

# Brigitte Kaquet

## For a Long Time I Have Believed ...

For a long time I have believed in the fire of the stage as if it were a deluge of stars. For a long time I have believed in the fire of the stage as if it were a wig, a shining mane, a stream of moonlight that covers nudity and illuminates the smile like a pearl-like tear. For a long time I have believed that the poetic image, the offering of the body, the burning of a pair of eyes are enough to replenish the sacred space of our visions.

Outside, the world. The Cirque Divers, great gardener of lies and of universal paradox, mirror in which our spectacular world is reflected in its peacefulness, funnel corridor where encounters melt in a drop of water, stage where daily gestures are theatricalised, platform on which the clowns struggle between laughter and death ... The parallel worlds penetrated our homes, we asked them in, we invited them. The liveliness of the roads invaded our cabaret-theatre, our lives, our every day activities ... The sacred space of my visions remained untouched.

For a long time we believed that History had its course. For a long time we believed that History was a river and that this river ran in only one direction, that it had a source and an outlet, that it only needed to follow that course, and that no other possibility existed. Two banks contained the mixed waters, it is only a matter of choice, we used to say. And then over there, towards the East, a wall fell.

Who am I to reveal the wounds of the world?

The need came by itself. I did not say anything, it came because of the force of things. A too filthy world, a river that overflows, banks that crack, meaning which is lost. Down there, towards the South, a bird breaks its wings, the child falls over from exhaustion ... There I have seen, or read, or I have been told - I don't know - that the army destroys houses and the women cry. They had wanted to live on this earth, their earth, while far away they drew borders and walls that they did not need, that crush them, and there, in the hills, one has given names to the villagers so the assassins could recognise them ... Here the foreigner

*We sing, yes we want to sing,  
we want to sing through your  
throat, we want to sing with  
your voice, we want to shout  
with your voice. Dance, dance  
old man with wet eyes, dance on  
the abyss of your tears. Dance  
on the abyss of your tears, with  
your feet we want to dance,  
with your feet we want to  
dance, with your feet we want  
to dance ...*

has asked for papers, he wants to stay, he does not want to go back down there, but he is sent back there, one does not hear anything more about him ... I have heard that others march in the mountains and in the forest ... Masked they have learnt to fight so as to resist ...

At the sunrise of the month of December we decorate the circus tent: wood and mirrors, velvet and gold. It is under the tent that women from Africa, citizens, nomads, peasants are coming to sing. The world from outside, fragments of voices, bursts of laughter, the skin and the clothes ... A small part of the continent down there is absorbed here in our place, we allow them to invade our lives, to warm our winter, to wash away our greyness. The songs flow each evening and tell us about daily life, the wars, love, exile, poverty ... For a whole day we speak together, all these women from afar and us, from here. Sarah, Malika, Disco, Yande, Codou, Fifi, Stella, Mini, Dido, Marie-Philomène, Rose-Marie, Amy ... often words give way to song, it is better like this, the song contains sadness and happiness, conflicts and enticement. Windows open onto the life down there: Algeria, Black Africa. Resistance in the towns, in the bush, in the desert.

This year we celebrate our twentieth anniversary. The univocal thought flows calmly along the river of History, the low side of the wave has transformed into a force that expels the poorest from the field of economy, the parallel worlds are no longer at the same level and they follow different directions. Irony has given place to discouragement, carelessness to need, lack of seriousness is in search of ways to reach dignity. The Cirque Divers persists, resists, remains as a funnel-corridor, a stage or a platform, a great garden ... We celebrate the fiftieth issue of our political journal. With it other thoughts, a different awareness and preoccupation have been elaborated and

written down, all this has marched alongside the songs from the world, the cultures in resistance, the women of Africa ... The sacred space of my visions has dissolved with this desert stream, water-tight partitions were not justifiable there.

So then theatre has become a place of transit and the men, women and children that populate the world, those wounded by time, those broken down by solitude and injustice, the un-born, those without name and without anything, the assassinated nomads, rebels and exiles have entered the stage. And then tears - all the tears of the world - have wanted to flow onto paper and pass through the voice, the palms, the eyes of the actors.

And this is what the tears sang:

*Cry, cry Man of the World. Cry the lost river, cry the assassinated equality. Cry, cry Man of the World. The lie of your people. Cry. We the thousand and hundred Tears, the pearl-like solitudes, we beg you to cry. We Tears want your eyes, poor and blind, we search for the iris, the pupil, the cornea of your eyes. They should shed us. We, all the tears of the world, want to slip into your wavering thoughts, within your trembling eyelids, within your hesitating nerves. Cry, cry old man, we are the tears of the world. Tears of the people and of the wind, tears of the earth and of its open veins, thousands and hundreds, pearl-like solitudes. We want to cross over your mouth and speak, we tears of exile and poverty, tears of drought and glaciers. We sing, yes we want to sing, we want to sing through your throat, we want to sing with your voice, we want to shout with your voice. Dance, dance old man with wet eyes, dance on the abyss of your tears. Dance on the abyss of your tears, with your feet we want to dance, with your feet we want to dance ...*

Night is different from one continent to the

other. Down there, no constellations from my childhood. Lying on my back at the doors of the desert I searched in vain for the bears and the chariots while the divine dog, my old Greek philosopher, Diogenes the Cynic, was wandering in my thoughts. Five years later, together we went along the small and steep paths of writing and staging. With him the public squares have occupied the space of my intimate visions, and they are populated by dogs and countryless beggars and philosophers, camels, nomads, India, Africa, the Ganges, the Styx, the Nile and the Niger ... The different worlds - real and imaginary - merge and dissolve, they become hybrid. Water-tight partitions are no longer justifiable. The old impotency has become a need.

Who am I to forget time?

I no longer see how I can write, play, sing about anything else than this time

which envelops us, about terror and lies. The dust of the world searches for places where it can land. Mown down lives, skinned hopes, disappeared childhoods, the hidden, ill, excluded people, constellations which belong to the margins and to the small streets - they search for places where they can be. Then poems decide. They make themselves into a passageway, clear space, corner of the sky so that this rain of stars falls onto the stage, onto the planks, onto the pages of our books.

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Manuela Varrasso, Brigitte Kaquet and a member of the Tuareg Tartit Group at the Festival of Women's Voices, 1996. Photo: Phillipe Gielen