

TIME FLIES

For René, one day.

If not here, where?

If not now, when?

If not me, who?

(Old Jewish Saying)

Hotel Bolivia

Once I made it to fifty, I was finally able to clearly develop some reels of film containing the first impressions of my fall into this earth (and only thanks to the extraordinary progress made in the discipline of self-knowledge in the early twenty-first century).

I knew that the place of my impact was called Cochabamba and that the region of the South American continent where Cochabamba is located was called Bolivia but, despite ten years of Freudian analysis, most implications of that event remain vague to me.

For instance, the language spoken by the characters (my family members) cast in the above-mentioned reels, was not the language spoken by the inhabitants of the region I lived in (the Indios), nor the language used to communicate by the inhabitants of the place where I now find myself (the Italians), while I'm trying to write this autobiography. The reason why I still experience this uncertainty is the following: I was not able to decide in which language I should write this exercise of Recapitulation!

Let's go back to the reels. Everything made me think that, certainly, I was not the only one to be wrong in choosing the landing site, as the people who welcomed me on the planet seemed also to be in the wrong place. Because the main topic of the plot of those reels was the flight of the Jews across the ocean (the good ones, my group apparently) persecuted by the evil ones (the Germans, whose language was mysteriously spoken by the same ones who welcomed me in the first place).

Which was exactly the nature of the relationship between all these different worlds? Between Jews and Germans, between Indios and Spaniards, Aymará and Quechua (two local ethnic groups, with different languages), between South America and Europe, Cochabamba and La Paz (the capital, where we spent the last few years of our time in Bolivia), between lamas and donkeys, dogs and cats (even today I find it hard to understand why cats are not the female partners of dogs). It took me a long time to understand all this. It was perhaps because of the decision taken by my family when I was five years old, to migrate to a 'more civilized' country (the misunderstanding about my landing location would be sorted out in this way?), which did not give me the time nor the opportunity to delve deeper into this matter (would that have put an end to the doubts about my landing place?). However, it's hilarious that I never went back to neither Cochabamba nor Bolivia in my never-ending wanderings about the world, in all possible directions.

Until very recently I was firmly convinced that I was a kind of uniquely three-brained creature marked by such an exotic blend of cultures. Until the day I discovered, in a book called *Hotel Bolivia*, that in reality, I belonged to a species of some thousand refugees, sharing the same impressions and feelings I had. On the other hand, I've never been able to understand why six million human beings never realized in time (like my family did) that the only way not to end up being wiped out was to escape.

An Uruguayan El Dorado

After a brief period in Buenos Aires, where I attended a kind of induction session on the mysteries of sex, provided by the young daughter of our hotel owner (she invited me to put my hands between her thighs and I got so excited that I got a very high fever, while the scenario drastically changed: my parents' hands introduced a suppository between my thighs, in front of the same young girl!) we all disembarked in Montevideo – my father Kurt, my mother Paula, my grandmother Oma, my uncle Erich, my aunt Edith and I – after a long night-time crossing of the River Plate on the Carrera ferry.

A sudden inflation swept the Argentinian economy and all my parents' savings away. My father, who was looking for a job, used to walk me every day to the Allied Forces Park, where he told me lots of stories about various existential topics, which would deeply impress on my growing psyche.

At the public school N° 12 'Cervantes', in Montevideo, people had never seen an incoming seven year old student, who did not speak a single word of Spanish. There was a meeting with the Headmistress and the other teachers to observe this living wonder and from that moment on, to my great delight, I was treated in a special way throughout elementary school.

My only friend, in the classroom, at school and in general, was Doris Hajer. I often played with her in Parque Rodó while our mothers were chatting, sitting on a bench. It was a miracle to me that she too spoke German, as she also was the daughter of immigrants. I never managed to convince her to do the only thing I really cared for in that period: to fasten her with heavy ropes to a big tree.

I stuck to Doris like glue for several years. Instead of tying her to a tree, she was soon tied to me, and fortunately she did not dislike it. However, I discovered one aspect of her that really shocked me: every time we passed by a church, she used to cross herself. How was it possible then? So, was she an enemy? I had been taught that only good Germans were Jews, while Catholic Germans were evil people. Whose side was she on? Things started to get really complicated. I realized that I had only completely understood this many years later, after two weddings and some important relationships, exclusively with Catholic ladies.

