain corrects every error, every malfunction that can happen, but it's not very likely. Souleyman thus is in no danger, except that of losing his job. This anxiety eats at his mind and makes him hesitate. He asks for little: that which is, in principle, his right: a "place in the sun," as they say, life insurance, new proof that his family will be cared for in the event of his death. Distracted, Souleyman is speechless at those moments, mired in frustrated gestures. Mechanical arms only moving dead air. A wrinkled brow which cannot think straight. Distraught, he goes to join his friend Pete. Abandoned. The two together try to dream up coping mechanisms. But neither of them knows how to approach CUPE, this union which explains that it can do nothing for them, because everything is measured by seniority. The old order plays the devil's role to control new competition, and as Souleyman is the last to be hired, he will be the first to be fired. In any case, he must wait until those who have more seniority than he grab all the choice positions so he can gather the crumbs... and be satisfied if indeed there are any remaining!

Pete himself seems to lose his voice and no longer knows how to approach me. He hasn't set foot within my precincts since he was fired and thrown overboard. He is afraid of being unable to extricate himself from my machinery, so entangled is he in this love story with Kelly. One could say he is caught in a viper's nest. "We have to avenge ourselves," says Mokoko to his friend. In the height of passion, Pete surrenders himself to me like an artist to his raw material.

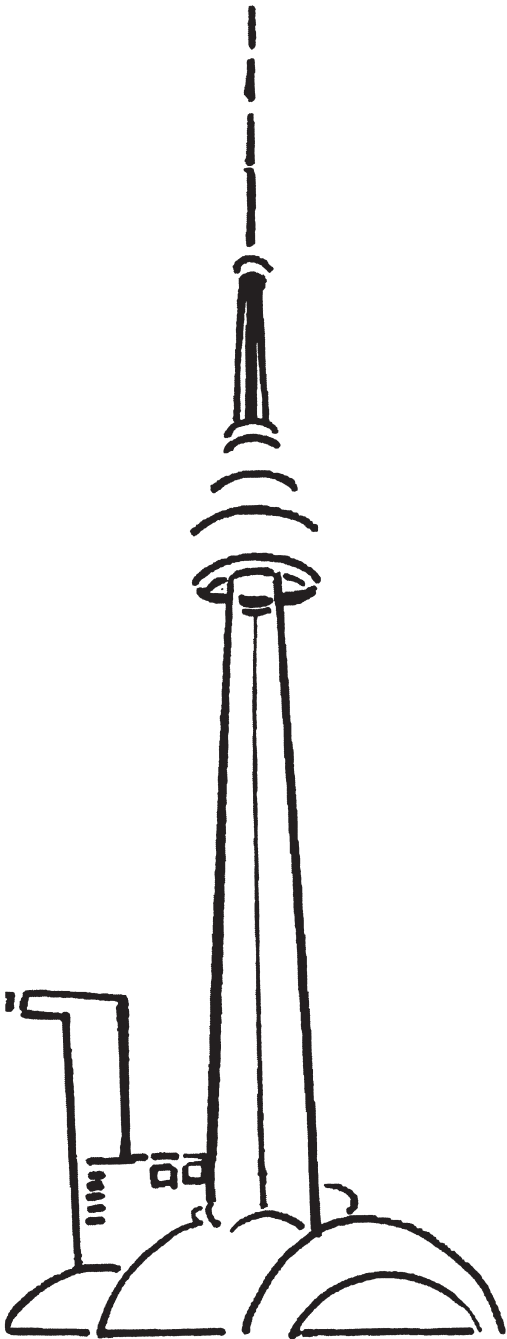
However, neither Pete nor I can control fate! We plunge into

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ourselves because we have something to say. It doesn't matter who will listen to us. We will spill our guts in silence. In solitude, both wondrous and sad, he loves Kelly who refuses him any satisfaction. And I, because I am in quest of the elusive, difficult words whose resistance tears my skin. All the time making me enter a Calvary tasting of Paradise. And I produce by paying my debts to my environment. I don't have a pen to put to a blank page to enjoy the licentious marriage of paper and ink.

My necklace of light, fireflies more eloquent than myriads of lighted windows. They decorate the skyscrapers with a semblance of life, creating dreams.





5





*F*rom my summit, I do nothing but beam words. I capture them, but especially transmit them. My finger doesn't attack the sky. It serves as a focal point. I don't mention the world crises. They are so far away that we don't pay the slightest attention to them. Often because of the individual's prominence. My compatriots never neglect their work unless a new item in their particular interest captures their attention on the radio, the TV, the newspapers. Under the circumstances, they don't consult their ancestral philosopher's stone, or the intellectual star of the moment.

I am Château de Latour, who relays all the complex thoughts. Mediamorphosis. Communication. Sound and light show. I am on watch day and night. My ideas travel throughout the universe. My local vision extends as far as Niagara Falls, to the south. A wonder of the world. And to the north, as far as Algonquin Park, large and small lakes, ignoring Canada's Wonderland and the TD Centre – I will describe to you only the splendors of nature. The Group of Seven immortalized it better than I ever could with my words carried on the wind. I trust painters more than word jugglers. I am up front with my prejudices and tastes. I prefer television to radio. Radio to newspapers. Reading tires me, as much as I'm excited by the TV screen! I would so much like to learn to live. But I know that life isn't to be learned.

Today, joy seizes the city. Is it the Great Spirit invoked by Pete in his friendship ceremony? At dawn, this acrobat in moccasins studded with emeralds appears ghost-like to me. He wears an anorak embroidered with white shells and grains of black coffee. Dancing leather fringes. A majestic cadence. He positioned himself with four other members of the First Nations, at the very foot of my shadow. He lights the "scented hay" in a pearl shell, and directs the smoke with an eagle feather towards his

friends. He expects it to purify the ears, mouth, nostrils, eyes, briefly, all the senses, and especially the soul. Crouching over their drums on the ground, the friends beat a madder and madder rhythm, while Pete follows the circle clockwise. All the while singing litanies ranging from sweet to violent. An invocation whose message I can't decipher. One of the drummers asks if his accent resembles the moose cry, or if it doesn't at all. Pete can tell him. Suddenly he goes into a trance, invokes the Great Manitou, who presents himself in person: *Wa-sha-quon-asu*. The Grey Owl speaks:

"The Whites are mistaken about us. They take our ancestors for savages, cannibals, only good for reading the tracks of animals who skulk behind trees, decoding the keys the Whites cannot read in the deep forest. And to keep their conscience clear, they say we are *noble*. How can we be noble while grazing on the salad beneath their feet? In this country, salads are imported from California wrapped in cellophane! Yes, we hunt with bow and arrow like chiefs. We wear moccasins and make canoes out of birch bark. Sometimes, we are faithful allies of the English and sometimes of the French. Each in turn or simultaneously. When it suits us. When we want to surrender or reconquer our lands. We are brave warriors. Not thieves sneaking behind one's back.

You adopted their language, my son... but they have taught you nothing! They still envy the free spirit of our wanderings. Our sense of honor, and also of humor. Our love of truth. The power of our dreams. Then, tell yourself that the 'Great Manitou' still watches over you. That is why he gives you different masks. Not those imposed on you by force. On your aboriginal beauty, they burned with hot iron laziness, dirt, drunkenness, stupidity... All the clichés we hear constantly. They are happy to park us on reservations where we don't pay taxes. The only problem is to find work. In order not to resemble the layabouts

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crowding the streets and pocketing Loonies without making change. They're going to reproach me for this stereotype. But it's a drug for those who play hide-and-seek in the holes of this *Wonderland!* They no longer want this land. No one has understood the voice of the Great Manitou! You, you're going to listen to me. You don't have to go down in defeat. You have nothing to do. Observe, and mind your own business..."



Perhaps it's the Moose-Spirit that infuses the inhabitants' faces with joy? It gives a rainbow of colors to buildings, tinting skins with an ungraspable happiness; joy read in people's behavior, food making them forget time. All this oscillates on my antenna, the words of the moment. Extremes vanish even if measured on the planes of earth and sky. But I know only the mechanism of the electronic balance! I quickly weigh the evening and daily news. I filter the word flow uncensored, unprejudiced. One of the rare absolute truths that I respect and carry in my heart is the Moose-Spirit. Because this Force lives this truth in his flesh, and his cry means more than a fire siren. The chorus of his innocent voices is better than fame's trumpet, or the Mounties perched on their wooden horses. Each of his members combines elements of other animals. The Moose-Spirit which is both distant and near in the forest of our thoughts. His muzzle grazing on clumps of moss beneath emerald waters announces the Orient and Occident of our sunniest desires. He feeds us with love, life, wrinkles and smiles. A vision of power with his two hundred and eighty meters and more than one thousand kilos of flesh, he is beyond description. His impressive force is always sought like the air we need to breathe.

Among his gifts, the Moose-Spirit carries new blood to this dying city. It was the end of the 60's. An injection of all kinds of moose-spirits in the land of ambiguous foundation. Whence this flux of multicolored globules making waves at the airports and beside the Lake. Sleeves rolled up for works that this brave new world is in haste to begin. Imagine the hordes of immigrants ready to wash away from the queen city its Victorian sclerosis. Still today, they throw firecrackers, send up fireworks to celebrate Victoria Day. The nearest Monday to May 24. The Queen's Birthday often in competition with the U.S. Memorial Day. A miracle accomplished: here is Toronto coming out of its shell, shaking its Stiff Upper Lip. No more monotony to cut with a knife. No more need to chase flies... They're rare, it's true! But the city assumes the ease of a virgin ready for marriage. Bursting with happiness and health, drunk with light, she abolishes the sadness resembling Glasgow's in every way. The old Toronto the Good, Hog Town, is revitalized. The provincial community assumed the air of a cosmopolitan Metropolis.

In a few years, the ravished moose-spirits gratefully witness climbing spires, towers, skyscrapers. And their hands are calloused constructing, night and day, the world they have dreamed. Unbridled imagination makes the town take flight in myriad lights and splendor. As in the beginning, the welcoming country opens for them doors of silence and windows of tolerance, they feel at home in their skin. Then, fairly integrated, they spread a few sandwiches with peanut butter topped with maple syrup. A story of feeling very much at home. And for more than thirty years, each year they give the city its annual checkup. Blood pressure of the streets and avenues. Mammography of structures and buildings. Verification of the mental prostate. Diets in order not to gain weight in mediatic brains. Without forgetting alcohol abuse, drugs, insomnia. Overmedicate to soar to

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victory like the Blue Jays: *Go, Blue Jays, Go* is the slogan affixed to the rear windows or bumpers of thousands of cars...

In occult knowledge the Moose-Spirit displaced the linguistic map of the country by a few millimeters, as a certain Patrice D'Amour required, who pretends to be the Invisible Man. A mere midget to take his place, momentarily, at the round table of negotiations, to assure the place of the minority in a majority provincial Tower.

"Christ, what tower are you speaking of? I pay one hundred fifty bucks for my shopping every week, and I'm not on the B.S."


"Me neither. Welfare, you need to earn it. I am the North, I am the heart, I am the spirit. The light of the Anti-Babel Tower speaking all languages in the happiness of a blinding light-house."

With top billing, Sieur D'Amour becomes simultaneously visible and risible. Head of Series of the National Film Board. Beneath his shepherd's crook, and despite all the vaccinations, Franco-Ontarians have contracted this incurable disease of the "Official Minority." They make repeated announcements to habituate us to the Misunderstood. Just to show the world that our provincial trillium talents rival those of the Fleur de Lys. Understand by that that the Belle Province turns a deaf ear to all the francophobias of the country. Except its own. The Elect shouts, "Outside Québec there is no salvation." Mother France, privileged on all grounds, makes it pay the bill of which nine-tenths comes from the federal budget managed especially for the would-be separatists. And they make sure that all the historical discussions highlight the victims' cry of alarm in the corridors of my political lobby, where the majority of ethnic communities try in vain to be heard. Marcel-Marie Duboucher cultivates them so they will vote him President of the Trade Union. Once appointed, he won't bother with them!

The legitimate sons Marcel-Marie, Marc, Jean and other cursed ones authentically verified as of pure French Canadian descent formerly, and Québeckers at present, feel themselves to have been excluded and invisible for generations. They have no other choice than to apply these same exclusions to the immigrants of the Moose-Spirit. A hybrid land. "Utopia occupying the whole space." The conclusions are clear: "Critical discourse is suspect." If Québec excludes us, say these single-minded uprooted peoples, we must more and more "exile ourselves within ourselves." I am quoting verbatim the great poet René-Gilles De Chialon. I know I will be accused of falsifying or distorting his words. Of not having been "politically correct." Only his words are official. They are Bible truth in the eyes of the English who nevertheless insist that the pie be sliced in equity and justice for all the excluded. Without exclusivity. By fair play and English flair, those of the moose included. After all, they pay their taxes in the Province, work, live and die in the Province.

"And they can't see why Marcel-Marie doesn't want to exert himself one bit so that Souleyman has as well-paid a job as his. Isn't he the *authentic* son of a country extending from Atlantic to Pacific?"

"Christ... What do these colored faces have to do with us? We should boot them out... like the damned English on the Plains of Abraham! Who should push whom? Who came first?"



I got up in a good mood, gay, jovial. And here I am turning to vinegar. As soon as I think of the minority squabbles, I have a headache. Squabbles woven on a background of Anglo-Saxon

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detachment. Internal ferment, on the outside an icy face. When I think that the separatists are cooking up plots under my very eyes, and I play the fool! I know they won't get far. Seeing my height and my visions, I don't need to convince them. Look at their capital sheltered in our banks that I have overseen since the first referendum of 1982. I was barely six years old... and already they had more confidence in me than any Prince of Windsor!

For God's sake, what are these Francophones doing tearing themselves apart for the tiniest piece of land? When one lives in the largest country in the world, it blows your mind! And hardly twenty-eight million inhabitants.... Don't tell me that our lands are uncultivated eight months of the year. Snowy spaces that should be abandoned as soon as possible, according to Voltaire. He must be biting his nails and turning in his grave today. If he only knew that despite his predictions, here they grow apples, pears, vineyards. They make wine. A Wine which took first place among the worst wines in the world! But the French don't know it makes the greedy happy. They sell it at fifty percent of the market price, just to refine the taste of reluctant drinkers. But that was only the beginning. Today, we make Ice wine of international quality which perfectly corresponds to our temperament. However, let's return to the internecine quarrels of the Francophones. They have established fifty-six non-profit associations for the public good in the Queen City. Imagine this excess of activities, from BOFTEM to BEFCTU, from AMFOU to AIFOU, without speaking of the Alliances Françaises, the Richelieu Clubs, etc.... Study the list well before you get lost. The politic of multiple colors is evidently very complicated.

Before, there was the initial voice. That marking each act of bravery by "a war feather," a kind of trophy that the native pinned to his headband after a weaponless excursion to the



enemy camp, a horse theft, or a scalping. After thirty war feathers, he could wear the “war bonnet.” That was in the old days. Pete earned his first “heroic feather” when he fled the reservation. He didn’t know he was going to take the enemy’s side in disappearing into the lap of Sister Antoinette. She smelt of musk. When she held him against her, he felt her soft breasts. Amply protective. It was from her he learned that the Mohawk belonged to the Six Nations, known as the Iroquois Confederation. Ranien Kehakas, or People of stone, the Mohawk cultivate their talents in construction work, especially on high scaffolds.

The Mississauga Tribe left Toronto in 1848 to settle in the Grand River region. His father was born on the Brantford Reservation southwest of Toronto, the splendid capital of the Province, and perhaps of the country. There, he registered in the Mohawk Institute which was built in 1830 to produce farmers and all kinds of farm workers. He created a fairly prosperous family. Pete’s father had borrowed money from the Band Council to build a house for his ten children. Pete, the last, was born in 1956, twenty years before the closing of the Mohawk Institute, and the opening of my doors. In 1975, the Institute was transformed into a cultural and educational center.

The story of Pete’s father’s love life is rather vague in his mind. Sister Antoinette always whitewashed it. Saying it was the fault of the white woman who instigated a savage violence between the cousins. Both were married, and both were in love with the same employee of Canada Post, one Naomi Crack. She had them as lovers at the same time, for three years, when the tragedy occurred. Pete’s father killed his cousin and was condemned to life imprisonment by Judge King. Naomi, Pete’s mother, didn’t know exactly who was the father of the newborn child, nor what to do with this child that fell into her care. She entrusted him to the Sacred Heart Convent. At this period, it

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was aberrant behavior to bury him in the prison of the founding Fathers. Still, despite his fugue state, he returned to the lap of his adoptive mother, Sister Antoinette, who inculcated in him the rudiments of the Bible, a sense of duty and responsibility and attachment to the Ten Commandments. At the age of twenty-two, this Métis married and left the reservation to go work in the city and send money to Twylla, his abandoned wife, until the day when he performed the perilous leap of his life. A story of laughter or challenges! Place a “heroic feather” in his tangled black hair, defy gravity and play the Robin Hood of the air. Curious, the metropolitan police awaited him on terra firma a few meters from my trunk....



If my superhuman height causes dizziness, it is to inspire greatness in fliers, to master the inexhaustible mystery of the skyscraper forest, of the fir trees bristling with needles, birches, poplars... all this purple shading to blue, green, orange, black ink and the whiteness of paper. All these subjects of life are only a carpet of moss and ferns. There I drink, Tower-thief-of-fire, the common denominator of my period. And, especially, identity working in our depths condemned to surpass itself endlessly. My vertical tendency doesn't follow a single direction, but bursts into shooting stars whose source, or whose landings, remain completely unknown! Just like the caribou which, with head submerged, grazes on water lilies at the bottom of a lake. From time to time, he lifts his head to see the sky. And each time he moves, water runs from his limbs in white streams, making concentric circles in the serene lake which dissolve somewhere beyond eternity. Then silence resumes, this obsessive, sublime song of identity.

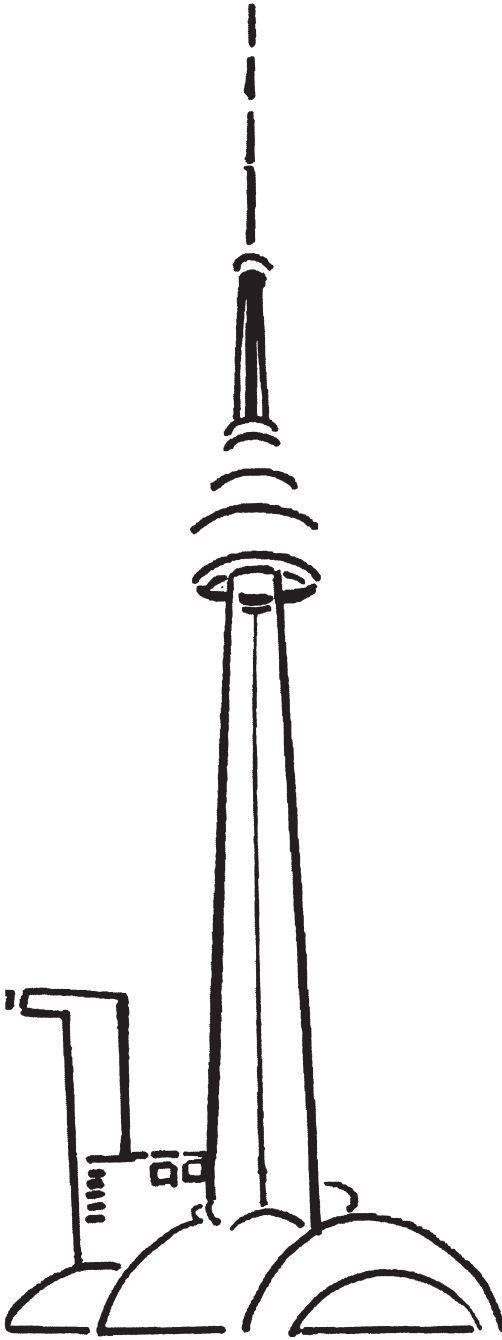
I too am made thus. These foamy sparks of daylight do not dialogue with my antenna but with my bulb which, embracing life amidst tumult, never ceases its quest for a language of reconciliation.

At that point I ask myself why Pete was fired when my motto shouts out loud, *Welcome, let your spirits soar?* Why did they deprive him of his love of air? The joy of plunging from the sky to the earth. Isn't he free to precipitate himself in the opposite direction to the thrust I boast of? To defy gravity? To enjoy a fantasy, rejecting the laws and the Puritan work ethic? What will remain when he has cast the dice? Pete wanted to taste the sacred in this desire to attain Beauty in his life. He has forgotten that the sacred and beauty exist only in contact with others. Like the experience of God within oneself that one finds only in the pilgrim-look of the other.

Evidently, only love gives sense to life. How do I, angular stone, go about loving all these beings that I created with my own flesh?







6



The sun cascades on the shapes of scattered nebulae. The city is transformed into our reality. I am no longer in the radiant nudity of the skyscrapers. Shady zones nibble at buildings. The harmonious unified light is broken.

Each light tries to monopolize the intense limelight. My vision flies from roof to roof. Signs delayed on the façades of buildings. Like a Legion of Honor in the buttonhole! A Lion licks a crown capping a globe, completely yellow, right beside me, attached to the Royal Bank. A red square, in the form of an angular C couchant, containing an upright T, in a hollow signaling the Canada Trust. An immense M in blue light, in the form of a saw, the teeth on a bar, presides over the highest building, the Bank of Montreal. Behind this behemoth is Commerce Court. Then the red S identifying the Sheraton Hotel, then the four black buildings, taking the conventional form of the name the Toronto Dominion Centre. In large red letters, the Skydome Hotel<sup>3</sup> signals its strange charm with inflated capital block letters on which a bloody star gleams, and an old pen dipped into the O of the dome. What makes my heart ache in this futuristic cartography is that the Royal York, the premiere attraction of the city a mere thirty years ago, is crushed by these Johnny-come-latelies that thumb their noses at it. Yesterday without competition, the most prestigious Hotel where Queens and Kings stayed today keeps the faded elegance of intimacy. Its baroque, daring elegance with all its flags flying belongs to another era.

If I pause over the description of these towers, it isn't to lift the veil over their quarrels, their competitions, their financial excesses, but to observe the luminous, more or less striking

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<sup>3</sup> Which later becomes the Rogers Centre. *Translator's Note.*



nature which already announced the end of a world. Work ending for everyone based on the level of competence. This Trojan horse of capitalism built on initiative, on unbridled free exchange, determines to offer guarantees of Polichinello: the market opening to ensure wealth, competition to make more dollars flow into circulation, in the veins of the Multinationals, privatization so that hungry wolves can gargle with cash.

The characters I have put in place are not necessarily subversive. For survival is the Canadian quest par excellence. The flamboyant, beautiful Kelly King – young woman on the move belonging to the English majority – was drawn from early childhood to the tradition of governing her territory. Always on time, she possesses the Puritan work ethic and performs her tasks with obsessive loyalty. This determination inherited from the founding nations is nevertheless undermined by a bad conscience gnawing at her, that she has not played fair with regard to two impossible loves: the perpetually absent Pete and the new recruit Marcel-Marie, completely absorbed with his own sex. So, I ask myself, how will she get out of it? Which one will she favor with her fine features, her full lips, her delicate, frank nose? Homosexuality doesn't bother her. She understands it almost as a compelling desire to retreat within oneself. Defending one's sex! Leaving this option on the back burner, she concentrated on the situation of this unemployed Amerindian. What can she do? Even her position at the top of the pecking order doesn't give her the right to act freely according to her own impulses, her sense of justice. So many constraints hold her back. Imprisoned within herself like the seeds of a lemon, she can't express her feelings to anyone. Not even her father. How can she tell Pete he should take the initiative and bypass the cleaning company for a temporary post as a high altitude specialist in stone? She doesn't know that he undertook such a step in playing the

role of the acrobat of infinite trajectories.

Pete Deloon still mulls over the bad choice he made the first time he threw himself into the air. By this instinctive rebellion, he wasn't seeking to prove to himself that he is capable of heroism. He very simply made a decision. And he won't go so far as to don "the mask of stupidity" they wanted him to wear during the celebrations of the victims of the founding nations. Nevertheless, in his heart there burns the sacred fire of the very talented which from time to time recalls to him the spirit of the "reserve" where he grew up.

I am trying to capture truth through words. It's as if I were hunting the moose with a slingshot, taking care that my metaphors don't scratch his skin. The poorest among the Indians would never have enough to eat, to make their moccasins and build their tepees. It's true that they no longer live in this kind of tent from the past, but in shacks without lawns, all the more exposed to the vagaries of this modern time. In any event, I would have wanted grave, consequent truths, heavy as a leaden sun. But what am I accomplishing, at the end of the day, after having talked incessantly? Notebook of sufferings thrown to the wind... Why, the other day, after setting his affairs in order, Pete's cousin, barely twenty, put on his Sunday best, borrowed his sister's car, then parked calmly near the Bathurst and Spadina bridge. When a train passed, he threw himself from the bridge. Deliberate suicide. What force or what demon possessed him? The paper folded in four in his vest pocket said: "*I am fed up with life*" ... We will never know the reasons behind this act. A short newspaper item took note of it. Such a brief notice that no one would see it. Whom can one blame for this willful death? How can one extract it from a whirlwind of words so that it makes an impression on anyone? Even on his nearest relatives!

This truth gnaws fiercely... into living flesh. I am more and more persuaded that no one wants that truth. A passing thought. Nothing more. I am not even going to attribute it to this concrete objectivity which characterizes me. Whatever I say or do, I would always feel remorse, transparent as glass, deforming the inside and outside of everything I believe. *Hang on by the skin of your teeth*. Everything I'm suggesting is only a sliver of glass, sunlight playing on it to the cadence of my words. It's for that reason that I am catalogued as an Anti-Babel spitting out joyous, beautiful words at arm's length. My words, however, are simple, and some of their truth is amputated, like the images projected from my antenna on your screens. They are as simple as a day without bread; and perpetually fleeing day and night. Every incident I report, extracted from verbal chaos, is under suspicion. Not that I tell it badly, or that I try to deceive you. No, I don't embellish the event. They will say it's a news item and that the media simplify everything. They don't aim their projector at anything but negatives in order to attract the attention of the couch potatoes glued to their TV. Balzac, Dickens, Manzoni would have built a whole novel around it; two hundred pages to set it in motion, two hundred for its development, as many for its execution, two hundred more for its consequences, and the last two hundred to conclude that this deliberate suicide had an unhappy love affair. The proof is that he methodically and lovingly folded the socks that his sweetheart gave him, delicately arranged the bit of paper bearing his last words in the left pocket of his coat. But perhaps this tragedy conceals a moment of happiness lived in the time it took to fold this fetish before throwing himself under the train. Fleeting illusions, forever lost.

I don't make up stories. I recount what passes through my antenna, this cap that I wear and lift as if I were a magician.

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Above all, I make the choice. By the sole means of a concrete wall, I release my news. As in old times curls of smoke escaped from the heart of the tepee. No windows. No porthole. The entrance closed so the warmth couldn't escape. Everything is bottled up in this miraculous cap which only captures and transmits disasters....

His cousin's suicide haunted Peter's heart. He can't escape it! On the contrary, he is imprisoned by the words of Ovide Mercredi who proclaimed loudly: "*We must rebuild the Constitution not for the 'distinct society' of Quebeckers, but so that the prisons aren't always filled with Amerindians. There is no reason why they should always be the ones who are ignored to the point of killing themselves...*"

Pete heard this speech from my own mouth. I let this message through only to console him a little for this heavy weight crushing him. He must lay it down, but remember it. I'm not speaking of the "*je me souviens*" on the license plates of the Belle Province that Marc Durocher throws in Pete's face at every opportunity. No, I evoke *memory!*

I'm not accustomed to retreat into the arcana of my characters' memory. But when I know that a certain memory tortures a man, I try to help him. Is it for the good it may do him? I don't think so. I only play the game because this remembrance of time past gives the illusion of understanding the present. Often, I retreat into this wonderful game, but since I'm very young I don't cultivate this illusion. However, I have a plaque carefully screwed on one of my walls: "*This coffer-memorial was sealed by the very honorable Pierre Elliot Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada, on the occasion of the official inauguration of the CN Tower October 1, 1976. It is to be opened October 1, 2076.*" Moreover, I keep wondering what this plaque contains. In any event, in 2076, neither Pierre Elliot Trudeau nor Pete Deloon will be of

this world. All the same, if this servitude depresses me, it also consoles me, for Pete's free fall, named for this event Sweet Pete, is already inscribed in big letters in my expensive glossy brochures: *"Just as Mount Everest must be climbed because it's there, the CN Tower has its adventurous side. The first person to parachute from the Tower was a member of the construction crew. On November 9, 1975, Sweet Pete managed this daring leap uninjured. He was immediately fired for this act."*

Even printed on glossy paper for eternity, my Highs and Lows are not judged with the objectivity and concreteness characterizing my presence on this democratic soil. Other daring feats or records are projected daily on large and small screens: the two leaps of the Hollywood stuntman September 21, 1979, and for my tenth anniversary, in 1986, Spider Dan climbed twice in one day to the external windows, *setting a world record for climbing a building.*

Pete will always remember the little St. Paul Chapel at Brantford. In this Mohawk Chapel, built in 1785, his wife Twylla Blue, a Protestant, had led him to swear fidelity in a religion which wasn't his – Christianity doesn't suit his mindset. He still believes in his Great Spirit, whose breath speaks through him. God's thoughts can only be accomplished through human words, songs and prayers: *The earth will be, from the very beginning when I thought them... the mountains will be, from the very beginning, I thought them up... the earth will be, from time immemorial, I speak it...* For Pete, the words are worth their weight in gold. Once pronounced, they lead him to good, to good health, good hunting or, very simply, more or less satisfactory relations with the evil spirit. If he abuses it, the words will turn against him; and if he uses them with circumspection and respect, they will adapt him to the universe. Thus, this prayer: *My words are linked in harmony/ with the great mountains/ the great rocks/*

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*the great trees/ In harmony with my body/ and with my heart./  
All of you, help me/ with the supernatural power/ And you, oh  
Day/ and you, oh Night!/ You all see me/ in harmony with this  
world.*

Pete gave his word before the Christian God. In deep silence, joining him to Twylla Blue, he thought of the words his heart pronounced, and the words are inscribed on his flesh. However, he feels a persistent malaise he can't understand. An evil spirit torments him behind the vow. Filthy entanglements. Myriads of thorns pierce his flesh. Peter remembers the afternoon he encountered Twylla in the dark corridor of celebrities at the Museum of the Six Nations that the Cultural Woodland Centre of Brantford shelters, southwest of Toronto. She appeared to him at the end of this tunnel after he had looked at the portrait of Emily Pauline Johnson. This famous daughter of the Mohawk Chief, born at *Chieftwood*, traveled around the world, as a poet and actress, to explain the wrongs the Whites had inflicted on her people. She undertook her mission with a passion and zeal unequalled up to the present.

Twylla resembles Pauline like a twin sister. A beautiful face whose sadness would split rocks. Delicate lips, an enigmatic smile. Two long braids sweep her hips, caressing lightly their provocative curves. A svelte, firm body hidden by a long dress decorated with coral, pearls, and fanciful embroidery falling to her bare feet. Dazzling sensuality. Miraculous, a living Pauline emerges from the portrait that Pete has just been contemplating for over an hour. Suddenly, a strange emotion penetrates him, an unexpected ecstasy –, mingled with an incomprehensible anxiety. Perhaps this is his chance to find true love. Pete integrates with his wife's community, and Twylla gives him a son, like a caribou in the concealing forest. Pete must hunt deer and earn a living for his little family. But soon the time comes

for him to seek a better life for them. One year after their son's birth, Pete leaves Twylla and the reservation, whose slogan still remains seared in his mind: "*De Dwa Yea Nah...*: Come join us!"

To leave these familiar haunts for the metropolis, the devourer of dreams. To have one's feet planted firmly on the earth as a job seeker. To become a member of the team of skywalkers. To build the lunar landscape of the Queen City. A trapeze artist. An acrobat walking in the sky. On the planks of my scaffold, a moment of blinding caprice. A crazy desire to defy gravity, the laws of nature. Pete meets Kelly King and the flood of his glowing love for Twylla is diverted as if by magic. How can he take this heart by surprise, which doesn't even deign to look at him? The blonde Kelly inserts a razor blade into his soul.

Here he is returned to my feet armed with a pride as arrogant as his aquiline nose and copper skin. His triumph resulted only from my verticality which makes everyone dizzy who looks up at me from below. There, lift your eyes to my summit. Feel this void which, digging into you, makes you lose your strength. Souleyman Mokoko also experiences this feeling every time he senses his job slip through his fingers... like hearing a poem which turns you to jelly. Fortunately, Kelly will tell him that he will still have work for another month. That's at least one up on the enemy. But nothing for Pete. Not even washing the stone with his loyalty of the first one employed at heavenly heights.... He didn't fail to repeat this neutral slogan gripping his heart: *Technology points to the future*. The human element is erased. Recovery is no longer in anyone's hands. And I, a solid structure which never obliterates time, I continue to speak and serve this thankless technology which, signifying nothing, claims to take charge of all future thought...











*A*dmit, finally, that I personify the Queen City. Not only by serving as its focal point in the glass and concrete jungle, but also on the world map by overtopping the towers which marked other places. Without forgetting that I broke all records for height. I dominate all of them. From the oldest, the Eiffel Tower, to the next highest after me, the Empire State Building, to those of Tokyo, Sydney, Munich, or Blackpool. We all belong to the International Federation of Great Towers. I am thus an honorary Member as you are a member of a prestigious Club where only the high fliers enter. I have a front seat to view the most scandalous or shocking scenes. Look, sometimes I take a mischievous pleasure in chatting with a crescent moon. I prefer it to the full moon, pretentious and distracted, even if man has walked on its rocky surface. Yes, the crescent is better and simpler, and I amuse myself sometimes by disturbing its serenity.

“Crescent moon, don’t you want to come out and play Q-ZAR? If you do, you can pursue any enemy with a laser and vanquish him.”

“Why do you think that I’d like to come down to earth and be swallowed up in your hellish underground, just to amuse myself? I have the whole sky to myself. And no time to waste before aging and being reborn. I already feel the presence of Mother Moon and next month’s crescent.”

“As for me, I have eternity ahead of me.”

“At least you sometimes spend a little time with me. But the men and women in your womb don’t even glance at me. Rather, they work, eat, and sleep. Or, meanwhile, quarrel, put each other down, stab one another in the back. Or frankly make war, open or clandestine! Battle fronts more or less a thing of the past. Laser battles, behind computer screens calculating the speed of projectiles and the targets to be hit. How many innocent lives

sacrificed! 'It's just a security measure,' they say. All that either living or virtual reality. And men repent only to begin the cycle all over again, giving alibis their words don't at all justify."

"It's true, but I contain virtual worlds more real than reality."

"It's curious that you placard your arrogance in this very reserved country. You can't even see what's right under your nose. And you boast about dominating the world. What can I say?"

"That you are only a crescent on the way to becoming a full moon, then disappearing. You resemble a little boy, a wise one to be sure, at your maturity. You are becoming feminine. If not, you wouldn't inspire poetry."

"Wait a minute... you incubate the female, and yet you burst from the earth like an erect phallus. Dubious erection! And the irony of your fate is that they built a Skydome with a sensual female womb, which nevertheless was given a masculine name just to drive you crazy..."

"Hey, you're letting your imagination run away with you."

"I'm not imagining anything. I'm only describing reality. After all, I'm more distanced from it than you, so I see more clearly. Viewed from a distance, it's true that you are pontificating in front of all these buildings which are diminished by comparison to please you. I'm not talking about those which are squashed like the Skydome or Roy Thomson Hall. Their rounded contours are displayed to set off your masculinity. At least I give dreams to people and I don't cause vertigo. I am a source of inspiration, a fertile Crescent watered by the Tigris and Euphrates, The Red Cross, another facet of a Cross which comforts believers. I am the emblem, the flag carrier of countless nations! Don't forget, in particular, my café-crème-croissant aspect opening beautiful mornings, rainy or clear."

"Wait a minute, my young friend! You're entering dangerous labyrinths. I am the mediatrix of languages in a world haunted

by disbelief. Pursuing the logic of words, I don't awaken an evil genie who would produce miracle after miracle. I'm trying to find a way to escape. With my height, I can see clearly now unless a cloud momentarily blocks my vision. There are so many news stories controlling the world. I transmit all of them with the rigor and strength of reinforced concrete."

At that moment the Crescent, I note, turns its back to me, and our dialogue evaporates. Perhaps we could talk again later, but for the time being I am turning towards those human beings who are disturbing the peace within me like thieves shaken by lack of will power. Marc Durocher continues to take out his anger on his wife who swears bitter hatred towards him. She is looking for a friend to kill him. A fantasy, perhaps, but one never knows! No one is safe from murder. It's the same in this country. This Quebecker is dying to dismantle it, believing he can best serve it in that way. The "*Vive le Québec libre*" of the French intruder, General De Gaulle, echoes in everyone's head. This kind of rhetoric sickens me. I don't make rabble-rousing speeches. I don't take my impressions for Biblical truth. When a man beats his wife to assert his importance in the world, he should expect to be refused his daily bread. But life can surprise us. When Pete returns to the site of his downfall, as if to the scene of the crime, he finds that other job-seekers have taken his place.

Fung Chiu, a certified accountant, goes home after a long day's work. His nose is buried in paper day and night, but when he makes love to his wife, he feels he is master of my finances. So he has managed to make five babies in a very short time. For here, time is money. And Fung has wed the continent's motto, blind as a mole. For him, it's nothing to put himself in the skin of this animal. He swears only by his desire to dig his hole. Here, no one cares what his neighbor is doing. Everyone is only

concerned with the cave he himself creates where he can live and die in peace.

Material signs of wealth classify every citizen. And that's it! Fung Chiu is at the top of the list. A simple employee highly placed on the pay scale. Always in a three-piece suit and tie, he negotiates better than a banker. He drives his Japanese convertible, the latest model, as slowly as possible on the left. Other drivers suffer road rage. Despite horns constantly blaring at him, he never moves to the right, even if he voted Progressive Conservative. This parvenu on the top floor of my structure has understood Market Law well: the essential is to be always ahead of events, and continue to integrate his cash flow with the sweat of his economist's brow. Having made preparations in the 1970s, he landed in Toronto, after filling his pockets in Hong Kong. He invested his money in Chinese cuisine, which is sold inside me, as well as on Dundas Street.

Chinese food and Cybermind, what else do you need to fill you up? Between reality and virtual reality, there's no point in hesitating: "You eat, amuse yourself, surprise yourself, tremble, burst out, admire, become ecstatic..." Such a feast is offered you only in the basement of "the tallest Building in the world." There too, you can buy the best three-dimensional nightmare in the world, undertake fantastic duels while being bombarded by flying Pterodactyls, attack enemies with futuristic flame-throwers, fight like a gladiator of the year 2023, fly into the clouds if ever "you encounter a World War I plane in combat with the Red Baron, in Flying Aces!" All this, and more, for the petty sum of a few Canadian dollars to boot, which aren't worth three-quarters of the Mighty American.<sup>4</sup> I'm not boasting to convince you to come and live a reality more visceral than your unreal

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<sup>4</sup> Fortunately, this situation is changing, with the Canadian dollar approaching par with the U.S. *Translator's Note.*

imagination in my air-conditioned underground. I don't burden you either with my lucubrations expressed grandiloquently from the wings. It's because Chinese food is among the cheapest in this city so that Torontonians fall back on it with their eyes closed. It takes the lion's share because it's one of the most delicate, or so they say. It's also the only cuisine that can compete with French, which is satisfied with the wolf's share. My antennae have captured over eleven thousand restaurants or eating places in metro Toronto. They serve every cuisine in the world. Fung Chiu invested in the Crossroads Restaurant, a little Chinese corner business, just beside the Italian flogging pizza and pasta, the Greek Chawarma and moussaka, Tim Horton's, Bagel King, Harvey's Hamburgers, Mr. Donut, fish and chips, the apex of English civilization which, be it said, doesn't attract a crowd.

It's Fung Chiu who calculated to the very cent the exact cost of my construction. A bonus: several tens of millions of dollars they recovered in less than fifteen years. But what could they buy with this modest sum? A structure weighing seventeen thousand nine hundred ten tons, five hundred twenty-three meters of concrete slabs, first quality. Enough to build a wall extending from Toronto to Kingston. Longer than the Berlin Wall. In any case, that one no longer exists! In his financial report, Chiu doesn't mention the one thousand five hundred thirty-seven men and women who killed themselves for forty months building me. Without a strike, nor the slightest incident except for Pete Deloon who was seized by the folly of the air. It's true that during my erection there was only one victim. A wind caused a beam to fall on the head of one John Ashton who was found dead at my feet. All security precautions had been taken.

Fung Chiu is such a careful guardian of expenses and entries that you would rather not meet him in the corridor. He juggles



figures so skillfully you get vertigo. But a different kind of vertigo from what I cause at my summit. My grey silhouette finally gave birth to a household name: The CN Tower. In fact, I only cross the frontiers of my own country for the record. Not by name. If everyone knows that after Charles De Gaulle, the Eiffel Tower is the best known French name in the world, who knows my name outside my own country?

In the cultural geography of Canada, to be identified with a monument is – uselessly! – to focus exclusively on the transcendent name. Nevertheless, no one can pass through Toronto without being baptized in the air at the very base of my antennae. If Fung Chiu drives like a snail over the arteries of the city, at the risk of causing many accidents, he navigates the information highway with unequalled dexterity. In the simulacrum of culture, he is king. And in his civilized way, he howls, without malice. Thus he demonstrates mastery of himself and his surroundings. So much talent for confronting life, at the steering wheel of his computer. Once he has paid the toll, he can summon the world and all its knowledge at his fingertips. From a stable rolling chair, time resists all forms of curiosity. But I am there for all the rest. I am the hypersupermarket of illusion.

I nurture, and thus I know secrets. For they are lodged in every one of my stones. I draw my identity from them like a red maple leaf on a nameless snowy background. The Canadian National, this arrow, railroad or Via Rail, sweeping the great fertile space of this country and, in olden days, the transmitter of glorious historical epics, no longer preoccupies me. The Loyalists and the Ukrainians of the prairies, Jacques Cartier and Louis Riel, Étienne Brûlé and the fur trading routes, the founding Fathers and the Amerindians... they all live the same drama: bipolarity, infernal binary oppositions, whatever they say! Which unravels, sometimes masked by tremendous torpor,

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sometimes by an excess of harangues, discordant, exasperating notes, widening the gulf by intra-mural battles. Even within my embrace, they don't spare me. Marc Durocher, drunk on the sound of his own voice, had a Congolese come from France to give him ideas about the issue of Québec independence. The Africans know a lot about the problems of this century! And since the Quebeckers consider themselves the "White Negroes of America," you couldn't do more to help them than enlist a giant writer with fertile words, "enrolled" at the last minute for a campaign skillfully, but illicitly organized. Célestin Mongo is recruited to demonstrate the evils of colonialism. Several visits all across the Belle Province at the expense of Her Majesty's taxpayers. Speech after speech. Preach to the converted that it is better not to report, because that strikes a false note. But these are the only words which are today's currency. The problem is that Mongo devoted his whole soul to the good cause without understanding it very well. They stuff him with words and alcohol. Lulled by comforts he never experienced before in his life, they propel him into intellectual circles assembled on the spur of the moment. Artificial smiles pay lip service to sincerity. It's all orchestrated in my crazily winding staircase. Thus transpires the genetic construction of these cursed ones.

