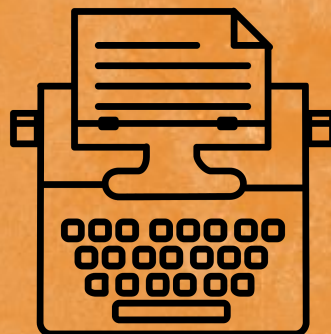


Title:

Author:

Occupy Climate Change (OCC!)

*Creative story
entry*



FORMAS



Rome 2200

By Veronica Samperi

June 6th, 2232, 08:29 AM

The H501/V had stood still for sixty-five years at the coordinates 41°85'608" N12°47'952"E. At this precise point, a hundred years ago, my grandmother Francesca Romana was leading her life in the streets of Rome. Born on September 22nd, 2133, roman town for five generations, Francesca Romana was part of the last land natives. She always told me proudly of her great sense of belonging, of an attachment, yes physical, but above all cultural and emotional, to a specific geographical place. She spoke to me almost obsessively about this place, the city of Rome, which I know only relatively today: it was the first metropolis in the West, powerful enough to influence culture, language, religion, society and art, in all its forms. It was the Eternal City, she told me. But another thing, my grandmother, used to told me "Without water, roses wither.

Without treatment, nothing is going to last. "

I have seen few roses in my life, they are not flowers designed to withstand the current temperature and even less the chemical composition of the water that surrounds us every day. Thanks, or because - depending on your point of view - of the stories with which my grandmother made me grow up, I have always longed for things that I don't even know: valleys covered with daisies, woods teeming with cyclamen and frozen waterfalls. Every day, on Vyta, I go in search of landscapes and places that my world has not known, and it never will, to reconstruct the pieces of a story that preceded me and that will remain, at least this one, forever.

I was born on November 24th, 2208, in the D section of the cruise named "H501/G", the boat dedicated to the births of newborns in the South-West area of Rome, located for forty-one years at coordinates 41°52'00" N12°29'00"E. On June 3th, 2167, at 00:47, the first birth on - our - floating land, inaugurated a long tradition that literally broke the bridges with the past. With the law decree n. 29/2147 (so-called Quarzi), the obligation to deliver newborns was introduced into our constitution in the individual vessels dedicated to health, located in every pole of the national area. The first to have inaugurated this new method were my grandmother Francesca Romana and her son, not surprisingly, Primo. Furthermore, the law n.27 implied that there was no more than one child per couple, under penalty of expatriation to other poles for aiding andabetting.

Since that day, there has not been a single birth that did not take place in the appropriate boats, throughout the national territory. When I was born, my grandmother was 75 years old, she always told me that I made her wait a long time, but it was worth it. She was my guide, and every single day of my life up to the age of 18, I spent my time with her. She said she had a mission towards me, that she wanted to keep in me everything that I would never have been able to see with my own eyes. I have always listened to her with ardor, ever since I can remember her, and even today, after six years of not hearing her voice, my days are marked by the memories of her that she sewed on me. However, the true purpose of her "mission" has only recently become clear to me. Maybe she didn't understand it either: she wanted to apologize. She wanted to repay with me and in some way with all the generations that have followed her, to ensure that all the beauty that she has been able to give the world in the past was not lost. A little with anger, with melancholy but above all with a lot of unawareness, I think and live virtually the life of the past, in a city that I cannot cross, that I cannot touch with my feet, in order to preserve it. Just today, on June 1st, sixty-five years ago, people started their life on ships again, and if as a child I always wondered why this anniversary was not celebrated, as it was done with every anniversary, today I realize that it was the beginning of the end. The end of the old world, of the old life, of freedom. The beginning of new habits, traditions and uses to which people transplanted onto ships have had to get used to after years and years of living a completely different life. Every June 1st at 9:00 am, for sixty-five years, the sirens of our ships have been sounding together, to celebrate, but above all, to remember.

On May 25th, 2167, the evacuation of the old houses began, most of which occurred spontaneously, while others in a forced manner. Some families barricaded themselves inside the house so as not to give in to being transferred to the ships; others carried out extreme gestures: hundreds of dead were found in their homes, in order not to accept such an excessive solution. The days of the eviction, the water was not yet so high, many managed to escape with their cars, but the escape was never successful, due to the police located in each tollbooth, motorway or border with other cities, with specific provisions to bring the fugitives back to their reference boat.

The reason why people were so averse to giving up their lives was simply, because they didn't know what they were getting into. Such an important limitation of freedom, there had not been since the years of the various coronavirus pandemics that followed: the first periods, to counter the contagion, people could not move from their homes, in a state of total lockdown, not then so different from the

situation we live in today. We are all stopped, limited and blocked on our ships, forced to have contact only between us: it is like having a family of 6000 people and at the same time having a superficial relationship with each of them. But thanks to the stories of my grandmother and Vyta, I understood and saw with my own eyes what the ancient world was like, I understood what I was missing.