Those years proved to be very important in crystalizing various aspects of my personality. The mentors I found were Karl May, Walt Disney, the Ernst Fuchs' *Sittengeschichte* and the flying saucers phenomenon.

Karl May was a German writer for young people whose stories were set in the Far West as well as in the Far East. He really helped me to understand the complexity of relationships between human beings, between Indians and White faces, between Arabs and Europeans.

The Three Caballeros and *Saludos amigos* by Disney, dealt with Lake Titicaca and lamas, gauchos, boleadoras and horneros (small Uruguayan birds) and lent visibility and legitimacy to my own personal world, and also to the continent we lived in. For the first time these tales made sense and they were able to contrast the unpleasant sensation of unreality caused by all South American related issues, while my parents and I kept focusing on the United States and Europe (where, as I was told, my real 'family' was).

The *Sittengeschichte* is a thick three volume bundle whose refined pictures show the erotic European traditions through the centuries, which awoke my first sexual anxieties and excitements, along with Disney's Minnie Mouse, when she risks her own life tied to a tree, while a chain saw advances on her, as well as an image of the Deposition of Christ with a Virgin Mary on his side, weeping over him.

However, it was towards the end of elementary school, that I became really interested in the study of flying saucers (or UFOs, Unidentified Flying Objects, as they are more correctly known). To this end, I organized, with teachers and students help, a research group that met at school twice a week.

Papimami, the South American Indian

It was enough to move from Downtown Montevideo to Carrasco, on the east coast, 18 kilometers away: an elegant residential area surrounded by a thick and melancholic vegetation, to destroy all the hard work made in getting my own beliefs and opinions. It was like losing the firm conviction that I could swim. My parents always told me that I was a good swimmer and I trusted their words more than my own experience. Despite living in a seaside city, the water scared me.

Doris stayed behind and our house became empty (my uncle and aunt, as well as my grandmother, did not follow us) and at the Malvín High School I would not find any of my previous mates. But, in the new neighborhood, I found instead some kids that would have become the hub of my universe in the next stage of my life.

However, their first impact was a bit hard: they nicknamed me ‘Indio Papimami’, because I came from Bolivia and I was always hiding behind Mommy’s skirt or Daddy’s trousers (as I used to call them). But, as time went by, the quantity and variety of types of people I met (from the large Reches family, to the Domínguez sisters, as well as the Cohrs, with their horses) gave me the opportunity to find the adventure-mates I needed.

Of special importance would be the Poggio-Gnecchis’ (a peculiar and charismatic family from Milan, Italy). They had three boys that were my same age (Marco, Enrico and Massimo): they basically adopted me and introduced me to a lifestyle full of tastes, flavors and interests (not least, *Topolino*, Italian for *Mickey Mouse*) that would strongly influence my decision to live in Italy for good (decision taken much later in my life, and under completely different circumstances).

The events that left their mark on that period of my life were: my mother’s supposed betrayal, who supported without a glimpse my father, according to whom I was ‘too grown up to be smothered by her kisses’; my subsequent decision to leave home and move to a shed in the garden; my passion for jazz and ping-pong; the disturbing sinuous ‘Girls from Divito’, in a humorous Argentinian magazine called *Rico Tipo*, and the curves of the fiery mulatto girls in *Bohemia*, a Cuban magazine; the freedom achieved thanks to a bicycle; dancing ‘cheek to cheek’ to the sounds of ‘Only You’, by the Platters and the frenetic contortions of Bill Haley’s rock and roll; the discovery of the magic world of dogs and horses; the mysterious and esoteric architectures built by Engineer Pittamiglio and the unsettling reading of authors like Curzio Malaparte and Jean-Paul Sartre; the trips I took with my parents to the United States, Europe and Israel to meet ‘the family’; the definitive fall of my hopes of becoming ‘an engineer like Daddy’, crashing against the wall that mathematics was for me; the subsequent end of my academic education and the early introduction to the world of labor, when I was hired by the electrical firm owned by my family *Rodríguez y Neumann S.A.*; the assassination of John F. Kennedy.