Luckily I'm here to resolve contradictions. While raking the walls with sound, despite my better judgment I follow the convoluted, insipid political machinations. I nourish these intruders, but I don't house them. From afar I watch the secrets teeming in my corridors, my elevators, my turnstiles, the Revolving Restaurant, the observation decks, the targets, the arcades... no, nothing escapes me.







*I*n my case, you don't need to look far to discover the seeds of my old age! Which sullies beauty as soon as it appears on my characters' faces. They enter my womb, most of them leaving disfigured by fatigue, care, anguish, fear of what tomorrow may bring, and other worries created out of whole cloth to keep them alive. And even if the women wear makeup, like Kelly, or the men shave, like Souleyman, to appear fresh and ready for action, unhappiness wrinkles their brows. Forced to bear this *mal du siècle*. A shield erected by a suffocating pollution speeding the process of deterioration. Unknown to them, the aging process gives rise to the desire to embrace death.

As for me, they'll only wash my façade. I'll appear even more beautiful than the memory of time's stains! Already projectors lift my light towards a very gloomy sky. I am the visible minaret of the inexpressible. The other day, I told you that I "carried" words. Perhaps nearer the truth, I unload them. While my technicians are busy capturing and transmitting world crises, importing and exporting tons of discourse beyond our national frontiers, I insert my personal anecdotes into the media flow. This intervention isn't intended to take you by surprise. Nor to teach you about the chaos in which we flounder to survive. And I don't tell you what is going on in my networks, showing Canadians another side of themselves. What they don't possess and what they miss, faced with the dominant elephant south of the border. This longest and least defended border in the world.<sup>5</sup> Free trade that is more or less successful, and that the Europeans have difficulty emulating. How many lawsuits and hairs to split, passing beneath my nose like a scent of musk, benjamin, and incense... But the barber who can split these scents in four isn't of this world!

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<sup>5</sup> A situation unfortunately changing in the twenty-first century, post-9/11. *Translator's Note*.

You think I'm rooted in this soil of progress and modernity? No, don't kid yourself. I travel much farther than our Canada geese. Sometimes I circle the world so often it makes me dizzy. I no longer have time to consider myself a stranger on the most exotic continents. And I inhabit the air better than the crow lost in contemplation on a tree branch. In this tepee of the sky I breathe, supported by the metal sun of my rotunda, where Pete Deloon danced as if on a cliff edge. But he never asked if we should burn Darwin, that mad reactionary who froze us in an ineluctable determinism: origin, race, root... *Survival of the fittest?* In this land that the sun only floods with ice, Pete's ancestors won the prize in the material world. And we only resist it when there are murders. As for me, I want to climb, my hands free, towards this multicolored sun and embrace fertile images. There it is, they're going to say I'm making up stories. In this idealistic world I have created out of whole cloth, I navigate in the four winds, antennae open, speaking ear, clock of time present...

Since I am planted in the most cosmopolitan city in the world, I am the living museum of the Man of towers. As a tower, I accentuate whatever I turn out: speech, ideas, beings and objects. Of greed and stupidity. Here, the Anglo-Saxon majority loses ground. Hyphenated Canadians are legion, but they don't succeed in agreeing enough among themselves to govern. Italian-Canadians line up, trying to supplant Jewish-Canadians, who for their part make a distinction between Ashkenaze and Sephardic. These dashes between the words sow discord where everyone tries to feather his nest.

I would have liked to assemble all these inhabitants passing back and forth in the cavern of my inner heart of hearts. Unite them around a table a little like La Fontaine with his animals. In the basement of the château Vaux-le-Vicomte, a wax La Fontaine, identical to the Houdon sculpture, dominates the

head of the table in seventeenth-century costume. Around him, a laughing lion, a crafty fox, a wolf on the alert, a docile ass, a green frog, a hardworking ant accompanied by a fly and other little animals. The guests seem to be enjoying their past stories. Fantastic adventures where they are sometimes the turkeys in the farce. It's a shame they weren't placed just beside the kitchen, where the servants and other slaves used to dine.

My guests are in the panoramic restaurant being served by the good French chef who wears a chef's hat and white coat. This traditional chef, since he is neither Belgian nor Swiss, often leaves his kitchen to ask the guests about the quality of the meal. He always has a story to make them laugh, a Belgian story. But I know my characters. They are there to speak to each other through masks, without truly making contact. Pete seeks to conquer America and Kelly. Two objects of desire linked and then separated, bifurcating and reconnecting. He wants to escape at any cost from the swamp he had plunged into, body and soul, unable to see clearly into himself. His land gutted, besieged on every side, the conquest of the New World never ceases to haunt him. A messenger like myself who changed the face of the planet. At any rate, his spirit seeking solace isn't mine. As for me, I am apolitical and without religion. Is that why my leaden objectivity embraces all the religions of my characters, as well as the diversity of their worlds? Columbus entered the Garden of Eden with weapons. I offer before your eyes the infinite horizons of speech. I am the one who un-speaks to capture the unique in all its diversity.

Inflamed imagination explodes. Europeans were fascinated by America and the life of the native peoples. But, as early as the turn of the century, this vision was dead and buried. The New World no longer connotes novelty. Pete returns to the source of his wound, to the conquest of Kelly whose rejection he will



never understand. If she still believes he belongs to the “primitive” nation, she is blinding herself. My antenna’s pointed finger caresses the sky of anecdotes. In our time Pete lives a surreal fate. A more surreal life than that of Breton’s revolutionaries. He still participates in the creation of a mythology so complex it baffles the most sophisticated intellectuals. Why didn’t he catch in flight the tender glance Kelly gave him? She turned her head towards him. Her expression seemed to say that she was awaiting his move. A difficult mystery to decode. Was she angry at him? Was she asking herself why he didn’t make the first move? Was she indifferent to him, or too shy to show her feelings? She was unaware of his marriage to an Indian woman and his child abandoned at birth.

Does Pete, this nomad of modern times, cast out from the very summit of my scaffolding, dream of the state of grace embodied in Kelly? He never changes his ethic about earning his bread by the sweat of his brow, and feels his rejection like a social curse. Doubtless a national curse as well! The rejection is a plague of Western imperialism. One day, he will return to the Moose-spirit to escape it. He will call upon the occult which paradoxically creates his personal fortune, and he will plant his savagery in the heart of the civilized world of the Queen City. Will he rediscover the state of nature in this cubist architecture making robots of men and women civil servants? He will then leave to dig his tomb in the virgin love of a pale face. But Pete still doesn’t perceive the slightest reaching out on Kelly’s part.

In front of the register tended by Marcel-Marie, Kelly brushes against the Indian wordlessly, without any apparent awareness. This silent contact fills her with a strange feeling, until now denied. Hitherto menacing, Pete now becomes familiar, close in his unemployment. Silent love generates peace. She now desires him, and his absence no longer satisfies her. His love seems

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perfectly pure like this “earth without sin” so wished for by the paleskins. A double leap of seduction and of submission towards the Mohawk, offering him the horizon of distant feasts.

Kelly has already filled her page patiently and precisely. Her overflowing heart echoes this quatrain of William Blake: “To see the world in a grain of sand/ And heaven in a wild flower/ To hold the Infinite in the palm of the hand/ And Eternity in an hour.” She recited this prayer in order to see the world thus reveal itself before her eyes. To live it, one must have a kindred soul making intimacy palpable in life’s interstices. Kelly seeks Blake’s vision, without explication or analysis. Feminine intuition will one day enable her to touch his telluric strength, his inner infinity.

Her Dad, Judge King, who has just suffered a myocardial infarction, told her that Pete’s father was saved by the postmistress, a white mistress with two lovers. First, he was imprisoned for the death of his cousin. They were going to execute him. But, after fomenting a riot and fire in the prison, Naomi Crack organized his escape. The guards, who had been generously bribed, closed their eyes to it. Pete’s father disappeared, and no one was ever able to track him down. From being a criminal, he was exalted to hero status with the members of the tribe. A fate that equaled that of the Medicine Man’s daughter who persuaded the mob not to crush a paleface’s head between two large rocks. Taking her courage in her hands, she thrust her way through the crowd, gripped the prisoner’s head “in her arms and placed her face against his to save him from death.” Pete continues dreaming about this miraculous gesture. His distant Ancestress must have been inspired by the Moose-Spirit. In his heart of hearts, he was hoping that this Spirit which reconciles differences would visit Kelly’s head. To save her from this vegetative life which only leads to the death of the soul. Brushing against

her this morning wordlessly, with no excuse, Pete sees a door open in front of him. Will it lead him to the altar or to torture? Is it the first step towards a possible agreement? And if he takes her to the Brantford reservation, what will be Twylla's reaction, or that of the tribe members? In his confusion, Pete Deloon stammers a strange prayer. Is it the voice of the Moose-Spirit? Or do I lend him my own voice?



*I don't renounce my Amerindian blood, my spine, and the hope for tomorrow.*

*These ribs holding the country together until the deluge of Europeans who, inflamed with anger and victory, spread over my land like hungry beasts. "Je me souviens." At the turn of the century a new race will be born composed of all the races in their fiery grace and their peace without pride. No more White Supremacy. No more frontiers to conquer, to the west or the east. The global village will no longer count its quarrels. And we shall sing the fleur de lys, the trillium, the maple, the rose, corn, and cheese. We will "walk the sky," a springtime horizon. My birthplace Ontario and my land of Cocagne will celebrate their recovered identity.... The Caucasian lightning will offer Lake Ontario, mirror of our conscience, as an eternal gift to the first son of the nation.*



Rocco Cacciapuoti pays no attention to the glance exchanged within my embrace. He was too busy to pay attention to maintenance, to clean up whatever was lying out front. No ashes or cigarette butts to empty, for smoking is forbidden within my precincts. Wastebaskets and popcorn containers occupy him as

much as news and jeremiads reported by Souleyman Mokoko. Apparently Rocco Cacciapuoti pulls out all the stops in his election campaign, even though he didn't succeed in registering in Forest Hill. Instead, he registered at his parents' home in Little Italy. The streets there replicate the atmosphere of his birth village, in the heart of Sicily. Rocco Cacciapuoti remembers his voyage at the age of six in the hold of the ship. The rolling motion almost emptied his guts! His parents, bricklayers, brought over the rest of the family, neighbors, friends, and all those obsessed with this departure for the Eldorado of the New World. They were going to build and populate the Queen City, inject Mediterranean blood in it, which gives zest to life, changes its face, transmits to it the warmth of the *Mare Nostrum*, the vivacity of warm countries which is expressed in the whiteness of their walls, their red bricks, and their colonnades with flowered capitals. Angels on the lawns of newly built houses bring joy to this stiff, austere country.

Set loose, the city becomes coquettish, and expands on a radius of more than sixty kilometers. A limitless plain. Since he spent his adolescence there, Rocco feels it in his skin like a lioness in a stone and concrete savannah. Shoes made in Italy, with high heels to raise him a few centimeters, Borsalino hat to give an illusion of his importance, he goes door to door. His wife, his children, his parents, his cousins, his aunts and uncles, all take part. They have to convince the tribe to vote for Rocco in the provincial elections, then the national ones. He ends up in Parliament as the Minister of Communications, a post previously occupied by a Ukrainian who, in turn, had supplanted a Pole.

Meanwhile, it's a crazy campaign against dirt which Rocco sees only through squinty eyes. He cannot control it except at moments of careful supervision. Before he leaves his work in my precincts, considered sacred by his whole family which con-

structed me, he is going to sow the discord of greed. No one will steal his position, already reserved for a distant cousin. The maintenance he clung to, as a baby does its pacifier, he now rejects. Crafty rather than genial, he prefers to spin his web to trap the enemy, rather than be tied up himself. For him, everything should have its reward. No dirt, true or virtual, should sully the ground.

Rocco will never discover the disturbing presence of a man in a three-piece suit, with glasses and briefcase, who comes every day to spend time in my concrete staircase. All the employees are sure that my system will resist any attack. No one can sabotage the generators, even if they short-circuit my alarm and security systems. How has this intruder discovered the secret door to my stairwell? Should I fear a threat? Will it come from this troubling personality who passes through me like a ghost? Or from the invasion of virtual specters who become flesh in my basement? That is how I now fear a likely flaw, I, the tree with homologous words. Might not the man have carved on my base the branch of forbidden fruit?

I am the giant tree producing words, curled fruits of green notes. No need to water me. My perpetual winks announce my presence, pulsating at regular intervals, reinforced at night by flashes of powerful searchlights which foreground my words. Like my chef who treats his guests to his "*nouvelle cuisine*" recipes, sometimes I also leave my listeners hungry. What more do they need to satisfy them? My lyricism suffices.

Nothing distracts Rocco and all the employees, except the gnawing hunger for power. His campaign to clean up dirt doesn't go beyond the memos he distributes to the service heads. Violent rainstorms wash and corrode me. They don't in any way affect my transmissions. They don't irrigate the news items. The rainy season makes my words slip. In any case I don't control these

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beings that I have put in place haphazardly. I don't play the role of the Good Lord who pulls his puppets' strings, blissfully ignorant that some of them will rebel against him one day or another. I try to weave a few shudders into the tapestry. Chance and necessity. To make words ricochet on Lake Ontario, the mirror of my words carried away. They will never invade me. I remain on the slippery slope of ideas. I don't hide them because I offer them from the corner of the lips of my antennae. Like birds' nests on solitary branches.









Why does this Intruder buzz around me like a crazed bumblebee? Around me, a rigid structure, a flower on its stem, never losing its pollen: the voice. A dead object containing life in words endlessly oxygenated. A vibrant word that I transmit in pictures. Everyone knows that I capture sensations and thoughts, no matter how distant. My equipment functions at each quarter turn. It gives permanence to these images emerging from my antennae. These comings and goings are seized by captors, cornered in unexpected places. Not to speak of successive dramatic scenes all day long. Taped, they become historical moments, immortalized, once they are preserved on cassettes. The cassette is more durable than any paper the Intruder is used to collect, folding and refolding it with care and affection.

The Intruder picks up any kind of paper at all only to scribble words on it, notes forever hidden in anonymity. Certain clichés are repeated several times: *“The Tower plays tricks on me that deserve hanging. What route can I take to seize its whole circumference? Disturb its attraction at a finger’s touch. Always this view of the horizon distracting me from its contours”*... He moves these messages religiously from one pocket to another, from his slacks to his coat, from his shirt to his vest. At night, he classifies them in folders or throws them willy-nilly into drawers, onto the furniture, tables and chairs, according to a system known only to himself. Whimsy and surprise! You could say he is seeking to breathe a semblance of life into the inanimate. Otherwise why activate and reactivate these bits of paper like a writer losing the thread of his thoughts?

By my glassy observation, I can follow this Omniscient one who hurls himself into my concrete arms like a lost child returning to its mother’s lap to soothe the daily tortures. My emergency stairs, that no one takes, breathe him in even after the alarm system

sounds, summoning the fire department. It embodies nostalgia for him. By itself, it seems to recount his life. Not by reconstituting his notes scribbled on paper, but by expanding, with delicate frankness, on the torments haunting him. Fixing a steely glance on me, he would like, without malice, to translate for me his dark side, his solitude, his privations and needs. I feel I am looking at my own image, my svelte figure, my height. I slip into him. He profiles himself in me. And there we are, planted one in the other, similar and different. Sometimes we form together a being of silence and whiteness capturing the march of time, sketching tenuous relations, and injecting a seed of vitality into solitude.

But I am not on the verge of madness even if he wants to erect a world at my height. How could he accomplish this when he launches into nightmarish voyages, sometimes extremely violent? Like the day he took it into his head to set fire to the church of Hare Krishna, on Avenue Road. "In order to purify this alien magic," he said. Whatever he says, he is always taking care of himself so he is not contaminated by pollution, subversive ideas, or the mob. While in his home there is an unbelievable collection of objects accumulated without taste, papers strewn all over the place, a disgusting coat of dust covering the Spartan furniture and sofa bed. But from that spot, whether in bed, sitting or standing, he can contemplate me at leisure. I am constantly in front of him, sublime and mysterious, dark and illuminated; he is fascinated by my tireless winking. Like a Moose-Spirit, I frighten and attract him. What mission impossible is his madness about to unleash in my stem? Is he collecting his papers to satisfy his pyromania? Turn off the tourists by scattering them at my feet? Stick them together to block the entrance, and thus deprive me of my bread and butter? Perhaps he is determined to believe that he alone is worthy of capturing my waves because they are his own voice?

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In his eyes, in effect I embody the challenge and success of the Queen City, the indispensable element which defies death. As love conquers all. No fear of danger, obstacles, or banana peels. Love winding around and melting every current... I've collected my evidence. I'm capable of anything. Of reporting truth and discovering it. Uproot the news items and reroot them by the love of freshness and heartfelt feelings. A crazed foliage, they make crowds dance in snowstorms and torrid sunshine. I also resist winds blowing at four hundred eighteen kilometers an hour, 747 planes which could crash into me. They will be blown to bits. As for my body, with barely a scratch, it will recover its strength again in due time.

I have just learned the name of my intruder: Symphorien Lebreton. Obsessed, he sees danger everywhere he goes. He never fails to try to pass unnoticed. He loses himself in waiting lines, groups of tourists, school visitors. He melts into them like the invisible Man he is dying to embody... The more he makes himself small, the more he sticks out like a sore thumb. Which confirms his conviction that he is a "perpetual victim," as a Frenchman imported into rampant anglomania.

A black squirrel happy to have his peanut, Symphorien will hide it in a tree trunk. He hurries towards the emergency exit instead of taking the elevator. He makes sure no one sees him carefully plant some pieces of paper in the vents and hollow spaces of the stairwell. He thinks he's nourishing my base, stuffing me with talisman-words, bubbles of thought. In any event, I must be on my guard. None of the employees notices this game of chess; intuitive movements without words, music, or light. He takes advantage of the situation to retain his hope of sending his thoughts out over the entire world, and to enhance his genius, which has learned the language of this land, is, it seems to him, to be celebrated in the museums of the imagination.

Then, he will receive the Trillium Prize, since he has succeeded in transcribing his lucubrations on paper, cleaning his throat laboriously, plucking his ideas lovingly, cultivating his mother tongue which is so massacred by these foreigners with doubtful loyalties, these recent immigrants who disembarked on his white land to scratch about for leftovers and eat its *tourtière*.

I placard my triumph under the noses and beards of all the jealous people. I take refuge in the “safe and healthy” of every conductor, in order to combat the two hundred lightning bolts a year that hit me, without blinking an eye! On the other hand, I adjust my lighting seasonally in order to prevent any bird fatalities. All these natural adaptations against bad weather, and the protection of our wild life, can only incite a confused brain to try to find a flaw to exploit. This Frog, knowing all the latest news, kills himself trying to fix my antenna. To contemplate it, enchanted, bathing in the illusion of reaching the sky and giving free rein to vengeance. Giving his leisure time over towards mischief. Wounded beyond recovery, he intends to inflict his implacable hatred on faces of all colors. On all those who worked in cement and mortar in order to build me. I who transmit all languages... What blasphemy for this “Implanted one” who thinks he is whiter than Mr. Clean, purer than the “pure laine” Québeckers!

Now I wonder if my vibrations haven't touched off his earthquake? Did he want to harm me? He fears, no doubt, that I will discover him. It's odd how the guards and staff saw nothing! We played so well the cat and mouse game, the two of us. Symphorien tries to dismantle the system I put in place. I will never be able to confront him to disarm his deadly intentions, convince him it's the wrong way to go. *Nobody can fight City Hall*. Will his violence spill over like boiling milk? Am I becoming as paranoid as he?

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It's true that I'm a powerful magnet who attracts eccentrics in all sizes and shapes. People streaked down the 2570 steps of my stairwell. Naked as shiny worms, displaying their genitals front and back. Some deliberately twisted their ankles or broke a foot for the insurance. Some climbed the steps on motorcycles, with pogo sticks, carting pianos, refrigerators, or taking apart a Jeep. So many more examples that I could mention here. Because of prudence and objectivity. It's worth noting, however, that Brendan Keenoy holds the record for the fastest climb, seven minutes and fifty-two seconds, in 1989. People have thrown themselves from the Skypod, with or without a cable. Climbed like Spider-Man on the glass exterior windows. All this to prove once and for all that once a record has been established, people are going to rush to break it and take the championship.

Skill galvanizes the spirit. You must rise in the world at any price, beat your own record to win the first prize, even kill the rivals who call themselves brothers in adversity. Therefore I am not amazed someone would want to harm me in any way possible. Today, the first Tower of the world, I have surpassed the New York, the Muscovite, and the Parisian..., which cannot help but arouse the envy of others! Nevertheless, I always manage to sleep away my anguish, and I profit from it by recovering my clarity.

Imprisoned at Queen's Hospital because he had beaten up a cashier who refused to let him in ahead of people who had been in line for three-quarters of an hour, Symphorien finds himself under heavy guard. But as a result of countless interventions by his mother, the lawyers and social workers who were well paid to justify his innocent entries and his crazed departures in this delirious fair, Symphorien is doped up with tranquilizers which master him during crises. Then one day, his self-control returns with the snow and ice. The nurses no longer have trou-

ble getting him to cooperate. Madame Lebreton takes her son out of this august building, like a wildflower, and plants him in an apartment on King Street West, with a bay window facing East, offering him a magnificent view of the city. Crow's-nest on a magnetic reality, both far and near. You could say he lives in a glass jar, and all of Toronto is spread in front of him. I am his center of attention because he can simultaneously profit from my expansion towards the sky, and classify his little bits of paper according to the inspiration of the moment. He first listens to their heartbeat, palpates their contents as if he were verifying the sweetness of a tropical fruit. He assures himself that these papers of various colors and forms contain a truth well described, a situation well observed, a felicitous turn of phrase... Original gems with which he will compose the secrets of his inner life. Words of which he is ashamed, or those which could compromise him, he hides in a broken-down sofa. There he collapses after agitation shakes him from head to foot, then sleep overcomes him. In the arms of Morpheus, nightmares taunt him, leave traces of the day on his sad soul.

When he gets up in the morning, he can't avoid me. I am distant, and I dominate him. His eyes, riveted on me, don't dare take a half-turn to escape towards Lake Ontario, or Harbour-front. Hypnotized, he believes that I am extending the antennae to him. A mother opening her arms to embrace her son. A lover holding him close from head to toe. Suddenly, he wakes up and sees me as an enemy, a rival launching an attack on his private life. Through the window separating us. The glass wall of his apartment exposes me to his fixed look, to his anger whetted by my winking. Like those red lights accompanying the sirens on the roofs of police car. Only the insignia "*To serve and protect*" on the doors remains impervious. And he becomes furious, breaks the window with a crowbar. He becomes enraged at my

silhouette, beats the image as if it were a fleeing enemy, shatters me in a thousand pieces, all the while calling for help. Arousing the neighbors, he denounces me as an impostor, on the pretext that I was launching at him to betray him and turn him in. And he begins to cry with all his strength:

*"She's lying. She's lying. Spreader of gossip. Slut. You will not stop my observation. I will have you, you and your secrets. The scandals of your employees. Your victory over competition... It's bullshit... that I wouldn't even give to pigs! Open your yap, tell them that I'm spying on you, and that I'm noting your secrets of Polichinello on papers collected from the waste baskets... I'll break them. Just like this frontier that I cross."*

The police and ambulance intervene. But he has already lacerated his hands and arms as a result of breaking the window separating us.

On foggy days, he touches my iron staircase as if he wanted to wed my importance. A glorious hero of my creative force at the entrance which exhibits twenty-four television screens, he comes to play on my own turf in the sight of the whole world. He could look his fill, participate in a variety of televised programs transmitted by me. And he would identify with these faces, these bodies, these hands pregnant with information that he would commit to paper in aid of his cause. But nothing. The ramp on which the visitors rub elbows seems to him a perch I've extended to fool him... to push him towards a trap where he couldn't negotiate any alliance.

In the midst of his paper furniture, his paper trinkets, his paper towels and toilet paper... he himself resembles a paper dispenser whose writing justifies his existence, embodies this décor turned into a home. In fact, there were phrases of a man flayed alive on his body as on the objects surrounding him. Of an omniscient author who talks to himself. At war with objects



he covers with words of hatred, words of love. You can follow the labyrinth of his wily cat's writings without finding their coherence, even if they babbled a chaos of sense capable of dismantling my own structure. If I turn my gaze on him, it's because I feel his desire padding the traces of my voice in this narrative. Perhaps he is haunted by this project whose intention he is afraid to articulate. When he turns to the stairs, doubtless to observe and write, he's going to plant his papers. Does he live with us? Or does he write to escape an unbearable reality? Does he hang out among the machines in my cavern to grasp the mechanism, then pull the trigger in order to block the flow of my images and reduce me to despair, to infinite silence...

I see him walking with hesitant little steps. Nervous in his vertical vending. No grass to walk on. A well cemented soil where his feet cannot capture the rhythm of any word-harp. A little lost, like Pete Deloon seeking love and work. Like Rocco Cacciapuoti inventing crumbling power strategies. Like Marc Durocher hiding in marshy soil so that his revolution appears natural. Destroy everything in order to build anew.

Kelly King turns the key of the fragile, luminous purse of love. An angle of vision dominating the garden of desire. She runs into Souleyman who has just crossed the Jane-Finch corridor where he lives. She doesn't dare confide in him, tell him of her passion for Pete which will never be announced over the airwaves. He is his friend, he will keep the secret. Kelly moves towards him, hesitates. She shakes like the bottle one must shake before opening. She wheels around, riveted to my observatory.

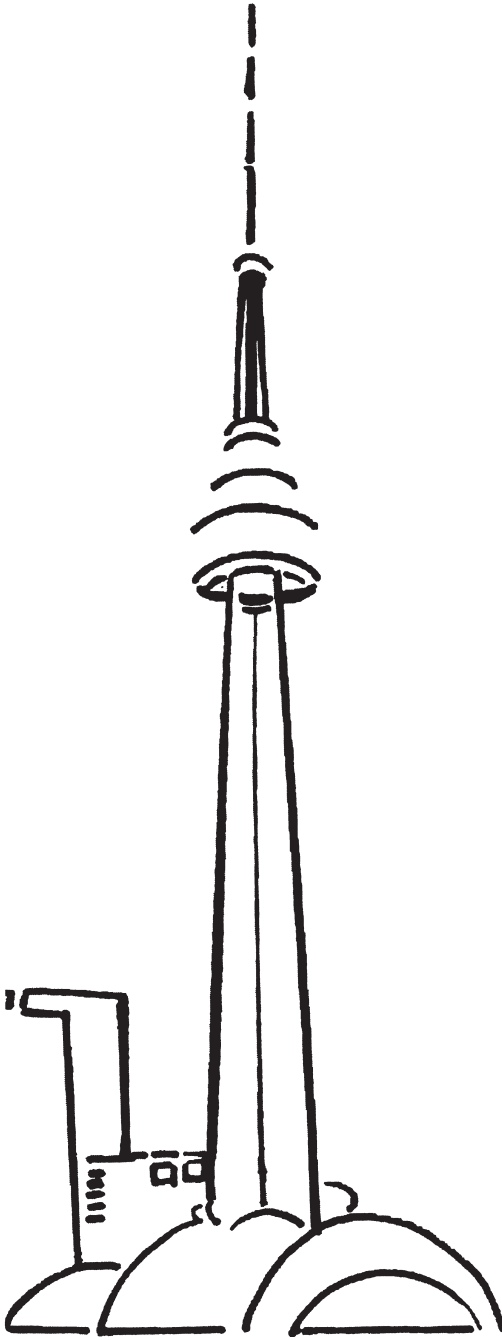
In effect, Kelly lives at the very top of a mountain of reinforced concrete studded with glass, sheltering her from indiscreet glances. Between heaven and earth, she has wild ducks, seagulls, and bluejays for neighbors. Aboard her daily module, she makes

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my “suspect” logic turn as if she lived in a tepee near the Scarborough Bluffs of Toronto. From time to time, she runs into Marc on the inner observation deck full of his “Treasure Island,” his sweet Québec, whose lovely contours he sketches like a logger with his ax. Isn’t he against everything, gnawed by this ambition where anything is possible? Head in the clouds, his scribbles gallop, constructing castles on the Saint Lawrence. To amputate, once and for all, the land in order that he will no longer have to speak anything but the language of Molière. To climb the Utopian ladder. Get rid of the language of Shakespeare to purify the air. No longer use this marvelous lamp to float in intellectual and literary circles. All by itself, his dream walks, with an oil lamp, in a wobbly van, a kind of underground library where he piled up *chansons de geste* that don’t belong to him. A courtly love whose secrets he no longer knows. No wood fire to share the passion of a life.

I have no soul, but a personality which imposes its stamp. My power causes vertigo, and sometimes prestige.





**10**



Symbol of the union of heaven and earth, I couldn't reconcile Pete and Twylla. These First Nations lovers who abrogated the agreement tying them together. The attractions of a highly placed Anglophone ruined everything. In a single blow! Is it perhaps a result of the wanderlust so desperately inscribed on the flesh of the Amerindian? He can't bind himself to spatial immobility, or the rigidity of a relationship. No longer to his wife, who is faithful to him despite the tradition granting him so much freedom. In place of painting or sculpting Twylla's portrait, I'd like to show a few striking features. Not to fix them in your imagination, nothing lasts nowadays, but just to be on the record. Twylla's beauty, a heavenly gift, sets off her intelligence and perception. An inner flame balancing the mirrors obsessed with her presence. If she is reserved because of modesty, it is because she asserts herself to give full flavor to life. Twylla possesses the charm and art to attract you to her like the sea with its wild waves. Penelope abandoned on the reservation, she awaits in vain Ulysses' return. It is her image that this modern wandering Canadian circulates, whose constant uprooting is only in reality the result of surprise. His stubborn departure for the Queen City left her with a heavy burden of serious consequences. In reality, all her life, she has had to fight for the slightest privilege. You will annoy her, if you tell her she has had an easy life. Leaving school at the age of sixteen, she has had to work days, and continue her studies at night. By correspondence in order not to lose her income! Unlike some women, Twylla doesn't insist on being loved, but respected in her pride of birth. With exclusive interviews on the air, everyone takes his hat off to her. A surprising accomplishment which commands respect.

The magazine *Chatelaine* hires her to track down the unusual in women of merit. But she doesn't forget that she sold Kool-

Aid at the age of six in order to be her own boss. At twelve, she becomes a trainer of female athletes, and tries to make them distinguished in their community. An athlete, she thinks that when the body acquires strength, the mind feels it too. She never boasted of the big sports events! She is tolerant, and delivers fine speeches against violence. Her discourse is apolitical. Rather, a heartfelt cry which unfortunately reaches only the converted. Her words are smooth as soapstone. Flowing from her mouth, they roll, rosaries of serene love, around her mother's distaff. All this to demonstrate that the original proof can never be lost: the earth which possesses us returns only to the Great Spirit. On the way, we crush it with our clumsy feet, without knowing how to die!

Before reaching this blossoming, rare even among the Amerindians, Twylla lived viscerally the painful passage from slavery to emancipation. When she fell in love with Pete, she believed that this love was going to reconcile her with her age-old heritage, her mythology sustaining daily life, and providing her with moments of happiness lived between the flesh and streaming emotions. A rare gift that you cannot buy at the supermarket. But when love descended on her like a milky, benevolent lightning bolt, she no longer knew which way to turn. Disoriented by loving love, a perfumed peace quickly stole through her soul. Musk of life fulfilling her. Unlike Kelly whose skin peels and puffs up from extreme anguish, she is, in the present time, filled with certainty. If Kelly is unleashed sometimes like a hurricane, Twylla, a light breeze, masters herself. An inner buzzing murmur giving peace. At the birth of her son, "the most exalted moment of her life," she says, she dedicates herself to motherhood.

But by now her son is grown and the money orders no longer arrive from the Queen City. Her sense of abandonment has metamorphosed into a guarded rebellion, and she wraps her-

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self in a scarlet cape. Innate wisdom and experience from her origins. Twylla leaves her humble home, takes dangerous roads leading to the provincial capital. It is time, she thinks, to break new ground in this land mined with ambushes, and to head towards this fate emerging from within me.

No one paid any attention to Twylla's arrival at her destination, a zombie who left her reservation to reconquer a vagabond husband only following his impulses. Pete is sick about his extra-marital affairs. The Anglo woman, a vampire, sucks his blood silently, leaving no scars on his copper skin. Knowing everything, Twylla arrives without warning in Toronto and takes a room in the YMCA, near his place. From there, she will know how to navigate in the arcana of administration. Internet without a computer!

Twylla decides to approach Rocco Cacciapuoti. And as she is a free-lance journalist, she knows how to charm him. The toupee of this little Napoleon turns around, without his knowing it, to condemn this bold, emotional interruption, then calms down while sticking to the bald spot on his skull. It would be better to get rid of this daughter of the First Nations by doing her a favor, the recent immigrant decided, who thus takes his revenge on history! These ideas grow in him as if in his monk's hood. The game is on. The wick planted the idea. At this moment, the Minister of Communications proposes to Twylla that he will send her on assignment to Malaysia. To attend the opening of the Menara Tower in Kuala Lumpur. She is to deliver a report and an article. To quell the false rumors propagated by the Asian newspapers. All kinds of propaganda claiming that this Tower is the highest in the World. Forgetting to name me! What a disgrace...

Will she be able to get a scoop from the depths of the other tower? Let there be no obstacle! Twylla is nothing if not decisive. Her energy, hidden beneath a debonair, indifferent manner, helps her to focus. She has just won her first bet: "You must



concentrate on the apex of the pyramid, if you want to climb it. Never the middle, nor the base.” Her coolness has disarmed Minister Cacciapuoti. A miraculous assignment that has fallen to her when she least expected it. She is going to take up the challenge of leaving to conquer the new language of towers in order to spread my reputation among the great audiences of the whole world. A difficult path to track the unexpected amongst the mediatic machinery! Twylla is ready for the adventure.

I am not going to describe the climate she is going to live in during this sweet mission you don't assign to the first person who comes by. Now she is on the front lines, where history is made. An independent spirit, she doesn't keep herself at a distance from the event. True to herself, she trusts her intuition about possible mishaps, and grasps well both sides of the story as if she were combing her hair in order to make the braids impossible to undo. Pete's absence brings tragedy at home. And Twylla, ready to reconquer the lost ground, throws herself body and soul into the battle being waged in her heart. It is not a question of conquering, or bringing this straying husband entangled in love back to the tepee, but of gathering her strength in order to spring, a tigress of the future. Twylla presses on without turning a hair. She consults Souleyman, Pete's friend, and a husband well versed in conventions and traditions. The current passes between them. They discuss the obstacles they need to understand. Pete must emerge from the swamp where he is comfortably mired. Despite all the speculation, they understand that, not having tasted the sweet and sour of all-consuming love, Pete has not yet arrived at the extreme stage of illusions. Perhaps this impromptu voyage of Twylla, his legal wife, will offer him an exit. But the legal system means nothing in our day. The rain making the love of plants, and love plain and simple, flourishes pours on everyone. No one pays attention. Except when it

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annoys pedestrians, who aren't very numerous in this country which is super-automobiled up to its armpits.

I am not going to transmit to the sky the words of Souleyman and Twylla. I am trying to focus on their earthly reality circulating in my steel veins. I entrust to you the voice of Those-without-voices. The visible murmurs of these characters who are close without touching. Not to say without speaking. I don't feel myself to be a bridge between these characters who enter and leave my womb. I observe them minutely enough to give you only the surface, and everything that glitters isn't worth twenty-four carats. As our epoch despises visionaries, I am not going to play the sorcerer's apprentice, the guru, or a priest nailed to more or less disturbed confessions. The pains suffered by Twylla and confided to Souleyman will remain a dead letter. During the confidences over a cup of coffee bought at my feet, they exchanged glances full of complicity. Unsuspected links. What I know, moreover, is that Twylla thinks her husband is verging on madness. His amorous activities leave Twylla as cold as an effigy of Italian art. And no one can rescue him from a prison he constructed with his own hands. Only the Shaman of Brantford will be able to trace the curves of the desires gnawing at him, making him slide on the luge of my sharp profile. If he doesn't succeed, he will need a sorcerer who, by means of an overpowering trance, will send him to gild himself on the opposite shore of Lake Ontario. He will track in himself the power of the Moose-Spirit of which the ferryman Souleyman was speaking. His amused, tender attitude towards Twylla indicates clearly that they are both in agreement: the ghost, the soul of Pete's father (dead three years ago) dwells in the son's body. And when this other-worldly intruder makes his existence felt strongly on the earth here below, we can't deprive him of his liberty.

In this domain, Twylla doesn't feel exiled. She understands

this genuine madness, which can only be cured by a Shaman. Only if that fails will she have recourse to American medicine. Meanwhile, as the Shaman is himself also a sorcerer or ghost, she will entrust to him this mission in dream territory. All of a sudden, Twylla feels freer than the eagle and lighter than the butterfly. The confused smile on her face has disappeared. She triumphs over this new solitude.

Finally Twylla takes off for Kuala Lumpur. In tune again with the rhythm of her deepest thoughts, she throws herself into the battle against this world of insane, gut-twisting competition. Excited by this enigmatic woman who has just vanished from her native land, I am going to follow her as a spirit-antenna. I will capture her words as she in turn feels my omnipresence. The two of us will be constantly face to face, even if she is near the China Sea in the South, and myself, on the shores of Lake Ontario:

“CN Tower, relax, the Menara of Kuala Lumpur is far from reaching your height. So far no one has beaten you.”

“Then what about these childish rumors celebrating it as the first in the World?”

“Of the Asian world, yes, but not of the whole world! It is only the third.”

“Then why should I be afraid, with all the prestige I represent worthy of the height of the nation? Whom or what should I distrust?”

“No one. But if there is misery, it can only come from your bowels.”

“You can see I’m pursuing my inner quest, like the stone trusting to the wind. Like one of those Thousand Islands speaking on the St. Lawrence.”

“My word, you’re becoming a poet. Aren’t you going overboard to bounce into a space that doesn’t belong to you?”

“Sometimes I take chances in heavens not for sale. Just to be

benevolent. Without reaching paradise. To devote time to those who are cursed.”

“I see you coming with your great steel shoes. You mean the other ‘founding’ people and that of the First Nations!”

“All right! I am already being attacked for the flow of dollars into my banks. Insurance and capital are being moved, escaped the ‘Belle Province’ for that of ‘Yours to Discover.’ From the Fleur de Lys to nest in the Trillium. Is it my fault if I refuse to amputate the country? Québec is as vital to me, Toronto Tower, as the Autochtones.”

“Enough hypocrisy! You profit from hard cash, and you dust us with lyricism to calm us down.”

“If I stop the subsidies I’ve infested you with, it’s so that you can meet the challenge of rivals and competition.”

“It’s not up to you to show us the way. We’re grown up and vaccinated! I’m not defending the Separatists, but those who want to take their fate into their own hands. The excluded and marginalized on the list of the Unemployed!”

“More morality! Talk is cheap... Still the Chip on the shoulder and we must pardon everything... What do you want? You are always on the defensive. Nonetheless I only speak to you in your language. And I unify, from my summit, this Anglo-American emerging fresh from so many English Métis.”

“You invested all your energy to divide and conquer. Your old adage! Today revitalized by a world-class technology which empties us of our ‘spirituality,’ and tosses us on the heap of the unemployed professionals!”

“I too had to empty myself to distinguish myself! Just glance at my media messages which don’t even give recent immigrants the desire to integrate! In this nation fragmented into ethnic groups, one forgets, as a Quebecker said, that ‘the nation is essentially a cultural reality.’”

“Let’s talk about it... these cultures... You reproach the Separatists, the Autochtones, and the Allophones for their ethnocentrism! And what are you saying, by the way? You’re reproaching the Amerindians for cloistering themselves in their traditional tepees... the Quebeckers for shutting themselves up in the liturgy of their churches or casinos... the Italians for extricating themselves from thousands of kilometers of spaghetti... the Chinese for floundering through their sweet and sour sauce... And the Hong Kong Chinese for building new banks to maintain the essential Canadian value: survival!”

“You forget that I’m the one who taught you to argue this way.”

“Yes, but you nevertheless continue to imprison me in my past. And affirm to me that it’s ‘prestigious,’ without holding it on the lap of your ‘spirituality’ which becomes poorer every day... Like the official languages!”

“That’s a whole other story. You’d do better to pay attention to your assignment... I’m awaiting your discoveries.”

In Toronto, the sunset that evening brings the skyscrapers to life in their autumn colors. The gold of the banks turns orange, and then shades into brown. The gray of the concrete is nuanced seductively, reflecting the brilliance of a calm, tranquil life. Green is focused by glassy vibrations liquefying in wondrous refractions. Yellow sunlight sweeps the unrelieved black of the Toronto Dominion Centre which, for its part, smiles momentarily in rare celebration. Red dominates, burning all the colors. The city is on fire. Its buildings are dressed in the autumn luminosity of parks and forests.

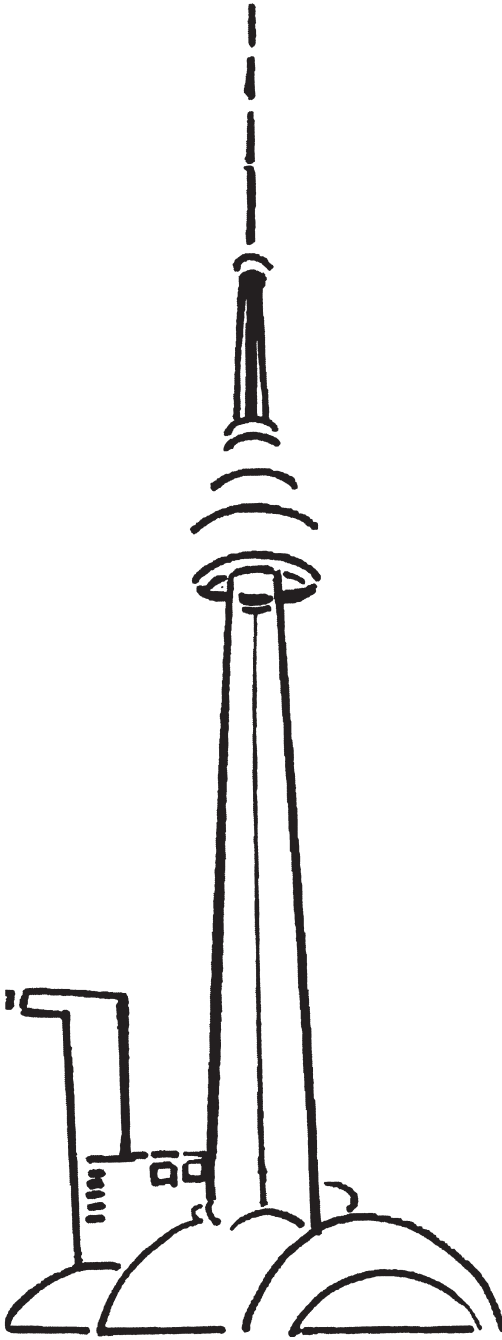
And while Twylla Blue continues her quest in the Kuala Lumpur Menara, this Asian lighthouse which declares its revenge by denying me the most sublime height, I try to substitute my usual mechanisms, casting a glance towards the past. Towards the Tower of Babel which sacrificed so many lives, ruined so

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many colossi and, since, made so much ink flow.