France and the Theatre

I keep a clear and firm memory of two (out of nine) of my uncles on my mother’s side: Josef, in Israel and Salo, in New York. Especially the first one, an artist and a tourist guide. Many years earlier he had been a soldier in the British Army, serving under the famous General Montgomery, in the fight against Rommel and Hitler’s army in North Africa. Josef helped me to understand many years later – when I met his daughter Maly in Jerusalem, and my cousin Harry Friedman, in Tel Aviv (a scientist and Kabbalist, who had studied with the Nobel Prize-winner Ilya Prigogine), where many of my questions and longings came from.

My passion for the cinema also dates back to those years. As soon as I turned eighteen, I joined the Cine Club de Montevideo and fell in love with the secretary, who would become my sister in law years later, because I fell even more madly in love with her sister Lily Salvo, mother of my daughter Mara.

During that period the films by Ingmar Bergman, Italian Neo-realism, Orson Welles, Kurosawa, German Expressionism, Antonioni, Fellini and the Nouvelle Vague in France – all played in their original languages, with subtitles – became an important guide in the labyrinth of life.

My friend Marco went on to study at Columbia University, in New York. I wanted to go too, but apparently my desire was not strong enough to overcome my parents' objections, which I would have appreciated later, when I found out about Marco's suicide. Susana Domínguez shared the same destiny in Paris after marrying another friend of mine, Jean-Paul Brisson. She was the young girlfriend from our neighborhood that Marco left behind when he moved to New York.

In those days, in Uruguay, making movies seemed to be something impossible. Theater was the second best choice, an environment where I also imagined finding beautiful and easygoing girls. At the time I could not imagine that theatre would have become my profession and my world.

I was engaged to Bettina Camacho, (a fifteen year old girl with whom I soon got married) who attended the French School (she was the school mate of Perla Domínguez, sister of Susana) and was also an actress in an amateur group from the Alliance Française. I used to pick her up regularly from rehearsals and I waited for her sitting in the stalls; one fine day, Bernard Schnerb (who soon became a friend, teacher and mentor) told me: 'Why don't you come on stage and give us a hand?' He gave me straight away a tape recorder to record some sound effects needed for the performance: a creaking door, approaching thunders, the barking of a dog... It was the first step in the path along the way that led me to where I am today.

Soon I became the best sound designer for theatre and dance in the whole of Uruguay and the theatre critics recognized me and rewarded me more than once, during a magnificent gala at the most beautiful Teatro Solís in Montevideo. During the daytime, I worked at my family's electrical firm ('one day this will be yours', they used to say) and at night, at the theatres 'for the sake of art'. Paradoxically, at that time, the theatre was both amateur and professional, as the profits obtained from ticket sales were enough only to cover the production costs of the shows, except in the case of the Comedia Nacional, but neither artists nor technicians were paid at all.

I could even consider myself a privileged person as I got the chance to travel to Europe or the United States once a year, satisfying in this way my insatiable curiosity. I could also broaden my horizons and see what was new in the art world. This was to form the basis of another fundamental part of my personality: every time I travelled I used to bring home all kinds of materials and experiences: music, literature, visual art that I would share with my friends in Montevideo. And it was precisely this same muscle, along with my ability to be fluent in many languages, which would lead me many years later to become a theatrical agent, to advance this profession and start up the *Andres Neumann International* company in Florence. Thanks to its new headquarters, its wonderful library and its modern 200 seat facility, the theatre of the Alliance Française in Montevideo acted as a launching pad. I took part in its construction and became the artistic director for several years, together with Bernard Schnerb. I lived many parallel and often conflicting lives.

On one hand, I was completely integrated in the French community (I learnt French quickly only through practice; not so with English, which I studied for several years in a language school). On the other hand, I often represented officially my father at the Board meetings of the Banco de Trabajo Italo-Latinoamericano, run by Mussolini's former Minister of the

Economy, Professor Domenico Pellegrini-Giampietro. In 1967, I was also responsible for setting up the international meeting of the Organization of American States in Punta del Este, led on that occasion by the U.S. President Lyndon Johnson. While shaking his hand I got the feeling I had touched the skin of an elephant.

This and other events of my life contrasted sharply with my involvement in the avant-garde, actively organizing electronic music concerts, happenings and fluxus events, in the company of Conrado Silva and José Gabay, as well as Beat Concerts at the Teatro Solís (with lyrics written by Boris Vian and Lautréamont), transgressive performances at the Juan Sebastián Bar, a trendy night club in Punta del Este and, above all, setting up cutting-edge multi-vision environments together with architects and set designers Jorge Carrozzino and Carmen Prieto.

I lived through the subversive and revolutionary times of the May '68 movement in Paris in my own way; starting a relationship with Lily Salvo, married and with two children (Aldo and Bruno). She was known in Montevideo's artistic and intellectual circles as 'The Goddess', a famous painter, who had studied with Torres García and was also a friend of Pablo Neruda and Ernesto Sabato. She was 40 and I was 25: this age difference made our relationship even more scandalous at the time and led her to abandon her family to be able to live our love story freely.

Then a very troubled and difficult period followed: I tried to provide for my child bride while maintaining at the same time my relationship with the painter-goddess. I lived in a tangle of lies that would eventually stop one day coming back home, when I found both women sitting in the living room and having tea.

In that way, all the comings and goings stopped and I could move in with Marilyn Monroe (at least my personal embodiment of her) and I fully savored the pleasures of sex and passion that produced, as a gorgeous result, a blond creature that we called Mara.

But in the background of this story, a storm of disastrous consequences was afoot. I am talking about the arrival of the Tupamaros, one of the first left-wing terrorist groups inspired by Che Guevara, repressed (or perhaps incited, an unresolved question so far) by an increasingly ferocious right-wing repression, that in a couple of years would have led the country to a military dictatorship.

Shortly afterwards the situation became unbearable. Freedom of speech disappeared. Roadblocks were everywhere. People I used to go out and work with were imprisoned, tortured by the police and the military, while others did hide or left the country. Others still, like Gaetano Pellegrini (the son of Mussolini's Minister and colleague of my father's at the Bank) were kidnapped by the Tupamaros. I was between two fires.

The murder of Dan Mitrone, an American Embassy officer (also the plot of the excellent film *State of Siege* by Costa Gavras, with Yves Montand, gives perfectly the idea of what was going on at the time) and the bombing that destroyed Montevideo's Golf Club (we found out later that one of Lily's nephews was among the attackers) were the kiss of death: it was time to leave. My parents did the same 35 years earlier. I was experiencing the same destiny in the opposite direction.

From the Andes to the Alps

Thanks to Bernard Schnerb again and together with the Carrozzino family, on October 4th 1972, we could leave for France, after a last minute emergency wedding with Lily, and after registering Mara's birth late (we were both still waiting for our decrees of divorce). The French government awarded me a grant to study in one of Nancy's institutions run by Jack Lang (the future Minister of Culture, who would later appoint me as *Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres*).

The right-wing Uruguayan press stated that Andrés Neumann, Jorge Carrozzino and Carmen Prieto were on their way to France, under a fake cultural program, to be trained in guerrilla techniques (we should not forget that, in those years, in Bolivia, there was a strong connection between the well-known French intellectual Régis Debray and Che Guevara).

Our host institution was CUIFERD (Centre Universitaire International de Formation, d'Etudes et Recherches Dramatiques), a study centre linked to the *Festival Mondial du Théâtre de Nancy*, a sanctuary for the avant-garde theatre of the time. We could not have asked for anything better: we were in the right place at the right time. However, we also needed to get used to the simple starving students lifestyle in a northeastern suburban city in France.

We had left Uruguay in a hurry to spend a year in Nancy and to observe from a safe place what was going to happen there. We could not have imagined that the Uruguayan military dictatorship would last twelve years. It was winter when we arrived; we were initially housed by the social services in an infirmary of a 'Maison des Jeunes Ouvriers'. Then we moved to a four room apartment shared by four adults and two children: Mara, 6 months old, and Paolo, the Carrozzino's little boy, four years old. We furnished the flat with things people gave us or what we could find in the streets; we ate at the 'Restò U', the university canteen.

The two years spent in Nancy were a difficult time indeed, but also very important for the rest of my life. The experiences I had, the people I met, the creative job I dealt with, were the raw materials to build up my future.