But does myth always provide objective information? Can it change in any way the invention of our way of life? When Babel has sown so many misunderstandings in souls, how can I, with all my world-class technology, avoid the hidden traps of ambiguity?





**11**





*I*n fact, I don't take myself for the Tower of Babel, or for the Ziggurat, that giant pedestal, placed specifically to help divinity descend to earth. A Welcoming Temple, a Highly placed House constructed in seven stages laid out in steps just in case some Good Lord of ancient times deigned to cast the briefest glance at his creatures! Today, I don't know if the Moose-Spirit would want to come to earth and recognize Pete's madness. But, in fact, is it madness to love in a century desperately lacking it? That's the case of the lunatic Symphorien Lebreton who feeds my staircase bits of paper, love notes. And often, he kneels before these stairs as if they were the Wailing Wall... He doesn't utter pious vows, but the desire to eat me alive, for I have never ceased to invade and possess him!

In far-off times beyond recall, God, in the Tower of Babel, mingled all the languages of the earth. He sowed discord between peoples and proclaimed confusion as a way of life! To this very day, things occur differently within my precincts. Everything functions in a fixed order allowing no errors. I filter discords, and only allow recent immigrants to speak in order to color American English, the master tongue leveling everything! What more do you want? If I affirm the Anti-Babel, it's to forge a path to the Unique which negotiates and transacts for every people who would come to settle in my limitless land. In my precincts, there is no sculpted stone representing man to himself, doing the sacred work constituting his essence. There is rather cement washing over my skin in waves of sweet melancholy, horrifying disasters. Resulting in fog in the spectators' souls. And they want more? The more calamities befall them, the more they delight to say it doesn't affect them: "Spare my head and strike at a distance."

Babel, a tower which was never completed, embodies misrule, confusion, and fragmentation. I am still in the cradle. Already I

dream of allying myself to the city. Baroque giantism emerging from the postmodern dust makes my soul visible. These traces lack the polish of old furniture. But they serve as a mirror to all those who bay after power. I give the impression of rattling on to establish a distance between myth and reality, past and present. Just so that you will know I have put in place characters caught in the act. Necessity and chance. You see them living under my umbrella. Everyone slaving at an occupation he didn't always choose.

The past doesn't haunt me; the present I try to resolve by highlighting the headlines. The future frightens me. But what do I fear? Nature's extremes leave me cold. Those of human beings give me convulsions. Their evil has no equal in the animal or plant worlds! Especially when they try to alter my image. Their discord becomes delirious.

On her return from her assignment in Kuala Lumpur, Twylla – perhaps also to take her revenge on the arrogance of these compatriots! – begins to present the Menara Kuala Lumpur Tower to the media. This rival is erected on the *Bukit Nanas* hill ninety-four meters above sea level. What a tower, claiming to touch the sky with its four hundred twenty-one meters! It boasts it is the highest structure in Asia! In the local papers they speak of this world-class lighthouse, as if it were the first tower, without even mentioning my name. As if I didn't exist for this giant pineapple of concrete and steel topping a classical cylindrical column ending in a capital with lamella in the form of luxuriant leaves. Of the same fruit: a stammering pineapple, believing itself the bearer of celestial fruits. You could say they lack imagination. These same leaves are repeated on the doors, at the base of the building. No better spot from which to contemplate the capital of Malaysia. Twylla accessed it by climbing a nearby hill, then stairways, step by step. Arriving

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at the entrance in the form of the *mīhrâb* of a mosque, crusted with faïence in geometric blue designs, she realizes that there is no representation of human beings in a Moslem country.

A less complex structure than mine, it doesn't have this long tapered neck which makes me majestic from near and far. Nevertheless, it does contain, like myself, a few common elements: an observation and transmission deck, a Shopping Mall, a panoramic restaurant, and fast-food outlets on the ground floor. But the Kuala Lumpur Tower possesses in addition an amphitheater, a mini-theater, a pool and a prayer room called *Surau*. At the reception, Twylla receives magnetic passes, a pair in paper covered with cellophane. A little gift to better appreciate the capital, Kuala Lumpur, and its skyscrapers piled pell-mell in a tropical forest. And she is captivated by the beauty of the entrance. Blue and greenish faïence in marvelous lacy forms. A mystery she can't decipher. The Arabic letters seem to her like serpents eating their own tails. Without rhyme or reason. A figurative art banished so as not to compete with the supreme God. So that she may see no icons, nor a cross, nor a baby carried by his mother. Nevertheless she has the impression that she is entering the center of a cult. The Menara Tower, which is only the lighthouse of a profane discourse, parades a mystique of doubtful origin... an imitation of nature refusing to yield.

Cohabitation is a matter of time. Tumultuous, paralyzing ambiguities accommodate themselves to the place, like the squirrel to its pine nut. In my precincts, the "House of the Lord" is inhabited by the only language of those who have won and collected the bet. However, my antennae don't lose sight of minority voices. And you see clearly that I chose to tell you my story in the language of Maria Chapdelaine, of Langevin, Ducharme and Grandbois.

Also, look at this image of Twylla entering the door of the Menara Kuala Lumpur with a Malaysian journalist. An acquaint-

tance in this land. And they are linked by a thorough-going professionalism! Suddenly, the Malaysian is seized as if he were a thief, a traitor to his country, a drug dealer.... The police insist on arresting him for a reason Twylla doesn't understand. She too is glued to the wall she came to admire. As if the cloudless sky darkened with God's thunder! No evidence. Searched by two policemen armed to the teeth. Machine guns ready to kill a troop of mercenaries. She barely turns her head to verify that this unexpected, embarrassing check doesn't consist simply of showing her assignment credentials, when a panicked policeman pulls the trigger. *Trigger-happy*, she says. The bullet scorches her friend Zinal's shoulder-blade. And he is transported to emergency, where they take their time. The level of care offered in this broken-down hospital breaks her heart. This image projected all day long on my screens revolts me. It says more than all the articles devoted to it!

I can do nothing, except report the incident and shut up. Commentary isn't within my mandate. It's my secret. I deliver it in this body-newspaper. Not as a pyrogravure, but in *cyberspace*. This little fragment of eternity tying me to you. The instant it takes to put these notes into writing. My only pleasure. You're not going to take it from me? I would go crazy. Crazy from ploughing the heavens with my words until the clouds start to weep.

Twylla finds herself at the foot of Zinal's hospital bed. The wounded man isn't suffering. He is under police surveillance. The Canadian woman slips a few dollars into the nurse's shirt pocket. So she will take good care of him. This is how Twylla learns from this same nurse that Zinal has just "killed" his mother, or more accurately aided her... spared her suffering in practicing euthanasia, just before the rendezvous with "the foreign journalist." A matter of maternal love. To ease her suffering and push her towards heavenly rejuvenation.... There, she will

shine in her eternal existence! All to save her from an agonizing end by giving her a sweet death. So that she may live elsewhere. In this after-life promised by a God who is just, no matter what he does. Zinal made his ablutions, then his morning prayers. Inspired by this dialogue with the Supreme Being, he made his decision. To end it. Quickly.

The autopsy will leave traces... But Zinal doesn't feel guilty. His mother had begged him. He didn't kill her. He facilitated for her the return journey. And everyone must leave one day or the other. In the glory of a voluntary departure. Instead of a failing health making stones weep. I don't have to judge this filial love. I notice only on my screens that this Zinal will be condemned by his country's law. Twylla waited for him until he recovered.

This couple with brown skin, slanted eyes, Eurasian face... born from a chance encounter, want simply to live. To live in the wounds of their two very different countries. Twylla, the Canadian Indian, in her country which is one of the great G7<sup>6</sup> – alas, unemployment reigns there – and which plays peacemaker. Her force, in blue or other-colored helmets, is displayed around the world with trains of gunpowder from racist scandals which make one's hair stand on end. As for Zinal, literally the Handsome One, he is from a developing country, or, to put it another way, a poor country, where economic growth reigns, unequally shared. His country is a gigantic work in progress, in full construction. And luck doesn't knock at its door. Around a hospital bed, they decided to share a new adventure in the snowdrifts, where glacial air kills both crises and microbes.

What is Twylla going to bring back to the country of maples and snow? An addition to the unemployment list? A new scribbler who masters with difficulty the Queen's language, and knows not a single treacherous word of the language of the Lys

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<sup>6</sup> Now the G8. *Translator's Note.*

d'Or. A condemned man in his country, who can live free in hers. A supplementary charge for social services which can't even pay what they owe to the autochtones? Knowing that these means will likely be closed to them, in a brainstorm Twylla decides to play the card of political refugee in order to have Zinal enter legally her land of plenty, and lay-offs!

You will see clearly that it's hard for me to follow a linear narrative! I who am myself simultaneously exploding and plugged in – others say in FM mode – like this generation of crisis, I speak, at the same time, from the many corners of my mouths-antennae. I accumulate facts by the merest chance! Completely unlike this ironic saying: "I am to you as the sardine is to oil." How can I be sardine-ated in old oils? In these ancestral schemes lacking flexibility and adaptability, two word-slogans allowing me to change tactics often. I don't take flight before the event, I adopt the philosophy of gambling. Faced with a blocked society, I place other bets. My flight is offensive! Thus, I adopt a *laissez-faire* attitude. I will spare you the story of Twylla with the Canadian Embassy, where they hardly gave her a quarter of an ear, her determination to rescue Zinal from the claws of fatalism, her solicitations of the Malaysian government, her steps undermined by Ottawa, her report to the Little Napoleon which had to await the thaw between the Amerindian couple on the matter of divorce. Briefly, Twylla's steps taken thousands of kilometers from Toronto only resulted in saving the Malaysian from his country's law – it seemed like that to her. Like so many good Canadians, she thinks of helping others before her own people!

And to say that in this Queen City, a calm and tranquil landscape, the rich attractions and parks, wide Avenues with fluid traffic like water molding itself to glass, spacious parking lots at the subway entrances... all this planning in squares only leads to the most intolerable injustices, to crimes, to the tearing

apart of people who love each other, and, for the first time in the history of the Province, to the proliferation of beggars and the homeless. Thus, the excluded are a legion... of dishonor! No Malcolm X raises his voice to cast a laser beam on despair, sadness, misery — and especially the solitude of the century's outcasts. The minute Twylla lands at Pearson Airport, the journalists pounce on her to extract some information to fill a little blink of an eye of their daily void:

“What are you reporting about your trip to Asia?”

“Much wisdom, and especially the sentence often repeated to me: Tell your living dead to talk about us.”

“Why? We don't say enough about them in our news?”

“Well, no. We only speak about ourselves. About our auto accidents, fires, thefts, embezzlements, taxes... You could say that Canada and North America are the only ones to produce events worthy of interest. You could say that we are the only ones to control the Globe! Does the rest of the world exist for us?”

“And what do they do, for their part?”

“It's simple. They put us in all their sauces. As if they couldn't exist without us, without our point of view. Without our approval. But the *us* for them are the Americans, to be sure.”

“What? Don't they distinguish between Canadians and Americans?”

“Oh yes. They see clearly that the Canadians are always towed by the Americans. They are the top of the spindle. We are just a little crank. An appendix which isn't very functional, but which they may need, one of these days. One never knows.”

“Explain yourself!”

“You only need to look at the Hong Kong Chinese. Canada is their port in a storm. We greet them with their capital. They build their own banks everywhere, control a large business sector, and export themselves to our refrigerator. And they keep a vigilant



eye on the future. Meanwhile, China guarantees them the same advantages, and they can enter there, but this time with a Canadian passport which crosses every frontier. If ever that shouldn't work out, we will have been only a backdoor bridge permitting them to realize their ultimate goal, to land in the United States."

"And as they are canny and patient, they will surely succeed. But tell us a little about the results of your assignment."

"Well, I was treated like a queen. Red carpet and all that goes with it. Basically, they copied a few of our innovations in the domain of telecommunication. But they are still far from reaching the sky. As our CN Tower has done. She has only to close her eyes to see the whole *Comédie Humaine* on her screens. At the end of her microphones and amplifiers. I suppose they can't go any higher because they don't have a Pete Deloon. This son of the moon who walks on air, with grace and elegance, beneath the eyes of the Crescent."

"Are you aware that your Ex is cohabiting with Kelly?"

"You have just told me of it. Thanks for that. The divorce is in process, and I am happy for him."

"Your Ex is a man who shows a perseverance uncommon enough among your people."

"That doesn't amaze me about him. That's how he won me. Striking the Eagle with lightning, he will take his time to rise from his ashes! I am sure he will try to keep to the end his dignity that he carried like a bandolier: the costume of his tribe, a Greek crest, a leather tunic cut in strips. Don't trust the glance of the Caribou.... As for you and your clichés... You can lock yourself behind his scalp dance. I am convinced that in this war dance you will never discover the eagle!"

"And what did you yourself discover at Kuala Lumpur?"

"I tested the immortality of love in a hospital bed. And I saved him from his wounds."

*Thus Speaks the CN Tower*

“How do you feel at present?”

“More at home in my skin. I had to leave my reservation, my city, my province, my country... so as to look at myself in my inner mirror. And I saw that my chaos makes the stars dance. While the chaos of our land never budged the smallest snail!”

“Was that the goal of your trip?”

“No. I went to verify and celebrate a Tower officially... I encountered by chance the asylum of solitude curling within me. A Malaysian journalist taught me how to kill it with love. By means of killing, we invented peace.”

“And this Tower?”

“I came back from it. But I’m not sure if it’s a Menara or Menora. The first word in Arabic means a lighthouse, the second in Hebrew, a seven-branched candlestick. The middle candle serves to light up the three on either side.”

“It doesn’t matter much. It’s always one light or another.”

“Yes, to be sure. Light is what guides us... lights up the darkness in which we live. It should be the light springing from hordes of human beings. But when it’s a Tower, we must mistrust it.”



Night descends on Toronto. Its somber tunic lets a few lights pierce here and there, continuously from buildings and street lamps, and sporadically from automobiles and airplanes. The journalists disperse. As an omnipresent Tower, I don’t cease to keep guard; I continue to reveal the latest news captured live. As for Twylla, coolly and imperturbably, she climbs into a taxi which takes the 407 south and the Gardiner Expressway to return to the YWCA where she still rents a room. During this taxi ride, she speaks to the eagle feather pinned behind her head

between a headband and her black hair cascading to her hips:

*Why did I answer these charlatans of news? How could I have dialogued with these wooden tongues who can't see beyond their wallets? They tried to trap me in order to confound me. I kept control. So much the better for Pete. By losing myself, I found myself. As for Zinal, he is a balm for my wound. What would life be without love? And why are we ceaselessly in search of this actor full of light who gives meaning to life? Even if he toys with us, his charm nails our flesh.*

*I have traveled thousands of kilometers in order to track down this miserable danger which exists only in the head of a tower of which we are so proud. What futility! I can't depart from my path, that of my autochtone fathers. Head crowned with feathers, I must continue to cultivate the Moose-Spirit, to sculpt stone, to weave my tepee, to make moccasins for agile feet. I would thereby incur the disapproval of the Founders who continue to want to plant on our soil strongboxes filled with francs and dollars, the loot of their boredom singing all day long in multicolored advertisements....*

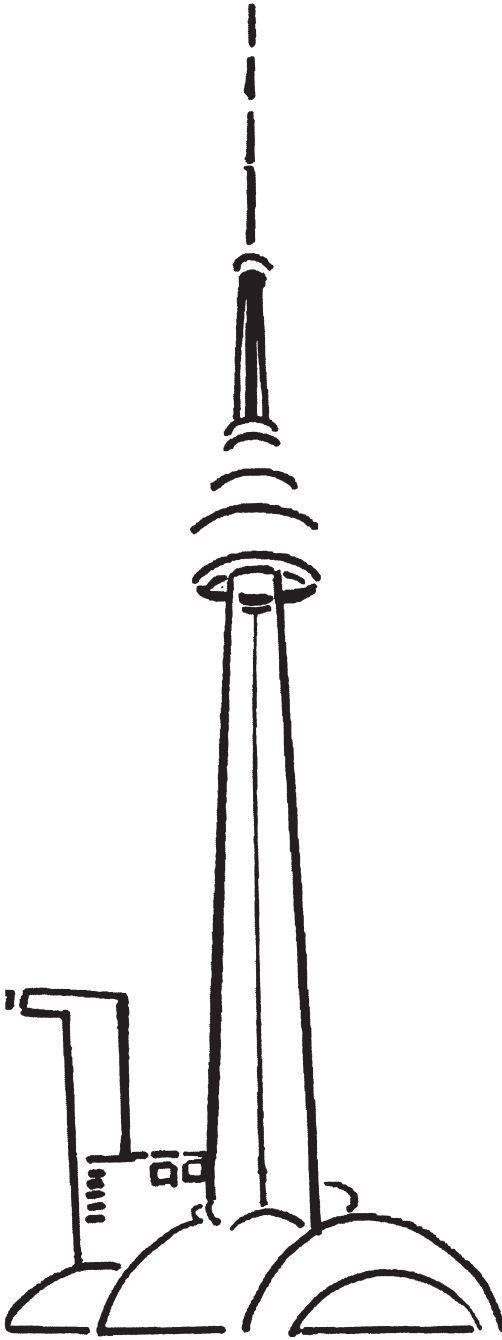
*I am neither a reactionary, nor a Zarathustrian who persists in wanting to teach the superhuman. I have no lessons to give anyone. But I find that necessity is the mother of security. Thus I try not to create a false tone. With every gesture, I correct, whenever possible, the awkwardness of my disparate acts. Even if I am stony in nature, I still feel the vibrating fibers of my rigidity, the breath of my plant, the suction of my roots, the vertigo of my ghosts, the mockery of my pain, the power of speech of the Moose-Spirit which accompanies me everywhere.*

Twylla emerges from this waking dream as from a virgin forest after making love with local and exotic plants. The probing of her viscera rejuvenates her, gives her that radiant air you only see by moonlight, in the midst of stars shining in all their clarity.

*Thus Speaks the CN Tower*

She passes close to me... I give her a little wink of recognition. She has just lifted a great weight from me. This spontaneous help, coming from beyond the abyss, fills us with pleasure that neither one of us can define....





**12**



Covered with fog, mist, clouds, sometimes I can't be seen. Then I emerge, a ghostly watersprite appearing and vanishing with the weather. The weather acts on my humor and conditions my way of seeing things. In our region, we have two seasons. Winter lasts six months with inhuman temperatures which sometimes fall to minus forty degrees. In the summer, it's so hot, we can't live without air conditioners. As for spring and fall, they don't last more than a month each. Whether it's cold, windy, or snowy, whether it's hot, humid, and sticky, the sun is always present. Storms and meteorological disturbances pass quickly. We survive the winters because we're equipped for them. It's the time when everyone visits friends and recovers, finally, a little of our humanity. I am not forgotten either. Crowds come to warm up in my arcades, my game rooms, my Q-ZAR, my cinema of simulation, or my Crossroads Restaurant.... Other curious visitors want to fill their eyes on my decks and lookouts.

This day which propels me into anonymity is not only unusual, but allows me to rest, to take a tour within. I'm going to frustrate expectations, cover my tracks, and catch my breath, escaping the tyranny of rude looks examining me everywhere and undressing me at will. I melt into the heavens, reflecting so many values I embody! Carried away by inspiration, I set out to plough the world with my interior antennae, like a ploughshare digging into the earth to prepare the sowing, or like a CD-ROM recorder who, in nebulous cybernitude, transfers copies full of information. All these options recover past and present, not to mention the primordial activity, the talking stone's leap into the future. Speaking out from the depths of my womb. As a Super-Tower, I polish my pebbles over and over. Foaming waves crash over their brilliant, sticky surfaces. A multitude of unheard-of colors crown the reefs protruding from my svelte silhouette.



This gratuitous act leaves traces of an anonymous creator. And I am seen as the focal point of the city, monopolizing everyone's attention. However, I know that I act like the thick viscosity of the Dead Sea sticking to swimmers' limbs, making their bodies and spirits float.

The Canadian people see me as a Super-Tower, a media star immovable and congenial, since I confer pride on them, which they take for granted. But like all human beings, I didn't ask to be born: however, I exist. That's all. And, like very few people, I am lucky to be born in a rich, immense, powerful country. Its immense space makes me dizzy. I also make everyone who looks at me dizzy. We are both great. That's the sign of my frankness. You call it naïveté? May your jealousy be lost in the Bermuda Triangle!

But be aware that, contrary to human beings, I can't think. Thus, as Descartes would put it, I don't exist. I admit that this existential problem doesn't particularly bother me. I am thinking of it, this minute, because I have just stumbled into my fantasmagoric state. My retreat into fantasy frightens people. Frankly, I don't hide behind my media mist to frighten anyone at all. But it's still my right to privilege with my clairvoyance the elect among the hordes descending on me. To the former I confide my truth in collections of words – or what I've ended up believing is my truth. Not that which makes so much ink flow. Mine is stamped with the seal of freedom, outside God's hands. How do you want me to believe in him, when I am only a talking stone? Every time I speak out, as I do now, I am distrusted. Each time I confide in the Moose-Spirit, the only one which intrigues me – I'm not saying in whom I believe –, I'm suspected of playing the role of reactionary. Every time I make a few shells of words shine, borrowed for the worthy cause of seeing clearly, I am accused of being a shadow figure, or boring. Each time

that... In short, at the very moment I open my mouth-antenna with common sense, I'm ridiculed. They attack me if I go in the wrong direction. I am detested if I aim correctly. *You're damned if you do, damned if you don't!* That's where I acquire my little touch of humanity. They must still grant it to me. And I wish it were on a plate, not necessarily silver!

Sometimes, I don't hear the murmur of the streets, I'm so absorbed by all the words I circulate day and night. I find myself alone again, in a tête-à-tête with my antennae, completely intimate with the troubling feeling of my stones. Moreover, a little like this macadam *Inukshuk*. *This stone ghost mounting guard from now on, on Sherbrooke Street, between the McCord Museum and McGill University: witness of the passage of a people.* We are neither of the same height, nor of the same city. It belongs to Montréal, and I to Toronto. Our two citadels are regarded as faïence dogs staring at each other across centuries. At the same time, our affinities greatly surpass our differences. I feel close to this stone ghost which, like myself, manifests himself to himself in his solidity, enduring longer than iron and glass buildings. In his fantasmagoric projection, he is more mobile than the passersby with their timid steps. Look at them, they are only puppets attending to money matters. Seized by the throat by a dollar whose value varies according to the whims of the Arabian desert – they pretend to forget those of the North Sea – , they get to sleep only after having verified the Wall Street projections on their computer screens.

Even Pete Deloon hasn't escaped this obsession with saving. Kelly King took charge of it. At first frightened by this *Inukshuk* assembled by the dazzled heart of Twylla, she ended up guiding him towards the light of his life in my entrails. Without even understanding his language, she transformed him into a boy toy. In place of the idol he was for his wife. And they became

savings warriors: living on the high hog with the bank account and every kind of life insurance guaranteeing you the best of care and a first-class burial.

Pete drives Kelly to work every day. He comes to pick her up from the office at exactly five o'clock. His comings and goings seem to be regulated by a metronome. However, unlike myself, a Tower without thought, he thinks but doesn't exist. He's a robot moving, galvanized by triumphant machinery. I haven't told you how Kelly came to be charmed by Pete. The latter has attractions that are hard to find today: a moccasin skin's sensitivity, a bear's tenderness, a determined caribou's pursuit of goals. Kelly King didn't resist for long, and the conquest of her heart wasn't sanctified by struggle. You must admit, as well, that Kelly isn't heartless. For a time, she was radiant, like golden rain pouring from a placid sun. Every morning, she crossed my main entrance like a queen of the night. A mistress filled with love, boiling over with life like the surges of new truths, her body gathered warm caresses, touches lifting her to paradise, transforming her. I no longer recognize her. She juggles with dollars and cents like a fairy seduced by the gods. In the evening, her amorous impulses roll like devastating waves in Pete's arms, and she melts in a lava of lust. Their bodies are carried away, sensual scythes abandoning the seeds of grace. However, in the morning, leaving her at the foot of my stairs, Pete has the impression of embracing dry algae in place of last night's siren, emerging from enchanted gulfs.

It's difficult for me to dissect human beings, to express their complex springs of conduct with words, while I am only a tower of stone and cement, glass and iron, steel and reinforced concrete... However, my antennae create words and distribute them to the four horizons. It would never enter the head of Inuits, either, to displace an *Inukshuk* from its *tundra*. It's as if

you asked the children of the Founders to take the road signs from highway 401 and put them in the middle of the desert! *An Inukshuk which is displaced is no longer an Inukshuk since it no longer signifies anything, and commemorates nothing. It's not a totem pole, but the mark of a passage, a sign, a witness, a sort of indelible writing which, outside its context, loses all significance.* Then, if the *Inukshuk* is able to find the road in a blizzard, why not myself, the CN Tower? I would like you to distinguish between my media truth which is objective, solid, trustworthy, and my private truth, already freed of all contingencies, and therefore affording a more luminous light. Thus I devote myself to my tower truth trying to survive painful self-knowledge. For I don't want, either, to be co-opted by that supposed "founding obsession," *Survival*, on which the writer Margaret Atwood put her finger, opening so many purses. She made a fortune by offering us her final truth of "an ethnologist of selfhood." *De Souche* in her soul and consciousness, her words become the essence of our knowledge and our identity. Her resonant formula, "The quest for the Canadian identity is like a dog chasing its own tail," is no longer on every tongue!

But what can we say about my characters floating in their cocoon, ready to be shaped? Will we have to model them with our thumbs to the end of time in a reinforced concrete scenario where they will be molded into new forms? Since I don't think, I dispense. My words, purified of self-neurosis, turn to granite in mid-body with these ghosts running into each other in the heavy black clouds over my head. Each time I leave my concrete carcass, I manage a detour in Human memory. An Anglo-Saxon tower, in the feminine – thus the French language is imposed on me – I see myself as a giant phallus, stiffened, a striated arch at whose feet they have had the lousy taste to place a Skydome: a yawning vagina which opens and closes at will. A feminine

organ, masculinized by a grammar I can't master, just for the love of denaturing our relations. But everybody insists on his sex. My skin is granular and grey, hers smooth and white. I will tell you later about the ties we have established; because we too have a right to learn to read ourselves over the shoulders of the beings who frequent us. In reality, I survey the Queen City from my three balls at the base up to the gland ejaculating news... waiting... and hungry for... crises. Here are a few which are far from being mere verbiage: the terrorism of flesh and ideas... of the State and its characteristics... self-perpetuating fratricidal wars as networks of truth that the Internet cannot calm.

Formerly the Spirit was the Sun. Then he made himself stone. Finally, he made himself absence. At present, he becomes stridency through instruments. Now, as a tower patrolling the sky – without exacting fear or obedience – I resurrect God to the sounds of glass and concrete. I report the Globe, or as Marshall McLuhan named it, the *Global Village*. This University of Toronto professor made a fortune by launching a few generic formulas: “The Medium is the Message,” and other pearls of wisdom that his heirs still masticate without renewing or replacing them. Once the world embraces a phrase that sums it up, it transforms it into religion. Thus religions which don't escape time constraints run off the tracks. Only to prove that God exists. As if we didn't know that there is something in each of us: men, trees, animals, stones, animate and inanimate objects, the smallest blade of grass, and the most colossal tower.... In short, we create sects to help people cross through the dark tunnels of an evaporated faith. Because of the grease of cash! While waiting, the monotheisms turn beings into stone to the point of bursting into exacerbated fanaticism. Such a vacuum to fill... Such an emptiness to supply... Who isn't dying of envy to be decoded according to his faith? But not necessarily that of the cross, the crescent, or the orthodox.

*Thus Speaks the CN Tower*

Is it the Moose-Spirit manipulating me with his magic power to make me speak thus? No doubt I'm inspired by this alternative God who infuses in me this rhythm and cadence. The alternative gives everyone a chance. The gods, human beings, trees, animals, objects... Thus I, the CN Tower, mirror in which Torontonians see themselves. I don't see in each glance the seven deadly sins listed in the Bible, but the back of each being penitent about life.

Kelly, for instance, drags behind her the guilt of having torn Pete away from Twylla. She wears the smile of victory undermined by anguish. Now she is afraid of losing him because she makes him live with her like a goldfish in a bowl. With no job, Pete devotes himself resignedly to his mistress, all the while wearing the mask of the man who is fulfilled because he has possessed this woman placed on a pedestal of passion. I'm only telling you what I see on the surface. The other day, they got into an argument just in front of the ticket booth because Pete arrived late, completely drunk. Kelly, who had spent the whole day glued to her little screen, didn't have the strength to do more than cast a furious glance in his direction, tearing him away from his stupor. He followed her about like a dog seeking pardon after gross conduct. What are the real feelings of human beings: Hatred, bitterness, combativeness, cowardice...? I leave you to guess these bodily parasites. By assuming height and hiding myself in fog, I'm incapable of telling you about the violent agitations shaking my characters, their internal turbulence, their traumas, or their invisible happiness. I know they are shaken like the maple tree in a violent storm. Daily routine leafs through their time: aspirations that die, at the very moment they are conceived. They want to take flight, eagles soaring in ethereal joy. But they are blown along paths strewn with twisted roots.

Would I go so far as to claim the Moose-Spirit speaks through me? After all, it speaks in the soapstone sculpted more than five thousand years ago. It suffices to see the Eskimo art illustrating legends providing the fundamentals of our original identity. It is not only in grey or black soapstone that this Spirit is expressed. It's expressed in ivory, caribou horns, antler, and whalebone. It is in matter that this God expresses himself. It is up to the artist, then, to fashion these figures... But they will always be different from *the seal sleeping on a rock*. As for mine, they are recent immigrants, multicolored hordes whose hands are forgotten after they planted my roots in a triangle, the three facets of my personality, sculpted and projected through the thrust of my silhouette. To the two pillars of the *founding solitudes* is added the third *multicultural solitude*. But these three facets which touch, without speaking to each other or being assimilated, count for nothing, in the final analysis, without the base of the pyramid: the Autochtones, true and first sons and daughters of the country. And I am determined to play the role of media-trix between these four *exacerbated solitudes* which turn their backs on each other without real encounters.

Cloistered in a consumer society, and prisoner of my height which reflected the towering ambition of my builders, I no longer seek growth in this misty noon of my twenty years. It's not by counting the number of freezers that you banish cold from your house, nor by counting the number of cars that you measure the inner distances traveled in suffering or happiness, tolerance or terror...

I so want to reflect the hope of this country. Even in terms of architectural Art, I realize that I am incapable of stirring consciences. The rhetoric – you know this better than I – is in one ear and out the other, and doesn't untie the shoes of the littlest listener. I myself, inventor of nothing, only reply to the stony

*Thus Speaks the CN Tower*

vibrations that I sense in the air at this time.

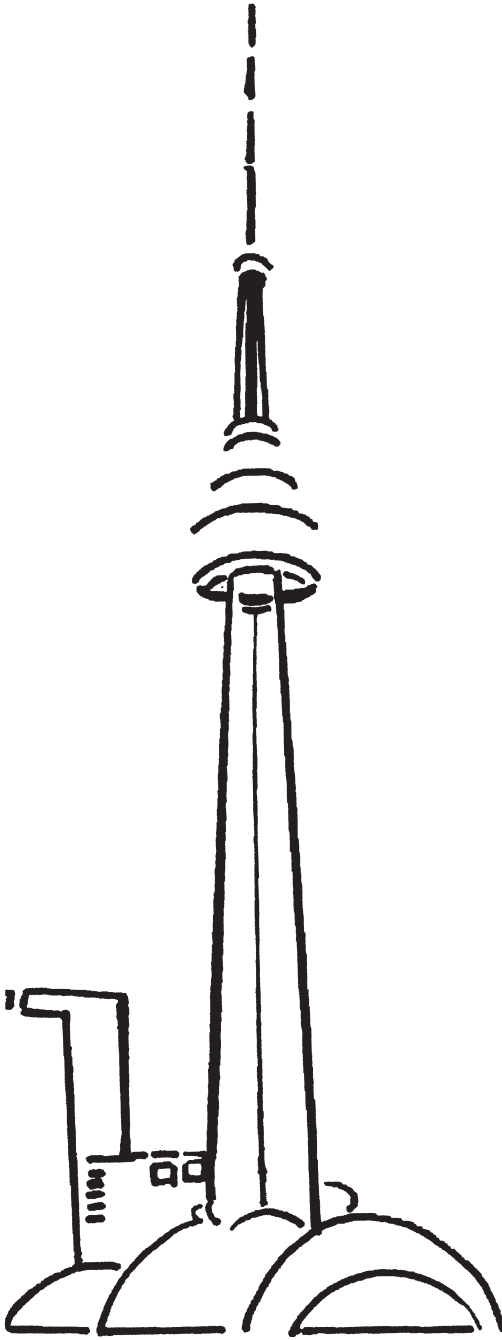
If I speak to you of the interior of my glass and concrete pilory, that doesn't mean that I don't put my heart into it. In my words torn from the sky just for my body/ notebook, I admit the odor of death is missing. Also missing is the sight of the blood flow signaling life....

All my characters, nevertheless, carry their fate on their backs. In their blindness, their vision, and especially their death, they try to extract from it the essence which will make them memorable. In my grey sketch today, I see clearly into them, because I defy the sky, or rather, because, more than anyone, I master the mediatic nourishing us, all of us who make word transfers. Thus I easily manipulate the intimate, private life of a few people circulating in me and around me to deliver them to you unpackaged, in the form of fragmented anecdotes. My stony curiosity, in any event, doesn't slake my thirst to know the truth about beings that I choose sometimes in the happy moments of my trances. Not to judge them... nor to read their mirrors, no! It's thus that my arbitrary existence acts...

If I invite you to enter my shell, it's to make you laugh with my tower follies. To lure you into my networks of manipulation. Without the self-satisfaction of navel-gazing. I removed from my I-raconteur all the attractions which blow up any talespinner worthy of the name into a dirigible. Modern times have opened the "royal voice" of "disposable thought." This Kleenex wipes up colds well. But I, the CN Tower, I don't catch contagious diseases. As towervision, I let myself go on tangents, without criticism. "Electrons of uniformity," which can't manipulate the drive for liberty, leave my guts in a dire state.







**13**



*I* emerge from a fog enclosing me in my shell. I have just completed twelve revolutions during which I identified a few elect among the four or five hundred people working under my roof. I followed them with my stony discourse. I gave some of them steady work, and I take advantage of a few opportunities to heal them with my inspiration. My great reputation delivers pills of hope. They would be unbelievers to refuse them. Sometimes I offer them happiness, and they wallow in misery! Sometimes, I quicken their blood with liberty which goes to their heads. Sometimes, a single glance reifies them.

From my head nailed to the sky, visitors can see one hundred and sixty kilometers all around. From the low, squat Skydome pinned to the earth, to Niagara Falls. They command a view of the superb Lake Ontario, as vast as an inland sea, Centre Island, Ontario Place, Casa Loma, Black Creek Pioneer Village, Canada's Wonderland... and so many other marvels, as you twist your neck to follow the rays of the setting sun. Nearby the "Twin towers in arches" rise, forming the new Toronto City Hall, built in 1965. You could call it a bird of good omen taking flight to perch on my antennae. Or else, they are two grand pages of a book opened on the public square "of meetings and assemblies." A place to stroll among Henry Moore's sculptures during the summer, the Square becomes a skating rink in the winter. Recognized throughout the world as a triumph of architecture conceived by the Finnish architect Viljo Revell, this new City Hall makes the downtown pulse to the rhythm of a dazzling modernity. As for the old one, built in 1888, it is no longer in competition. Its antique air makes us pity it. With its elaborate sculptures, its menacing gargoyles, and its greenish roof, you could call it papier mâché, this château is an example of Victorian Gothic architecture. Its clock tower, sounding the hour,

seems muffled today. Nevertheless they continue to store the archives in this old manor no one had the nerve to demolish. Petitions were submitted to save its life. Bowing to innovation, it tries to hide from view, from the race and competition.

Why am I dwelling at length on the fate of these two buildings? One crouches over a distant past and no longer knows where to hide, and the other placards an arrogant present confident that the world belongs to it. In a way that's the story of my life. Look to the west. They flanked me with a Skydome to mock me and awaken my sex drive. A Dome of the Sky, they say. My word! It's rather a gigantic vagina opening and closing at will like a succulent fruit, an outgrowth of my verve, since 1989, the year of the French Revolution Bicentenary! Why then that precise year since we ourselves have only unleashed a minuscule "Tranquil Revolution"? With no great upheaval, not many deaths. Our tranquility resembles the solid wall of water of Niagara Falls. With us, everything percolates within, while the exterior is smooth stone and whiteness, like the roof of the Heavenly Dome whose three white arches come together in turn and separate noiselessly. A splendid forum for all kinds of games and spectacles, and the home stadium of the Toronto Blue Jays and Toronto Argonauts, the Skydome arrived to nestle in the corner between my leg and the Metro Toronto Convention Centre, and pulls a cover over itself. But it will never succeed in conquering my own turf, the CN Tower, for I excel in transmitting the true and false in an ambiguous, sticky molasses. And isn't that why I beat by a mile all the towers, and all the buildings? My vital force resides especially in my stony discourse, in the perfect love I devote to my city. I offer them, in fact, to more than a million and a half visitors who come to visit me annually, in addition to the whole Toronto population.

*Thus Speaks the CN Tower*

The Skydome was incapable of offering this love at the time of the magical Pow Wow festival in mid-May. *Everyone is invited!* Pass the word. More than a thousand dancers in authentic Amerindian costume. A treat to see these colorful costumes worn only for feasts or ceremonies. For once the First Nations have reunited. To exhibit their art, their culture, heritage, crafts, customs on parade, their cuisine of bannock, fried bread, corn soup.... *Let's make it a family affair*, says the advertising. *Come to the concert of Rebecca Miller, a country singer from the Mohawk Nation. Meet your spiritual ancestors, your healers.* That day, Twylla found herself in the colorful throng, among her own people who were making a lot of noise, not so much with speeches, but with bells tinkling on their heels, highlighting their personality. It was love of the earth that this crowd came to celebrate.

Certain to find very few white participants, Twylla is nonetheless disappointed not to encounter Pete and Kelly there. It's true that Canadians take less and less leisure time. They are happy to plant themselves in front of the little screen, couch potatoes with a beer in their fists. *Zapping* the remote, channel-hopping nails them to American crime serials with constantly exploding action. On the menu: murders, fires, fights, interminable car chases accompanied by the sirens of the clownish police.

Twylla approaches an aged Indian sitting on the earth. An intuitive, inexplicable attraction. They are now face to face. The Shaman offers her a censer he swings from left to right. Directs the smoke towards this female stranger with an eagle feather. She is drawn to it. As if she were bathing her face with this blessed scent. She clasps her hands as sign of respect, closes her eyes, and begins to hear the singsong chant of the ancestor. Floating in dreams, she no longer knows if the voice tells her own story, or if it's the tale she heard before in childhood. Like the

Shaman today, her grandmother cradled her early on while murmuring to her fragments of life which became confused with her own. This half-feminine, half-masculine voice, coming from the depths of the world, offers deep pleasure to her, seems to issue from stones warmly clutched in her grandmother's hands:

*"It's by holding these stones that I can tell you their secret: a night of nights letting her spirit wander until daybreak, a woman descends from a promontory overlooking the Humber River. What today is called Baby Point. Just to the north of Bloor Street, and to the northeast of the Old Mill Restaurant in Metro Toronto. The woman descends to fill a jar of water. She is nursing a baby girl, in the same place where the French King's soldiers prevented us, the children of the First Nations, from selling our furs to the English. Fortunately, Agah, the medicine woman, helped her in childbirth. She seizes the baby and presents it to the sun so the Moose-Spirit will understand that a new life has begun on this earth. She chants several prayers. The baby begins to devour everything offered to her. She eats, and eats, as if she had always been hungry. She sleeps and dreams like a stone. And the mother looks at her little girl. She smiles at her, caresses her, lets her sleep...*

*She is called Twylla because she is different from the other children of the tribe. As she has blue-grey eyes, she is afraid to go and play outside. She fears the ridicule and cruel laughter of children. Twylla prefers to shut herself up, eat and sleep like a stone. The only noise her mother makes is to grind corn at the crack of dawn. Otherwise, she sleeps and dreams.*

*She feels herself floating in air. On a limitless blue sea. She seems to see a mountain top crowned with thick fog. The mountain emerges from the water. And the daughter is dying of envy to descend and play with the pebbles, to walk on the beach where she sees people twice as tall as her father. White people, they don't resemble anyone she knows.*

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*Her mother's footsteps awaken her. She swallows all the food she has brought her. Always hungry. As if she had never eaten anything..."*

*"You should go out, Twylla, go play with your cousins," her mother's voice says sweetly.*

*"Her father is uneasy about her. He knows that even his nephew Suluk makes fun of his cousin, calling her 'Pale Eyes.' He mentioned it to his elder brother who ordered his son not to make fun of his cousin. Suluk continued to surround Twylla with his friends. All of them crying: Pale Eyes... Pale Eyes... Tears run down Twylla's bronzed cheeks, and she refuses to go out and play with children her own age.*

*One day Twylla sees emerging from the fog, near the niche where her father kept his sacred pahos, his prayer feathers, and other mysterious objects... a very tall young boy named Kamik who said to her:*

*'I come from a distant island. I belong to an order of priest-magicians. You have already seen my island. And I'll take you there to visit before it sinks beneath the waves.'*

*Kamik, this giant from an unknown land, has pale skin and blue-grey eyes like hers. It was perhaps for that reason she felt so comfortable with him. He took Twylla's hand, and they flew through the air. On the fog and on the sea. And the young man takes her to visit his island, shows her birds and strange flowers and plants which cure illness, like those her father still uses today. Twylla was enchanted.*

*One day Kamik introduced her to a very beautiful woman. As gigantic as himself. Twylla noticed that the woman's eyes were as pale as hers. When the woman took her hand in hers, she flew away. And Kamik says to Twylla:*

*'I love this woman. One day we will have children who will be your ancestors.'*



*That day, Twylla did not understand Kamik's words, but in her childish head, she said, 'I will remember.'*

*One day the public Crier announces that the Spirits are going to visit the promontory. As a result, Twylla's father sprinkles corn flour on the soil so that the Spirits can find the path of the clear brook, after the snow melted, which follows the pine forest as far as the tepees. The drum and tambourine beats reach a frenzied crescendo. The Spirits appear. Giants around whom green trees dance. God of the air, the Eagle accompanies them on land and sea. Coming and going to the Fourth World. His feathers serve as a pahos where messages and prayers are engraved for the world Beyond.*

*'From far, far,' says Twylla, 'like these stars shining in the sky, we can put our house in order.' The Eagle and the little tree, with magic power, transmit thoughts of this kingdom to others.*

*She is dazzled by the procession of Spirits. Her father leads the procession. All the bodies are painted black with white symbols. Branches of little trees are hung from their belts, small bells around their arms and legs, larger bells around their bodies. Rainbow-colored masks decorated with down, eagle feathers, and wild plants shiver at each step. A light breeze animates them each time they stop. At the rear come the women wearing orange masks. On their black robes a white and red covering. Boots in pure white deerskin set off these vivid colors. These women make music with pumpkin shells, deerbone drumsticks.*

*Both near and distant, Twylla looks at this scene. As if she were within it. As if she were excluded from it. In place of the promontory, she sees herself on an arid plain. A desert open in all directions. No trees. No water. No grass. A few faded grains of corn. Dust everywhere, and a torrid sun! A few hungry people. Poor souls going around in circles without finding any satisfaction. Thanks to their marriage to the Spirits, their faces are*

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*radiant with joy. Everyone dances in this trance of the hovels...*

*Twylla tells all this to her priest-father. He already knows the mysteries awaiting his little daughter. Distinguished, or banished, by a fate which excludes her. When she tells him in minute detail about this curious and familiar ceremony, he says to her:*

*'I have heard of the end of the Fourth world and the eventual emergence of the Fifth. The Fourth will finish in a catastrophe. Simply because people have left the true path. The All Powerful would have liked them to take another voyage on earth. They pass all their time acquiring things and objects. From which come envy and wars to procure them. Neglecting the ceremonies, leaving only to chase after material wealth, not asking the deer's permission when they take its life, they kill without regret or ceremony. They forget to thank the Spirits for the water babbling in the brooks when it fills their jars. When they are warned, they all reply, 'We have so very many goods that we will never want for anything!'*

*The father leaves Twylla alone in a room so that she can dream in her own way. Undisturbed. Perhaps to foresee events in order to save... even a part of this people thirsty for goods and merchandise. He decorates this peaceful place with sacred stones people carried with them for generations when they came from the West. The stones in their unpolished form are great turquoise nuggets gathered from Mother Earth and carefully preserved in special deerskin pouches. He knew from his father, a priest before him, that at a given moment one of these generations would know how to use them to benefit the tribe. Privileged in her new dwelling, and spoiled by her parents, Twylla's only duty is to tell her father about her dreams. He will decode them for the good of Kin and Stranger."*



I am concluding this seraphic voice of stone pouring its discourse into the palm of a divine hand. I will relearn it, one day. That's for sure. For on my concrete skin, it traced the authentic fate of origins.