To be in the kitchen of the most important artistic avant-garde laboratory of the time and to meet Tadeusz Kantor, Pina Bausch, Peter Schumann and the Bread and Puppet Theater, Bob Wilson, Víctor Garcia, Dario Fo, Jerzy Grotowski, Augusto Boal, Robert Anton, Luis Valdez among many others, was a great chance and a privilege for me. Moreover, working with Jack Lang and his team was more instructive and professionally formative than any university class, even if prestigious.

But it was not a bed of roses. We could not go back, even to take a run up, and we didn't know which direction to take. Furthermore, Lily was not feeling well, as she felt guilty about her other two children left in Montevideo, and Mara was still a baby.

In 1974, when the Nancy Festival asked me to select the Italian theatre companies to be invited, we decided to move to Italy: I would commute to and from Nancy once a month to report to my team about my Italian discoveries, continuing on living on my grant money.

From the Alps to the Apennines

Thanks to my arrival in Italy as an 'Ambassador' of the Nancy Festival, I was soon introduced into the world of theatre and culture in general. We picked Florence because it was in the middle of the country, neither too large nor too small, we knew some people through the Uruguayan Communist Party and because we were attracted to Florence's art.

A year later, no longer the Ambassador of the French glory, I set up in Italy on my own, but the same people that used to run after me and flattered me before, began looking at me in a worried and suspicious way.

We had been living for a while in a small three-roomed flat on Via dei Leoni 8, behind Palazzo Vecchio (where we would spend ten years) and we rented a Post Office Box numbered 728 at the Central Post Office in Florence, when Lily one evening said to me the same sentence Rasputin tells Ivan the Terrible in the same titled Eisenstein's movie: 'Europe will not recognize you', and she gave me a two year ultimatum to prove her wrong or she would return to Montevideo bringing our daughter Mara with her.

This new challenge summed up with the less clear one my father issued, to whom I had to prove that I was a man able to survive on his own and to choose his own destiny.

The dice was cast and some lucky encounters came to my rescue: Luigi Nono, the famous Venetian composer and member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party (whom I had met in Montevideo) turned out to be a friend and mentor. A brief and chance stay at Villa Rucellai in Prato gave me the unexpected and happy opportunity to make the acquaintance of the celebrated director Luca Ronconi and his team. Thanks to some friends in the Communist Party, the Province of Florence organized for us a tour with one of the multi-vision environments we had staged in Uruguay before leaving, on Pablo Picasso's work.

A letter had been sent to the Nancy Festival by a Florentine theatre group called Ouroboros, directed by a certain Pier'Alli, whose venue, called Rondò di Bacco, was set in Palazzo Pitti. In the left-wing circle I used to meet nobody had ever heard either of Ouroboros or Pier'Alli. One evening I went to that venue and I ended up in the middle of a rehearsal of *The Death of Geometry* by Giuliano Scabia. I found both the company and the work very attractive and interesting.

It was then that I had a crucial idea for my future career. I proposed Pier'Alli that he should present at the Rondò di Bacco a season of avant-garde theatre unique to Italy, inviting the best groups among those I met in Nancy, and ask the Teatro Regionale Toscano to finance it. No sooner said than done. Roberto Toni of the Teatro Regionale Toscano liked the idea and I was soon directing, with few funds, a 200-seat space where, over the next three seasons, the finest cutting edge artists in avant-garde theatre would perform: Tadeusz Kantor, Robert Wilson, Meredith Monk, the Bread and Puppet, just to mention some of them.

At the time, no news spread like it happens today. Audiences from Rome and Milan started to flock to our theatre. Achille Occhetto, secretary of the Communist Party came over too (as a private person, in the company of his actress girlfriend). The story of his visit spread quickly in Florence and local politicians started to get interested in the Rondò di Bacco and its activities, in order to accommodate its management to the political frame of the time. As a consequence, Rondò di Bacco did not last long.

The time of flying under the control of the radar system was over. So I decided to follow the wise advice given to me to me by Franco Camarlinghi, spokesman for the Arts in Florence: I opened a performing arts agency on my own. Because of my success in Florence, many theatre directors in Italy were interested in my proposals. In 1978, *Andres Neumann International* came to life and opened its headquarters on Borgo Albizi. The company – in different places and ways – has existed continuously for over thirty years.

Andres Neumann International

My work became my life. And my life turned into a continuous journey. I had, without realizing it, invented a new profession: Cultural Management, bringing together expertise in art, finance and politics. Not only was I now fluent in five languages, but I had also learned to speak the language of the artists, of the politicians and of the business man.

I went to Krakow once a month for several years, first to meet Kantor and then Andrej Wajda, whose theatrical work was as important as his film productions. Once a month I travelled to Paris to meet my mentors in the theater business, André Ginzburger and Fernand Lumbroso. My friends Ariel Goldemberg, Patrick Sommier and Michèle Kokosowsky live there too as well as many clients: Peter Brook, the Comédie Française, Jérôme Savary, Alfredo Arias, Ariane Mnouchkine.

During the two weeks left each month, I alternated trips to Amsterdam in order to attend performances at the Mickery (a visionary space created by Ritsaert Ten Cate) with others to New York (where the most important contemporary dance companies had their headquarters), Caracas (where I collaborated for a few years with the *Festival Internacional*), Madrid and Barcelona, two cities at that time coming out from the dark years under Franco, but ready to

open their doors to the world. I also went often to Wuppertal for Pina Bausch, Stockholm for Ingmar Bergman, Moscow for Anatoli Vassiliev and Saint Petersburg for Lev Dodin. Last but not least, I had to attend the opening night of the guest performances I had organized everywhere on the planet. This could take place the same week in Tokyo or Los Angeles, in Lisbon or in Spoleto, in Palermo or in Buenos Aires, in Hamburg or in Mexico City, in Genoa or in Venice, in Milan or in São Paulo, in Vienna or in Copenhagen.

At that time communications were not the same we have now: there was no internet, no mobile phones, no fax; international calls were made via telephone operators who often could only speak their native language, sometimes it could take hours to connect a phone call. To communicate with east European countries in the Soviet area, the only possible way was through an ancient and expensive device called 'telex', using perforated paper tapes.

Despite these logistic troubles (starting from my head office in Florence, until 1985 and then Rome, until 2000), I managed to hold together an enormous web of human, artistic and professional relationships. Together with the famous international artists who entrusted their work to me, some other important Italian names followed: Luca Ronconi, Dario Fo, Vittorio Gassman, Marcello Mastroianni. I met many of them at Teatro Tenda in Piazza Mancini, in Rome, where the impresario Carlo Molfese from Naples had asked me to direct a festival: the *Rassegna Internazionale di Teatro Popolare*.

I linked with important allies for bold enterprise: Renato Nicolini, spokesman for the Arts in Rome, who assigned me with a peculiar project of international, theatrical and cultural exchanges for the City of Rome (besides being my master for a 360 degree vision of Italian related matters, as Jack Lang had previously been for France); Enrico Menduni, President of ARCI (Association of Leisure Centres of the Italian Communist Party) and Giuseppe di Leva, Director of *Milano Aperta*. They all played a very important role in my life, also because they were partners of women with whom I cultivated a deep personal friendship.

I refer to Patrizia Sacchi, an eccentric Roman actress (whose son Simone is now married to my daughter Mara); Anna Mariani, a distinguished lady of the Ligurian bourgeoisie, who taught me how to speak Italian correctly with infinite patience, and to Marina Baldeschi, a very stylish Florentine countess who would become my collaborator for 30 years. Thanks to their examples and amity, these three women taught me a lot of what I know and who I am today.

But my father Kurt turned out to be my best ally. When he realized that I was not willing to go back to Uruguay, he closed our family business down – the one that 'one day I would have inherited' – and he moved to Italy with my mother Paula. He worked with and for me for 18 years, first in Florence and then in Rome, supporting me in a way without which my professional growth would not have been the same. His support meant also to me that I should not fail to meet his expectations, as he had set high hopes on me. In this way, and without noticing it, I did pay a top price in order to achieve these goals.

Who am I?

I had been a beatnik in the '60s, a hippy in the '70s, a yuppie in the '80s. I lived as a rich man when I wanted to, and as a poor one when I wanted to be frugal. But who was I? Who was really the man wanting to be this or that? My wish had been to devour the world, and instead I got lost in it. I overcame the boundaries of language, but I raised other walls inside me, and behind each language, I found a different person, like Zelig. At this point of my life I became a searcher, a phase that has not finished yet, that has probably been suspended since I was a teenager.