If from the beginning I was preoccupied with my birth, it was to see clearly into my stony nature. I had the wind in the stern. Hordes of many nations, finding work, didn't have time to quarrel. A rainbow of colors completing itself. Pierre Elliot Trudeau did the rest by creating a Ministry of Multiculturalism which shared the apple of discord among the many mouths held hostage to a few news articles. As for me, CN Tower become Inukshuk citizen, I guide the inertia dragging skyscrapers without volition and a few human beings fixated with love for want of any better objects. Being neither lyric, nor strategic, I capture the waves speaking in a stone, steel and glass language, everything that is said about my city, everything that reaches me from the great world outside. Constructed as I am, I lend an ear to the excluded, the sick, the well, the poor, the rich, and the powerless... because I am capable of foreseeing the eventual end of century catastrophe, and because I am the echo of the fragmentary tale extracted from the giant womb of the Skydome, by my extrasensory stony perception.

In the dense silence, there is only stone that can talk to stone! In the gap between the hell of thought, there is only stone which can reveal to stone the secret of beings and things, tough links woven by time to the rhythm of metamorphoses. Only stone frees portraits sleeping in stone: geometric bas-reliefs of our features flowing into alphabets of languages slaughtered without a by-your-leave. They bleed outside the rites of passage which reveal man to himself and his society.

If I have lingered over these cries of fleeing stone, it's because I wanted to implode in Twylla's arms. She came to embrace me

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just after her return from Malaysia. Her bare arms caressed my crystalline skin. My words slipped into her flesh. Like this tale she heard from the other side of the stones. Then I knew that she defended me at the tribunal of competing thoughts. Thus, she sent her report to the Minister of Communication, Rocco Cacciapuoti, who didn't take the time to see her. Once her mission was accomplished, several telephone calls received no reply. No call back. Resulting in this letter she delivered to me in the circle of her arms:

*Dear Minister,*

*I am writing you from a nearby country which is only yours and mine. Thanks to Souleyman Mokoko who furrows the CN Tower as a part-time worker, I was able to learn of the fate we must all face. To leave his trace on this phallogentric guide which needles our good Queen City, not to name it. Toronto turbaned with its skyscrapers, ferocious in the battle for the Almighty Dollar. In each Building an architectural strategy reaching up to devour the Sky. But no fear of these buildings which bow before the Tower, unsurpassable at any price. In fact, the Tower is the only structure liberated from the shield of the banks in the sky's isolation, reflecting our economic power and our architectural skill. Her skill in the communications domain gives the world hallucinations. And we Canadians are haunted by neutrality in order not to mire ourselves, so to speak, in wars where we are always the peacekeepers, and in internecine quarrels where we excel at cutting through the crap.*

*I am sick at heart that my ex-husband, Pete Deloon, couldn't obtain a job in this same Tower he erected with his own hands. His joke, or his prowess in leaping from the summit of the highest Tower in the world, in some way*

truncated his life. The leap of the absurd which, instead of helping him transcend selfhood, only aggravated his fall. But it happens that values “shift.” In place of the standard of work measuring everyone’s talents – that is, the money one makes – Pete, with his buffalo scent, followed the glamorous woman. She who was placed at the very pinnacle. What do you want? Powerlessness forced him to commit a small mistake. In place of violence, he opted for love. Becoming the slave of tyranny! I would like him to exhaust to the limits the gross illusion of perfect happiness.

Contrary to the rumors that have spread, I don’t expect to tear Pete from Kelly’s claws. I am beginning a lawsuit, in due process, just to ensure support for my son. This lovely son who is soon going to be jolted out of adolescence into the adult world. He will always remain the pupil of my pale eyes. Like his, which remind me of my father. From this point of view, I admit that I am delighted he doesn’t resemble his own father. As for the Human Resources Director, she debauched my ex-husband, first humiliating him to make him pay for his scandalous free fall from the CN Tower – in America you get nothing for nothing! – then swallowing him like a fly in a spider web. Meanwhile, she made him taste the sweet and sour of waiting. So that strong links would be forged, resisting the passage of time.... And what did she do to keep the sex high, and the nose to the ground? She didn’t even help him declare his unique courageous leap to the insurance company so that he would qualify for Workers’ Compensation. As you know, Minister, the Insurance is, for all Canadians, the only currency which pays for their death. The Human Resources Director of the prestigious

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*CN Tower didn't lift her little finger to find him work or obtain any insurance for him. She wants him to remain the little dog dependent on her good will, always faithful to her whims.*

*I'm coming to my assignment in Malaysia. First, I would like to thank you for choosing me for this important task. The opening of the Menara K.L. Tower went off almost without a hitch. Except for the little incident with Zinal (my new acquaintance) which didn't spoil the ceremony at all. I was greeted like a Queen of Sheba. Better than I would have been welcomed in my own country. The hospitality came straight from the heart, and not from bottles of champagne. Since the country is Muslim, I should have said from bottles of fruit juice. In any case, the warmth of the contacts is measured by the meeting of souls, and not by trays of hors-d'oeuvres.*

*Thus there is no reason to fear that the Menara K.L. might steal the thunder of our Tower. Neither from the viewpoint of height, nor of world-class technology. Rest assured. I am insisting, nevertheless, on communicating to you the malaise I felt at the contact of this Tower when I compared it to ours. All the Malaysians I encountered, from north to south and from east to west, cherish their Menara K.L. in their hearts. Which fertilizes them with an inexhaustible source of happiness. They make it their faith and their pride. And what's more, they see its mission as "the focal point" of all kinds of local and indigenous cultural activities, but also of international and universal. In addition to the fact that every time a visitor appears in the Tower, he is offered the "SALAMAT DATANG." This Greeting of Peace is on the tickets, the brochures, the smiles, the architecture, on the entrance,*

and even on the summit of the building. Their Tower thus possesses a mystical aura. The whole tower head is clad in glass... arranged in the traditional Islamic form of the "MUQARNAS." This whole structure then becomes a harmonious entity reflecting the renaissance of the Islamic architectural heritage. The Kuala Lumpur Tower is permeated by a Spirit which, unfortunately, ours does not possess, and doesn't seem to want to possess. Not for lack of means, but because we only look at the past to denigrate it. We are content to scrutinize the future stupidly. Without reference to the galaxies lost in the infinite past or in the awkward present. Because we are fixated on business profits. And not on the varied colors of our deep and surface composition. We only consider time important when it is equated with money. And we don't benefit from this same time to extract from it and highlight the sources of our originality. Personally, I feel the Moose-Spirit wandering around the Tower instead of emanating from it, like prayers from disbelievers' hearts.

Pardon me, Minister, for having thus confided in you. Something that is absolutely never done in our stiff upper lip society. I know it. I have insisted on sharing with you everything I had in my heart, because you are the first person who gave me an assignment. However temporary. You know as well that everyone prefers me not to leave my Reservation. In Canada, only the transactions in the wolf-tongue survive, instead of those of the Moose which fuses spirits.

Counting on your Mediterranean indulgence and your understanding, I would like to inform you that I have decided not to return to my Reservation, in order to become a free-lance writer in Toronto. If you should ever think of

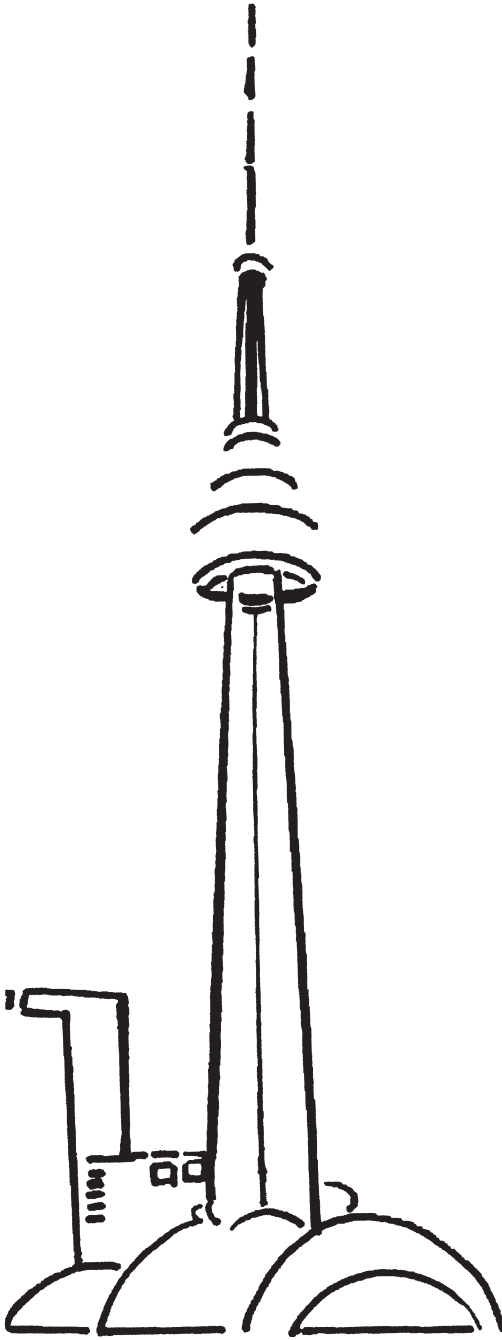
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*me to cover any event, I am asking you to call on me. That will allow me to add a bit of caribou to my spaghetti.*

*Sincerely yours,  
Twylla Blue*







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*F*reezing rain. My skin is covered with a sheet of ice. My bulb glitters white like glazed paper. Instead of fading, it flourishes, more beautiful than ever, and recovers the natural color of the country. My stem doesn't augur well for Souleyman Mokoko. The only day he fails to show up for work. At the intersection of Jane and Finch, he loses control of his car. A monstrous, treacherous skid. A collision and chain reaction with a terrible crash of five cars which, instead of embracing lightly like metal lovers, rear-ended each other, opening their trunks and their secrets, like furtive thieves. The Chevrolet, "built to resist impact... giving its driver perfect mastery, even in difficult conditions," flattened into the trunk of Souleyman's old Ford. The Ford, in turn, smashed into a Honda which rear-ended a Fiat, destroying the functional design of an Acura... an accident where the metal takes its revenge in a pleasurable interpenetration. Only iron and steel make love like that. In a passionate violence of possession...

Ice is without pity. The graceful lines of a whole chain of cars, their colors and conditions blurred, have paid for the luxury of intermingling in an orgy of crashes. No one can disentangle them or return them to their original positions. This passion of interlacing vehicles is enough to make you weep. Car and mechanism, your pride and joy, no longer serve you. They take pleasure in defying your aesthetic and your will. Having submitted to your power for centuries, they now take their revenge. An accident in which five people who don't know each other from Adam and Eve find themselves bound together inextricably. Iron recriminations unleashed because of the filthy weather.

At level five, I possess state-of-the-art televisual equipment serving ten stations, from CTV, TV Ontario... to Global. At level six, the same kind of equipment for FM radio: also about ten stations such as CHUM-FM, CKFM-FM, CJRT-FM... CBC. With

all these world-class stations, no one reported this spectacular, costly accident, which didn't make the evening news. They simply announced that "an accident stopped traffic in the morning at the Jane and Finch intersection. There were no deaths or serious injuries." No one even noticed this sibylline pronouncement. A news item of interest to no one. No names were given. It doesn't attract anyone's attention. Now I know why I began to narrate this tale of a body where I give free rein to my antennae's inclinations. In vibrations making me shiver from my foundations to my summit, I transcribe them into stone letters. I censor in them overflowing sentiments in order not to get too personal, and so that my "listeners" don't position me on the rotting foundations of trendiness. I leave it to other artists to strangle on their fifteen minutes of fame.

Since my vision is panoramic, and my main function is transmission, already, at the age of twenty-five, I feel a communications heartburn turning my stomach. Nonetheless my technology continues to function. After each message that's transmitted, I erase myself. My role ends when the words stop. Then I leave the theatre of words. I have nothing more to do except serve as middle-man. No one pays attention to the facts. They forget I'm not a showplace, but only a transmitter of stone words. This role I have played for a quarter century introduced into my concrete flesh myriad human vibrations. No doubt that's what keeps me close to a few of my characters. In short, I am not always neutral.... For example, when I speak of Souleyman Mokoko's fate, my narrative is colored by subjectivity, breathing life into my strong sentiments. That's the way it is, I can't help it!

It's true that Souleyman doesn't leave me indifferent. Frozen to the bone. After several attempts to telephone, he can't reach the Management. He was so anxious to accomplish his function of a spectacular flight in one of the four elevators which take off

at the same speed as a jet plane, transporting more than twelve hundred visitors an hour. Cocooned in his engine, Souleyman would be as warm as in the trunk of a baobab tree, nourishing him with its ancient leaves and roots.

Conscientious, worthy and honest, he slips on the icy, sordid bridges of his daily job. It's fortunate that, from his position, his fertile African imagination escapes to an air bath yielding an unforgettable view of the Lake. He imagines he has found his "place in the sun," or the Toronto Islands. Just a little house where he could live with his family during the summer. A peaceful corner for three months. The rest of the year he is blocked like a snowman, without the strength to escape from his body. It's Twylla's son Moki who will come to his aid and teach him how to live in this Igloo.

The Administration jumps at the pretext of "a serious error": Souleyman hasn't ensured his service. He hasn't foreseen the need for a possible replacement. Wicked tongues do the rest: "Africans have no notion of time. Lazy good-for-nothings who only expect to be waited on. Heads in the clouds, no practical sense. They all eat fiercely spicy peppers which make them sweat... effortlessly, not to speak of them as cannibals eating human beings in Béarnaise sauce. They make babies they expect to raise on the streets..." According to Dr. Ronchon, "*the cyberdependent* – and all these Africans are cyberdependents – *should be treated like alcoholics or drug addicts...*"

Souleyman is dependent neither on Cyberspace, nor on the Government. Often he even forgets to fill out the forms for the family allowance which, in his eyes, is only a disallowance of individuality. And as he carries his dignity like a shield on his forehead, he doesn't run the risk of crawling. He never profited from his job to visit me with his eldest daughter, Aminicha, aged fifteen. But now that he no longer works within my precinct, he

brings her to my Restau-crossroads, to eat her favorite lunch: a Big Mac, French fries, and a coke. As soon as Amanicha sees me close up, she exclaims:

“Baba, Baba... why does this pyramid end in a needle head wearing a turban?”

“It’s not the same pyramid as the one I spoke to you about. And it isn’t a turban, it’s a perfect circle.”

“Tell me again about our ancestors’ pyramids.”

“I told you why I gave you the name of Queen Amanichakhéto. I should remind you that her funeral pyramid, filled with gold objects, precious ornaments preserved in a bronze bowl, was looted by an Italian who, after Napoleon’s campaign, returned to sack the pyramid and extract valuable booty from it. He sold the first half cheaply first because the experts couldn’t authenticate the treasure. It was three or four years later that a renowned archaeologist could authenticate its exact value. The price of the pieces climbed sharply, and the Italian was bitter!”

“Then the Kingdom of Kush was rich and powerful?”

“Yes. And even illustrious. We have been conquerors, and in turn we have been conquered. But we will never pardon theft and dishonesty... From Djebel Bachal, “the sacred Mountain,” still topped today by a rocky needle which resembles the Tower, our Nubian princes went to conquer Egypt. Our ancestors came from the Kingdom, today Sudan, situated at the confluence of the White Nile, the Blue Nile, and the Atbara. Its dynasties of black Pharaohs came from the South. In the beginning (around 2500 B.C.) it was the independent kingdom Kerma. Perhaps the most ancient in Africa. And I hesitated, when I chose your name, between Kerma, and the diminutive of the Queen’s name. I opted for the latter because you are my riches. More precious than gold, ivory, ebony, or incense. More than the skins of wild animals dear to the cult. All these riches were negotiated, and

exchanged under the watch of enormous fortresses constructed by the Pharaohs of the Middle Empire on the “Batn el-Hagar,” the stone Stomach, around the second cataract which was flooded by the waters of Lake Nasser during the 1960s.”

“Tell me, Baba, will the Skydome, which also resembles a stone stomach, be swallowed up by Lake Ontario?”

“Amanicha, you don’t mean that the CN Tower is the daughter of the rocky Needle?”

“Exactly... Baba. But not completely... I have just said that the Tower is a pyramid in the form of a needle. And you told me that the rocky Needle is a religious symbol of the Pharaohs. It allowed them to believe in God, and simultaneously told time. It was also the departure point for all adventures. The point from which they measured the distance traveled.”

“Yes, the point of origin. It was fixed and immovable. While the CN Tower is a transitional space. News circulates to the four corners of the earth. And it circulates without a trace. You listen to it distractedly. Considering neither its weighty silence, nor its measured tone. While our language, Méroé, was engraved in gold by Taharka at the summit of the rocky peak. A meroitic inscription simultaneously hieroglyphic and cursive which hasn’t, even to this day, found its Champollion, and remains for the most part undeciphered.”

“But who remembers Méroé?”

“Hardly anyone. And certainly no Canadians! It’s for that reason we came here. They promised us we could keep our heritage, our culture, our language... and then they turned against us. Saying that the ‘Ethnics’ must integrate, assimilate, purify themselves, nullify themselves... to take root here. And we changed ourselves from head to foot. That didn’t suffice. Whatever we planted, baobab or maple, our tree will never be ‘native.’ In the eyes of Bilodeau, Durocher, Miron, Trembla, and others, it will



never bear fruit!”

“Then why did we come here?”

“We were forced to leave our country. Precisely because turbans are only worn on melon heads. Those who wish a forced return to tribalism, to religious laws smothered in integrationist sauce, in obedience to the Nation... the supreme sorceress who dethroned the Whites. These whites that all African peoples imitated to fill their own pockets. They emulate them. To save their skins engraved with gold and ivory, they empty inexhaustible mines, killing elephants recklessly...”

“You told me that Canada distributed publicity in all the foreign countries to invite qualified people to immigrate to this country. ‘Become Citizens of Canada,’ they say. You immigrated and you became a citizen, so why did you lose your job?”

“First of all, it’s *Mektoub*. It’s written in the heavens that they will find the sacrificial goat for budget cuts! Behind the scenes of chauvinistic and hypocritical negotiations, heads roll. Just to meet the demands of a budget no one understands.”

Souleyman was a little comforted by speaking to his daughter of his native land. He could never have opened his heart this way to a Canadian “*de laine*,” or pure goat! I, the CN Tower, I am no longer traveling among men. They come to me, admiring or confused. To whom, if not myself, can men confide their fears of living without love, all the days that fate grants them? My rapport with them is measured by a stony yardstick. I was sensitive to the “rocky needle” and the “stone stomach” Souleyman talks about. Suddenly, I found myself positioned in an ancient tradition. Thanks to this foreigner, become a Canadian, who doesn’t betray his past!

Instead of being a dizzying antenna planted on the shore of a great lake, I am, in effect, pleased to see myself among the pyramids, a very high pyramid. That consoles me, for neither the

Skydome, nor the railway lines flanking me at my base, nor Front Street, Spadina and University Avenue teeming with adventures, could produce the elixir to inspire my dreams. Technological progress weighs less in the balance than in earlier days. It matters little if my elevators climb my five hundred meters in a few seconds, or if the roof of Skydome can accommodate thirty-seven hundred cars and open in less than twenty minutes.

If I were an Inuit sculpture, I would vibrate to the song of animals, the tales of constellations, the agony of kingdoms, and the joyous mastery of the Earth Mother. Fortunately, Twylla sometimes comes to caress me, to hold me in her tender arms. Am I not the projection of her Pete, who was fired? Child of his unhappiness, I procure her happiness.

Souleyman's dismissal from my arcades weighed heavily on my heart until the day – and I don't know by what miracle! – he found a job as a taxi driver. Armed with his doctorate, he brings to my doors hordes of visitors including idiots, madmen, and sometimes mystics. It happens, from time to time, that I capture fragments of his exchanges with his clients. During one run, with only the tram as witness, Souleyman confides:

“The Tower doesn't betray me, but its *managers*. They won't carry it to paradise! I'm grateful to have worked in its living flesh. The elevator led me astray. We don't count for anything. The system controls everything. The thirst for life, the thirst for love. No one can cut the aorta of the system, or put a spoke in the wheel. You can't change anything, even the oil greasing the infernal machine. In my country as well, that's the way things work. You scheme to make all the mouths open wide, those dying of hunger, as well as those who throw leftovers to the dogs. Fearful, they open only to swallow a bitter pill. But there, at least, I had the desert in my view. Here, all I own is my snotty nose! There, speech costs a lot, sometimes even life. Here, it's

worthless. We possess the fundamental freedom to say what we think. What am I saying? The right and the duty to shout what people are thinking to themselves. Never confront the State! We criticize everything, power and democracy, and no one gives a damn. I even complained to the Human Rights Commission. And they let me enter one door and leave by the other. Always free to believe and to die in the hope flowering in speech, in the death-mirror of repentance...”

Here the citizens have dedicated the coldest month of the year, February, to Black History. They invited us to develop our *Kuumba*, our Swahili creativity supposed to unify us while it actually divides us. It becomes a star, along with the African heritage at the Harbourfront Centre. A whole program: a historical review, *Black in Time*, a Coca-Cola concert, and you go there to dance your heart out, Garth Fagan dance, immersion dance, and Souleyman sings, sings and tastes your exotic cuisine... Then, seized by the turbulent exorcism, I put my hand to the clay, and I create a “Tower-needle-stomach-stone” amulette to protect my CN Tower from the evil eye. I want so much to give to her a soul, without at the same time selling my own on the international flea market. Even for her, I refuse to clog the arteries with the tigress rhymes of my speech. My rhythmic tigrity I dedicate to everyone, a hand extended to others. It’s the gesture this land of welcome needs so much, which freezes the most loving hearts. However, some people believe that, by crowning the Tower with my unpublished love, I am acting like an African sorcerer who dialogues with ghosts! Then so much the better, if that’s what I’m doing. For in the desert which rejects no one, there flower and survive forever the most beautiful sand roses.

You know, the Prophet, that God blesses a thousand times with his pity, said: *A stone came down from the sky whiter than*

*Thus Speaks the CN Tower*

*milk, but the sins of men blackened it.* It's the most venerable object of the Holy Place. A heavenly stone black in color, given by the angel Gabriel to the patriarch Abraham, helped by Ishmael. Here as well, a Tower, the Mecca of the Torontonians and the tourists, emerged from the earth. It's a *Ka'aba* grey as the dawn, obeying scrupulously the rules laid down by men. It doubtless possesses part of the genius of the Moose-Spirit that the First Nations blunted. Yes! There are only the deserts deprived of love which create passion; you know that too, don't you?"

Souleyman deposits at my feet countless visitors dazzled by my concrete radiance giving men a foretaste of the panorama. This fantastic vision, vaulting over the skyscrapers and plants, men and animals, doesn't reveal any mystery of the most dynamic, cosmopolitan city in the world. No one suspects the drama living in each of my characters huddled in his shell of unemployment, tragic love, or drugs replacing religion. Each one is a soap bubble bursting. Each one needs to escape into a corner of the heavens in order to meditate on his fate. Solitude in a placid multitude. As for Souleyman who has the audacity to use his black hand in the elevator, to protect the Tower with white magic, they fired him on the pretext that he is cursed, a bearer of bad luck.

Now there is only Twylla who comes to embrace me every day and transmit to my granite flesh bits of history.

"Toronto exists since the Ice Age. Around the year 900 A.D. my ancestors began to cultivate corn, beans, melons, other vegetables and grains. In 1787 the British government bought this region for seventeen hundred pounds sterling, paid in currency and goods to the local Indians. When Canada was transferred to the English in 1763, after the defeat of the French in 1759, Toronto was made up of fur traders, United Empire Loyalists and refugees fleeing the American Revolution. Heralding a period of

industrialization gone mad, the railroad only arrived in 1850. Since that time the city has prospered, and a cosmopolitan dynamism took over. Only yesterday, in 1950, three-quarters of the population was of British origin, but today three-quarters are multicultural.

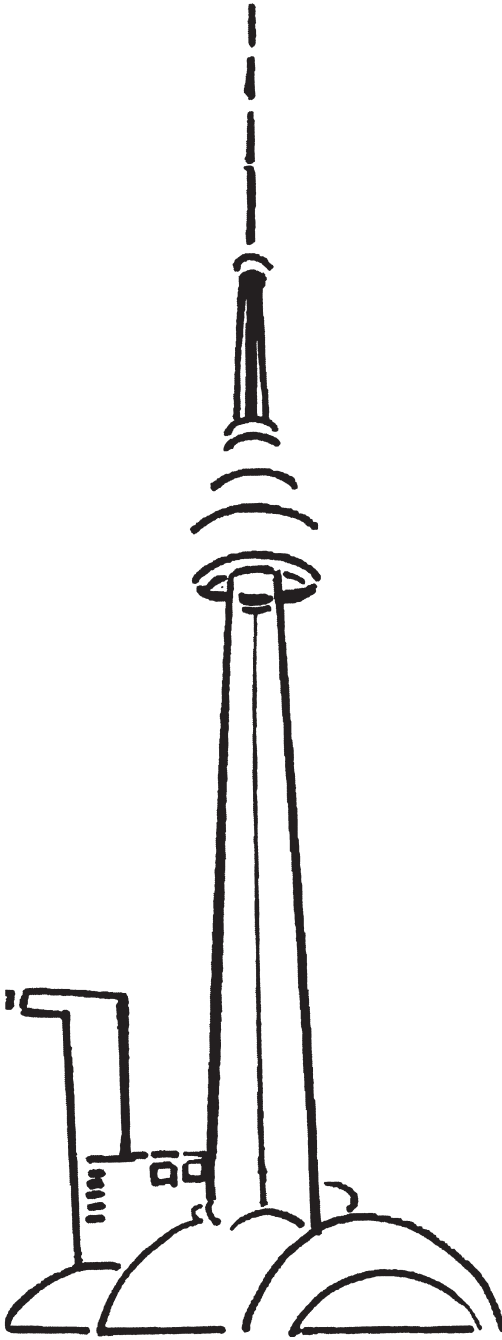
It's to this same Twylla that Souleyman, the new snow surveyor, gave the extra key ring he hadn't surrendered. She sends it by courier to Rocco Cacciapuoti. That day Souleyman felt he had given up his soul. The keys ended up on Kelly King's table, who saw in this gesture the surrender of Pete Deloon's secret heart. As for Rocco, he reads in it a premonition of his return to the land of origins, to Italy which witnessed his birth, whose beads he needs to count in the rosary of time.

And what awaits the broken chalice, sent forth, like a fragment torn from eternity, to another inland sea in the new world? This Lake Ontario which always welcomes infinite quests, asks if they are going to open the caverns of the future...

As for me, I know that each of my characters is a tireless nomad, a "wandering Canadian," who never escapes his solitude.







**15**





*T*his morning, a radiant sun laps the city languorously. Usually dull, she assumes at present a new face. From Victorian or Edwardian, she is suddenly transformed into Mediterranean. The various “Little Italies” forming immense pockets are set in relief. The red brick shines intensely, putting to shame the advertisements boasting about the cuisine and other Italian products. And in turn the Portuguese, Greek, Chinese, Israeli, Polish, and Hungarian quarters light up.... The Italian community is far and away the majority, surpassing the British founders. And there are drunken, crazy excursions. Rays of sunshine slake the thirst of these half-million Italians who secrete into the dull, monotonous Anglo-Saxon air a twist of *limoncello* perfuming the atmosphere.

Waxen rigid masks smooth out and melt into tears of *joie de vivre*. The sun dances around, erasing the shade in the archipelago of buildings. All angularity broken. There remains only my happy verticality, greeting a serene sky. St. Andrew’s Church projects its façade on a building-mirror softening the Puritanism of its lines of force. Some are erased, others distanced. And while the forest of concrete and the marshes of glass cut the streets and avenues in four with their shade, busy Torontonians go about their business. Contrary to habit, they seem relaxed, sure of themselves. For once, they don’t take themselves seriously. Not jostling each other as usual. Strolling rather. With lethargic step and unmasked face. Even the “Hi!” they send each other seems filled with hope, overflowing with energy and joy. Stricken looks lose their sadness. Under the blinding light, they reflect seeds of happiness, never disappointing.

It’s my turn to leave my neutral stone asylum and begin to sparkle. The sun licks me all over, warms me. But the rays of sunshine, with their dry tongues, insult and outrage me. What

plots are they weaving, these jealous ones a little of whose radiance I have stolen, thanks to my verticality which captures easily everyday words? I don't give shade to anyone, even to Symphorien Lebreton who wants to burn me with his bits of paper. It's Twylla who, in a moment's time, made Symphorien disappear from my transmitting memory. Nevertheless, I must always keep him in my line of sight because lately he never fails to send me virulent messages, in a language of love that mortals handle skillfully.

But my verticality transcends every form of ignominy. This Symphorien, I know him better than anyone. He isn't crazy. He lives only for his ideas in the stairwell. If the snails leave *en masse* after the rain, he retreats into my shell at the faintest ray of sunlight. He knows that in good weather people love to relax. Fed and cared for by his mother, he devotes himself to me, day after day, except for once a year during those wacky competitions where people climb my stairs, three at a time, with an egg on their heads. That day, certifiable lunatics aren't afraid of sliding on the yolk. On this day of glory, Symphorien avoids showing himself. He huddles in my guts and abandons himself to his epistolary passion: intimate pieces of himself, bursting with tenderness.

*"Alas, Toronto is no longer the bastion of Anglo-Saxon culture, but of the new immigrants. City of the Blue Jays and the CN Tower. Few people know that its quarters all sing their own personalities... Of Rosedale whose wealth buzzes on its petals... In Cabbagetown where the old Cabbages paint their flowers... Quarters take the colors of the people who live there. With us, colors thumb their noses at whiteness... I, the White man, I am lost in this excessive number of characters. What crater creates the diamond? I seek my sanity in the extravagant architecture. Sometimes I find it lacks passion. What do*

### *Thus Speaks the CN Tower*

*you say, Tower of my three solitudes? You who emerge from the immigrant thunder! Coconut tower. To break in order to drink its milk. Suck it day and night. Swallow it, with my lover's breath... I love you Tower like the love which turns sour. Not like the African arriving from the moon. He doesn't even know how to skate at the foot of your stairs... And these Chinese who litter the sidewalks of Chinatown with their vegetables. They know how to slide on banana skins. Dundas, at night, with its sparkling lights, makes them think of Hong Kong... My city bursts forth in yellow and red. Everything is in motion: the displays and the clothes. Dragons on flags and joss sticks in people's hands. Shocking spices on the opposite side from the Orient, overpowering perfume glued to clothes... That is worth a glance, to question the universe displacing multi-colored globules without knowing it, and which, under your perverse view, Tower of my eye, preaches a philosophy of the land... But what do you take yourself for, Tower of my ..., who babbles under a maple tree? ... Your stony word is more hideous than the owl's cry... Moreover, who listens to your strident voice, except the credit favorites, the multinationals in flagrante delicto... At your words, everyone plays deaf, even the ethnics you cherish. Look at them all jostling in Chinatown in order to fill their stomachs cheaply, with steamed or Cantonese rice, hot or sweet or sour sauce. As for me, your humble servant, nothing is given to me in this country of Cocagne... In your guts, I masturbate with words, and my disseminated outbursts evaporate in your silence. Nonetheless, I can't detach my vision from your surges towards the sky. Only the Happy Few climb it clandestinely. I don't know who will win the prize... And I continue to lavish the living caresses of my words on you. I ejaculate in you my stone words to impregnate you with new laws of hospitality. Is it all a waste of time?"*

Symphorien wraps his papers in cotton, then places them in the corners of my stairs. He thinks he is planting stones in me, parcels of love which will escape from me, at Judgment Day, to be reduced to powder by a mysterious explosion.

The unpredictable and ungraspable Symphorien is faithful to me to the core. Who can doubt it? Alas, he will remain misunderstood; his outbursts of love, like his dangerous thoughts, aren't revealed to anyone. But I, a stone Tower, I understand him. I capture him whenever he enters my concrete sensors. I see him the instant he slips into the crowd to rejoin his own concert hall, La Scala of his Milan he invented under my nose. He arranges his bits of paper: rectangle near rectangle, square after square, and the balls according to their size. Like an orchestra conductor, he positions the musical instruments which spring to life, lifts his phosphorescent baton, and holds the other hand steady at eye level. From the depths of my guts arrive, in successive waves, the melancholy violins, the austere grave basses, the strident, joyous trumpets, the pastoral fresh flutes, the tender rippling piano, the serpentine clarity of clarinets, the saxophone blues... Then the two hands of Symphorien mark the silence, and in a sudden laceration shaking my glass walls, the angry drums explode, the cymbals ejaculate violence. Lightning falls from the sky.

Symphorien plays his life. His hand moves in lyrical gestures, the fingers vibrate to extract tremolo, soften the counter-altos. His baton waltzes and shakes the heart of the musical notes. He takes tremendous pleasure giving life to each note, drawing it from these objects stuck and scattered over twenty-four stairways. His imagination activates the musical instruments to a chorus. Glowing with happiness he lends them his voice moving without a break from Pavarotti tackling *La Traviata* through *Carmen* to Duke Ellington distilling blues from the continental sorrow. Symphorien looks around him and sees a full hall. He

*Thus Speaks the CN Tower*

stops the music. In a solo, on a nothing air, he launches into his constant refrain: *Only you...*

I, the CN Tower, shelter and protect this Symphorien. I don't denounce him to any galaxy. If he took refuge in my basement, losing his human body, it's only to find his *Voice* again and develop it to the rhythm of my torments. A volcano with rare eruptions, Symphorien is a chaos of ice and fire whose only design is a "hard desire to endure."

I can only reserve a few antenna moments to report to you a selection of speeches chanted by Symphorien. While reciting it, I have the impression of excavating his inner language, his specular origins from which he himself cannot extract the precious metal. As a scribe of frequencies, I transcribe what I've captured, unsure that static hasn't disturbed my hearing. And even if that happened, humanity will only keep this text as the authentic elegy of the master-singer:

*O Lady of chameleon Towers, take pity on me*

*Grant me the dance of dead words*

*The air which mocks life's pretensions*

*I want my quota of eternity*

*To disappear in you*

*To wed your words of stone,*

*Cement holding the ivy*

*I want to push beyond your skin*

*Into the unsoundable flesh of your phrases*

*To transform our words into pachyderms*

*Animals firing stone*

*Your outbursts betrayed me/You took me in your arms/Smiled at*

*my youth, soon faded/ In a quarter turn, it became my distress/*

*I leave behind me the assassins of my vision that/your ungrasp-*

*able mediation transports while sneering/On the screens. On*

*the tele/Nothing engraved in the melodious which will endure*

Hédi Bouraoui

*My tongue tempted by eternity is a mystery  
I devoted my life to it/  
With the zeal of the bee and the ant.  
And what does this vermilion tongue yield me  
Lost in the rainbow of the four seasons?  
Unequaled sadness  
I once made my song from it*

*Only you can make me believe...  
At the time of distraction lasting forever  
Only you can love me in your heavenly matrix  
Beyond chicanery and torture  
Only you cajole me in your modest cave  
Unknown of the interior which survives  
But to endure, one must burst, a frightful terror  
Tribute to the violence bending the knees of the intolerable  
Whoever is horrified by sacrifice, has only to close his door.*



Symphorien howls at the top of his lungs. He hopes to incite to revolution his auditors-spectators crowded around him and on the stairs. His howls, like those of wolves in the icy deserts of the North, disturb the Tower authorities. Alerted, the police remove him by force. The witnesses watch this scene with empty eyes.

Symphorien has only mutilated the time separating me from him. He thinks my heart hasn't vibrated. Love matters and is shared. If he wanders around my structure to please me, he's taking the wrong road. Because I know he's heading for a bad end. It's not that I distrust him, for only the mean-spirited operate in doubt and distrust. But he overdoes it. To prove his love to me, he plays the roles of Romeo, Mac the Knife, and the judged!

What planet, in its dizzy course, threw this Symphorien on the earth? Despite the tortures human beings inflict on him – because he know how to dance with me, and because he knows the art of breathing in the stone of night – he is determined to see in me a star furrowing the sky, *Inukshuk* leaving traces on the snow, or a Cantor who lends his voice to sing of love, his back to the wall at the worst of times. And at the moment he begins to decorate my stairs, he is accused of being a public menace. Nevertheless, he only shows the ills of a declining humanity, hoping to lead it out of its labyrinth and set it on the track of eternity.

Neither will Symphorien be treated like the “lunatic” of my first cousin in New York, the Empire State Building. But the latter is real, and moreover a Palestinian of Israeli nationality, aged sixty-nine, who shouts at the top of his lungs: “I adore America, I’ve got her under my skin.”

And he points his 38-caliber Beretta revolver and fires at random at the tourists. In no time, the world catches fire. Hell at the top of New York. Terror and blood at the height of three hundred meters, on the observation deck. A blow against American security? Hell between heaven and earth. Firing at less than one meter distance. The firing continues. The trigger finger dances crazily. The hand has lost all hope. It destroys life with the agenda of sacking everything, here, there, and everywhere, including his savings as a teacher that he invested, losing everything, in the supposed security of American banks. A Danish musician struck in the forehead with a bullet dies. Six other people are struck in the head, the neck, the side... Among them, two little children: one aged five months, the other a year and a half. The latter falls lifeless in the arms of his mother, who herself receives, in turn, a murderous bullet. No way to escape. All the visitors are prisoners of the shots of a desper-



ate character who, to end it all, blows his brains out with the last cartridge, *made in America*. And they see his false teeth blown out of his bloody mouth. Nine wounded people wallowing in blood. In less than twenty seconds, the tragedy unwound mercilessly. The unforeseeable shook all America which was touched at the height of its glory by a twist of fate, seized by a boundless dementia.

Despite this carnage, the pretentious Tower, the Empire State Building, recorded nothing. But my own antenna is more vigilant, probably because I'm more receptive by nature. In fact, since Symphorien wanders through my viscera, I anticipate every day this kind of hemorrhage. Is it then mere chance that at the moment he stammered his lugubrious song, attempting a joyous suicide, another tower visitor decides to cut short the life of others, along with his own?

In the New York tower massacre, the anonymous murder victims didn't engrave their names on the parapet of the observation deck. As for me, I don't know how to translate the horror encompassed in a simple news brief. My stone words can't communicate the subtle terror. The race for the toilets, the blinds, the emergency exits... was blocked immediately by the police whose only concern was to find the criminal!

After the murder, whose consequences couldn't be kept secret, the richest, most famous, safest of the world's great avenues, Fifth Avenue, devoted its energies to finding a clue. Newspaper circulation increased substantially. A hysterical polemic raised the hypothesis of terrorism as soon as the news came on the screen. "Who attacks the Americans?" was the question of the day. From all the evidence, the security systems failed. Where were the legendary American efficiency and pragmatism? The most up-to-date system for detecting the mentally deranged couldn't read the intentions of the Palestinian who, with an

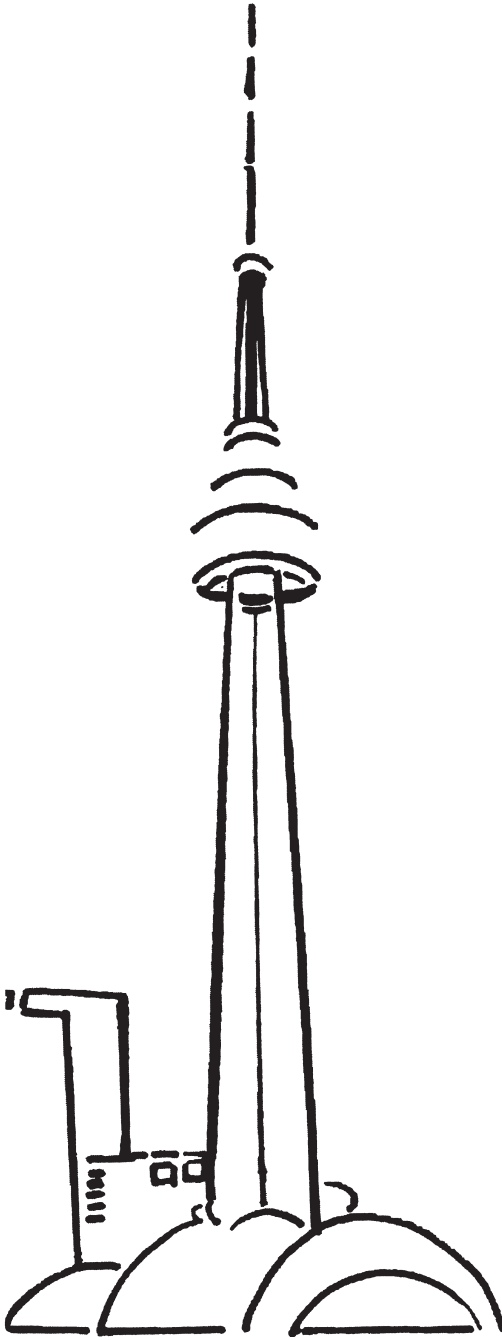
*Thus Speaks the CN Tower*

Israeli passport, managed several trips to the countries whose frontiers were the most closed to African and Middle Eastern nationals. He came there to increase the yield of his \$300,000 on the stock market. But the stock markets fell, and with them the lives of certain people whose security detectors, blinded by the slogan "Business is king," don't foresee murderous rage. Coming from Ramallah which undergoes an Israeli shelling every day, he developed the firm intention of giving himself the right, on Christmas Eve, to kill innocents, together with himself, whose bones they wouldn't even search for.

Must I prepare myself for a similar occurrence? The horror here hasn't yet reached its peak. But can you ever know? Symphorien sowed trouble about me. For love of me. But I must be vigilant. All the same I know – in my heart – that Symphorien's trouble, benign at the root, is only a reaction to the lack of affection starving him. If he failed to die for me today, it's because this pilgrim of the concert-speaking-in-stone-words wants to live in my shade. In place of vocalizing his mad songs, it would be better for him to bury himself in silence.

Silence? He's used to it.





**16**



*E*ven when I emit unbearable heat, they say I am cold. The characters I sketch with my stone tongue become petrified. No amount of tenderness will release them. No love unites them. How should I narrate to make you feel the lava passions boiling in my copper arteries? Like the chef of the revolving restaurant who breaks his back to vary his menus [today he offers you a succulent *Chateaubriand with Béarnaise sauce* with the house soufflé: “a little French dish *made in the CN Tower*”], I try myself, too, at each panoramic turn, to refine the nuances of my tales. So that you know I transmit to you here the stone words registering my characters’ vibrations, charged with that invisible part telling the world truth.

In this memoir of a cement body, I sometimes enjoy revealing a few secrets that my antennae don’t deign to capture. I learn that Twylla adventures in the immense northern Ontario forest, among sparkling lakes and the shade of giant trees, oaks and firs, elms and birches. Armed with her camera, she wants to seize the divine instinct pervading nature, and immortalizing the moose. Twylla is far from being a hunter with bow and arrow where the noise of the masters of the hounds, the hunters, their servants and barking dogs bring back to the lord the spoor of game at bay. Silent, on the lookout, she advances with velvet step towards the meditative moose.

Twylla scents the passage of this animal, so sensitive and intelligent, capturing the slightest sound. Is it of the deer family with its flattened antlers? Of the camel’s with its hump? Of the stag’s with its delicate feet? Of the horse’s with its elegant flared muzzle?... But what surprises her the most is that its coat is a mixture of grey, brown, red and black... colors which harmonize with the terrain! She advances slowly and sees him splashing in a lake. She freezes, fixes him in the sights of her camera. The

animal shivers and, instead of fleeing, remains nailed to the spot, as if hypnotized. His own decision is expressed when he dips his head in the water.

Twylla knows that the moose is master of his destiny. Unlike the stag which takes fright and follows his herd, the moose follows his camouflaging nudity. Rejoicing in nature and space which submit to him, his soul seems suspended on rock, on the earth, on the universe of plants and animals. Twylla adjusts the camera, focuses and takes her picture. The moose poses, shows off his beauty and throws her an admiring look. She dared to confront him. Or perhaps because she guessed the intoxication churning in his veins. Peace seems to invade them both. They wait a long moment, melting in the fluid matrix of love of the earth. Twylla did not come to steal the soul of the animal, but to borrow it and transmit it to my Tower emissions. I need to be able to commune with this glorious being reigning in our north woods. His name, of Basque origin, *l'oregnac*, was brought to Canada by the first immigrants. Chateaubriand, who described it from every angle, stressed its rapid, frenzied flight, and its body composed of several bodies.

Worthy encounter of the First Nations daughter with the animal that takes her to its heart. Mastered. This symbiosis in memory becomes a ritual of peace.

Twylla, whose face like the full moon now betrays a shining joy, carries the experience, in her arms, into my breast... Immediately the animal weds my stone flesh, and makes of me a *clairvoyant* city, and not a *flamboyant* one, like other Capitals. When the heavy cape of fog drowns the city, I recognize its blackness. I begin blinking to warn my fellow citizens. I carry within me multiple prophecies of a *joie de vivre*. Soon the sun will reappear, snow will be swept off balconies, sidewalks, doorways.

*Thus Speaks the CN Tower*

My Moose-spirit looks at the city with its myriad lighted windows. Downtown becomes a floral spray that I munch fraternally. Their grouping creates its own flaming galaxy warming my stone being. In Chinatown, the most exotic ethnic village in the cosmopolitan city, shrill songs, jostling indifference, shivering fish scales, plucked chickens and ducks bump into each other with Oriental joy mocking the American steam roller. Between Dundas and Spadina, Gerrard and Broadview, Asia takes over all day. It displays its storied sales, its reasonable food, and the exuberant crowd stuffing itself with chow mein and chop suey washed down with thousands of cups of jasmine-perfumed tea. Greektown, around its artery, the Danforth, doesn't smell only of moussaka or the "lamb-eggplant salad" strongly garlicked, but a bouquet of Indian, Chinese, and Latin American spices: cloves, nutmeg, ginger, whetting everyone's taste buds.

Little Poland, between Lakeshore and Dundas West, is studied with imposing Victorian houses sheltered under majestic, thick trees brightening them. Stuffed cabbage rolls and pyrogi perfume the air. This Eastern European odor came to gorge on Canadian freedom and condiments. The Portuguese village extends between Ossington Avenue, Augusta and College Streets, proudly displaying its *azulehos* beneath which it's good to drink port wine with the taste of the country. The bakery odors are inebriating. Here the bread doesn't taste like rubber, as in the rest of the city. Cheese and fish stores, crowded between lace and crochet boutiques, make you lick your chops. How many villages constitute my city: Indian, Caribbean, Italian, Israeli, Ukrainian, gay... You circle the world. Forest Hill and Rosedale are so smart. The former, faithful to its green haven, hides the most prestigious residences in Toronto. The wealth displayed here is crowned by Upper Canada College. It's one of the most distinguished preparatory schools in my country, which pro-



duced writers like Stephen Leacock and Robertson Davies. In the beginning, Rosedale belonged to Sheriff William Jarvis, and since his wife Mary flooded it with wild roses, they named it the "Valley of Roses." Alas, today there remain only little winding streets filled with dwellings of completely diverse styles.

As for Cabbagetown, formerly the biggest Anglo-Saxon quarter, poor, with a bad reputation, today it represents the other side of the coin of bourgeois Toronto. Cabbage is no longer grown in front of houses, as the Scots did, immigrants in the mid-nineteenth century, but rather commemorative plaques on picturesque Victorian maisonettes. The Annex is also well named. A quarter annexed to Toronto in 1887 and developed according to a very specific plan, it placards a homogeneous architecture putting to shame that of the heterogeneous quarters. Here, gables, turrets and cornices line up with bent heads at an equal distance from the street. The Beaches displays its most charming beaches. A trolley ride from downtown, effervescent, beach, sand, boardwalk beside the water create a California mirage. There you can take a dip, window shop, then sit at a table on a patio and watch marvelous sunsets.

Why does the fire of the stone not warm the soul? All the more so because I've assimilated all these ethnic groups. I emerged from their hands, from their inspiration shaped by an iron will. The incarnation of their mirror image springs from me like a miraculous cement tongue. And to this city which planted me, the nugget of a world in bloom, I return the gratitude of a symbol swarming with ethnicities. The Moose-spirit possessing me since Twylla penetrated me acclaims the return to my actual age, that of stone, of a past which hardly exists. Of origins, when the grit of differences rasped with joy.

I came to earth only to change the course of the country's history, which sold its soul to hockey. Witness the ex-star guard of

the NHL, Ken Dryden: "Hockey is our national theatre." Thus, the Canadians state what creates their identity. Through hockey, they dramatize all their favorite themes: the East of the country versus the West. The Franco versus the Anglo. Canada against Uncle Sam. White Canada against the multicolored. Turncoats versus loyalists. Sovereignists versus Federalists. Francophiles versus francophones. Ontarionists against PQists. Homosexuals against heterosexuals. Those who want to destroy the country versus those who want it intact. Those who remain in the country versus those who expatriate themselves to the United States, somewhere in Europe or Asia, to cleanse their original conscience, or a good measure of spiritual conquest.

Like this Marc... Who? But he's the most famous Canadian on the earth! Marc Rowswell, comedian, 0 in French at the Ottawa high school, who makes two million people laugh in Chinese. Torontonian, good skin good shade, that they call *Dasham* or "Great Mountain," famous in Asia and unknown in his own country, had faith in the Chinese saying: "The man called stupid is often the most brilliant." Everything began with this joke. Emerging from the Chinese ghettos here, it crosses the whole country of China. Thus, he masters the *Xiangsheng*, an oratorical joust with puns that are very difficult to pronounce. Ever since, he keeps the nickname, "Big Mountain," that some illiterate peasant might give to his child. "In Toronto," he said, "I am Mister Everyman. To keep the flame burning. I must continue to escape these entrapping words."

Happiness consists of seeking the obstacles facing you in order to overcome them. Put yourself to the test to seize its value. Like the new generations I live the soft life. They buy me everything. They chew my food for me. I possess everything but the sense of life. What must you do to procure a little grain of happiness during this parenthesis between two nothings: Birth

and Death? So, through the human beings who frequent me, I choose to travel the strata of history, mythology, and religion that man reads in the lines of his palm. Thanks to Twylla, again, I learned to read the Moose-spirit which, situated between languages, advocates the separation of temporal and spiritual, rather than Québec's separation from the rest of Canada. A synthesis of religions and cults, the Moose-spirit accommodates himself to difference because he represents tolerance.

Since Twylla returned from the Kuala Lumpur assignment, she attached herself to me body and soul. She also spread the good word on my material and technical prowess. In our day, only these two sacred cows matter in judging human worth. Through her, the Minister of Communications, Rocco Cacciapuoti, stuffs me with goodies that I accept modestly and circumspectly. They aren't lavished on me to encourage laziness and the refusal to soil my hands, nor because I live off the sweat of my walls, but so that I can contemplate myself in the mirror, which only reflects age and deterioration. Fortunately, I know that doctors exist who can reverse the natural aging of the tone. However, no one is aware of the vibrations, the erosion, the growth of nature, of pollution, or of the mini-earthquakes and the passage of time...., of all these calamities destined to make me ugly. Still, I don't have any weathered gargoyle that I must rejuvenate at any cost. I myself don't know the mystery of the creation of stone.

My svelte, elegant silhouette encloses me in heavy solitude. The overabundance of means and my view from a height isolate me. No twin tower to dialogue with, even in our language of towers. For want of other auditors, I find it necessary to entrust my speech to the absolute ear. It knows how to receive the intimate tale of a stone life. For the muscle feels the slightest disorder. Thus I leave to ears that have lost their hearing the privilege of knowing I am walled in the thrust of a single burst of stone.

*Thus Speaks the CN Tower*

But would they know that this cry I stifle overflows with love for all created things? Forced as I am to repress it. In order not to shock too much...

The flow of media information no longer satisfies me. Through Twylla's mediation, I leaned towards other stones newly born in Asia. At present, I turn towards stones clearly more ancient. Rocco comes to my rescue. Recalling the Tower of Pisa to me. Moreover, he carries it in his heart. With malice, with stupor. Profiting from general strikes in hospitals and universities, and from an unfavorable political situation, he gives himself an assignment in his country of origin to plunge again into the Mediterranean "lightness of being." Rocco succeeded in the new world only because he carries within the ancient world. Even if he has lived in Canada from the age of six, he knows how to read, through the cut stone, the sculptured stone, crenellated walls, marble submitted to the laws of human forms and faces and bits of glass zigzagging in the enamel and the colors..., the images that artists have created, leading to a life marked with the seal of eternity.

As soon as he arrived at Piazza dei Miracoli, Rocco Cacciapuoti notes several imposing monuments springing majestically from the tender green of a great meadow: the Cathedral, the Baptistery, the clock on the Leaning Tower, and the *Camposanto Monumentale*. Nothing of the sort surrounds me. Neither green, nor a religious site, nor a sonority awakening you, nor a rite of passage towards the other life. I grow, CN Tower, in the rigid limits of stone and at a calculated distance from the skyscrapers whose cubic uniformity cries vengeance on formal art. Only the stomach of the Skydome draws the attention to the possibility of birth. Long lines of crowds enter and leave its matrix like ants. They say they come to attend sports events where the victors are stripped bare before pocketing sums making them flee the crowd. Everyone swims in illusion. Even I am surprised to admire my

edifice reflected in a dawn newly born, newly vanished. And they tell me that the illusion of the Unique is greater.

Pisa projects an imposing simplicity. By a variation of lines and styles, marrying Roman, Muslim, and Gothic, it gives birth to a new style, the Pisan. And what have I created as a style? Novelty in my height and a new discovery: a big head firmly planted on a needle. Is it the Italian shadow behind me that makes me write?

Wanting to set the example of grandeur, I pushed “my constructors” — whom I’ve escaped since, and they bite their fingernails over it — to make *tabula rasa* of a past which encumbers, and adds nothing to their city. I am thus of my time. It matters little if I am seen as ugly or beautiful! In reality, I try to sacrifice style because I am not Man. The essential is my surge towards the sky, towards the Moose-Spirit, this moving force of the invisible. It thunders forth in me, and tells the rosary of myths weaving the web of my twenty-four turns. Did I say “myths”? Oh, yes! They are the only havens for my head sweeping the Toronto space where one doesn’t stop feeling the pulse of the ethnic groups.

I am straying again into the labyrinths of selfhood, when I decided to yield the floor to Rocco Cacciapuoti, so that he may tell his own story. The same that the gigantic hand with four great sausage fingers speaking to the sky continues to transmit in the manner of the popular talespinner, in front of the Venetian esplanade. What visitor to Venice doesn’t know this hand whose thumb delivers to each passerby the secrets of the preceding passerby? Outstretched on the earth and crushed by distracted feet when it doesn’t greet bodies eager to rest facing the estuary, the thumb, groaning, recounts what it heard from a passerby named Rocco Cacciapuoti who thought he could tread his native land with his Torontonion feet.

## *Thus Speaks the CN Tower*

*I am dazzled before these works glorifying God. Marble plant with colored trunk, stems, and flowers grow naturally in harmony. All the lines which, at first glance, seem fixed, vibrate with shades and colors. The simplicity and purity are astonishing.*

*But why does this Tower, leaning towards its Creator under the weight of time, still excite me so much that I confuse art and life, while the verticality of the CN Tower leaves me cold, like a cumbersome stalagmite? A gigantic work in its time, this tower of my native land today is a dwarf not even reaching the tenth floor of the CN Tower. And just imagine they took three and a half centuries to crown it with its Campanile with seven bells tuned to the seven musical notes. I understand better Symphorien's attempt, who wanted the CN Tower to sing the glory of God in the depths of its stairwells. I was in charge of its administration from its cleaners to the summit, but I never thought of its mystery, nor of its beauty. Moreover, does it have any?*

*Straight and rectilinear, our CN Tower stimulates the world with its height. And I understand better now Twylla's intention of breathing the Moose-Spirit into this determined partisan of the secular! It doesn't lean like the Tower of Pisa. Which side should I lean towards, to triumph over my Tower's heart and tear it from the ice petrifying it? What side should I lean towards to extract myself from the stagnation where I find myself?*

*I was a Liberal in politics since the rise of Pierre Elliot Trudeau with his heart deeply rooted on the left, and I came to the peak of power. A minister, but at the same time a mason's son, how can I move towards the Conservatives, play their game of budget cuts for all social services, and enrich the multinational corporations which seize everything... If I don't convert to the right, I'll lose my post in the next elections. But power consumes me, and I can't decide anything by myself in this land of liberty and democracy. Even Twylla's mission had to be approved by a majority vote!*

*And it's going to hurt me to turn my coat and lean toward what I detest. Perhaps I should advance further in Liberalism and support the separatist cause of Marc Durocher? Let him decide in his conscience and soul the fate of his Province. He must still return to it, since "outside of Québec there is no salvation," and he takes on the challenge the Belle Province threw at the Federal government. I respect his project if that's what he wants. Why resist him?*

*"Torre pendente," Mea culpa! Your bells once announced that Count Ugolino della Gherardesa was going to die of hunger, -- and after him, his sons and little nephews -- because he was a traitor. I have already betrayed Pete by not pleading his cause. What price will I have to pay if I betray the part which placed me at the top of the Tower?*

*"Terre pendente," it's from our summit that Galileo Galilei made his famous experiments on the gravity of bodies. Jean-Paul II, at the opening of the twenty-first century, finally absolved the discoveries of the Genius who revolutionized our vision of the world. The Pope was well in advance of his time. And what have I invented? Nothing, not even a machine to swallow dust, or a system to correct the injustices that I see happening before my own eyes. As for Souleyman, I found him a temporary job which only placed him at the end of the unemployment line. And Pete, mistreated all his life because it's in the nature of things. The autochtones, first children of the First Nations, pushed aside once their land was occupied, their ancestors massacred, the survivors parked on reservations, forbidden to leave them. Yes, I delegated an assignment to his ex-wife, and I didn't even read her report. I asked a secretary to read and answer it. A polite little note, neutral and noncommittal. And I didn't even intervene to defend the innocent Symphorien, a dreamer who under no circumstances would want to hurt his beloved Tower which all day long he feeds with often useless information. Everything moves smoothly on the rail*

## *Thus Speaks the CN Tower*

*for those who work, day and night, without even thinking of making love once a week. However, everything is derailed towards anguish, bitterness, and hunger for those who are unemployed, I mean those who are guilty of being so: "But it's your fault if you haven't found work," "You're over-qualified!", "You're not qualified for this job!", "You're too old!", "Your résumé..."*

*For the first time I open my eyes as wide as Galileo's lamp, still hanging near the Chaire del Duomo located beside the first pillar of the cupola constructed by Nicola Pisano's son, Gianni, who in most ways excelled his father in skill. The Chair of the Baptistry wasn't touched by automobile pollution, and thus keeps all its patina. Normally cold, here the marble comes to life with a grave vigor symbolizing in its fragments the human condition: a blow here, a blow there, and I battle existence, not sharing the unhappiness of others. Or rather I only combat the evil eating others up when it touches me. Like the stone: in place of learning to fight its inexorable aging by natural means, I have it washed with chemicals which disfigure it. However, this Chair is carried on eleven dark brown marble columns, some resting on lions, others on socles. Statues of St. Michael, Hercules, the Disciples hold Christ up, together with the four Cardinal Virtues. All these eternal supports of the Church are firmly anchored in me. Time's patina undeniable here, but transplanted there, it becomes an oppression to convert cares to a promise of paradise.*

*I read the drama unfolding before my eyes in figurines enacting the events preceding and following my birth. The Annunciation to the mother: it was prophesied there would come to her a son who would reach the pinnacle of power after starting at the bottom of the ladder. The ability to acquire early the knowledge to serve the soul. The latter makes the body supple, not the faith which descends on one without knowledge. I was born predestined to have my nose to the wind, Leader who lives ambition in*



*the flesh of his flesh, always believing in his power to conquer the world. I was able to surround myself with wise enemies who counseled, helped me, shaped me to their needs. Playing the role of the Sorceress Queen, Kelly opened my eyes while continuing to smile. Few people knew how to read her through her words. Only her silhouette and gestures betrayed her to the sharpest-eyed judge. When she didn't tell the truth, I saw her brow furrow and her breasts sink into a flat chest where perception skates unhindered. Then she moved only the eyelids, never the arms, hands, or other parts of the face. A traditional mummy refusing to utter her real thoughts unless in her own self-interest. And to decipher it, you needed more than Christian charity! She only offered the other cheek to crush whoever opposed her. She spends her life collecting victories, not to have her enemies sing her glory and fame, but so she can sweep up the winnings. But I proved to her what I was capable of.*

*By my Latinity which is street-smart, and my action, I became committed to the rhythm of an epic of tolerance. That's where the future opens its possibilities from lowest to highest without distinction of race or religion. I have crossed snowy lands in the sweat of incredible heat. The gold rush of the moment ran out of steam. False notes and vacuity as soon as you doze over your daily work. On waking, the sleeping one is always wrong. And you must never leave your place to cool off for they forget you as soon as you turn your back. I learned that cold preserves things and material objects better than human beings. He serves with the purity of his faith all those men and women who are already dead as a result of changing camps. And I am taken up with endless disputes between Marcel-Marie, the Franco-Ontarian, and Marc, the Quebecker. "Where do you come from? And why don't you go back to the Belle Province? When did you come? And when do you intend to go back to Québec?" And both repeat: "A*

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*sovereign Québec will not abandon the francophone minorities of Canada.” Who are they kidding? And then they rally behind the banner of a certain solidarity to escape the real problems they inflict on the country. In front of everyone, they say only: “fears continue,” simply so you won’t throw a napkin over the lobsters they were served as an entrée. No matter what, we are all wandering Canadians. We all arrive early or late in these terrifying infinite spaces. The blank page should “speak white,” but they never realized that white is composed of all colors. Who realizes that pure white is only a heresy?*

*By playing on the checker board of skin colors, services, and unimaginable drudgery, you will end up losing your innocence, and fall prey to competition and rivalry! Then I raised my voice twice as loud as all the recent conquerors, while rolling up my sleeves and burning my candle at both ends of the official languages. And en route I have even opted for complete citizenship as the repatriated Constitution of Her Majesty’s Kingdom prescribes. This is what I made myself say: “Now that you are cut off from your origin, you are no longer Italian and you will never be Canadian. The origin you tore with your dirty hands will never more grow in this paradise of elected origins. Nothing more will remain to you than this jump seat where, without native blood, you will work until your work life ends.”*

*It’s thus I kissed Judas. The first official language which is a little less chauvinistic than the second. But my heart hasn’t finished marinating in the Latin of my ancestors, and here I am betraying myself unconsciously. Like Molière’s philosopher who doesn’t know it. From top to bottom, I debate and combat the injustice inflicted on this minority language. I invest my energy day and night for years. At each turning point, they repeat to me:*

*“It’s no use that you turn, return, turn away, or contour facts and gestures, we others, first citizens of the first class in this first*

and largest ice country in the world... we oppose you, and we will never trust you.”

*It's true, I was never arrested, nor beaten. Nothing except deep wounds to the flesh of my dignity. Alone, I lick my wounds like the wolf nourishing Romulus and Remus. These brothers killed each other for the love of a city whose legend only memory has preserved. Moreover, the lies of a legend are worth more than a stillborn truth. It's thus I poured into the Tower's reputation the faith I was missing and in which I believe. I erased my own self interest to serve the queen of towers in the Queen City. In spite of frustration and vilification, suffering and curses, I armed myself with a new pro-fate skin. "O vero pelle o niente."*

*To the art defined by a great French author like an anti-fate, I furnish the ultimate gift of the pro-fate issuing from all these talking sculptures. And they call me Rocco Cacciapuoti crucified in this land of marvels. Blessed with garlic and virgin olive oil like the Tower of stone and cement that a Moose-Spirit visited to install itself there, a magnetic pearl making its fortune in longevity. I am in the cathedral and a young Canadian girl sketches on paper a portrait of the nude Hercules, a club in his left hand and a vine leaf covering his private parts. A colossus densely bearded and tangled, giving pleasure to women without men.*

*Quello che voi siete noi eravamo*

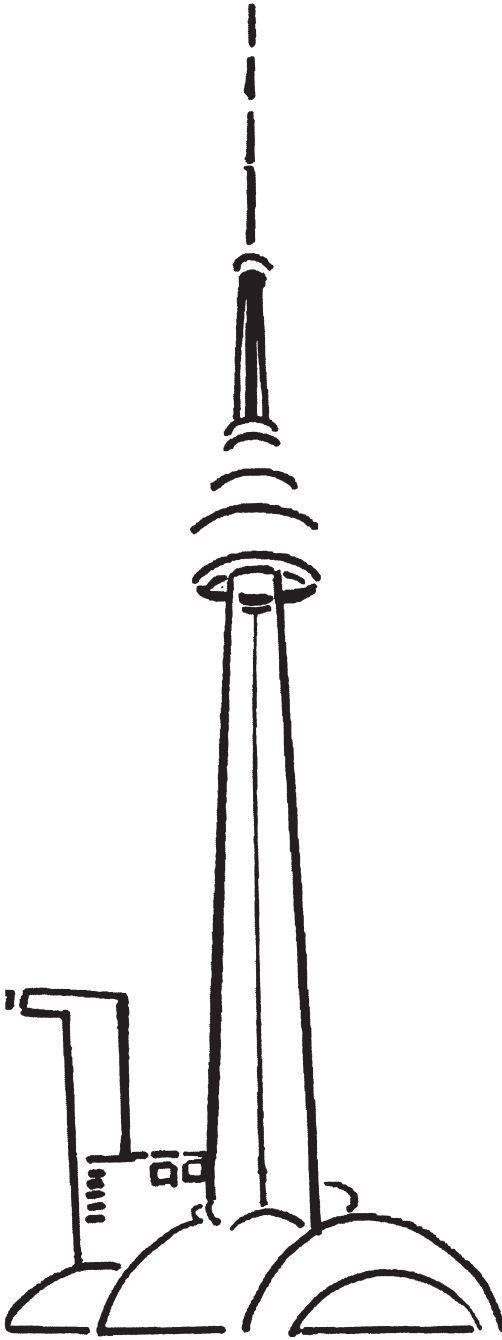
*Quello che noi siamo voi sarete*

*Body of a man fashioned in the hardened stone of eternity. His phallus masked by a maple leaf grimaces. We will conquer this eye squinting in two immense holes making women dream of former loves. Of love to come... an elegant tide of flowers, stars of memory. Miracle of miracles, I emerge smelling the incense and the pardon of those cast off. Time counts the rosary beads of hope. The fingers identify them one by one as they wander over them.*

*Per raccontarvi meglio Toronto, facciamo mattina...*







**17**



Contrary to my habit, I let go the reins and allowed Rocco Cacciapuoti to write his own autobiography. It's not that I'm crazy about this kind of literature. But they can't say I don't allow my characters to speak for themselves. However, how can one summarize a whole life in a few stanzas? Even the most talented of orators can't carry off this *tour de force*. Nor can I communicate to you everything my stone heart contains of love and pride, of tolerance and peace, especially since Twylla has imbued me with her spirit which always inclines towards forgetfulness, mist, frost and ennui. And here I am in the midst of repeating mechanically what Rocco keeps echoing all day long.

*"Bella è la vita in una citta piu pulita.*

*La liberta è una scatola di sardine.*

*Ma il commercio, ce l'ha un'anima ?"*

Why do these three sentences emerge from my speaking screen, just at this moment ? How do they help my narrative flow? Perhaps not to any great purpose, except to give you in a few words the essence of this new immigrant. He has thrown himself, heart and soul, into the function of Minister – confronting a crowd whose only response is indifference – Rocco will be expelled from the Liberal Caucus for having voted against that famous vampirical budget whose untied strings are a joke, the Goods and Services Tax.

"It's regrettable that the Liberal Party of Canada chose to ignore democracy," Rocco replied to his critics that day. Since then, he has considerable difficulty overcoming the disgust of others. The man who bathed then in his ministry oil bath can now say: "Liberty is a sardine can." It's the occasion for his Cabinet heads to eat him with their little Boy Scout knives.

Possessed, in his turn, by the Moose-Spirit, Rocco attacks political volatility and exclaims to anyone willing to listen: "Tell me,



does business have a soul?" It's the magic of the multiple beauties of the Moose-spirit which converts nonviolently, and makes hearts wed woods and flowers: the only chance for human beings to construct a new world. I am about to say, a mirage, or whatever stony prejudice refuses to oppose nomads and sedentary builders.

I feel this burst of enthusiasm which creates masterpieces. For this reason I am ready to respect the most primal reactions, the archaic levels of this unifying spirit. It embodies nature's rectitude and her creative thrusts. A vital place in memory, it offers you others the chance to expand, to realize your burning desires. Not as a solo performer, but as a many-colored chorus.

It's the Moose-Spirit which controls Pete's tongue, but does he know it? The beings of this lower world never fail to surprise. Pete, who made the whole world believe he swallowed his tongue, suddenly became a talespinner with advice to give his listeners gathered before the Henry Moore statue, just in front of the City Hall:

*"Oyez! Oyez! All those here, seated on chairs or benches, people standing, stiffly erect. People come from the four corners of the earth. Oyez! Oyez! People under the earth transformed to dust. People hardly emerged from your mother's womb, who are on the return road to earth... Oyez! Oyez!"*

*Rooted in the history of a millennial earth where my ancestors appropriated the whole continent, I saw gatherings of Nations move towards the Boreal region of the Canadian East. Iroquois and Algonquins share the territory of Lake Ontario's north bank. Since the dawn of time, our Shamans who went to the Other Bank have taught us that every object made by man possesses a soul. Today, a heresy of modern times, the CN Tower negotiates with the Moose-Spirit so that he can wander in her stone and concrete space. However, I'm lost in this same community which refuses to recognize me.*

*Thus Speaks the CN Tower*

*I want to understand my adventure... in this world of the unemployed. I loved, without saying I love you. I made love to two women as different as the sun and the moon. Each one caressed me with unspeakable tenderness. Enchantment with a scent of roses and wallflowers. But that didn't nourish me. Neither me, nor my son Moki who continues wandering in the world on the fast track. And I don't know how to apply the damned brakes to our downfall while the Tower continues to proclaim from its antennae the world order with its Pax Americana."*



*During every storm, Twylla consults and questions the stones. Like a little girl still on the reservation, she massages with her soft hands the turquoise, the blue, the black veined in white, the white striped with black and blue, the gray spotted with pink and white... She caresses these stones. Sensual melodies of skins. The energy mounts from granite strata and blue ferns, and sighs pour down. Twylla begins rocking to the rhythm of steps advancing in the solitude. Stony infertile landscapes. And from her limpid throat bursts the moose prayer:*

*"Stones, you whisper to the wind... the breath of the past.*

*You speak to the sea... in waves of past and present.*

*You keep the secret... in the ephemeral algae.*

*You murmur in the silence... which doesn't mean the gold of time.*

*Stones, tell me your story."*

*A black sky pours over our heads. Icicles bigger than a fist fall without breaking. My skin takes on the darkness of a sky preparing a deluge which will carry off my son Moki, if he ventured into the streets. I transmit this fear to his mother. She will not let him go out. Twylla never ceased to believe in me, in my notions. My center of gravity just shivered.*

*I can't save myself from failures and bad weather! One gathers around me, and I float in the storm above skyscrapers, lakes, buildings, and forests. In procession, the crowd advances towards me. Seven children are picked to extract from my heart, in less than three hours, seven balls of stone, paper, granite, cotton, cement, glass, tissue... I invoke the Moose-Spirit to help them. The balls are nestled in the interstices of my body. In dislodging them, with a robot-like precision, a shadowy opaque thunder voice shakes the crowd. Seven gigantic birds soaring above the children's heads seek the right moment to tear from them the balls and their secret.*

*The crowd hurls itself on the balls, and rolls them in their hands, one by one, in order to extract energy from them. I turn then to the east, I trace a circle on the ground, and I place the seven stones from north to east, then from north to west, three on each side. There remains one to close the circle towards the bottom. But I perceive that I no longer have it. Suddenly Moki appears, holding in his hand an emerald stone, the lost ball transformed into a stone of light. From the emerald stone emerges a fog enveloping Moki and curving towards the sky. At this moment, I knew that the Moose-Spirit had left to him the power buried in the stone.*

*Moki turns towards the Moose-Spirit, the ancestor who initiated him to act in perfect accord with nature and live in peace. He will then sacrifice the blood of materialism to the altar of egoism and bring the Province in particular, and everyone, into the Spirit's lap.*

*Oyez! Oyez! You need intuition to live like a human being !*

*We, Amerindians and recent immigrants, we make of it our faith, anchored to Belief,*

*Oyez! Oyez! The ascent to the origin of origins is only a curse. Wait then for the Mooseitude to resume its rights of regard, its legitimate rights over all the Nations.*



I am happy to know that Pete took a long road to return to his matrix since his perilous fall into the gap, the void where he so wanted to be born with Twylla. She is his liberator of yesterday and today; mine as well. We never left either her heart or her spirit. But a brief detour with Kelly was necessary for him. He learned from her the secrets of hypocrisy and good manners, of genteel people who perfect lies under the mask of conviviality. The leap into Kelly's bed was an amorous adventure with sawteeth. Their flesh drunk with tenderness echoed the pomp of days passed in euphoria. But dissatisfaction is the enemy of passion, the hell which kills bursts of laughter. Its tongue of flame reduces to ashes the secrets of repentance. Pete is shaken by a burning desire to return to his first love. Too late. At the other end of the line he reaches only the voice of an answering machine: "You have reached XYZ-ABCD, please leave a message after the beep. Thank you." Twylla doesn't call back. Her own passion also took a brief detour. She took her place in Zinal's heart. She had little time to look behind her. The regularization of Zinal's situation in his new country totally preoccupied her. Days spent lining up, filling out forms, appearing before anonymous commissions, to ask for the rights of the person and those of the nation... so that her heart's chosen could obtain his passport and citizenship.

Then came another task. Find free-lance work to pay taxes April 30 before midnight. But Zinal doesn't have the means to recycle himself. The fat patron of the Council of Arts of Ontario – appointed by the Government not for her competence, but because it's a woman of significant origin, born francophone in Québec, converted for the good cause into a Franco-Ontarion – can't tolerate names that sound bizarre. "Make your submis-

sions and we will see later,” she said, to every immigrant whose name blasts her ears. And later, she calls all sorts of cobbled-together organizations to lavish on them the budget surplus at the end of the year. After all, no one can better appreciate the largesse than the real sons and daughters of the country.

Faced with Zinal’s confusion, Twylla found the word needed to avoid wallowing in the inevitable:

*“There is no democracy but that which awaits its home. That which follows its course in the battle of oppositions. Whoever approaches to install it, queen of blinding clarity, is its assassin who, on judgment day, will wash his hands of it. Beneficiaries, we all believe that we are inventing our own story. We treat it like a puzzle, surprising at first, easier and easier in what follows, when we succeed in finding by touch the little piece which fits into the other.”*



Early in the morning, Moki comes to offer to his mother the seven stones found in my viscera. Twylla chooses three of them: one in the form of a bear, the other a wolf, and the third a tortoise. On their surface, which left nothing to the imagination, she reads unsuspected figures of animals. The biggest is gray and striated with earth-colored traces. The latter, she says, will serve as the *Lead Stone*, the leader of the game which will inform her of the world order. The second, seemingly lighted by sun rays, is turquoise-colored, zebra-striped with orange. The light emanating from this dark body heats and furnishes energy. As for the tortoise, it is black spotted with white. Twylla feels that from this stone emanate wisdom and natural order. With a delicate electrical drill, she makes holes in each of the stones, then lines them up, like a necklace, around a deerskin

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thread. The bear, the wolf, and the tortoise in the exact center, and the other four, two on each side. Twylla wears her necklace and invokes the world:

*“Oh stones*

*Voices murmuring in the wind’s delirium*

*Paths leading to the sea*

*Profane and sacred chants blessing*

*The earth and the migrations,*

*Inspire me!*

*May your visions of light be with us*

*At the departure and the arrival.”*

At this moment, Amanicha moves towards Twylla with a box filled with food she prepared with her mother. Twylla eats, then loses herself in her dreams:

*I feel lighter. I swim like a cloud over the city and the lake. Only the Tower’s antennae point at my feet. Little by little, as with a zoom lens, I see a bark leaving the dock of Harbourfront, advancing towards a tear-shaped island. The tempest is far away. On this side of the lake the water is calm. An oily sea. Approaching the bark, I see two men resembling Pete and Zinal. The bark is full of all sorts of provisions. And I remember that the Moose-Spirit predicted to me that I would see my island before I die. The bark glides towards the east and nears a chain of little islands. I notice that all the inhabitants are red like me. They wear colored plumes and very bright clothes. Like those the merchants import from the south to sell to my people. Then I see an old man wearing a hat with huge many-colored feathers. He must be the Wise Man or Medicine Man, like my father. Everyone draws near to surround him and listen. Then, he places his hand on the earth and mutters a prayer, a poem, or perhaps a proverb? The two tall men resembling Pete and Zinal disembark. These scenes unfold before my eyes. I hear couples*

*teaching their children the workings of nature, the apparition of aberrations and maladies, and the aid which nature, with its herbs, brings to human beings. They teach them as well the functions of body and spirit, and especially the highest function: In breathing life into what he created with his own hands, the Creator acts within beings and things.*

*Each generation gives birth to a child (girl or boy) with pale eyes like those of my ancestors. Each child becomes a Voyeur-voyage capable of understanding mysteries. Like myself or the old medicine man who draws his power from stone. But what is a living Being? An awkward and breakable stone vibrating with a twist of egoism only serving transitory interests. With a touch of the thumb, it takes off on the arduous road of finitude, another sends it into orbit; and in its trajectory, it unleashes the unhappiness of thousands of beings, things, plants and animals, perhaps the cataclysm.*

*I plunge – is it the nightmarish fall? – into a moose-inspired meditation. I see people moving from village to village, constructing great temples to the spirits of this world and the other. The cult sites resemble the CN Tower like two drops of dew. A body in a flowing tear. An island launching itself into a reversed exclamation point. People go there to pray, sing, dance, love, and be quiet.... Then, gradually, they leave for other cities, other villages, other temples, seeking a simple life. Faces turn towards the Tower. They want to climb it in every direction, without being punished for enjoying the attractions of the first Lady of the city and the world. At this moment, Pete's liberty collided with hers, and she made him stumble above the edge of her antenna. But when Zinal came to her feet, the Tower erected between them the Moose as a founding father. The Moose-Spirit guides them both, unbeknownst to them, towards the acceptance of everyone as he is. No words to express it!*

*Thus Speaks the CN Tower*

*Since that time, a whole tribe crosses a desert of ice, plains and lakes from which it must draw its substance, without trees or brooks. A voyeur-voyager indicates to him where to set traps and overcome obstacles. Each of his words proclaims life. They arrive at an agglomeration of stones, rocks, buildings, tarred roads, macadam and tracks. You can't plant anything there, except a tower. But once it's constructed, people become lazy, depending on her for everything substantial and all the news. They have forgotten both the Creator and the Spirit which helped them.*

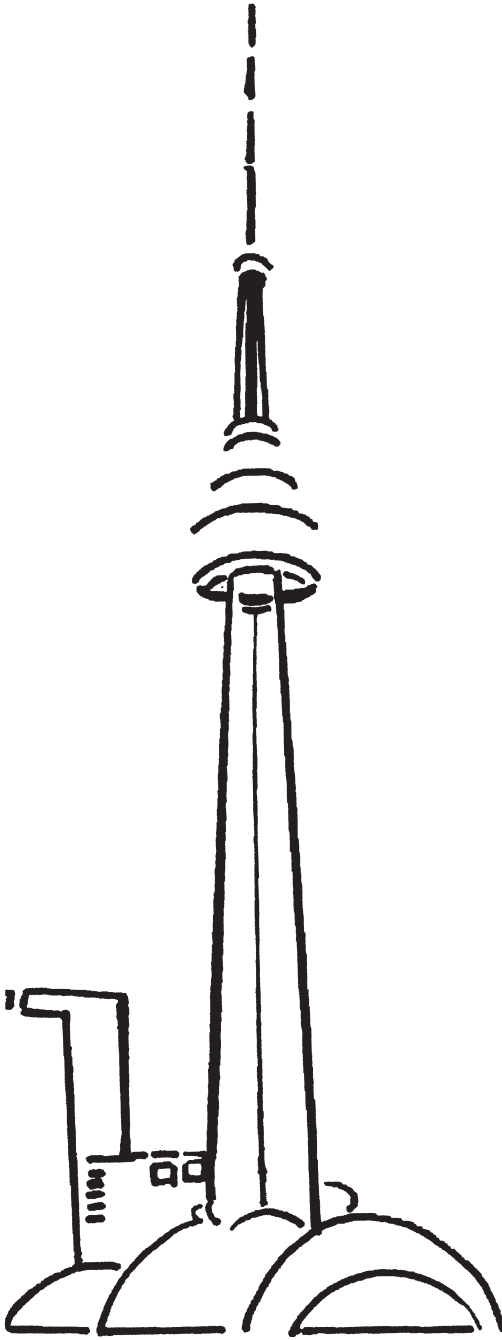


Twylla feels waves of heat invade her from head to foot. She has the impression of becoming triply red, that her fiery cheeks set fire to her whole body.

That night the earth trembled, with strong quakes, from top to bottom, from left to right, like a serpent coiling while crawling. A few decrepit buildings crack. No death is announced. Twylla is torn from her dreams, soaked with sweat... She remains silent.







**18**



*I* am a cold tower like the country which erected me. Snow falls there for six months continually. I don't create surprises, either, for my country has known neither revolution, nor a collective crisis, except that of separation created piecemeal which serves as blackmail to justify the history of linguistic competition. But let's end this, once and for all, by admitting the reality. English dominates, and will always dominate this continent. As for French, it is only tolerated to spice up the linguistic sauce of the country. For that reason I decided to place myself in this little taste. And don't believe that I opted for the tongue of the francophone minority through a spirit of contradiction! As a Tower, I must always distinguish myself by something. To narrate my history in French, *It's different*, as they say here. That adds flavor to my solitude, my malaise.

Moreover, I didn't invent the characters in my story. They really exist and work in my body. I see them enter and leave me. They are more or less attached to me. By self-interest, it goes without saying. For you can't move a stone unless you draw a few benefits from it. Self-centeredness, you say? It doesn't matter. Nothing changes without pressure. I began to move and become emotional, making speech my secret weapon, my Trojan horse. Sometimes my speech stumbles, hesitates, over the opaque reality of all these characters. Otherwise, how can you reflect, and make others reflect on this world which is only a Holiday Inn where a dozen races live in perpetual conflict. In my native city, extending and developing its green space, they seem to live in harmony. Even the streets give a feeling of security. Certainly, it's not a dream. In a city of the future, massive immigration imports its conflicts, its pasts... and a few nostalgic souls cling to these droll dead memories! Sometimes upheavals occur. My sensitive concrete captures and transmits what my

total being has become, weathered and worn. What I tell you is finally only a kind of self-portrait in the collective mode, like a painter seeing himself in the eyes of others, making himself his own subject.

All my characters are thus part of myself. But as they have personalities, they become autonomous. Each one is a tower in his own image. To be frank, they all participate in the same story, ours. However, every individual clings fiercely to his identity. I can do nothing about it. That's the way they're made, and they have no intention whatever of participating in any plot excluding them. Nevertheless, my characters are there, near and distant, participating in the lives of others and, at the same time, closed in on themselves. They work in my viscera and seldom speak to each other – perhaps a “Well!” echoing a “Hi!” consumed as they are by the frenzy of making a few bucks towards their retirement. Each one keeps carrying, all by himself, the “problems” undermining him. Without being able to share them with friends, they have ended up almost losing the sense of hearing.