I took the first important step in this direction thanks to psychoanalytical therapy (with Jacqueline Amati Mehler, who took me as a study case, published in her book *The Babel Tower of the Unconscious*, under the alias Mr. X). The therapy lasted eight years, at a high intensive rate of five sessions per week. This had a big impact on my travels, my work and my whole life. At the same time, I started to regularly work hard on my body structure, thanks to the help of Anna Maria Vitali, an expert in corporeal techniques, a genius in her field. My life also changed drastically after splitting up with Lily and my family in 1988. I moved and spent most of my time in a totally isolated home in the middle of the woods on the Tuscan hills (in an area inhabited centuries earlier by St. Francis, and whose spirit can still be felt there). Moreover in 1993, with the dictatorship over and the return of democracy, my parents moved back to Uruguay.

On a trip to visit my parents in Montevideo, and thanks to the insistence of Sonia Wolf (the daughter of my old elementary school mate Doris), I joined an intensive course at the *Espacio de Desarrollo Armónico*, run by Graciela Figueroa, a marvelous dancer and therapist I had met when I used to work as a sound designer in the sixties. My encounter with Graciela – and above all, a special massage session she offered me – became a transcendental experience that I consider, still today and unequivocally, a total rebirth. This time, I was given a ‘license to live’.

I liked my place in the countryside more and more and I was increasingly spending time there. In fact I did move there permanently and I rented a small studio in Rome, just as a foothold. Having wandered through human cities and theatre stages, where people fight for catching eye and attention, I dipped into a vegetal nature that simply ‘existed’, which stood for me as a wonderful, late in life and unexpected revelation. The glancing and unrehearsed appearance of creatures in the wood, such as boars, deer, pheasants, foxes, porcupines, ant-eaters, were moments of intense awakening for me. The differing taste of each season, the depth and profundity of the sounds, the material density of the night and the starry sky, were very intense discoveries for someone who until then was out just for stones and concrete.

Psychoanalysis had given to me what it could, and I was now searching for a path further in the same direction. What I ran into were existential and experiential journeys, something I was ready only then to face completely. It was so that I started to explore bodily techniques such as massage, yoga, Rio Abierto, tai chi.

I knew that Peter Brook was following a line of work based on the teachings of G.I. Gurdjieff, a master about (and by whom) I had read a lot in the past. These texts were already influential on me at the time of my formative years (readings I made after the strange book *The Return of the Sorcers* by Louis Pauwels and Jacques Bergier). For almost two decades of friendship and professional collaboration, I admired a lot of Brook’s capacity to make his presence felt and to naturally catch everybody’s attention. But strangely enough I realized only now that there could be a connection between his skills and his practice. I was finally able to formulate the question I could not ask before and I discovered that there was a study group in Rome, near Termini Station; a few weeks later I had my first meeting, the first of a long sequence that has not finished yet.

I then integrated this self-development study group, that I consider my ‘home’ (guided with infinite wisdom by Mme. Michèle Thomasson, who came to Rome from Lyon once a month to provide the various groups with the answers they were looking for and to teach them the required movements), with other approaches of the ‘Fourth Way’, especially the one known as SAT (Seekers After Truth) and employs the enneagram invented by Gurdjieff to the investigation of human personality, developed by the Chilean psychiatrist and spiritual teacher Dr. Claudio Naranjo (himself formerly teacher of Graciela Figueroa – the woman who gave me a second birth a few years earlier in Montevideo!)

On the path of the seekers, I came across an elementary school teacher from Arezzo, Viviana Benci, and I fell madly in love with her (there was a 25 years age gap, an asymmetry that happened frequently in my life). Viviana suggested living together in Camprione, my house on the Tuscan hills, that I had bought years earlier. She was also the first guest to overnight there, willing to stay in that remote place on her own, something that strongly impressed me.

My heart was open and under no circumstances was I available to close myself in front of anything life would bring me. It was so that I decided to close down my office in Rome (this has not been an easy decision at all) and to part from the people I had worked with for so long (my daughter Mara and Aldo Grompone, Lily's son, included. I'm particularly proud and satisfied of having been able to teach them my 'made up' profession; this is perhaps my biggest satisfaction).