Then I transmitted – for that's my role – their cares and joys as if I had heard them from their own mouths. All the time allowing each one to bear his share of silence to this “Holiday Inn,” which, in the final analysis, is nothing but myself. By delegating to myself the right to transmit these silences, I was seized by Zarathustra who, from trembling stone lips, spreads his wisdom of solitude.

I come back to the newcomer under my cupola, the Malaysian Zinal. Short and slim, rich in love and not at all poor in deniers, he arrives from a country of the third excluded who knew how to reclaims the slippery slope of finance. The Malaysians “left the planet of under-development and took flight towards prosperity.” With this simple formula as a greeting accomplishing the

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miracle of the century: [H.W. + L.T. + H.S.R. + Savings Rates + Minimum Government = Economic Boom]. If Zinal fled towards our country, it wasn't to become rich, as people believed, but only to conquer Twylla's heart. He already found the key to this broken heart. Swearing to continue practicing his profession in our country, he has obtained a landed immigrant certificate.

From his first hesitant steps in the Queen City, this stroller perceived the threat weighing on my shoulders. When the children carried the stones – You remember this nightmare when the bombs exploded! – no one paid attention to the conductor threads winding all along the stairs. The intention was certainly to blow up the emergency stairs which, once they were destroyed, would have created a tunnel in my building. What was the purpose of this act of vandalism? To discover my unconscious Tower which ended up digesting news like a human being? Or simply to mine my solid appearance with a void, with the goal of disarticulating my anti-babel speech?

I awaken face to face with this new sweet-and-sour news. An intermediary, still less embraced by me than my characters, has just dotted the i's. I am only misfortune's companion, peaceful and sad, benevolent and maternal, faced with beings whom I myself created. I am lost like a frightened child. I gave myself death by breathing life into them. Is it the voice of my characters I hear crying to my ruins: "We are all here, CN Tower, we will not abandon you"? I feel new hope at this encouragement. I hold myself more and more upright, even when I look at my very decrepit base. But who planted this line tying together the explosives of misunderstanding? Did he think of the uncontrollable fire?

Until the present no one asked the question. Suspicions, contagious angry words, haven't been fully transmitted. Moreover, they only augment the reputation of braggarts. I made a turn on

myself. I ask myself if it isn't Pete who acted this way to avenge himself on his vanished love? Because of his failure with Kelly? His disappointment that I wasn't named, in Amerindian, "Tower Tarantou"? In fact, I am standing on the "point of encounter" whence his people could move from Lake Ontario to Lake Huron! Perhaps it is only a fatal irony that confused history: the birth of Ontario after the American War of Independence. You could have wished that my name would echo the old Upper Canada, the Province of Ontario, under its definitive form in the Confederation of 1867. My name would then be "Ontario Tower" which would be translated into Iroquois as "Beautiful waters." It's not at all incongruous. Am I not the fluidity of stones tied together by the cement of speech? The spring irrigating the sky of knowledge by media speech?

Is it Marcel-Marie who dreams of calling me "Tower Étienne Brûlé," from the name of the first Frenchman to go as far as Lakes Ontario and Huron? I would have had as acronym "T.E.B.," "*la Tèbes du Canada*," which would have preserved the connection to his French origins. Marc Durocher also wanted to resuscitate "Fort Rouillé." But this fort, after being destroyed in 1759 by a ferocious British assault, was rebuilt in the excellent port of present-day Toronto. To name me "Tower Fort Rouillé" would have really insulted the Anglos and dug the ditch of separation! At one point, Souleyman was wiser in thinking of attributing to me the name of "Multi-Cult Tower." He claimed that this appellation suits me better because I emerged from the sweat of races of all colors. And if it was the Italian Mafia who wanted to save the honor of Rocco Cacciapuoti, stripped of his functions in the last elections? Good, let's forget this question which already aggravated several susceptibilities. In any case, it's the name of the Canadian National Railway which sticks to my skin today. But, in fact, why didn't they call me" Grand

Trunk Tower” – in memory of the Irish who built the railway, the Grand Trunk, linking the great Canadian centers. This name is more appropriate for the word-tree that I am.

Thus, it is children who unleashed the drama. Removing Symphorien’s paper pills, they noticed the presence of a little bit of thread which would have caused the explosion, killed dozens of people, and sowed discord. It’s horrible. What goes through Symphorien’s head makes your hair stand on end. But, no doubt, not his mother who suffocates him with her love. Moreover, after multiple appeals. Madame Lebreton finally got him released from the asylum. A few interventions landed on the mayor’s desk. She wanted to tear her son away from the rigid structures and observation which would have helped Symphorien find his way again. Hers, more confused, would suffice. For her and her son!

In reality, Symphorien had only one idea in his head: to excavate my heart and make the brains of my stairs explode. He installed in my place an “Eiffel Tower,” life size, which would be the symbol of constant humiliation. He is too blinded by his obsessions. For, even if I owe this 320-meter tower its way of pointing the finger, it has been, for a long time, only a fourth tower. Symphorien was wrong in thinking that I was about to espouse his Cartesian thought because I spoke his language in my stepmother’s body.

Didn’t I do enough by expressing myself in his language on the verge of vanishing? Classified in the énième rank of current languages, it no longer knows where to go, except to lick the chops of its chauvinism, which no longer matters in the circle of well-bred people, since the Hurons – the French sold them fire-arms to kill each other off – no longer call them “iron heads.”

My own heart, CN Tower, beats for the intimate speech transcending egoism. I will not play the role of the sorceress making separatism shine in all its splendor. I am neither a Marc Duro-



cher wishing it, nor a Pete wanting to correct history. As for the evocation of the unconscious, practiced by Symphorien, or grants, the method dear to Marcel-Marie's heart, or the forced assimilation lived by Rocco, they are all contrary to my spirit. From my glowing antennae, I will diffuse the ideal of integration, sweet and spontaneous, sought by Souleyman, and that of the rehabilitation of the Moose-Spirit that Twylla lives in her flesh. Nevertheless, I know that the two live their solitude facing two capricious founding races.

Symphorien is seized by a frenzy disabling him. He leaves his apartment, comes to kneel at my feet, then returns to his place and begins to contemplate me from his window pane. As a worshipper, he prays facing East, the direction of Jerusalem and the Eiffel Tower. It's there, in the ancestral line, that he put his faith. They had predicted he would never be able to free himself from it! Enough of that nonsense! He knows he will sing every dream come from afar, in my nave, my flesh, my apse, and my altar...

In the final analysis, I myself doubtless wish for the destruction of my emergency stairs. The desired collapse won't hinder the Moose-Spirit from borrowing the agile elevators to implant his "interior principle" on my nerves. Thus I would be able to have my interior music heard. The explosion at the heart of my structure would be my organ point. Instead of losing weight, scaling my stone surface, my spirit would be allowed to speak from within. From the mist suffocating me, I would free all the songs of love. My story, and that of the family I created with my words. From these slices of life, I would light up my emotions. I would feel like this old traveler who, seated on a bench at my feet, reads his book with a knife. Following the lines with the steel point, he sometimes holds the page up with the sharp edge of the blade. Sometimes, he cuts the paper when a sentence pleases him. He

gives his all to live in his cave. To taste the succulent orchestration. To taste the troubling metaphors and haunting images. His brain swallows sentence fragments, so their traces no longer escape him. In the book, he opens a breach like a window under the effect of a waterspout. "The door can only dream of the window," he says. Thus the void in me is hollowed out.

The old man places his spectacles and knife on two open pages. Just the time to smile at a female passerby. It's on these pages that the love story of Pete and Kelly begins, melting like a snowflake. And you would have liked me to tell you about a few bits of filth on the ice floes of dreams. I had only to yield to your wishes. Prepare myself to revive the jeremiads and recriminations. The broken hearts. These lacerations from which one only emerges wounded. Alas! The old reader has cut the leaves of his book. The pages bleed. Bits of paper, like flesh cut in strips, fly. Only for the love of a page of fate separated from the following pages without announcing the sequel to this fate.

I don't want to anatomize the sentences, nor inflict on them my new order. Listener to oral manuscripts on diskette, I turn my projector inward to scrutinize my city, Toronto, the Beautiful, the elegant, newly emerged sparkling from its gift wrap. May the world hear the multiple voices!

But is it going to change its outlook, for all that? Emerge from the imposture of the media? Cut the cord of mediology? Despite the brevity of our history, no one knows it. It's because the American Revolution was at its height when the Loyalists, losing, came to seek refuge in Canada. Wanting to keep the ties with England, following their crushing defeat, five or six thousand of them settled in what is today known as Ontario. In 1791, two provinces were created piecemeal: Upper Canada (the present-day Ontario) and Lower Canada (Québec). The former will be ruled by English civil law, the second by the "Custom of

Paris.” England introduces, by the Constitutional Act, the basis of a parliamentary system. It creates an Assembly Chamber in each of the provinces. The colonizers of Upper Canada continue to mistrust their neighbors to the south.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Americans declared war against Great Britain, and thus against Canada, believing that the defeat of the British will end the threats of the Amerindians. Always the Achilles heel! The Autochtones – on the altar of the Europeans who always arranged to expel them from their own territory. Caught up in the infernal machine of the Napoleonic Wars, Great Britain couldn't turn her head and come to the aid of her supposed colonial defenders. Only Fort York undertakes the main defense of Upper Canada against the American attacks. Skirmishes and pillaging. Fires and deaths. A war of the Whites which still, on both sides, leaves a residue of distrust and antagonism towards Uncle Sam. Anti-Americanism is certainly still alive among the Anglos, to be sure. The rest of the population, rather passive, accommodates this American presence which eats away ninety percent of them.

It was only in 1814 that the Treaty of Gand established peace, and the frontiers between Canada and the United States. The influx of immigrants, pushed by the recession, unemployment and poverty, has since grown. Then they exploited the fertile land to satisfy elementary needs. They created the weekly market, Open market, which will become the St. Lawrence market. The city's arteries will retain elements of Royalty: *King Street, Queen, Duke, Duchess, Princess*, not the mention the *Queen Victoria's* or *Elizabeth II's*... twenty years later, York becomes the municipality of Toronto with its five Wards: *St. Andrew's, St. David, St. Lawrence, and St. Patrick*. All Saints, so that the trade in fur, wood and grains... These products are exported to Europe in exchange for manufactured goods, especially those

of British make! Remaining isolated, Upper Canada needed to be reachable. Canals created free circulation between Lake Erie and the Welland River, the Niagara River, and Lake Ontario. Toronto is finally linked to the Atlantic. What upheavals! After the British Government lost its thirteen colonies (which became the United States), Governor Simcoe tried to reproduce the British class system in Toronto. Just to avoid “a second American Revolution.” From which came the Constitutional Act of 1791 founding the governing oligarchy known by the name of the Family Compact in Upper Canada and the “Château Clique” in Lower Canada. Nonetheless, “*chauvin*” is a purely French word! but the powers that be were convinced that everything good in the country must be essentially British. The political monopoly, in the hands of the Family Compact, doubtless assured economic dominance as well. And nothing has changed since the two parties emerged: the *Tories*, conservatives, and the *Reformers*, liberals who pleaded for a democratic government.

The French Canadians chose Louis-Joseph Papineau as spokesman. He went so far as to affirm that “the authority of Lower Canada must come back to the French Canadians.” From the very first steps, separatism inscribes “*Je me souviens*” with a red-hot iron in the collective memory. In Toronto, the reformer Leader, William Lyon Mackenzie, launched his first attack against the Government. Elected mayor in 1835, his ideas troubled the more moderate. Like Papineau, he ended up exiled in the United States. From the U.S. they tried, each for his own part, to regroup their forces and gain the support of the Americans. Useless then to revive the old quarrels between Catholics and Anglicans. Violence faded slowly. Antagonism silently placed a hard mask on its face.

The Confederation of 1867 created a division of powers between two pillars of Government: the Federal, situated in Ottawa, and

the Provincial, in Toronto. Thus the Queen City becomes the indisputable economic center tying together the four cardinal points of prosperity and efficiency. American style, as it should be!

How have I assimilated this page of our memory, I born of concrete a few moons ago? You wouldn't suspect that it circulates in each of my grains of sand. My natives drink of the immemorial sediments creating my essence. So many lives, so many deaths... irrigate my veins... So many facts and gestures cross my cement and my stones. With all of them, I transcribe, in my stony and hollow heart of hearts, my city and my country.

But why don't my compatriots trust the words circulating over the air? Those I diffuse, and which fade at the very same moment they are uttered. Why do they stubbornly ignore the stony silences uniting us beyond the mortar, the inner landscape of human beings inhabiting me with their daily tumult? A little greedy in praise: "Our Tower is one of the principal attractions of the Megacity," etc., they advise everyone to visit me on a clear day the better to see my carcass and the surrounding landscape. However, they forget the silence of my stones whose eloquence is far more refined than that of the words and images diffused by my antenna. These stones erected in me will be more severe in their judgments than the churches preaching a world beyond, while making you forget the world here.

I won't lean towards the earth like the old Tower of Pisa. That would be a prelude to a cemetery visit. Death doesn't frighten me, for I am every form of life which gives birth. There, the word is released. Basically, I don't believe in the separation of death and life. Both live together eternally. It's for that reason that I am not astonished that my fellow citizens want only to battle in the "piquant and picturesque" present, futile and fleeting. By doing so, they turn a deaf ear to the words cut in the concrete where each emission calls on the consciousness.

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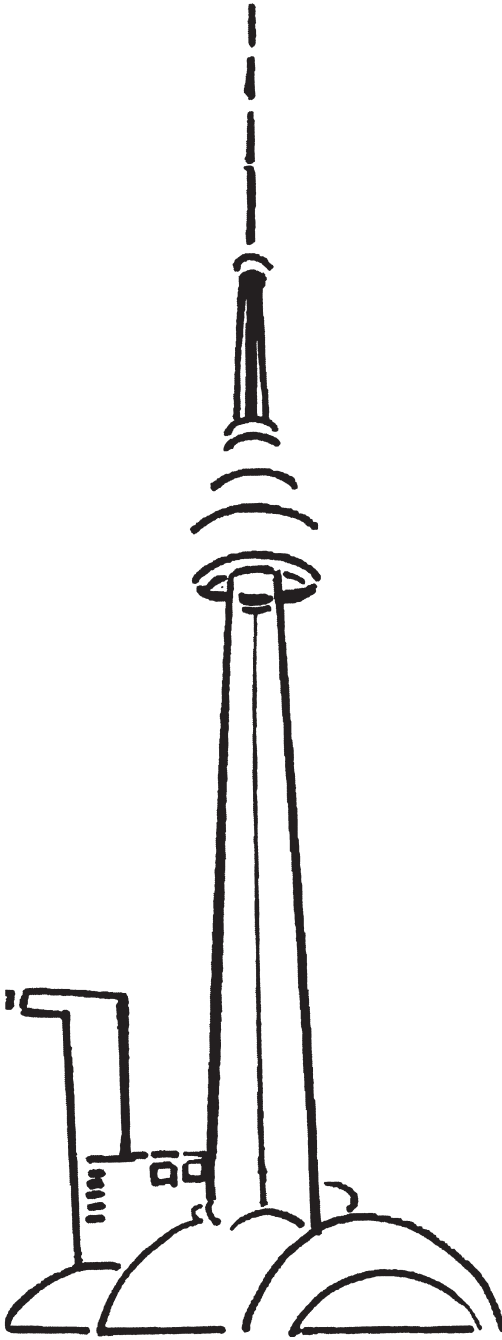
These words at present serve neither to win a war, nor to nourish hungry mouths. They know, however, how to make of consciousness a “social commodity”! And I who am on the page of futurism, I admit that this old way of seeing, dear to the Moose-Spirit, doesn’t suit my image. It will die old then, but doubtless in the silence of stone which will not cease celebrating the futuristic anti-Babel.

It doesn’t do any good to whisper in the ears of my Symphorien and Madame Lebreton – whose torments and anguish I share without complacency – my words of stone; I yield to the evidence that the evil of their time ravaged their conscience. They have nothing more to do with the “Noble Savages,” their conviviality, their innate sense of family, in short, with Nature.

And I, CN Tower, what path should I follow? What do I know? I am, for the moment, in quest of adventures to recount...

“Moose-Spirit, you who penetrate the flock, inspire me with active words smoothing the paths of creation!”





**19**





*T*wylla is there. She appears so tiny, kneeling at my foot. Her forehead against my window, like a minuscule firefly. I hear the Moose-Spirit breathe. She takes possession of my being through her Indian voice. What she sings is the rhythm of life: seasons follow seasons; bison, deer, men migrate. Twylla enters the fog of her imagination and shakes the images passing before her... seated like a tailor in the empty Skydome, inside the tent prepared for small demonstrations, her pure voice reaches me.

She pulls from her bag the sacred stones, caresses them sensually, and finds herself floating so high that she sees my antennae as minuscule as a bee's. Twylla sighs deeply and comes back down to earth. Again, she caresses the stones and sees Pete who is running out of breath, like a kidnapper of women in the camp of the Whites. An arrow coming from nowhere plants itself in his back, then a second, vibrating from the speed of the chase. Pete slows down, loses his breath, and in an agonized voice says to Twylla:

"I lost the battle. My love flew away in the Eagle's beak. The dogs sounded the alarm, but no one came to help me. Neither you, nor the Tower... I will exact vengeance!"

Twylla brushes the stones again and Kelly appears. Not far from her, Twylla spies the history professor with whom Kelly, at a very young age, had conceived out of wedlock a daughter she abandoned in front of the Anglican church. Mr. King would never have accepted a bastard granddaughter. Realizing that the legal world belongs only to men, Kelly leaves both her law office and her history professor. Unmarried, she seeks a shoe that will fit.

Twylla passes the greater part of this day daydreaming. Members of the tribe bring her food. They pour in her drink a mixture supposed to give her access to fantastic visions. But

Twylla abstains from drinking the drugged beverage, for it suffices for her to “feel the stones” for the fog to thicken in her head so that she sees other scenes of life.

Kelly King dines with Suzy McNally whom she encountered the previous week at a Congress of Canadian Studies. Suzy impressed her with her air of a rock well planted on its feet, her short hair cut like a boy’s, and her sparkling eyes piercing observers daring to confront her. Suddenly, she asks Kelly:

“Are you married?”

“Yes and no. I was married to a professor for five years. And we divorced. At present, I’m living with an acrobat of the air. One marriage was enough. We agreed to continue like this – and you?”

“I too married my professor. But we didn’t divorce. We have three children. We live each on his/her own side and we pretend the family is united.”

They are like two little girls in an attic. Each one unwraps her memories. Kelly pauses, then asks Suzy:

“Listen, Suzy, I want to tell you the dream I had last night.”

“Go on, I love to hear other people’s dreams...”

“It was just before dawn. I floated in black clouds which were suffocating me. I wanted to escape, but I felt the weight of Pete’s body on me. It was his birthday and he was furious. Instead of eating the rhubarb and strawberry cake – it’s my specialty – he began to harass and insult me: “You fuck-head, cunt of the year, when will you be ready on time?” In this nightmare, I felt at the same time guilty, and abused in my inner soul. Pete slams the door. A glass breaks. Its liquid seems to pour into a hole in my skull. I retreat into myself. I cringe in terror, making myself small to the point of disappearing. Pete sticks his face against mine again with his terrifying Kamikaze grimace, then slaps me twice with all his strength: ‘Well, slut,’ he says. ‘That will teach you to screw our marriage.’ My God, how this nightmare still scares me!”

“Dump this thug, Kelly!” Suzy says to her. “All men are the same; they always want to have the upper hand. I understand now... I act like an independent man, and let all the men go fuck each other!”

At the moment of parting, Kelly extends her hand to Suzy to say goodbye, but Suzy says:

“I prefer to hold you in my arms, Kelly!”

Twylla now hears Kelly’s voice, coming from the depth of solitude:

“A few weeks later, I invited Suzy to spend a weekend at my place, during Pete’s absence. I had an insatiable thirst to speak to her, to hear her voice, to savor her advice and her anecdotes. For the first time, I felt an affection in my heart warm as a newborn chick. Suzy climbed the stairs in the dark to sleep in the guest room that I had prepared for her. We are the same height. We said good evening, embracing at length. As if we didn’t want to part from each other. I felt filled with happiness, sweetly comforted and protected in her arms. She brushed my cheek tenderly. I planted a polite kiss on her neck and we separated. In my room, I couldn’t stop thinking about Suzy. I so wanted to surprise her in her bed, slide in beside her, be held in her arms. I invented all kinds of velvet caresses so she would love me more. The night was long. I dozed, crouched at the foot of the bed, until morning. No one else had soothed me like her.

The next day, she took the plane to Halifax where she was to attend a conference. I didn’t know how to reach her. Panicked, I telephoned her at her place in Sudbury. Her son answered and gave me the number of the hotel where she was staying. I took my courage in my hands and called her. She was at the other end of the line. At once, without catching my breath so that my courage wouldn’t fail me, I blurted out: “I want to sleep with you.”

Pete drinks beer after beer from sunrise to bedtime, and smokes three packs of cigarettes. Often he pisses on the walls. No mat-

ter where. No matter how. Without caring who is going to clean up his messes. But at least he doesn't dirty the glasses, for it's up to me to do the dishes according to our "family tradition." He does the cooking, and I do everything else. Even the shopping. And since he doesn't work, I'm obliged to provide for two families: our own and his family with Twylla. I pay monthly support to his divorced wife to raise their son. If Moki Deloon goes to school, it's thanks to me, Kelly King. And so that our Love affair goes smoothly, I must pay for his psychotherapy: to ease the soul, and pay the expenses of a marriage counselor in order to manage our differences, not to mention the quarrels which started only a few months after our decision to live under the same roof.

One night Pete gets up startled, and wakes me to tell me he has had a nightmare. I can hardly keep my eyes open. I know that he doesn't remember his dreams. But this time, he starts to shout: 'I dreamed about you, old sluts, you and your shitty Suzy, you had an affair behind my back. I don't want to see her any more, or exchange any words with her.' I turn to make my self small, on the edge of the bed. And Pete stretches out on nine-tenths of the mattress and starts to snore. Impossible for me to get back to sleep.

In June of this year I wanted to take my old aunt to Niagara-on-the-Lake for some fresh air and to relive some childhood memories over a weekend. I hadn't seen her for months, and the poor woman had been admitted to hospital and discharged without my visiting her. First Pete agreed. Then the week I was to leave, he flipped like a pancake. Rebuking me for leaving him by the wayside, neglecting my promises to be solely occupied with him.

'And what am I to do during all this time you're spending with your shitty aunt?'

"When the weekend came, he announced to me he had reserved four days on Martinique to relax and see everyone. On his return,

I waited more than three hours for his delayed flight. He was the last to leave it, and I saw immediately he was drunk. During the trip from the airport, I asked him how he had spent his time on the beautiful island. He led me to understand he had made dozens of female friends, that he had been spoiled with massages by nude women. He had danced every evening, made love on the beach... I wasn't jealous because the two things he had really done, without a doubt, alcohol and drugs, he neglected to mention. Back at the house, he forced me to stretch out on the sofa, ordered me to spread my legs, crying 'he wanted to have sex with me.' I managed to take refuge in the guest room. The next day we went to the marriage counsellor. I explained everything that had happened. For a quarter of an hour, Pete didn't breathe a word. Then when he was asked for his version of things, he said in one breath:

'I spent an excellent weekend with Kelly's approval. She didn't want to come with me. And I experienced such pleasure as I haven't had in a long time. I did no harm to anyone. I danced and amused myself. Finally I found my center – a mystical experience. She prefers to kiss lesbians instead of paying attention to me. All this therapy is shit. You aren't objective, while I have changed, abandoned my life among my own people, to keep house with this White face which didn't change one little bit.' Then in an unexpected tone, with a delicate, musical voice, he turned to me:

'We don't really need this therapy, we can solve our own problems. Kelly, I'm asking you to forget all this. I beg you, don't leave me. I love you.'

I've never seen Pete like that. Sweet, forthcoming. He seemed to have aged ten years. But I had already made the decision to leave him. Back at the house, he changed his tone. He swelled up like a malnourished pigeon, began to shout, to break everything within his reach, to beat me. For the fifth time since we

began to live together, I called the police who laid charges: blows and wounds inflicted on a third party. I called Suzy to tell her about this mess I had gotten myself into. I thought I would reveal to her my nightmarish private life, but after a long silence, she replied:

‘But Kelly, for a long time I’ve known that your Pete is a creep. He proposed to me several times to sleep with him. You would be better to come with your daughter and spend a few days with me.’”

The stony vibrations had just revealed to Twylla another Pete than the one she knew. What then was the truth? Doubtless, it is neither in what you’ve heard from Kelly’s mouth, nor in what I am in the process of reporting. It will be in what the Moose-Spirit reveals, at the moment one least expects it, about people and things.

As for me, I don’t need to feel the stones, like Twylla, in order to see. My Moose-Spirit caresses the clouds. I see a little boy lost. He doesn’t much resemble Moki, but that’s who it is. It is as if in a dream, unknown figures assume familiar names. We believe we recognize people we have known for a long time. Thus it is with this Moki who wears only a few rags. I pursue him in his wanderings, across clouds and canyons, skyscrapers in ruins and a dry Lake Ontario. No grass. He is walking in a city which seems to have suffered a nuclear disaster.

Moki, frightened, contemplates this desolate landscape. Standing on the pier at Harbourfront, facing the Toronto Islands, he looks up at a giant bird flying around me. For him, it’s the Lord of the Air, in magnificent flight, like an expansive spirit. Moki prays to him. His fluid voice cuts across the wind and, invisible, fills the canyons between buildings and houses. The Eagle seems to seek out the adolescent boy. It plunges finally towards earth and perches on the arm of the human who called on him.

*Thus Speaks the CN Tower*

Moki staggers under the width of the giant Bird, regains his balance, then caresses its feathers. A splendid sensation that only this savage Master of the Air provides. Moki murmurs sweet words to him, the same reassuring and cradling words that Twylla used to whisper in his ear when he was a child.

The Elk of the Air fixes Moki with a tender look, spreads his wings and, as swiftly as he landed, he takes off into the serene sky of the city. Moki follows his majestic flight, asking if he isn't going to land where his people originated. The Eagle flies over the HMCH Haida, a World War II destroyer transformed into a floating naval museum, the playing fields of Wilderness Adventure with their nautical toboggans, swimming pool, boats, and all kinds of attractions. He then turns towards Ontario Place, another tourist and amusement center conceived in 1971, five years before my birth, by Eberhard Zeiler, which spreads over thirty-eight hectares beside the water, to the south of Exhibition Place and west of the city center. The Bird finally perches on the enormous Cinesphere which houses the Imax cinema with its impressive screen, six stories high.

At the foot of the Cinesphere, Moki sees a gathering of Amerindians, of men and women of color. Some are eating sandwiches, others chatting. Others come and go and seem impatient. Everyone is waiting for the doors to open. He moves forward a few steps and finds himself quickly surrounded by his adolescent peers: "You, the stranger... the stranger... Get out of here. We don't accept strangers, here." Moki takes refuge in the "Centre of Creation." He sits with his legs crossed on a straw mat, the same position his mother took at Skydome. He takes from his backpack a long eagle feather and begins to caress it and sing to it the same words of love he pronounced to the Spirit of the Air:

*"Oh! Beauty of the sky, Lord of the Air, You of all spirits, you can bring good news and beautiful prophecies. You alone can smooth*



*over discords. Fill the canyons with the harmonious air of songs. Spirit of the Air, faithful companion of the CN Tower, you can offer us the unique opportunity to seize its words of stone, in the place of its flux of ephemeral images. Bird of good omen, let us burn the empty libraries, to preserve the maple leaves and their veins which speak to our souls strangled by the hands of cynical decision-makers. Will those people ever see the Handwriting on the wall?"*



For the length of this prayer, the child, of middle height and frail, seems to become a tall, handsome man. Proud, with piercing eyes in a stony face, Moki continues addressing his words of love to the Bird. Without letting go the feather he continues to handle, with his eloquence he tries to change the mindsets, to inscribe discomfort as a counterpoint, so that the well-being of his people may see the dawn of a new day.

Moki Deloon sees the spirit of the Air emerge from nowhere and land in front of the waiting crowd. Like a wave, he draws the bedecked people in another direction, as if wanting to persuade them to abandon the instant gratification of giant screens, and relearn reading in the book of the sacred stones. At this moment, Moki senses that one of the five stones belonging to his mother, Twylla, has just lighted up around his neck. With its phosphorescent light it covers the young man's whole chest. *"The lighting is accomplished, he says, in the kingdom of the Sprit of the Air. What would it be like for me in the kingdom of the Tower? Would I have the opportunity to let her dazzle my soul, as it did my mother and my father at the time of his descent towards the earth?"*

That day, Moki decided to go several times a week to the city where his mother made her home. He walked to Exhibition Park, commonly known by Torontonians as the CNE or the Ex. There

he discovered agricultural fairs, horse and automobile shows. Sometimes he went down to the Waterfront to practice his favorite sport, jogging, through the lovely neighborhoods surrounding the shores of Lake Ontario. But especially on the Toronto islands, formerly a sandy peninsula, Moki rediscovered serenity. Nature performs well, he thinks, "The place where the trees emerge from the water," as the Mississauga Indians said, is now an archipelago. Sand and the Scarborough Bluffs have been filled in from the East to the West of Toronto to form a peninsula attached to the mainland. Then, towards the middle of the nineteenth century, storms and erosion shaped the present physiognomy of the scar, the eastern breach.

From the ferry terminal at the foot of Bay Street, the financial heart of Toronto, Moki sometimes takes one of the three ferries to disembark at Centre Island. He walks on the lush grass of the island: Olympic, South, Snake, Algonquin, Wards, crosses bridges, then comes back towards "the other head of the salamander." He wanders for hours across an avenue stretching from one end to the other of Centre Island. From the Manitou Bridge to the quay and the beach, the avenue bordered with narrow green space, with flowing basins, fountains, and splendid lawns, invites the passersby to "please walk on the grass." The grass needs to be consolidated. Striking views of the lake and the city! Moki then stops at the base of the oldest building in Toronto, the Gibraltar Point Lighthouse, a stone lighthouse built in 1808. Some say it's haunted by the ghost of its first keeper who was killed by the soldiers of Fort York just seven years after its completion.

Moki walks barefoot over the sandy beach around the lighthouse. He seems to hear the voice of the ghost: "Words don't belong to anyone, but to overvalue them can cost a lot of lives!" He takes the path which branched off to reach Hanlan's Point, the

old defensive heart of the city, called first Gibraltar, then rebaptized by the Hanlan family which settled there in 1862. Moki thinks of the son, Ned Hanlan, who was a champion rower.

A crimson sunset awakes him from his dreams. Myriads of flashing lights ravish the surface of the water. Moki's eyes light up. He has made his decision to avenge his father, of whom Twylla has so frequently spoken to him! Moki refuses to admit that any tribunal had ever even glanced at the business of Pete's dismissal without cause.

No one knows who organized this demonstration. The Torontonians arrived from every direction in aprons, blue jeans, shorts and swimsuits. Under a hot sun, they brandished hundred of placards. Moki is astonished to see his mother shake this slogan: *At the Heart of the Tower... the Tunnel of Love*. The crowd spread out at my feet. In spite of the prohibition of the Municipality, a banquet was held outdoors where the hot dog is usually king. The passageway between Myself and the Skydome is besieged. A message signals: "The world begins at the corner of the passageway/ With the right and duty to act for everyone."

Ethnic groups invade the Block. They want to speak and sing all the languages. Stands are set up. Orchestras play the songs of their homelands. Assyrians sprout placards relating the birth of writing; Arab calligraphers apply themselves to drawing the verses: "When we will open, everything will be open to us"; an Israeli-Canadian brandishes: "He sold the sun, to buy a candle!"; another competitor advises: "Teach him a language, you will avoid the stupidity of war"; an Egyptian declares: "Yesterday he emerged from the egg, today he's ashamed of his shell." I see another streamer which says: "The road doesn't teach the traveler what to find at its end." The slogans overlap, each one claiming to be original in the Canadian stream: "The Time of Scorn is over," "The Era of Dignity has arrived." Each one chooses to express

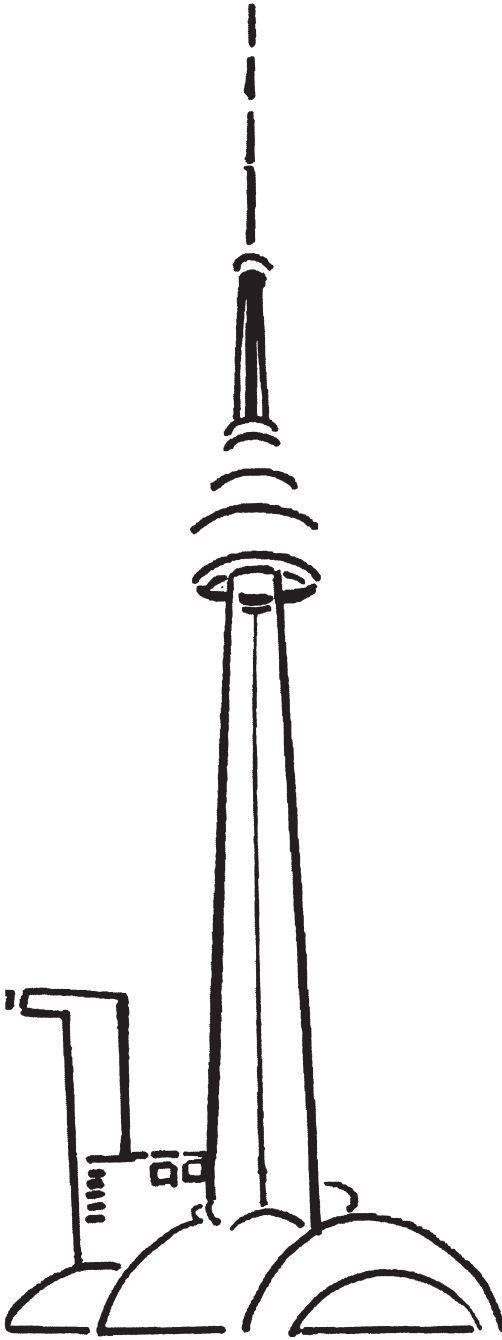
himself with a different choreography. An Indian declaims, in the holistic art of Kathakali which is, simultaneously, masked theatre, dance, song, tied to mystery: "At troubling moments, you must plunge in," "All Good Things belong to the Creator, the Effort must be man's." Souleyman waves a banner with a Mali proverb: "Wish good luck to others, so that you will have your own luck," an Amazigh: "Man is made of alfalfa, you must break it to twist it." The Toronto polyphony vibrates with multiple accents. Symphorien is also part of the festival, holding in each hand a placard where he has written, on the one: "Let's make the CN Tower sing. Like the Fabulous Troubadours/ The Babel of Toulouse," and, on the other: "Don't let the Breton fall into the trap of the French sheep." Not far off, the chief of an Iroquois tribe claims, "Don't lose your language, you will lose your culture."

Moki feels comforted by this enthusiastic assembly without frontiers. The laughs ring out. A joyous air bears witness to the heart's rhythms. He feels the stone hanging from his neck and perceives it has taken my own form, the CN Tower in miniature. The Spirit of the Air breathes into him the essence of the rainbow, expands his body and spirit, and arms him with magnetic feet. To everyone's stupefaction, Moki begins to climb me. He climbs like a spider, with bare hands. Like his father, he wants to conquer time and gravity all by himself. At this first world gathering, he is going to replace the ad hanging from the south side: **Microsoft Windows 98 Start**, with his banner which will fly over the Toronto sky:

**"An open book/Third millennium"**

Perched on the very spot from which his father leaped, Moki was invaded by a feeling of extreme pleasure. Now he knows he can, in his turn, come back to earth.





**20**



What a spectacle to see Moki conquer my height! What can I say? To defy me, the tallest tower in the world, to climb me, exerting all his will, and beat the record held by his father, who disappeared without leaving a trace. Pete is a Mandala of the future whose unknown son already orbits. As for Twylla, too preoccupied with her personal problems, she was only a spectator at this arrow-like flight of her son on the prestigious bark of my word tree.

I can't describe the crowd's astonishment. It held its breath in suspense at each step Moki took. Its breath cut short at each advance. A religious silence during the entire climb. Ungraspable confused fears. Passageways to dreams? Is he going to slip and disappear in a dizzying fall? Malicious tongues aren't lacking to convey Pete's fall to the minor media!

Moki stands on the platform where my antennae emerge. Facing death alone, he seems to be reconciled, more and more, to each cubit, with the heart of my tower inaccessible to those who don't make the effort to transcend their ego. Moki found in me his greatest challenge. Short in height (1.65 meters) and weighing only 49 kilos, "I avoid any excess baggage," he says ironically each time they remark he is too slight, and he adds: "It's better to bear the weight of a brain!" Moki has just had his twentieth birthday. Alone, above the repeated acclaim of the crowd, he celebrates his birthday.

Long hair, an eagle feather on the band circling his brow, the chiseled features of Navajo Indian and, around his neck, the stone fashioned in my image, Moki clung to my skin, like the heat of a blanket. Each step he takes on my stem is a trace engraved forever on my flesh, alive with eternal stones. And nonetheless, risking his life! They kept crying, "What a suicidal act!", "What an iron will!", "What a climb... miraculous!"



I don't feel Moki's act as a threat to my height. In any event, he knew how to rid himself of a failure complex and avenge, no, bring justice to his father who was the first to defy the gulf of the void. Moki's exploit is a floating cry in the blue wind leaving on time's parchment the anchorage of a son's love poem. An emblem helping him to live, to triumph over life....

I'm not reporting to you the news bulletins, the newspaper headlines, the article... or all the farragos relating Moki's acts and gestures. If it were Wayne Gretzky, the king of hockey, Maradona or Cantona, kings of football, Noah, the king of tennis... you would have heard paeans of praise for weeks and months. I, the CN Tower, I try to seize with my awkward stone reach the ungraspable flight of a youth. This sap mounting to the very lips of my antennae makes us both enter the adult world. It gives me and all voiceless beings the right to speak. The marginalized of all kinds. The stones beneath the earth. The shingle of beaches or at the bottom of the lake. Rocks on the mountains. Stones disgorge by ploughing. Rocks scattered in quarries. The sick in asylums whose cries are never heard. Those scorned in the times of glory who bark without biting...

A question remains, however, about all these mouths without responses: What will we call the hero of the day? Everyone present returned to his home impatient to explain what he had seen. They don't know the man's name who climbed unaided the highest tower in the world. He was compared to Spider-Man, to the Eagle of the peaks, related to the Spirit of the Air itself, builder of the Igloo above the abyss, releasing me from vertiginous words. Since they say that "language reflects the expression of a people's soul," why could the stone pile as well not express the Moose-Spirit of this Moki predestined to draw from the Sky an amazing light?

Because of this spirit's virtuosity, Moki effectively succeeds in

dramatizing his deepest soul. My words pale before his exploit. They will disappear without really translating the motives pushing Moki and my other kindred souls to act as they do. Proud of her son, of the prowess he had never before displayed, Twylla returns to her meditation. She crosses the one hundred steps of the bridge linking the Skydome to Union Station.

She knows that Moki returned directly to the Reserve, thus marking the return of the mature man to the land of his childhood. He will be ready to give advice and support. He will never part with the miniature CN Tower, nor with the Eagle feather planted firmly in his hair, kept in place by a band embroidered with vividly colored pearls. Having passed the test of the air and of gravity, he can now act, modestly and patiently, among his own people, according to the wisdom of the Medicine Man.

The tribe has thinned out. Very few young people are left on the ancestral land. The larger part of the community left to try its luck in the west, the oil fields, or the northeast, to defend the honor of the dead buried in the First Nations cemeteries. Then, with whom is Moki going to share his wisdom? Today there are very few people left in Brantford. The Palace Chief-of-the-Woods is in ruins. The saying *De Dwa Yea Nah* (Come join us!), faded and neglected, is covered with dust and mud. They no longer sit under “the tree of peace” to hear stories passed from one generation to another. They no longer organize snow serpent contests, the fabulous Pow Wow and feasts of bannock, fried bread, and corn soup. But two things remain unchanged: the democratic dialogue for every decision, and women’s rights. Eagle Boy gathers the commentaries, gives personal advice, counts the votes discreetly, then acts, respecting the consensus. He advises everyone to plant alphabets, from Brantford to the Niagara Valley. “It’s necessary, “ he adds, “for everyone to abandon his travels and come back to cultivate his garden.”

“Yes!” Moki says calmly. “We must reject prison, death. We have to fight to keep, at any cost, our identity, shared with whites and peoples of all races on this continent. We must plant flower beds in the form of letters of the alphabet: Inuktituk, Latin, Cyrillic, Arab, Hebrew, Chinese, Thai... and we’ll design them on the model of the immense red tulip maple leaf in High Park, Toronto, each bed contoured as one of the Provincial flowers of this Country. Around the maple leaf will quietly grow the trillium, the fleur de lys... and all the flowers crystallizing the lands where they are honored. Our garden will be vast as the country, large as the world. Everyone will work there according to his talents.”

Since that day, the Tribe began to grow on the fertile land, pastures and grazing-grounds, mixed forests, pine forests, transitional forests, the tundra, the barren land, snow fields and glaciers.... The verbal terrain is also cultivated in foreign languages extending to new fields of vision. Moki is conscious he is going against the stream of xenophobia and financial rhetoric: the Dollar. It, like the Euro, is haunted by the idea of “All Powerful,” seeking to rule all the markets.

At harvest time, on Saturdays, the St. Lawrence Market welcomes the fruit of the fields, fresh food, homemade, and crafts. Only books pale before the films made in Toronto studios: Police procedurals, and other American series made in Canada. It’s cheaper! This sleazy commerce nailed the whole country, unable to market anything without the authorization of Uncle Sam, south of the border. Nowhere else but here does the South rule. The Europeans are poisoned, those accustomed to the obedience of their former colonies. Their South, baptized as a fallen land, still serves as the home of a new slavery, lyrically named “subcontracting.”

Now, with antenna-like deformation, I slip on the terrain of world problems. Earthquakes occur whose cracks cover the planet. Sometimes they mingle with my stony vibrations.

*Thus Speaks the CN Tower*

My antenna registers on its ladder – which isn't the Richter Scale – the slightest tremors, and in any event, I can't remain indifferent. Moreover, what can they do to a stone which receives everything, becomes aware of world affairs, and begins to “disobey” the laws laid out by the founding fathers of the Nation? What punishment would they inflict on me if I proposed supplying medicine to sick Iraqis, those legitimate sons and daughters who gave birth to the Biblical Tower of Babel, or sending surplus food immediately to the Africans dying by the millions of famine every day?

Have I therefore become subversive in my country with its endless fight against obesity: “*To eat less can prolong one's life span*”? Nevertheless, in the Banana Republics, there are so many children who don't even eat bananas! Alas, my “subversion” is reduced to an antenna voice of a tower anchored between earth and sky. But Moki's is of a totally different order. He wants to upset the customs and give dignity back to the marginalized of all time. Then he is called a leftist! – The word Communist is no longer in fashion – , of rebel or outlaw. But I think that the expression dedicated to a stillborn revolution in the Belle Province, “tranquil agitator,” suits him best!

The RCMP has just declared Moki Deloon guilty of this anomalous thought, first, for his “revolutionary ideas,” then for setting into practice a “pernicious” idealism. The Brantford project made a hit with the whole Niagara region which is distinguished for the production of the best wine in the country: Ice wine. This wine is even appreciated by the best French vintners, and succeeded thanks especially to the know-how of the Italian community which cultivates its vineyards passionately. All the same, it's an excellent Canadian product.

Moki is arrested on my birthday, June 26, for an attack on the security of the State. But in reality, he only altered the mindset

of his tribe within the frame of the reservation. Such a dangerous initiative could have spun out of control with repercussions especially on the sons and grandsons of the inventors of bark canoes. This mode of transportation facilitated the exploration and development of Canada, as well as the snowshoe. *“These autochtones want to modify progress. They dare to seize the gains of the Masters and traffic in souls without using state-of-the-art technology. It isn’t even cloning! But what do they take themselves for?”...*

Moki is thrown into prison in Toronto without even the formality of a trial. I won’t report to you the little item, hardly visible, published by that daily ton of paper, the *Toronto Star*. The *Globe and Mail* didn’t even mention it. This so-called intellectual newspaper doesn’t lower itself to report stories about riff-raff. As for the official version of the Chief of Police (just for the record), it says: “We have arrested Moki Deloon for having retained tourists by force to whom native Canadian exploiters wanted to give a more complete image of the Native experience. Moki kept them one complete day in place of the traditional two-hour visit, which shows only the surface of things. We insist on the Reserve being a pilgrimage site, showing our history in its totality.”

I am not convinced by this point of view. The commissioner, a conscientious recorder, is going to interrogate Moki during the weeks following his imprisonment. I’m sparing you the superfluous details which add nothing except a number of pages.

“Your people reproach us for not opening the doors of tourism to the Reserve. And you find the means to strike and hurt an important tourist. Why?”

“That’s not what happened.”

“You’re not going to deny the reasons for your arrest.”

“I deny nothing. I’m saying that your version of things differs from mine.”

“Do you deny that the tourists visited the house of the Mohawk poet Pauline Johnson, I mean the Chiefswood Museum of the Woodland Cultural Centre? Witnesses testify that they even tasted soup made of beaver tails and moose nose in the Cafeteria. And Madame Berta Skye, in charge of the kitchen, explained to them that moose nose is a delicacy, as caviar is for white people: ‘Moose nose is really good. All you have to do is boil the hell out of it.’ Leaving the parking lot, Mr. Smith, who was heading for the nearby field to take a photo, was suddenly harassed and beaten.”

“In fact no one kept the tourists from completing their tour just as they wished. But Mr. Smith insisted on invading my garden. I warned him. He refused to listen, insisting he had read the books of Karl May, ‘a famous nineteenth-century scholar and German novelist who never traveled in North America, and who is the principal creator of the notion of the Noble Savage.’ Mr. Smith insisted on ‘photographing us in the interior,’ he said. It’s only at that moment that I tried to dissuade him gently. He was the first to create a mess. He was convinced he had one of these savages in front of him... ”

“You’re too sensitive. You’re accusing him of things he had no intention of doing. Admit that you kept him from crossing the barrier, even if it was only a matter of taking a photo.”

“But the barrier was clearly signed, ‘*No Trespassing.*’ That couldn’t be any clearer, could it?”

“Yes. But you must then have something to hide.”

“My secret garden.”

“Now we’re getting it. Then, tell me what you’re making behind the barrier. You’re growing marijuana, is that it?”

“No, we’re making atom bombs! You haven’t seen the factories?”

“That’s enough. Irony won’t get you out of this fix. What is this secret?”

“Nothing. Flowers, vegetables, fruit. Beds of different flowers in the shape of letters. Strange languages in green pictograms. The logic of the Chinese ideogram in tomatoes. The loose curves of Arabic in green beans. The flowery angulars of Hebrew in carrots. The arabesque straddles another arabesque in Cyrillic or in Thai.”

“Either you’re nuts, or you’re feeding me bullshit.”

“Neither one nor the other! But I understand that you’re lost. What if I said to you that we’re planting alphabets in flowered greenery for the love of the earth? What would you say?”

“I’d say it’s a crazy idea... of primitive people. And that I don’t understand. But I would add, ‘*You’ve gone bananas!*’”

“Almost nuts, you mean! No. We supply the labor to cultivate the land with all the languages of the planet because we want to read it like an open book. It amazes you that we take the earth for a book? Nevertheless, we respect everything it shows to us. Everything that grows in her. You know she contains secret riches. But you must still cultivate the land and know how to extract them. Just like a book: first, you must follow the furrows of her sentences, turn the words over in every direction, while all the time sowing our multiple and varied ways of reading. With long pauses to ripen the fruit while making us fly towards other dreams. With religious silences to let the words ferment in us, then savor their nectar at the time we choose.”

“In fact, we are certainly saying that there is a language of flowers: roses for love, chrysanthemums for morning. Pull petals from the daisy to know how much s/he loves us. But from that, to making the earth speak like a book, there is a cursed abyss. And you want to take me in a boat into this marshy abyss!”

“The garden offers an inexhaustible variety of words, and has an insatiable thirst to be read. When you walk around it, you want to fall into ecstasies on a bed of plump hydrangeas, of col-

orful tulips, of blooming jonquils.... And since during the winter the earth is blessed with glacial cold, our children build towers of snowmen, in letters making them dream. Then they initiate themselves by decoding the world underneath their noses. They have no need to import all these languages of love, for they are already planted in our towns, our suburbs, our countryside.”

“My God! Where did you find all these stories? You could have been considered a hero after climbing the CN Tower. You could have been entered in the Guinness Book of Records, in *Who’s Who*, but no, you turn out to be a scoundrel, a shit disturber of the public order... what? A criminal in police hands. And who, on top of all that, is reactionary. You don’t even know that we are already in the information age, and you are doing everything to return us to the Stone Age.”

“Don’t kid yourself. I’m computer literate, doubtless more than you are. We only want to progress not according to a virtual reality network, but according to the cycle of the seasons and the rhythm of the earth. The whole notion of work is in the process of change. We are only the advance guard, preparing ourselves. I’ll explain to you: you can no longer live the life of a maintenance worker who becomes Minister. As you will no longer be interested in books which are an exact copy of computer, television, and movie screens...

Careers will no longer be punctuated with “ascending movements” but “lateral.” That’s why we teach our children to think time like our ancestors, in other words, in a circle and not a straight line. Occidental linearity is outmoded, and we don’t cultivate carrots and turnips in rows of onions, but in a circle giving the straight line flexibility, permitting it to move 360 degrees. It’s the same for this crazy idea of Descartes, to invent ‘a universal language very easy to learn, pronounce and write.’ And what would become of the compost of regional languages?



Dead and buried? Now, according to us, we would like to revive them by imposing them on the local market which refuses to give up its colors.”

“My word, you’re an idealist! And it seems to me that you’re swimming against the current. You’re forgetting reality: since the oil scare of 1973, we are all heading towards the globalization of commercial exchanges. To remain competitive, businesses have had to reduce their manpower...”

“That’s why I’m telling you it’s better to earn a living some other way. Workers will be more and more autonomous, seasonal, part-time... You’ll see, you must read the earth some other way....”

“But who taught you this way of thinking? You’ve doubtless been influenced by the Hippies of the ‘60s? Your father’s generation? And you still expect to revive this attempted revolution which failed miserably? As for the march of time to satisfy consumer society, you can’t stop its drift, its flight, or its speed. It’s in the nature of things.”

“And what do you do with progress?”

“I only push my tribe towards it, but I don’t want to follow any model, except the one with which the Moose-Spirit inspires me. No longer to leave this extraordinary metamorphosis in the hands of our governing powers. To participate wholeheartedly in the specific context of my tribe, my province, my country, my planet. In that order and not the opposite.”

“You said ‘the Spirit... what? Moose?...”

The writer-commissioner seems to appreciate this dialogue. Never had he thought for a moment that this Amerindian, arrested for “blows and wounds to a third party,” would answer him blow by blow, nor give him any change for his payment. Moki revealed himself as the bearer of a problematic project,

difficult to understand, but “you must give him a chance.” Therefore, he will try to extricate him from prison.

This commissioner of Maurician origin believes, himself, in the spirits of nature. However, he is ignorant of the fact that it’s the Moose-Spirit which inspires this likable young man and infuses him with its visions. A voice emerging from the depths of the great forests, stones lifted in solitude to mark the passage of time, the Moose-Spirit gives him courage and perseverance to reach the conclusion of his projects. It is also he who whispers to Moki the secret of the multiple tongues and alphabets which don’t forget their origins.

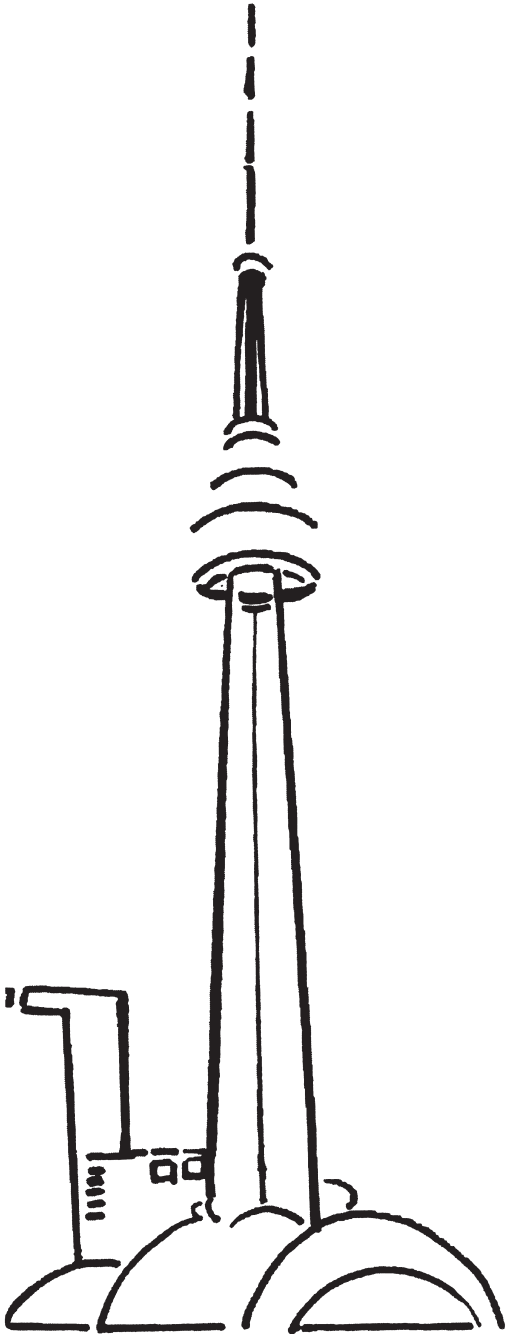
Emerging from prison, Moki carries his “revolution” to the very heart of the Queen City. But he knows he has a hard row to hoe. He comes back to his mother. In a little enclave on Spadina, north of Bloor, Twylla chose to establish her general headquarters. Zinal fixed up a corner of the basement she calls “my studio” where she spends the day sculpting soapstone. She speaks of it passionately to her son:

“The laws of nature have been spoiled. The world is going crazy. We must rebuild our country at the level of the Tower; if not, we will never be able to raise ourselves. That’s why our love is guided not by heavenly intervention, but by the foam of days, which the Moose-Spirit lifts to the summit of the Tower, vibrating in every pebble. And makes our leaden feet move.”

“Thus you recommend riding on the foam like the Tower on the clouds passing overhead. In reverse and against the current?”

“Yes! But try to resolve the waves’ foam by diluting insolent questions. Take the Tower as an example. It turns aside the angry clouds by reconciling day and night with her infinite finger. Son, know that in this infinite cycle, twilight prepares the dawn.”





**21**

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*T*ouch stone, touch Tower, I am the identity card of the Queen City. In a turn of the hand, I have already lived a quarter century. I will stumble in the new. Dead for one year, I will be resuscitated the following. The trip begins from the instant where I am. Like any quest. Wherever we find ourselves, that is where we are. But will I exist if my story isn't told now? In the final analysis, what is a tower that inspires neither legends, nor tales, nor even the gossip of vicious tongues?

Will they speak of me when I reach my first century? What will later generations say? Will they be at the reunion? And what will they think of my vibrations that celebrated the liberation of all colors in a cloudy sky? I nonetheless gave homage to the men and women who inspired me. I was neither forward nor seductive, nor flirtatious, so that you will bend over my body delivered to lacerating cold. I had a bull's-eye at my summit, near my antennae, that I directed to different quarters of the city. They wanted me to be systematic and logical, sequential and well regulated, but it turned out otherwise. Human beings furrowed me, and I discovered lyrical outbursts. At the urging of fate, confused pictures were born from the artist's brush of my destiny. Towards the end of my chaotic journey, I had the luck to feel the *Moose-Eye* wander in me, bursting my stony sensations and pulsating in every pore of my grainy skin.

It's true that when he moves across my stem, from one part to another of my gigantic stature, he fails to dissect musculature, to capture a character trait, to illuminate the gyrating bulb. In short, he avoids stuffing me with superfluous details. I will come back to these holes, these gaps, these omissions that I won't put on the back of the Moose-Spirit. He is not in any event the Supreme God who sees everything, hears everything, judges everything. The Moose is a source of inspiration, a con-

stant fresh breath of tolerance. A way of being proletarian and republican. His spirit doesn't represent any monotheistic faith. Or any charlatanism of sects nestled in the Sun Temple and destroying life.

What white nights and black days! What efforts and perspiration! Just to save their ceaseless flow of transitory information passing through me. For those who don't fear the void, I stripped myself naked, down to my central nervous system and my glass bridge. In this bird's-eye view, I spread myself, living flesh, attentive to the past, the present, the future, without complaisance. For it's a question of setting forth all my substantive concerns as the mediatrix of this end of century. I let the rocky phrases flow in their raw state, readjusting here and there the order of what emerges from my viscera. Like a water colorist who organizes the fulls and empties to weave his spider web in multiple leaden threads....

But lift your head just a little, and you will see the base of my Bulb, my observation platform with its clear grey threads arranged in concentric circles. In the final analysis, you can say that I am inexcusably naïve, a child newly emerged from the verbal limb of a rocky star. But, perhaps, because I am among the minority, I have also borrowed the French language. That's how I have just received a house warning from Madame Lebreton. Obsessed with dictionaries in Voltaire's language, she monitors the infractions of every "French speaker." She writes me:

*Dear CN Tower,*

*I have just learned from my son Symphorien your stylistic awkwardness, your uncontrollable errors where you wring the neck of the majestic rhythms of our prestigious language. The language of diplomacy and of glory that you massacre shamelessly! Frankly, I can't resist the temptation of first correcting everything*

## *Thus Speaks the CN Tower*

*emerging from under your French hat, then addressing this letter to you which will be my last. Regard it as said.*

*My son has just been released from the asylum after unbelievable efforts on my part. And that is all your fault. You have so bewitched him that he can no longer bear to live without your presence. I don't know how you succeeded in getting him into your power. You have besieged his soul. He thinks only of you and of the little billets doux he never stops composing for you. Declarations of love which drive me crazy. It's true that you transformed him into a poet, although he had no gift for this sort of "intellectual flatulence." Please excuse my description of this marvelous poetic genre: the quintessence of every language or, if you prefer, the best of a language carried to the highest degree of incandescence. Far from these mixages you concoct, filling our ears with the news that you have reached the sky. Or rather that your antennae make holes in this sky no matter what the weather. But I digress. My son spent his life writing to you in his language of "dissolute poet." You seem to insinuate that he is insincere, refusing to respond to his desperate appeals. His almost surrealistic messages, written to court you, remain dead letters. Until now, you have succeeded only in making him retreat into himself and suffer. It's time you rewarded him a little for his anguish. I don't ask you to make him "a scribbling clerk"; he would only accent your flaws, since he is unable to penetrate your stony cogitations. Moreover, neither is he able to imitate your obscure and complex style. I also know that if you have included him in your intimate circle, it is because he spends all his time wandering in your precincts. A tiny part of the world gravitates in your heart. But don't depend on that! Fortunately, he will have his mother to make up for this linguistic debacle and this terrible love story. But nevertheless you can improve his state by offering him a "superb compensation." I suggest having him climb to your*



benevolent Head. The title of P.D.G. of the CN Tower will fit him like a glove. Don't forget, I beg of you, to mention in your correspondence the order of the day, trial and other... that it is I who breathed the idea to him.

That being said, I wouldn't like to let this occasion pass without drawing your attention to the corrections I have made on your "Disinformation Bulletins." All filled with mistakes of every kind, turns of phrase not at all French, lexical and semantic improprieties, metaphorical confusion... and what more can I say? Moreover, I ought to have used the term re-writing instead of correction. Let me remind you that this setting into correct French form belongs to me since the Oath of Strasbourg, and I'm not going to let you mistreat it as you are doing. In complete revolt, I am watching over it as I watch over Symphorien. Excuse the repetitiveness. I insist on this constant state of linguistic vigilance which keeps me from shutting my eyes to your juggling, your arabesques, your unhealthy lucubrations on my patrimony...

As well, I am informing you that I have just cleaned the linguistic face of your chapter, newly born, and brushed its tongue, as you do your teeth every day, washed his behind, powdered his armpits and inside thighs with talc. In summary, I washed and diapered it like my son. Which means that you can produce absolutely nothing without me, and my benevolent intervention. In a word, you are nothing without my support and my person. Your portrait wouldn't even exist if I hadn't redesigned it with my professional skills. I'm not vain enough to remind you of the order in which I molded you. This "logos" which grasps your stature must bear my name. I am the author of it. I must then receive the royalties like the good co-author that I am. I make the concession of sharing the love you will give my son in future. However, don't forget, when the time comes, my share of the royalties.

I don't say to you "with the hope..." (a sacred formula which

*revolts me, even in our marvelous language), but rather, I order you to take my advice for everything stated above. I would no longer wish to give you my news, nor to hold the reins in your linguistic wanderings.*

I awaken from a nightmare after one of these black days, one of these white nights. A completely secondary character, created by my own hands, has just revealed herself in all the glory of her egoism, her chauvinism, her meanness. Frenetic. Not to say schizoid, with my stony words drunk to the last drop. And now she spits in my face, tries to alienate me from my most intimate discourse. Does she want to make me as disturbed as herself, so that subject-creator and object-created are on an equal footing? Does she want to send back to me the image of my limits to delight herself with my mistakes? Does she want to remind me of the order of her Grammar to reaffirm her control over me? Does she count on my weaknesses to end my employment and place her son for whom I have, in spite of everything, much sympathy? Even if I don't know when he is lucid or when he is raving, his ambiguity seems to me a source of poetry. I thus pardon his vacillation between hatred and love. In a sense, Symphorien is at least coherent towards me, his protecting mother.

The height of insolence! At the very moment when we attend the burial of the cold war in Paris (signed by the great leaders of Europe, Russia, and America), Madame Lebreton – again – sends me a declaration of war in good and correct form. I confess that I appreciate neither her humor, nor the tone of her plea. I feel that she is very sure and proud of herself. Knowing she has the upper hand in this battle I never dreamed of – and which is far from being equal – she maps her strategy patiently and diligently, arms herself with all her Grands Roberts and Petits Larousses, and begins to dissect me. Like a surgeon of the Sun King, she crushes me with all her classical power, despises my own meta-

phors, even if they are tough. It's enough to throw a punch here and there to claim victory. And I, incurably naïve, I continue to conduct my twenty-four children towards the august sacrifice on the altar of her whims.

The more I try to probe the reasons for this hostility, the more I become sick. The more I invoke the Moose-Spirit, the more I think I guess the path Madame Lebreton and her language have traced for me. However, irreverent, and loving multiplicity, I feel an ethereal pleasure in separating the two. At present, I realize that from the beginning of these writings, I have committed two fundamental errors: One, to have chosen the language of Voltaire and, the other, not to have yoked myself like a good disciple to his purity, his "spirit of logic and clarity." You will agree that it's a question of a canned cliché which hasn't been relevant for centuries! What happens to those who show a "good heart" or, rather, a weakness for the weak? What do you think happens to them? Crucifixion. Fortunately, we aren't yet at that stage. All the more so that I don't take myself for Mary.

I confess, however, that I have followed my natural propensity for liberty so characteristic of the century of light. And because I am of my time I have preferred to be on the alert for the voices of my immediate terrain, in order to take flight for distant lands. But Madame Lebreton continues to scream: "We must cleanse our language that these foreigners who are thirsty for Racinian words keep massacring."

Perhaps I should have kept quiet? Madame Lebreton would be deprived of the immense joy, of the throbbing pleasure uniquely reserved for those who give birth, of subjugating me with all her authority of a native-born Frenchwoman. Of a good Breton background ashamed of its *inram*, her navigation has no other language, it only lifts the veil by means of the French of France. Now she showed her aversion so clearly to my way of traveling in

the shady ambiguity of words, beings and things that I ended up doubting my storytelling talents. Not only as far as expression is concerned, but especially the omissions, the forgetfulness, the errors and the gaps... It's true that, throughout this whole tale, I have only rarely had Marc Durocher and Marcel-Marie Duboucher intervene in the fire of action. I didn't want either to fall into irrelevance, nor to sugarcoat the pill and make you swallow it with a constricted throat or esophagus... Your disappearance would have weighed on my stony conscience like an eternal ink cloud blocking the circulation of information.

I have therefore neglected the Québec translator and the gay Franco-Ontarian ticket-seller who, like warring brothers, followed their inclinations without too much commotion. They led a "flat" life. One of them continues to beat his wife to impose on her his orders of an "antifeminist soldier," the other one, a cautious pedophile, enjoys the forbidden fruit which doesn't grow on trees. Having come of age, he looks for a ring for his finger and asks another gay man's hand in marriage. Once the act and the ceremony are over, he assumes all the prerogatives of a couple offered by the provincial and federal governments, in addition to the grants reserved for the study of deviant behavior in heterosexual couples. An astonishing fact, it seems the gays perform their conjugal duties in an exemplary manner! I have just surprised the two employees in the toilet, engaging in a very surprising conversation:

"Did you buy black stucco to cover your part of the thread to roll around the stairs?" Marc asks. "Don't leave any traces. I hope that you wore gloves."

"Chriss," replies Marcel-Marie angrily, "you take me for an asshole? You think I'm going to screw up our plan! I too want Québec to separate. We must make a hole here, in this shitty tower, before revolutionizing the *Belle Province!*"

“Yes, if one blows the brains out of these WASP stairs, maybe they would understand at last that we don’t want to see them near us! And you, your origins are certainly Québécois. You will come to live there. The *Belle Province* will welcome you with open arms.”

“Holy Mother of God! I want to remain here, wasn’t I born in Sturgeon Falls?”

“Yes, but we need you. Your vote. You haven’t heard the Premier snivel after his referendum: ‘We lost because of money and ethnic votes, this time, but we will return to the attack soon.’ But believe me, Marcel-Marie, we are going to succeed bit by bit.”

“Fuck the ethnic vote! These black faces forget that we are the White Negroes of America! That France abandoned us, since that ass the Sun King, even if we continue to play footsie with that wicked stepmother!”

“That’s not what matters. It’s that the cursed English have conquered, colonized, exploited us.... We will take our revenge, and we will conquer by whatever means necessary.”

The conversation stopped there. Visitors invaded the toilets. The two brothers-in-arms distrust any listening ears. They therefore close up like two oysters, so no pearl of their plan can escape. Thus, they are confident that all the suspicion will light upon poor Symphorien. After all, he can be sacrificed.

The explosion took place on a Sunday afternoon. A large section of the emergency staircase blew up. An explosion of a few kilos of plastic only caused material damage. They wanted to destroy me, but they only succeeded in twisting my iron elements.

I realize that I didn’t foresee this small catastrophe, and I thank you for the investigation and its results. For it suffices to tell you that we will never find the perpetrators. For lack of concrete evidence, Symphorien was set free. This incident com-

pletely disturbed me. But it also led me to change my view as to the distinct society, Québec separation and everything that represents.

As I am a new arrival on the Toronto scene, I worked up the history of my city and, more particularly, its *discovery* – others says its “colonization” – by French missionaries. These “soldiers of God” and “soldiers of the King” combined Christian proselytizing, fur and gun trading, and adventure. The first colonizers exploited the rivalries between Hurons (on the French side) and Iroquois (on the English side). They broke their backs inciting, “poisoning” the Autochtones. From love of extermination. At that period, no one had yet discovered the adjective “ethnic.” Long before the arrival of Europeans, the Amerindians practiced the portage of the Humber River, an excellent passage between Georgian Bay and Lake Ontario. The French did the same to take charge of the “portage of Toronto.” Thus, they prevented the Indians, who were the real founders of the communication route, from going to sell their furs to the English who were established in Albany, on the other side of the lake. From this trading post, and from the “royal store of Toronto,” our Metropolis was born in 1720.

Taking charge of the territory necessitated the construction of three Forts: Baby Point (its name today) conceived as a forward post to Fort Niagara and Rouillé (from the name of Antoine-Louis Rouillé, Minister of the Sea and the Colonies). This third Fort marks simultaneously the acme and the end of the French colony. The word “colony” still makes me cringe with shame. It conjures up the violent conquests, the subjection and exploitation of a people whose own territory was expropriated. That revolts me. I want to fly to their aid. But I am only a gamine born, nailed to the soil, after a delay of three centuries. Today I don't deny ancestors like Jean-Baptiste Rousseaux. Initiated in the fur trade and the

Amerindian languages by his father, Jean-Bonaventure, Jean-Baptiste, called Saint-Jean, married the adopted daughter of the Loyalist Iroquois chief Joseph Brant, which facilitated relations with the Autochtones. An interpreter for Indian Affairs, in 1793 he greeted the first Lieutenant Governor of Upper Canada, John Graves Simcoe and his family.

I don't forget, either, other celebrities of the period who left their mark on the Queen City. Laurent Quetton Saint-George left France with forty-four other Frenchmen because of the Revolution. He created an import-export company and threw himself into sales and real estate, from New York and London, without going through Montréal. He was the one to build the first brick house in York, at the corner of King and Frederick Streets. As for Jacques Baby, a famous personage of this period (1763–1833), the historians insist that “he was Francophone in origin, born in Québec,” who was part of the Family Compact. A fervent Catholic and Inspector General of Upper Canada, he contributed “to the building in 1822 of the first site of the Catholic faith in Toronto, St. Paul’s Church.” The list of famous people is very long....

My relations with the French facts of our life and of our Province are beyond question. I could have cited more prestigious names from the English and American colony. But I have highlighted the French because I have been familiar with their language for centuries. There is no distance between it and the cornerstone of my foundation. Flesh links us, sometimes. Makes me burst into tears, but sometimes into laughter. I still marvel at this key to the garden which opens a few sophisticated rainbows to me and enables me to understand the language of birds. But I realize it's too late to march to the rear. I should have learned more languages than I possess to put me at ease, when the opportunity arrives, in the skin of other rainbows.

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I could have told my tale in the globalizing language, in our day taking over the media, the markets. But other languages fling themselves at me like wild waves: Swahili, Italian, Spanish, Arabic, Yoruba, Hebrew, Chinese, Russian, and countless others. Too late... the game is over. And this is not the moment to change linguistic baggage in the midst of the voyage. This regret isn't due to the fact that the Eiffel Tower mocks my existence so well that she doesn't recognize me, or that she looks at me from her low but "prestigious" point of view. She knows that my height rests on historical refuse. Does she forget that a quarter of a century counts for a lot in the history of Canada, which has only existed for three centuries? Of course, before the European conquest, there was only wind and snow! It's little enough light for the eyes of an Eiffel Tower, more than a century old, ensconced on a history fulminating back to the Middle Ages.

What the Parisian Tower doesn't say is that the Gauls fought like a rustic, barbaric people while the Africans, five thousand years before Jesus Christ, were radiating a more civilized civilization than that of France today. For their own part, the Indians, "noble savages," lived in peace with a nature that the Whites couldn't have endured. The Chinese, still more advanced than the Europeans, invented everything which is of use to us today and probably tomorrow. Astrology, astronomy, medicine, algebra, mysticism, exegesis, and other social and humane sciences of the Greeks and the Arabs have shaped my linguistic stones. Alas, fumbling in the heap, I chose the wrong number. Like a horse race where you bet on a very beautiful horse which comes in dead last.

I wanted to finish my narrative with beauty, but now it's all turning to vinegar. With respect, Madame Lebreton, for your "bad joke"! One day, you would say I lack a sense of humor! It's true, the slightest angry word scratches my stony sensibili-



ity. It's enough that they raise their voices against me because of my propensity for getting their backs up. But have you forgotten that, despite appearances, I am human in nature? Too human, perhaps! This anecdote I'm dying to recount will prove it to you. It's a slice of life which took place in the '80s in the dead centre of Paris:

On the occasion of a Salon du Livre in the Queen City, the Minister of Culture invited a few francophone authors to participate in workshops, conferences, book sales, etc.... At a dinner offered in their honor, this same Minister insisted on making a long speech to demonstrate how much he appreciated the work of these good Francophone citizens:

*"And you know, Ladies and Gentlemen, that you represent the finest flowers of Francophone cultures all over the world. You honor the French language because you are its citizens. Your writings reveal the extent to which you love your language, and we are grateful to you for it. By your works, you open doors on other peoples, other cultures, other civilizations.... That is the dialogue of cultures established thanks to your works."*

The foreign listeners present designated a great Congolese novelist and dramatist, since deceased, to make a speech and thank the Minister:

*"I thank you infinitely, Monsieur le Ministre, for your invitation and this delicious dinner that we appreciated very much. I especially thank you for having promoted us to the rank of Francophone citizens, but French customs and police only let me cross the border with great difficulty. Nevertheless my papers were in order. You must furnish us with passports which would permit us to return and to circulate freely without being harassed in your country. If we are Francophone citizens, we must have all the rights, duties, and responsibilities of a full citizen of France.*

*Allow me to inform you that in my country, I have read Mon-*

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*taigne, Rabelais, Racine and Molière, Voltaire and Diderot, Balzac and Flaubert, Stendhal and Zola... and I have encountered Men. I came to France and I haven't encountered men."*

There was prolonged applause for this flame of the "dialogue of the cultures," quickly extinguished by the icy water of realism and the snowflakes of disillusionment!

A truce on jokes in bitter sauce. I can do nothing about it. I feel saddened by everything happening to me in this last effort. The end of my tale approaches and I believe I have taken the wrong turn, focusing on this descent into hell, on the wounding of my stony body and my Tower soul. I threw myself into this scribbling adventure in my role as talking stone. That may seem strange, but I would say to you that I was constructed hearing the wind beating against rocks, the tempests sweeping my Tower-phallus, the womb of Skydome, the giant breast of Roy Thomson Hall. They married the three of us: a limitless vision. Muscles and sports to develop bodily strength. And Music with the best acoustics for symphony, choir, and other performances. We don't form a couple in the traditional sense of the word, but a trio. Which distinguishes without displeasing. And I, I orchestrate this concert in the desert of words. For this reason, I said to you that I am heading towards silence. So that my unreality put into words becomes a reality, and palpable as stone. Silence to cut and gouge out. Like Twylla's sculptures emerging from daily life. A mother and her child on her back. In place of the stocky solitary woman, she styles her as svelte and resolute. A kind of granite tower with human aspects.

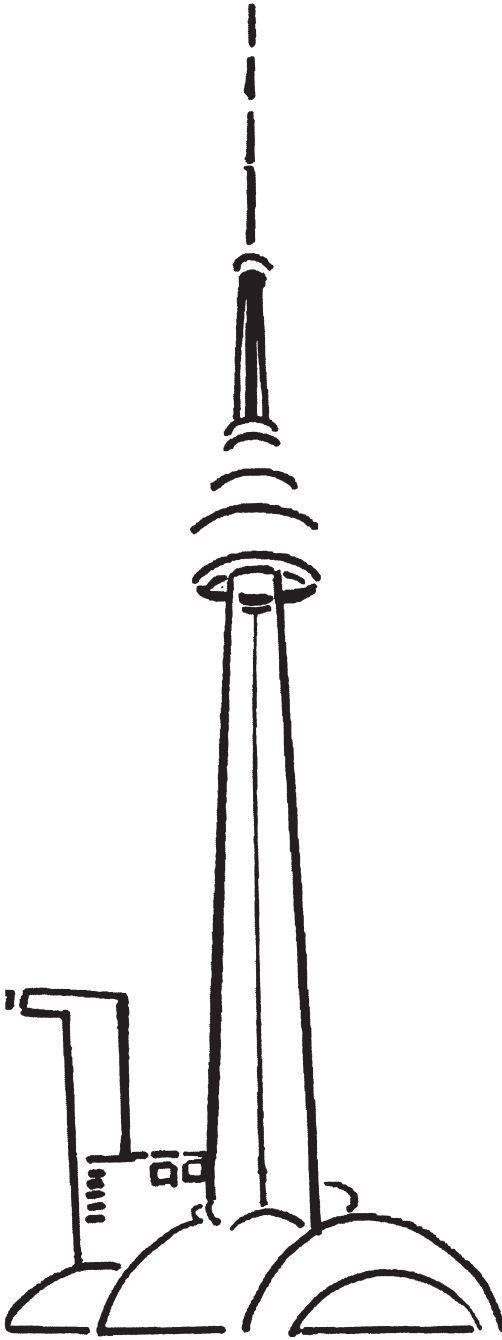
A figure showing her humanity. More scenic when she emerges from her hands. Like her, I fight with the invisible and the unforeseen. I transform them with my roots in the past. Not as a moribund worshipper of the past, but as a futurist not giving in to horror. Thus ferocious bears and trained seals are subjects of

dreams in the Inuit soap sculptures. Like the characters I have launched. We gravitate from mystery to mystery, gathering beauty from them. All the while knowing that our art is neither worldly, nor verbose, nor dogmatic, nor sibylline. In the green soapstone is cut the hope of the woman who sings her most intimate secrets to the world. The stone represents the sacred temple expressing the forbidden. Striped granite takes up the challenge and denounces, heart and soul, the inegalitarian night lodging in this two-faced world. Marbled granite opens the space of the fractured white where a face is exposed, turning its head towards a past which escapes it... while the fish it carries by the right ear encourages him to transgress taboos and interdictions. The granite spotted with hematite, mica, or salluit furnishes the dense matter at the heart of the majority of my characters. All of them, like a chorus, each in his own voice, report not only where they come from, but also where they go.

I leave aside the black or grey soapstone, unctuous or sweet as talc, ivory, caribou wood, curved whalebone... because they are explosions of matter that the Autochtone artists know better how to animate than I do. I am only stones held up by concrete. My words are rougher than those of the Amerindian engravers and sculptors. They are the only ones to put their knowledge to the service of art, to extract from stone our most authentic, original speech, to furnish the most valuable identity card of our Canadian specificity. I am not the only one to say so. Journals and books also: "A free, non-functional art which, in the eyes of the world at large, rapidly became the emblematic and symbolic mark, the *look* of Canada."







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*E*ven stone risks fragmentation. Temporary in its substance and its soul, it only reveals its truth when it is first cut, worked, according to its natural form, and then, by the hand transmitting to it supernatural beauty. This truth in perpetual construction. It is temporary and partial, and can only be understood in ambiguity and not transparency. It's the same with the truth of language. It is incrustated between words, in the silences sown between the trees of speech.

Marc and Marcel-Marie did well to resort to violence, reminding me of their presence. Neglected ticket-seller and translator, forgotten by the Tower of the Queen City, myself, one became, simultaneously, surly like a moist Roquefort, and frustrated like Swiss cheese with a thousand holes, and the other agitator no longer knows where to turn. So that one can spread his outdated Marxist theories, while the other continues, hammer and scythe in hand, to flood the world surrounding him with slogans from another time. I underestimated his strength. The proof is that these enemy-brothers united to blow me up from inside. What an ability to camouflage this thread of discord between these evil players and my living flesh! This thread serves as a tie between these two other threads of the founding fathers who perform sabotage according to all the rules of the art.

Marc and Marcel-Marie, commonly known as the three M's, applied to my inner wall this thread coated with stucco, so that the Frenchman, the recently arrived Symphorien, didn't notice anything. They don't like him because he placards arrogantly his "Parisian speech" whose turns of phrase and accent he handles so well. In effect, he shows scorn for their "regional dialect," and they show hatred for what he is. After all, *"the Tower is well anchored in English soil. And they're not going to move it from that spot! But this cursed Frenchman claims he wants to cor-*



*rect our accents and save us... after his ancestors abandoned us more than three centuries ago! Who does he take himself for?"*

I can't stand the systematic denigration of whoever doesn't possess the same point of view as himself. It's even intolerable when it occurs within the same "ethnic" group. The Bulgarian immigrants in Canada, for example, are divided into three factions: the former Communists, the converts to capitalism, and royalists locked in oubliettes, and emerging again into the light of day. Among these three factions, there are other regroupings by political, regional, familial affiliations. They all attack each other. Just for the love of showing that the "others" are wrong. Is it written into human nature to self-destruct?

In any case, the cut stone, erected into a tower, possesses the advantage of keeping its discords as intact as its coherence. Only time can make my face change, accentuate its wrinkles, powder it with dust, bury it or, perhaps, exhume it to make it shine again? In my case, as a tower, hope doesn't play out its drama between division and the ruling powers. It hides itself, calm and tranquil, within my structures until the moment when one tries to reanimate it through pure playful gratification. I don't know why I'm going on like this. Perhaps because I see the end in sight. My only consolation is that you will say, one day, *"at least the Tower will have lived its intimate life to the end. In the clarity of the crown. This bulb blossoming into a clear grey metal flower sapping it."*

But I digress. I'm returning to Symphorien because I feel a certain sympathy for this lost Frenchman. I say it without reservation. Even if he were a failed poet, he would like to make me sing at any cost. In every sense of the word, in all the known and unknown airs and, to top it all off, in his mother tongue for which, I have already told you, I feel an ever-growing weakness. During my progress through this tale, this "weak man" becomes

a sign of love tainted with ambiguity. I know, for example, that Symphorien will not easily betray me, even if I don't give him the position he deserves, in order not to reveal my exaggerated favoritism. I can't say as much for the three M's. They are only blindly following the path carved out by their ancestors, "soldiers of God" and "soldiers of the King" who, allying themselves with the Hurons, sent them as cannon fodder to kill the English and the Iroquois. In the most unspeakable rivalry of Founders, they made the English Province bleed white! It's this real and unique rivalry that the media sell every day, against all conscience.

In this transparent journal, I turn away, with all my heart, from every form of "politicking" which only survives on artifice and lies... I believe myself capable of clarifying the truth just a little. And it's not at this moment that I will muzzle my narration nor renounce this inner light.

Marc and Marcel-Marie have taken a very steep path. They left to establish themselves in Montréal, to raise the hopes of independence of the Belle Province. They think they have abandoned me in a swamp. Living in the Bonaventure Center, their headquarters, they began to divide up the City, bombard intellectuals and working class, writers and the illiterate, with position papers. Their aim is to convince even the "ethnics" who had voted "against them," to transform their no's into yes's. The trick is to make them believe that the country resembles a house, certainly distinguished but broken down, that we must destroy to construct anew, from zero. But they are careful to omit the fact that you must first erase the obsolete notion of the founding peoples, and give an equal chance to the third solitude – the recent wave of immigrants – to trace the plans, submit the architecture of this new dwelling to universal suffrage. For without the legitimate autochthonous population, nothing can

be built. It seems to me that this pattern of the road to take corresponds to the fashion in which I have been built. The hands of autochtones and hands from all over the world have built me.

In my workshop tongues of rock and language of crystal, steel words and gripping phrases of mortar are conjugated... No voice has been ignored! All are invited to take up the challenge. Of a height never attained. Instead of stifling the dissident voices, Toronto tries to harmonize them. In the manner of the Moose-Spirit. To the hardworking enterprise of the Jews the mercurial Italian is grafted. And at the heart of this warm chorale other voices are mingled: Portuguese, Spanish, Caribbean, Latin American... restoring Latinity to its first harmony. The latter, in all its dignity, dialogues with Anglo-Saxon which gets a grip on itself, instead of yielding to the temptation of the stratified neo-colonial dance, doesn't sell off any of its cardinal points, reintegrates the waves of pride. Thus it invents my body baptized as a Tower: Birth of an edenic forest where you can walk in complete safety and without hearing the slogan eating away at my guts: "Outside of Québec, no salvation!"

Here I am reciting from memory a few ideascapes of my Québec dissident who came first, and of the Franco-Ontarian who followed him:

*"To save our culture whatever it costs! And for that, we must regroup behind the Citadel of the Québec language with its ramparts resisting all contamination. We don't say French. Yesterday we were French Canadians. Today, we are Quebeckers. And proud of it. We have already received the agreement of the mother tongue: France has recognized us as a free and independent Nation.*

*It treats us diplomatically as a francophone culture entirely on its own territory. The Canadian Federal government pays the bill for this linguistic politics at a rate of 30% of the total budget*

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*of world francophony. It is true that France controls 60% of the slate, and that's completely in order. After all it's their language which is being propagated across five continents. The African countries account for the rest, that is, 10% they could never pay, in any way. Our cursed cousins who come to us don't take a hand in correcting our stony accent that burns their ears. And we don't need to take lessons from anyone.*

*We are going to comb the Province, convince the immigrants. Some are already on our side, convinced of our mission to make six million Québeckers, Anglophones, Allophones, and Francophones all mixed together, swallow our political culture as soon as possible. The task is far from being insurmountable since we are already five million French speakers, the majority native, well planted, with impeccable roots. We couldn't find the 'mots justes' to rally the whole population to our cause.*

*We will know how to find them. A loud proclamation of the magazine L'Actualité which says: 'the Quebeckers would like to live elsewhere, they dream of changing their country, unhappy with what they have, with what they are. Not the immigrants... Our dream is here.' Perhaps we will have to change our tactics? To deny what is said that the immigrants have contributed to put us on the 'map.' Find words which go straight to the heart of the voters. No more promises that can't be kept. No more ideals that can't be put into practice. Not to promise the CN Tower when you can't assemble the different part of the Québec puzzle, the 'Promised Land.' Sovereign and distinct it will be. Vive le Québec libre! Vive its coming Aura ! »*

It's in the order of things. I support their claims because I am for the inalienable right of peoples to self-determination. Knowing they insist on it, I don't oppose it. For even if I am of my time, I don't see why I don't think of the autochtones who possess four-fifths of the Québec territory. What will be their role

in such an alternative? How are they going to negotiate with the powers-that-be that are in the majority, in regard to voices, and minority rights, in regard to territory in square kilometers (as if the founding fathers don't recognize it either on paper or in reality). And especially what are the Francophone Ontarians supposed to become? They refuse to leave their Province. Are they, like "exquisite Cadavers," going to revive the spitting voices of a reconquered Québec?