At the beginning, after ten years of single life, it was not easy to get used to cohabitating in my countryside place with Viviana. First we planted a vegetable garden and then brought on board some pets: two dogs, a Maremman sheep dog Li and Iuki, a Dalmatian, took up residence alongside a Persian cat Glauco, who arrived as a clandestine from Montevideo. According to this lifestyle, when Viviana began to express her desire of becoming a mother, it seemed to me a natural inclination. It was in tune with our plans and existential course to bring on board a baby in our 'ship', especially such a big and warm one.

Our son René (named after René Daumal, author of *Mount Analogue*) and my grandson Leone (my daughter Mara's son) had only six months of difference and started their journey to planet Earth together. On September 21, 2001 (just 10 days after the Twin Towers attack) René was born in Arezzo, at the San Donato Hospital. He was neither circumcised, as his father's religion would have required, nor baptized, according to his mother's religion. In June 2000 I lost my mother and in September 2003, my father passed away, with all the additional difficulties caused by the distance. What I did not imagine was that also my relationship with Viviana was doomed, falling apart and straying away from our 'ship'. René would leave with her: our just-made little family broke into pieces.

In 2005 I decided to sell to a Scottish banker the 'ship', the only house I had ever owned in my entire life (bought in 1990 with the money inherited from uncle Meier, my mother's brother and a rich New York arts dealer). I came back to Rome, where Mara and her family live, but I also kept a place in the countryside, in Anghiari, nearby Arezzo. It is a refurbished granary named Sasseto that today is Iuki's house (Li died discreetly a few months before René was born), while Glauco moved to Tamara Cangi's place, my housekeeper, who has looked after me for the 20 years of my pilgrimages on the Tuscan hills. In Sasseto I can enjoy my time spending it with René, who now lives with Viviana in Arezzo, in a flat I bought for him in via Pescaiolina.

Three important events of my life did take place at Camprione: its house-warming party in the summer of 1993, on my 50th birthday, Mara and Simone's wedding in 1999, and the goodbye party to the house in 2005. The *Tenuta della Barbolana* continues to be the place where I feel at home as its owners, Marina Baldeschi's family, adopted me in a spiritual way.

I continued my professional activities on a low profile, focusing on the only artist who still makes my heart beat: the German choreographer Pina Bausch, creator of the Tanztheater Wuppertal. Her long term friend, the Italian writer and journalist Leonetta Bentivoglio helped me to understand, since the eighties, her extraordinary expressive heritage, besides being a *trait d'union* between me and this master of dance and life. Besides this, I am available to offer my services to old friends, such as Enrique Vargas, the Columbian artist who lives in Barcelona and runs the magical *Teatro de los Sentidos* and new friends, like the Argentine acting teacher in Madrid, Juan Carlos Corazza.

I am pretty sure that the spiritual search, where I'm involved at present, is just the natural continuation, in a different form, of the long time search for masters in the world of theatre. To them I have dedicated 30 years of professional life. This search has been my way of putting faithfully into practice the intuitions I had during my education and formative years. To be a performing arts producer was just the excuse I came up with to justify my presence near the magicians' pot that we call theatre. But in reality I always felt like a liar or a spy. Now I can finally disclose my intention to be a sorcerer's apprentice, abandoning all pretenses.

I was thinking about René when I wrote down this story. He is still so young, but one day he may ask himself who his father was and I may not be there to tell him this story. And why did I write it down in Spanish? Because sometimes the one willing to talk and the one willing to listen don't speak the same language. What is important is the desire to understand each other.

*Somos viajeros del universo.
Cuando visitamos un sitio, nos reciben sus habitantes.
Nuestros padres por ejemplo.*

*Quedándonos en el sitio, nosotros nos volvemos los habitantes.
Y con el tiempo, seremos nosotros los que reciben nueva visita.
Nuestros hijos por ejemplo.*

*Luego llega el momento de emprender nuevamente el viaje.
A la llegada del visitante se le dice nacimiento.
A la partida del visitante se le dice muerte.*

We are travellers of the universe.
When we visit a place, its inhabitants welcome us.
Our parents, for example.

During our stay, then we also become inhabitants.
And time over time, we are going to be the ones getting visits.
Our children, for example.

And then comes the time to set off on our travels again.
The arrival of the traveller is known as a birth.
The departure of the traveller is known as death.

Sasseto, Anghiari
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