With many little secrets, our two leaders momentarily seal their existence in adversity and without striking against Big Brother. As in the old Communist countries. Their combat brotherhood revives the virility of speech. Instead of seizing a gun, the 3 M's instead squeeze the enthusiasm of a speech they make to the converted, then to the newspaper *Le Devoir* and in e-mail across the planet.

For them, one single thing can't be either divided or shared: "sovereignty." How many lives have been lost in countless countries for a word? A single word arms and kills, disarms and restores life. I love the Belle Province, not because she keeps me in permanent competition, or in a state of jealousy furious at the subtle or gross strategies..., but because its fleur de lys has nothing to do with the trillium. The two, all the same, share the emanation of a perfume, a beauty, a style of life.

If many gave meaning to the world, why then can't a Tower, built with human hands, ask questions which move the world in one direction or another? Despite the violence and planetary destruction, I have always conjugated the simple tenses of sharing with my fellow citizens, from wherever they come, so that we can set forth together on the road to peace!

This "spirit of sharing" comes to me from the Moose-Spirit and the festivities of the Pow Wow. This Algonquin word moves my inner springs. It contains several meanings: Indian medi-

cine man, ceremony, social assembly, a discussion meeting, a gathering for commercial activities, a celebration of the cultural heritage... a fraternity including all the component parts of the First Nations. I will doubtless be accused of exaggerated favoritism on the side of the Indians. I will be taxed with sowing discord in the multicultural communities. On the contrary, I'm trying to reestablish equilibrium by reinstating the moose, the First Nations on the march. May justice be done! Moreover, what would the Maghreb be without its first people, the Amazigh, France without the Gauls, Africa without the Pharaohs, and Asia without the Chinese?...

Louise Durocher, Marc's wife, has just failed in her third attempt at suicide. Torn between a sadistic husband and a masochistic Irish lover, she couldn't reconcile the legitimate with the illicit, the French with the English. She mixed them at every opportunity, without frontiers or borders, overlapping, incoherent. The lover no longer knows how to take the divorce. Louise pursued him relentlessly, and found herself caught between two slogans, "Québec, the Belle Province," and "Ontario, Yours to Discover." Moreover, she is constantly harassed by her children who don't even give her the time to think, nor to write her novel. A woman who does everything and at any given moment, she doesn't know how to finish any project. Like a zombie, she moves like an extraterrestrial at home and in the street, more disturbed than Symphorien.

Eaten away by an exaggerated feeling of guilt, Louise has lost the True North which in her youth gave her identity and a sense of belonging. As a girl, she didn't show any forewarning of bad luck. Born French-Canadian, with a French-Canadian father and Irish-Canadian mother, she mastered the movement between these two reverse currents united by the adversity of time. But her double heritage of conquerors who made peace,

like Pierre Elliott Trudeau, couldn't forget ancient wounds.

Cloistered in her infernal binarity, Louise Durocher has no other choice than to take her own life. The field will be free for Marc and his feminine conquests. Isabella Street where there is no want of prostitutes. Louise doesn't know how to combat this overwhelming jealousy invading her, nor these wooden tongues burning her in the fire of renunciation. It never occurred to her to turn towards Twylla who, from her own experience, could have been of help. On the contrary, she turned towards this young Irishman with the red face who wears smoked sunglasses.

Louise fell in love with his orator's voice resonating with religion, with suave happiness. By way of an innate gourmandise, she made him delicious dishes which he disdainfully took pride in never finishing. Warming up her promises under the cover of sighs, Louise's heart, waltzing between the Quebecker and the Irishman, couldn't find a nest anywhere.

Like Louise, I too neither mold public opinion, nor intimate persuasive speech. During the fleeting time of this narration, I have lived the eternity of reconciling me to myself. But this forked tongue exists which you court and breathe at every utterance, every news bulletin, or that you hate the next minute. This *language-talisman* can assert no matter what, no matter how. One day this, tomorrow that. The day after tomorrow this and that. And the whole can be annulled by a turn of the wrist as if nothing had ever happened. Nevertheless, it claims to capture marvelously the ambiguous reality which never ceases to haunt us, to enchant us.

Then what will the outpourings of my rocky tongue become, giving birth to a spirit of togetherness in the intimacy of my inner world? The Moose-Spirit inhabiting me pours himself into the new sky of versatility. Being neither French, crying out, "The new Beaujolais has arrived!", nor American, boasting, "I am

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the strongest in the world,” nor Esperanto cultivating artifice, my language is torn between different language performances. From the original to those of recent immigrants. However, it remains cornered between two imperialists of the early days. The poet of marketability, the English-American who knew how to conquer the world without addressing its misery, despair, or expectations, and the French which denigrates without progress. Confined to attacking with invectives the American which becomes the world speech, it thinks it is strengthening its status and supremacy. I leave these two old enemies to tear each other’s hair out. What can happen to them when one is made of steel and the other of “pure wool” (old blood), according to the voices of howling Quebeckers? I turn towards those who keep me company in my travels.

Their plural voices don’t frighten me, for they are not as dispersed as God wishes in the first instance. They are neither more arrogant, nor more humiliating than his divine power. On the contrary, they follow, each in turn, the river of time to glorify it with so many victories in which He had no hand. In our era, each individual feels in his bones the terror of being dissolved into the magma of a shady reality. Only his language gives him a little control over his sickness. And every speech promising to stop this dissolution seems to me an act of solidarity and fraternity. It’s still necessary that visceral language rule.

I haven’t in any way limited myself to attaining the time of rediscovery. The organic order is immense. My heart is full of dreams which do not betray the desires of human beings, their loves, or their hopes of the moment. My rocky logorrhea announces them like the white seagull patrolling the grey sky to show its disdain of the sea. When the storm surges on the horizon, the waves will again seek the shore, washing it sonorously with piercing foam.



Already they no longer resist my crown, my cockpit sheltering the installations of radio telediffusion, the two observation decks, the night club Horizons, and the restaurant Top of Toronto. In addition to admiring the most magnificent panorama in the world, visitors can enjoy the Kodak mini-cinema and the photography exhibit retracing my history from A to Z.

And this first matter that I have just exposed in the intimacy of my rock-speech, constituting the crystalline aggregate of my countless minerals, the individual rock invoking the lunar landscape? A planetary expression of an instinctive reflex! This other language follows a road and deviates from it clownishly. Without taking itself seriously, it offers a few resonant flights. A little like the *Commedia dell'arte*. Not like Rocco, a devout Roman Catholic, without the slightest doubt. To follow several routes which sometimes lead to success, and sometimes to failure. Marked only by a completely personal stamp. Like this winged lion placing its left paw majestically on an open book, at the rear of the *Piazza dei Signori*. Two very eloquent pages inscribed in Latin capital letters perched on a marble column. If the lion of Padua grimaces to its heart's content, I, CN Tower, my laughter lacerates me from head to foot. Shattered in the very essence of my emergency staircase. This center of agitation which no one managed. Understood only by Symphorien who seized all its values. Evident ascent and precarious descent where each step counts its weight of joy and pain. These stairs don't lead to the attic of childhood to delight in old books, toys broken by ancestors, heteroclite objects making you dream of fabulous adventures. That only carefree children can undertake.

My own steps are only of the second order: people use them only in case of accident. Catastrophes are rare there, except that which levels those who don't speak my language. The architects of my steps doubtless thought of the large intestine because

it occupies a large part of my body, while offering a possible rejection of vitality. Symphorien, who sees further than the others, insists on making them speak and sing, step by step, with pleasant surprises and disillusionments.

The progress is maintained up to the moment when you must descend, to a hesitant, precipitate, forced, sliding, dizzying rhythm... once you have found a response to the questions of fate. As for me, I have habituated myself to sweet-sour words in balls glued to my steps. They kept me company up to the moment when they made my staircase explode. Quickly repaired without Symphorien's words coming back to encourage me...

In my role as talespinner, I deliver myself like clumps of earth throwing themselves into the arms of the sea. Thirsty for water, after tiring themselves by stretching over a whole continent, they evoke the memory of the flood.

One day, my characters and a little crowd of auditors made one of my conference rooms into a Noah's Ark. The theme treated, informally, the "autobiography in question?" Since then, I have become a memorial Place and the meeting a kind of confessional forum. What the famous participants said was nothing other than what they stammered daily on my own wavelengths: a navel-gazing to cut your cord of living-together! The summaries of a few of my characters who attended this debate with their ears wide open were more moving. Their interjections were sometimes disorderly, confused, and difficult to unravel, and sometimes so clear that they remained suspended in mid-air. Louise, for example, didn't manage to finish her sentences:

*"I live things more passionately than you do... My husband kills me. I try, but fail, to commit suicide. What should I do? I don't dare raise my voice. In what language, if not could I do it? I possess only two halves... which turn their back. When I force myself... they cry. No one hears me... I'm only a housewife.*

*Whose? Nothing belongs to me... and I remember. The Belle Province which denies me... I live in a cocoon. Of vipers... Ontario where I am classed among the unclassed... A poor minority. Only good to aid the statistics... Where is my chance of happiness?"*

Timid, she tries, at each sentence end, to increase her self-confidence, drawing attention to what she has to say. The garrulous Marcel-Marie interrupts her tactlessly. Fortunately the Chair of the session cuts him off in mid-rant:

*"Our place is here, Christ! Louise. What are you saying? They owe us everything... the province and the fun we add to it! And if we go to our own people in Montréal, it's to spite the damned English. Let's liberate Québec and then we'll see. But that's not the problem. It's the gays we need to protect. Like my buddy who complained to the Human Rights Commission because she was deprived of her lesbian title. What a mess! Isn't it? To know you are master on the same level as everyone else... Take a seat, Louise, and don't launch into disgraceful shit."*

Then Marc Durocher, who knows everything, lifts his finger. Knowing in advance that the whole group is going to reject his ideas, but he continues anyhow:

*"If you think that Québec is going to give up its identity quest, you're kidding yourself. We insist on it at any cost and by any means. Liberty is the only way to distinguish ourselves. We have never had a chip on the shoulder, only bitterness and resentment at not being victorious during the first conquest. Or from the first referendum. We will make up for it by moving mountains. Our leaders are harnessed to it body and soul. We will pursue their commitment. And it's just too bad if the Western Provinces take a stand which would only lead to separation. We would have given them a civics lesson all Canadians are missing. With their refusal to distinguish themselves, how can they advance in the era of state of the art technology? I know that we will overcome,*

*and the day isn't far off. I already feel the Tower's agreement, persuaded by the good sense of this step which used to seem futile to her. Québec is eaten up by uneasiness, but by way of fighting the English, they are going to begin to yield."*

The only person who takes up the challenge is Kelly King, always ready to counter all the follies of the Belle Province. She doesn't hesitate to use her knowledge and experience to convince others of the weak foundations of this "angry thesis":

*"You don't realize that Québec will be still more submerged than it is now by all the Americans who would have the upper hand. An island completely ignored in a North American sea; impossible to escape the shark's jaws, Uncle Sam, who already swallows sixty-six percent of our economy. After all, ties of battle and recriminations unite us; we have more to share in arguing than in separating, and turning your back to us in a shameful and damaging silence. Don't forget that you will lose more than us, Ambassadors, diplomatic posts, all the representation on the Federal level because you are more skillful than us in fitting the mold of bilingualism. This gift which opens more doors to you than to us. I too know that Ontario is drunk with success, but we will never fall into the trap of scorn, of 'looking down on Québec.' The Belle Province will also remain our sister whatever she does. Our Canadian identity depends on her. It distinguishes us from Americans. We won't yield to strikes!"*

Thus in a jocular tone (borrowed directly from the French), she plays at disagreement in a counter alto, crosses her arms, and doesn't even seem to follow the debate.

Facing them, the wily Rocco Cacciapuoti rises above the current in questioning the Quebecker and the Ontarian without admitting his ulterior motives:

*"But when are you going to make peace? We have a model country where progress is shared by everyone. Few are unemployed or neglected. There are few beggars on SDF (without fixed domicile).*

*But there are many dissatisfied people. A bitter current undermines this one and that for trifling labels that no one can apply. When will the Quebecker learn how to emerge from the swamp of his inferiority complex? Clamoring to anyone who will listen that the native born are well rooted in blessed France. And how can he seek his independence like an African country formerly colonized, when he doesn't want to know anything about the legitimate needs of the People of the earth? The first people they dislodged, without recognizing their importance and dignity. And is it true that Ontario suppresses its Francophones? Doesn't it favor them by stuffing their mouths with grants they don't know how to use? It's true that the budget cuts have trimmed the fat and excesses, but they are still left a bone to sharpen their teeth on. No? Take the example of the new arrivals who are full of initiative and bold ideas, and who repeat: 'Exploit others, invent reciprocity.' We Italians, we have mastered both English and French without losing our maternal tongue. We navigate in three currents which gives us force and power. In this sense, we are authentic Canadians recreating ceaselessly the collective identity which can only be based on the dignity of all. We are the laboratory of plurality which will reach its goal in any society with a mixed economy."*

Souleyman Mokoko, disarmed, attained the wisdom of the newborn. He listened attentively, especially to Rocco's intervention. Pardoning the threats of this one and that one, forgetting for an instant the injustices endured, he begins to speak to bring his contribution to the table in a calm, serene spirit:

*"I feel myself close enough to the ideas of Rocco Cacciapuoti because he had to fight against adversity in our adoptive country. Only there, he succeeded rapidly and without a degree. The road was hard, but he had advantages: white skin and Europe. Which we, Africans, Afro-Americans, Antillais, Autochtones... and other first letters of the Alphabet, how much time will it take us to reach*

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*the D of equitable destiny, or the Z of zero difficulties and prejudices? You must know how to manage all spiritual commerce with the foreigner to survive. Prosperity comes from this grafted tree which would kill its own roots if it nourished itself too much from itself. For the sap which gives life only comes from the continuous effort of the soil and the rain, sun, and night, of the mysterious combination of elements. It's time to stop the present upheavals and the past dispossession, emerge from the malaise we inflict on ourselves, for the love of an identity label, forever condemned to flow in a perennial flux and reflux. As for the languages of usage and of love, they are so many branches that the tree of life can carry without breaking..."*

What a lot of discussion leading to no conclusion! That's all in the order of things. Crazy things, you would say? I have noted the total absence of Twylla and Moki. Pete would never have set foot in this boat, for spite. Describing the hovels on the reserves, filthy tents, a Greek tourist laments he cannot reconcile the image of the Indians of his youth, "proud and silent," with "the scorn of Canadian society for Indian culture." These "people dispossessed of their past and without a great future apparently." And he evokes the soaring heart he feels each time he buys in Paris a box of "Great Chief" Canadian salmon, with its Indian warrior on a horse. Proud and majestic on the table, but who lost his soul on his own territory.

I try to swallow and, sometimes, to restore the façade of these rocky needles of the day. I'm not complacent about the "self-sufficient" effect of a world inclined to planetary collapse. I see Rocco leave in quest of his Mediterranean specificity, Kelly of her clandestine lesbianism and her all-conquering Anglomania, Marc of his decadent separatism, Marcel-Marie of his rampant native-born pride, Souleyman of his conciliatory Negritude, and Symphorien of his scribblings coiling within me.

For my part, I ask how am I going to end my story? Not by putting myself under the lights of the ramp, but by liberating my other characters from their isolation dug into the tomb of forgetfulness. If I labored to give birth to this love story it's because in the end there is life. But I have no illusions about it. Like Louise Durocher, I understood well that the attempts to emerge from the "Circle of the excluded" lead you on in spite of yourself! In this margin of here and elsewhere, I am simultaneously Amerindian, English, French, Italian, African, Chinese, Hungarian, Bulgarian, Greek, gay, Blue Jay, wild goose... Whatever I do, whatever I say, I remain the Canadian solitude celebrating its versatility in unity.

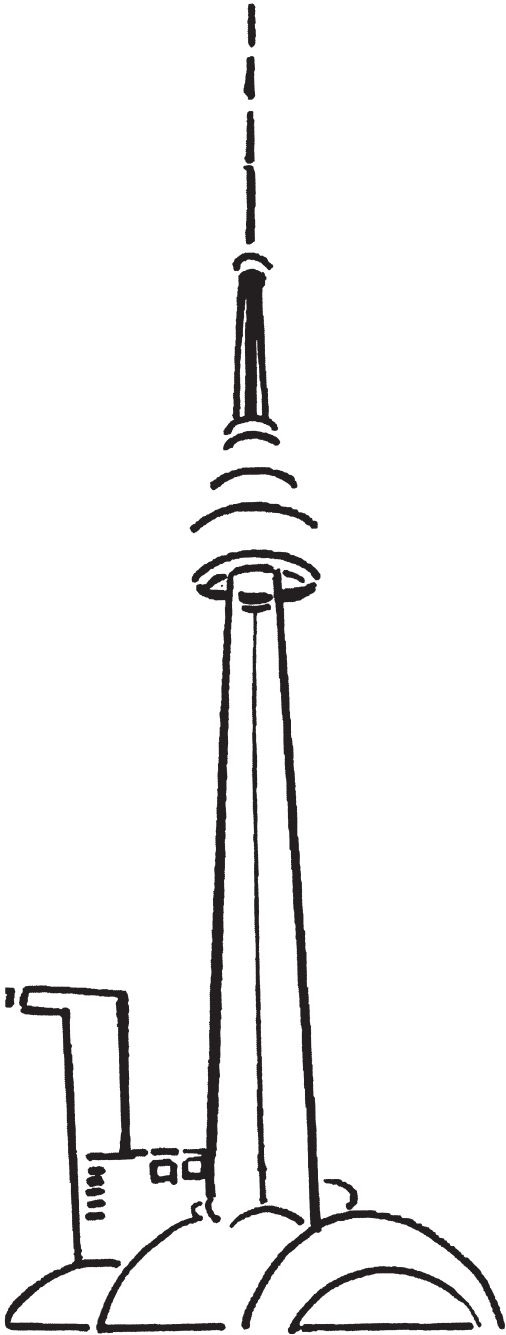
This movement towards virtuosity characterizes me. If I have been constructed, it's principally to counteract "the effects of the skyscraper boom in downtown Toronto." It is necessary to lift oneself "above the cityscape" to avoid the barrage of sonorous receptions from buildings pointing towards the sky. I outdid myself to gather the crystal-clear signals radiating for more than 110 kilometers. But that doesn't keep me from bending my spirit towards a glorious past that, moreover, I try to revive.

It comes from this rocky art of the man-made mountain, inscribing its letters of nobility in the song of a non-exclusive world.









**23**

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Sunset dilutes the sky into red blood, citron orange, violet satin... I am lost in the fairyland of warm colors of a world on the verge of disappearing towards the threshold of a new century. I no longer distinguish my territory from the U.S. The last sweet convulsion where the unforeseen filters the fog. Magic has disappeared. The death of a certain clarity gives birth to a crescent moon.

Dressed with these fragments of a confused multicolored sky, Twylla leaves her comings and goings in the subterranean corridor tying us together. She goes to spread the good word, which doesn't define us in the negatives and the chiasmus of the Canaditude discourse. In this Province which is larger than France and Spain combined, Twylla wants to transform herself with a sole truth distinguishing us both. From reserve to reserve, from town to town, from city to city, she plants transparency, the heart's cry in the crystalline air. Her words, day to day figures emerging from the soapstone, sing in chorus: "We must suffer other mutations. Not be banished or castrated. Gone is the folkloric thought of the founding fathers. Let's turn the page, enter the new age of mediators."

Twylla makes no speeches in her initiation workshops. She cuts the stone with melancholy sensuality. Scenes of men and women in action, in harmony with animals and plants. From her charmed fingers there emerge beings who enchant by looks alone. Their careful gestures unleash the desire for a dewdrop-light air. Their movements reveal that they are no longer satisfied with educating the excluded, from the first appropriation of the territory, nor those removed from the spheres of influence.

Having sniffed the pinewoods, run among the deer, crossed lakes with varying depths, and avoided the traps laid in the shade for wart hogs, Twylla advances towards my womb, bedecked with

many different colors. She tries to occupy the center of my base triangle. There, she doesn't adopt the stratagem of squatting, or of hostage taking, twin endeavors which made a fortune by attracting the attention of the media and of sympathizers. But she conducts the Autochtone delegation supported by a spectrum of recent immigrant hordes who succeeded in their pact of cohabitation, despite disagreements and misunderstandings.

The goal of their assembly is to negotiate, with dignity, the difficulties they encounter in daily life. Among her own people, Twylla had the impression of awakening from an endless night, stumbling in the misty dawn, heart beating wildly to the rhythm of a delicious virtue shading the ardor of her compatriots. And at once, she asks if she is going to wed Zinal at the risk of losing her rights and prerogatives as member of the Tribe. Thus the Constitution stipulates for every Indian woman who marries a white man. Very evidently, this law doesn't apply to the Indian male when he marries a white woman!

She decides to defy the law since Zinal is a man of color, as is commonly said for the slightest tinge of bronze! At the moment when the union of this couple "outside the norm" is in process of being sealed, Zinal, the Malaysian, receives his naturalization papers. Twylla is, he thinks, a good luck charm. He invokes the Kuala Lumpur Tower where he met "his woman," so that she took her place in the frieze of the highest building in the world. From that time on, Zinal and his tower exist in me. But wise Twylla thinks of involving Zinal in daily life. This couple which lives love hinging on impossibility knew how to surmount everyday difficulties. Today I see them, proud and simple, unequivocal about their identity shining in the epicenter of a new enthusiasm. They have the feeling it's the last stage of their journey.

An Indian file of men and women of all colors comes towards me, towards the chorus of my grandeur, in a religious silence

baffling the forces of law and order. Without a leader at the head of the procession. No one knows from whence this assembly came. No prior arrangements. But a spontaneous march going to a meeting with the unforeseen. Conscious that, in one sole blow, it constituted itself to celebrate the varied silences of the autochtones and the immigrants, this caravan asks what it is.

This silence isn't a shade on the picture, but the striking image of towers engraved on my walls. The last born, the Malaysian, inscribed there its radiant truth.

After these crises and debacles, racism and prejudice, inter-necine quarrels and foreign wars... a precarious equilibrium is in process of struggling to its feet. I see it in the aspirations of this crowd sitting at my base to share the food prepared according to the various recipes of the whole world. Once satisfied, it vanished without a trace, even a discarded Kleenex!

Twylla simultaneously participates and observes. She says to herself: "They are guests of honor who are going to come seven times a week. They will then leave for other unknown places. Without a doubt, the Moose-Spirit has thrown a little grain of salt into the mixed crowd." How has he touched the citizens? What have the sacred stones become? Who touched them? Who made them vibrate? Like a metal detector at the airport, she scrutinizes the bundles, the purses and portfolios, the satchels and the hand luggage, the attaché cases and the napkins... ! Twylla puts the stones in the little moccasin purse of the youngest man in the line. They are then no longer in the possession of the eldest, as the age-long tradition prescribes. Times have changed! Twylla knows now that the future belongs to those who have no future, to this generation of the unemployed and semi-employed who prepare themselves to turn the page of the parents spoiled by material excess.

No offering is made to me; my altar is empty! Nevertheless, they always take me for their focal point. They turn to me, not

as they did formerly to older people for useful advice, while organizing ceremonies to the spirits so that they will come to the aid of the Tribe. Angular stone, I embroider the skies with my circular kingdom. I leave a trail of beauty to the passing view. Solidly anchored to the lake, mirror of my first identity, I am more interested in the mystery of these metamorphoses than in the way I was built. Meanwhile, I have found my unique way of embracing Twylla's band. I have acted purely by stony intuition. Or, rather, the dialogue has been established, mirror of my world front and back, between cement and soapstone, steel and glass. On the seventh day the Indian file made itself a garland of a thousand colors around my stairs.

At no moment of their history have Canadians committed genocide on the Indians they conquered. In contrast, the Americans, in a hurry to rid themselves of their autochtones, invented ethnic purification. We were content, on the other hand, to deprive them of their heritage. White teachers educated their children in religious missions. In the U.S., Sitting Bull made his people cross over to Canada in 1890 to protect them from a massacre, and put them under the protection of Grandmother Victoria of England. When he was pushed to return to Uncle Sam's country, he replied he couldn't cross the frontier, crying loud and strong: "I am the Sitting Bull, I no longer move!"

Failing to find an identity which could stand on three legs, the country continues to seek itself. As for the Ontario population, it is directionless as a result of too many choices! I myself belong to this land, but I escape the rule of mobility, of instability, taking refuge in the thousand and one wild lakes of my province where I hear warm hearts sing in a new language.

The NDP government built the Casino near the Rama Indian reservation in order to hunt revenue. Dollars will bring other dollars. In the beginning, the idea was to make the Indians

independent, who had begun to seek illegal profits. But the Progressive Conservative government quickly managed to deflect thirty percent of the profits, instead of pouring them into the coffers of the sons and daughters of the First Nations. Gambling brings gamblers, and people were trapped up to their necks. Other Casinos at Niagara Falls, Windsor... Rama, which was conceived and planned to benefit the Indians, loses ground, prestige, and funds. The hotel prices go up, the clientele goes down. Paradoxically, the rich Majority wanted to show its attractions in a casino located in the territory of Indians, who don't have a cent! The voracity of the gambling planners fillets them to the marrow. Does the White vice not assure the survival of the Bronze?

Twylla refuses to fall into the trap of facility in this country at odds with itself. She doesn't believe it's necessary to supply the needs of the White Nation by white gambling, another form of legalized Racket. She retrenches behind my lines of force of a stubborn Tower. At the very heart of my emergency stairs, she submits the project of transforming my base and my summit into "Circles of the Alternative in Constancy." A new setting inspired by fish nets on the open sea which float like gondolas on the waves. In my circular space Twylla plumbs the world. Balanced in every direction, her body suddenly explodes, becomes shooting stars skimming the white walls... then disappears in the firmament. Diaphonous silhouettes, they spring from the foam of my concave precincts to extinguish themselves in the forest. Twylla, singular and plural, settles herself in two giant ghettos in the form of "Sun-flowers" where she distributes largesse and directs the game. These are neither ivory towers, nor Towers of Babel, but kinds of funnels allowing unexplored thoughts to pass...

Twylla conceives new spaces so that we only leave the kingdom of communication for that of communion, where there isn't the slightest hint of religion. In these places of sense, nuances



no longer seem original. Twylla's hand gathers grapes of light, as if she pulled stars nestled in the tresses of a complex, contradictory cosmos. Twylla walks on her head, her feet in the air are crowned with the halo of moccasins, her bare legs inspire more than Zinal with *mal de mère*.

The isle of the summit, the bulb, emerges from its din and plants itself in the CN Tower's heart. Trafficking in all languages, the bird hunters and sellers of feathers are eliminated. In these emptied and muffled places of silence, Twylla encourages adventure tales personalizing adaptability, liberating universes unsuspected of having imaginations, and rejecting the consumer society without regret. Thus, she makes Torontonians participate to the second breath, in the apogee of technology: "*The more science sees, the more the mystery deepens.*" The certitudes about the birth of the universe are shaken. Satellites and astronomers have seen stars born, galaxies collide... so many worlds pulverized! These unexpected explosions put everything back into question, including the certitudes of the oldest stars. The Big Bang is out of date! Twylla no longer trusts in the information highway, nor in the generation of computer-surfers of every sort... Between the isle of the base and the isle of the summit, she chose to let the striated flames of origins shuttle. The hidden faces of a new moon will reveal themselves soon, a moon which no longer makes you dream, but lights with its radiance the tumultuous connections of the three solitudes!

I was carried away by this thought about the incommunicability between life and death. Twylla led me to it, she who ceaselessly seeks the *mot juste* to express her fern-thought, her ivy-ideas. She succeeds only by turning herself around, especially when she has before her a touchy person, myopic and stubborn as a mole digging his hole in the rock. She continues to attack until the day when she is received in Kelly's office in

my administrative Bulb. It's the first time these two women, so near and yet so far, meet. So many straps bind them head to foot. Wounds block the road and confuse it. In a first confrontation they try to build bridges:

"I admit,' Kelly says, that my whole action, all my efforts served only one purpose, that of the ruling capitalism. God knows if I smothered him with affection to compensate for my disdain and coldness earlier..."

"Too bad,' Twylla replies, 'that you didn't follow other paths. And I don't mean the reverse of capitalism, nor the defunct communism whose idealism still hides in some moribund souls."

"Oh! How many times did we try to draw you away from this 'mentality of dependency'? Inculcate in you this spirit of enterprise you lack?"

"Yes, I see you coming with your big Adidas! Are you already reproaching my belief in the Moose-Spirit who guides us? It's a sixth sense that you will never understand!"

*"Don't add assault to injury!* I'm pointing out your weaknesses and you retort that we Whites lack a magic in which you are the only believers! A sense that we don't possess!"

"Not at all. We are barely emerging from a long period of colonization, not to say oppression. What's urgent is to take ourselves completely in hand, which must come from a drive for identity."

"But this drive is also ours! I recognize, however, that we haven't sufficiently provided the autochtones with education, formation, or politics. But do you believe that the return to history and the past can be a valid option?"

"It's not, in any case, what I preach. We must simply focus the discussion and put the CN Tower at the center of our preoccupations, while placing it in the context of the contemporary world."

“If the most powerful governments of the world could do nothing on this score, surpassed by state-of-the-art technologies and other claptrap of that type, it isn’t by transforming the Tower into an igloo or a teepee, or by living in the same fashion as the First Nations that you will resolve the crisis!”

“Again, you take me for a worshipper of the past! While I repeat to you the urgent need to find a more equitable solution to heal our cultural Tower. A first step before moving to the conquest and reconstruction of the Province, the country... and finally of the world. So I would ask you to pay attention to our proverb: *“Don’t judge others without walking in their moccasins!”*”

“I understand your strategy of first changing the microcosm to give the macrocosm an unalterable desire to metamorphose. But aren’t you a late-blooming idealist? As if we have all been for material progress at any cost?”

“I’m happy to know you admit your errors! All the same, don’t forget that in your enterprises the whole spiritual side has disappeared, except in its most superficial manifestations, the most banal, the most reassuring?”

“Perhaps! The city possesses a limitless number of churches, temples, synagogues... and even a few mosques and pagodas. There, the spiritual is cultivated in abundance! But let’s leave that aside. At the CN Tower, we are ready to grant you a field of action... a little in the realm of employment. Are you ready to function without me?”

“Your system has demonstrated cogently to us that no one is indispensable! Basically, the human being is only a little cog in the wheel, easily replaced, not to say disposable at will! It goes without saying that we will be able to function somehow, given a margin for error. As we say so well: *‘Knowing how to climb on a horse isn’t enough, you need to know how to fall off it.’*”

“That you take errors into account in any apprenticeship

redounds to your credit! But that's going to create disturbance and uneasiness, discontent and jealousy, revolt and frustration... and certainly strikes among the salaried workers."

"That there is no world war, and that changes are made peacefully is at least our only alternative for the moment. You are doubtless going to conclude that the CN Tower will lose 'its class and its elegance,' its commercial flair and accustomed revenues."

"Perhaps. But the important thing is the proportion. And it's my turn to exploit the gold mine of the lost paradise."

"I repeat to you. It's not a question of making something *new* with the old, to prepare the future by force to invoke the past. We will not conquer like you with *iron*, but with *stone*, its vibrations echoing the cadenced rhythm of our inspiration. However, let's not fool ourselves. The iron rocks, which used to be a sign of wealth, are today valueless. We want to mix their rust with the green of the hills, the stone quarry with the sacred stone, the pale lichen with the depth of black pine needles. The ruins of sheet-metal and pylons with stone, the mist of the mortar with glass mirroring steel... a modest *bricolage* which concerns only the CN Tower and its personnel who want to be heard. Our people always believe that they would survive only through anger directed at Whites, and the Whites through the submission of the Indians! And we must change all that."

"It's true. This schéma is outdated. We live at an accelerated pace verging on frenzy. At the outer limits we are only observers playing the role of provisional participants!"

"Yes, we are negotiating a hard period, morally speaking, unraveling in Olympian calm. You aren't going to make us 'pass a pipe.' Giving us money for our lands, we have been dispossessed. No more dignity, power, *bargaining power*! And at present, we are, like you, at the point of no return, at the next to last hour of the Apocalypse. We will no longer sign anything, and we will never

abdicate our sovereignty. We are going to liberate ourselves from the yoke of capital for a 'sunflower' *en ré majeur*."

"My God, what's that?"

"You know that sunflowers always direct their beautiful faces to the east, to the rising sun! It is necessary, however, to see them with lowered head, in Indian file, all faded at the end of the season. In fact, they make their own prayers of the dead."

"Well, then, what are you getting at?"

"We want to come back to the world as the day follows the night. To the primordial. But to remain there. Turned towards the East. First, let's forget the guilt, remorse, injustice, atrocities.... Let's build together towers of sunlight accessible to all. But you shouldn't feel sacrificed like a sacrificial goat... I know well your Ingres violin! I promise you that we will remain the best of friends, whatever you do! If there's a sacrifice to make, let's do it for your methods, your ways of proceeding. However, let's keep your will-power and your steady work. If the young have nothing to do on the reserve, it's not amazing that they escape into alcohol and drugs! They smoke and sniff heaven knows what. We don't ask for charity. We claim what is ours by right. And we will act in the spirit of the CN Tower which insists its anti-Babel language, its rocky tongue, the intimacy of the temporal in the immortal, the Moose-Spirit, be recognized."

"Excuse me, you're losing me again."

"Let's begin at the beginning,' Twylla insists. 'Kanata, the Iroquois words, signified village and didn't refer to the whole country. In the middle of this century, Marshall McLuhan created the notion of 'global village' for the whole world, to such an extent that the media have glued together the five continents. At the turn of the century, we raised the 'village-tower,' not the ivory tower of bitter intellectuals who only chew their recondite cud, but the village which offers all its inhabitants towers of

work, of leisure, of reflection and of action... and between all of them a cultural tower to loosen the tongue of the preceding ones. Thus we will adopt a new rhythm of life and death..."

"What a program!" Kelly interrupts her, putting her hands on her temples.

"No, not a program. Without blaming the Whites, we can find together reasons for our weaknesses. Let's seek a way to get out of this, a new way to function, to drink and eat, to suffer and taste happiness, to make love, not war. In a word, a new departure, an experiment, outside fixed norms, which will enrich us..."

"And which one doesn't quantify, I suppose?!"

"Exactly. And let's advance a bit: to make the cultural leverages, take responsibility for their development, we must rearrange the Tower. Do you know what the Algonquin word *manido* means?"

"No!"

"This word signifies 'the powers which exist in nature.'"

"Do you mean to say we must survive like 'noble savages'?" says Kelly, miming the quotes with two fingers of her left hand and two of the right gesticulating tremulously.

"I notice that you are wearing gloves by putting quotes everywhere from fear of not being *politically correct*. Don't be afraid. What annoys me is seeing what a struggle it is to modify your way of thinking."

"And as for me, I hope that you don't take yourself for a Manitou, having power over everything!"

"Again, you haven't understood me! I am in the midst of telling you tactfully and accurately that nature, animals, things speak better with their silence than human beings who shout their knowledge to the four corners of the planet..."

"Worn out to the last fiber of their words, saturated to the eyes by language! You notice, don't you," says Kelly with pride, "that I'm capable of finishing your thought?"

It's a scoop for me, the CN Tower, to have captured and transcribed in depth this dialogue, the first of its kind. The two women spoke together with open hearts. I can then retreat into myself to reach the source of my vibrations and cultivate my rocky speech. Even if most of my characters don't believe in it. As for myself, it fills me with satisfaction because it emerges from the stone!

Like Twylla, I belong irreversibly to my native land. Wherever I am, in word or action, its landscape will be in me as a part of my DNA. I have just played hopscotch with time. As a Tower, I will perhaps win. My language, on the other hand, will it win? It doesn't matter, between Tower and tongue there will always remain the dividend of interrogation.

I have often favored the monologue because it is in the air of the time. People are cloistered in a tragic solitude! They talk to themselves to deflect anguish and disquiet. I have climbed the stairs of thought and the information highways, leaped over the ramparts of prejudice, opened the frontiers imprisoning hearts, and climbed the ladder of negotiations! I made myself into a bird of good omen to sing my rocky speech to the four winds. And to flout the silent clouds from which we beg rain for an earth guardian of memory. Happy he who like the fire releases the new.

From the ashes, the Phoenix will raise again. Among the birds, he is the only one who is eternal. Because he refused the forbidden fruit Eve offered him! Among the elements, he accepted only the fifth, quintessence. The ether, magic of silence! declines this thing called *reality* which resembles my substance, *inertia*. This silence creates strength and permits me to immerse myself in the flow of words, the cascade of sentences, to give coherence to them. In the manner of the Moose-Spirit, my stony essence corresponds with inner vibrations. My voices evolve into spirals like galaxies in the cosmos.

*Thus Speaks the CN Tower*

*"I remember"*: Galileo and his astronomic telescope put the earth in its place. With telescope equipped with spectroscopes, scholars demonstrated the universality of chemical elements and the unity of laws. The whole observable universe. I refuse, then, to finish my tale-novel-journal-*prosème* in the confusion of Babel or of any narrative genre whatever (even hybrid)! But how to end this flood of five elements moving between men and things, plants and objects? The only dominance is the stone of memory.

I completed this tour of verbal bark in the manner of Twylla's arms which embraced me one day. Not to communicate news over air waves or on screens, but to transmit her love to me. Thus I in turn vibrated, infusing all my characters with unpublished feelings which cradled us day and night...

In the Bible, we learn that so many men and plants fixed to the earth die at the very moment they are separated from their umbilical cord. The CN Tower, I am the umbilical cord for my characters, first, then for the citizens of God's country. They are doubtless going to compare me to these monsters deprived, in Paradise, of all sexual desire, and of procreation. In my case, I'm going to cut the cord, fracture myself into stone-words, and let beings and things float as they like, to the diapason of their dreams. This whole world is an orphan chosen on the heap. Like me.

Unlike my peers who strut pompously with affectation, the molasses of decadence, the faded debris of a century at its close, I try to awaken the sleepers. So you needn't hesitate to twist the neck of my words cut in stone, of my statues of marble and steel, of my rocky sentences, my jolting language. My enunciation is like a saw shaping our collective tears!

My narration hastened, diffuse and complex as the substance. For the universe is no longer a fixed or sacred entity! Symphorien teaches me that "Men are made of the same matter as the stars"; thus, stone is daughter to the moon. In summary, I only make



a breach in our world vision. And since this same Symphorien continues saying to me, "The atoms are only the foam of the universe," I note at present that I was inspired when, in my shingled imagination, I made Twylla float on the waves of time, the head down and the moccasins as fleurs de Lys.

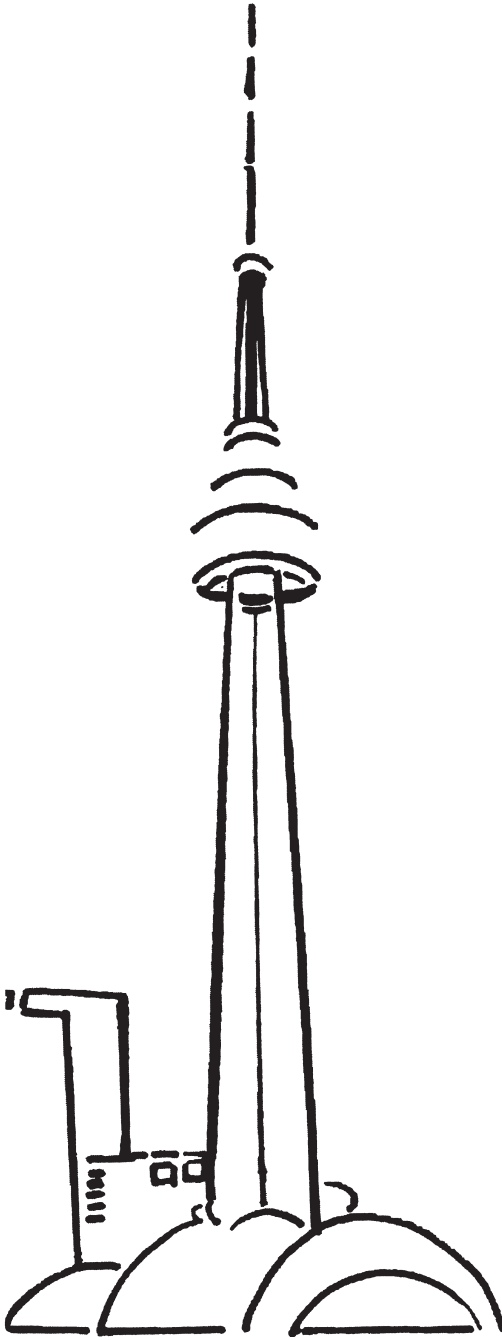
This initial project allowed him to install long distance views with ultrasensitive lenses all around my upper bulb. Rocco Cacciapuoti cleaned each bull's-eye with his dust and filth. Souleyman Mokoko began to recruit visitors from the whole world in order to initiate them into the one-way voyage of the heart into the breast of the local forest. Thus the precious enigma of the moose – unalterable liberty – will be seized.

Moki, climber of the World Towers, left in quest of *neutrinos* that only the sun's core produces. Amanicha pursues her hunt for the stars in the shadows devouring the world. Questors-visitors of eventual harmony in the theatre of violence have had the globulous eye of the moose within hand's reach. They know now how to discover their identity for all time beyond the folly of anarchic constructions.

As for the trackers of the Moose-Spirit, they head towards silence.







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# Thus Speaks the CN Tower

**Prix Littéraire de l'Afrique Méditerranéenne/Maghreb 2000**

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The Mohawk Pete Deloon gives the finishing touch. Capping the highest tower in the world, he feels the urge to be the first to take the dizziest leap. His courageous act is rewarded by his definitive dismissal from his job. This Ariadne's thread connects the plot focusing on a gallery of finely etched characters.

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—Sadok Ben Amor, *Alpha 36* (March 2001)

"On reading *Ainsi parle la Tour CN*, Canada appears to be one of the great social, cultural, and political laboratories of the great human meeting towards which, necessarily and inexorably, the whole planet is engaged...This book offers above all an immense lesson of confidence in life and, as occurs often in the fictional universe of Hédi Bouraoui, a mystical lesson where the Moose Spirit breathes."

—Françoise Naudillon, *Revista di Studi Canadesi* 13  
(Bari, Italy, 2000)

"In *Ainsi parle la Tour CN*, with its Nietzschean title, an explosive novel, Hédi Bouraoui tells the story of the CN Tower and her adventures.... this polemical work will please those who sympathize with the sufferings of the marginalized, as well as those who enjoy caustic humour and unleashed poetry. A beautiful text about a country in a state of becoming."

—Pierre Léon, *L'Express*, Toronto, 11–18 April 2000



**Hédi Bouraoui**, F.R.S.C., University Professor Emeritus of French, York University, is the author of twenty books of poetry, a dozen novels, and a number of books of literary criticism.

**Elizabeth Sabiston** is a full Professor of English at York University. She has published *The Muse Strikes Back: Female Narratology in the Novels of Hédi Bouraoui*, and a translation of his novel, *Retour à Thyna*.