The people here lived in huge buildings, huge and very high structures that look like our ships, but stuck vertically into the ground. Everything we do on our ship, they did it in their homes or outside, depending on the situation. Some of these people lived in villas, or independent houses: even one person could live in an entire building. Today it is pure science fiction, if we consider that a ship currently has to accommodate at least six thousand inhabitants, distributed in two thousand five hundred cabins. However, most people used to leave their homes in the morning to get to their job or employment, whatever it was. Certainly what we do every day on Vyta, they did it in the open air, without simulation. They did everything for real. My grandmother, for example, used to go to work in museums, huge old buildings that housed thousands of works of art. Her job was to tell visitors what those attractions represented. Only when I grew up did I understand that in short, my grandmother as a girl did exactly what she has always done with me. She was in love with her job and I followed many of her visits guided by her, through the augmented reality of Vyta. She had two sisters and when they were young lived all them together with their parents, in an apartment right at our same coordinates, next to the ancient Saint Paul basilica. Built 697 years ago, it stood on the place that tradition indicates as that of the Paul's burial, an apostle, with his tomb, right under the altar. I am so interested in the history of this church not because it is particularly devout, but my curiosity stems from the fact that, right inside, my grandmother's grandparents got married. She told me about it with pride, as if that were the badge of something very prestigious: the sense of belonging to a place, a symbol. The Saint Paul basilica, however, was only one of the four Rome's papal basilicas: the city was truly immense, among the most famous and loved in the world. People came here every day from far away places to visit its ruins, now flooded; the Colosseum, now destroyed; the many churches and monuments, which are no longer there, due to the current hydrological situation. The sea water, during the past years, due to its biochemical alteration, has progressively soured due to the absorption of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, starting to corrode more and more the foundations of the old buildings, monuments, numerous and very ancient buildings. To avoid their collapse and the consequent danger to the population, the law 27/2131 was enacted: "Destruction and dismantling of ancient buildings, historical monuments, to prevent

the collapse of the aforementioned, preserve the territory and facilitate the parking of residential vessels ". In fact, just that year, the city of Rome inhabitants life, and then of the whole Italy's, changed forever. Ships were introduced as a form of housing, following the model of the Dutch government, which had been working in this direction for years. The first country to take such drastic and "outrageous" decisions, according to my grandmother, was in fact Holland, paving the way for all the other European states, finally allowing itself to be imitated by the whole world.

Russia, the last country to surrender, did so only after Lachta-centr collapsed on itself in 2171, causing 217 deaths and 344 injuries. "It took him a massacre to bow his head. But we all had to do it, without saying a word," added my grandmother, lost in her thoughts and memories, as if she were in that precise moment in front of the same scene. I saw, among other things, the fall of Lachta-centr: most people ran away everywhere, like springs gone mad, to run for cover; I witnessed brutal scenes of people jumping into the void from the top floors of the skyscraper; other people pierced by the remains of the structure, which collapsed to the ground like meteorites. Vyta fully returns the brutality of the events that took place, whatever they may be: they are never censored. It is the ethics behind Vyta itself, the political choice to show life as it is, or rather, as it was. You have the task of making people who have lost the opportunity to live on earth participate in any event, as long as the event is present and documented in your database. This artificial intelligence uses the collection of all videos, photos, short films, stories from old and new social networks, old videos from surveillance cameras from countless places. All these testimonies are put together, grouped, in order to recreate the same place or event, at 360 degrees, giving the user the feeling of being exactly there, with the help of the augmented reality viewer. We often talk about contact lenses that allow the user to enjoy the view directly from the irises, but they used them especially at the time of my grandmother, when there were people who could afford them, when the professions were varied and there it was a big social gap. The only good thing about this captivity, according to my grandmother, was that rich and poor literally found themselves "in the same boat": at the time of the new provisions, all of them, poor, rich, old and young, were forced to face the same problem. It was no longer possible to move, travel, but then .. to go where? It was all destroyed, dismantled, demolished. That's why Vyta entered our lives. A promise of freedom, of experience, of knowledge, and people have clung to it tooth and nail. Many, too many people I know spend their lives with the augmented reality viewer on their faces, and in this way people have created a life tailored for them. Without all this water around, without being pigeonholed in the iron cabins, without the obligation to travel only by taxi boat from one boat to another and with a curfew that forces them to return to their ship at a specific time. Andrea is one of my mum's

former classmate, for thirteen years he has not left the ship to carry on his existence on Vyta. He only disconnects to eat or to go to the bathroom. All the rest of the time, Andrea is busy with his "life": when he is not working, he travels; he has a girlfriend; a house in the mountains and many beautiful designer clothes. As I see it, all of this does not belong to him, but to his avatar. His girlfriend is called Marta and she lives at coordinates 43°27'47" N11°52'41": Vyta gave me back the photos of an old city, called Arezzo. They met at work during a meeting and for years, according to the gossip of our ship, they have been discussing who should reach whom, at their respective coordinates. A trip, and in this case a transfer, is not a very simple process nowadays. It takes place by means of special boats, quite small, which make several stops in specific places, and each one gets off in the one desired. They are the replacement ships for the old coaches, as my mom told me. The journey is such a complicated process because there is a long bureaucratic process to deal with. She or he who is about to leave must submit an online application addressed to the appropriate organizations, within which he must explain the reasons for his departure; specify the ship of destination; declare the intention to remain indefinitely at the chosen ship. The movement can take place on the chosen ship only and exclusively depending on the availability of a bed or, even better, a cabin. As regards short-stay voyages, however, the laws to be respected are those mentioned above, with the exception of the third: a person must specify the duration of their accommodation on the chosen ship. I don't have many friends who live near coordinates so far from mine: the longest trip I've ever made was to go to the ship of an old classmate of mine, Ambra, almost five years ago. As a child, Ambra lived in the same ship as me, we were inseparable, but due to her mother's work, her family moved to the coordinates 44°29'38" N11°20'34"E, the ancient Bologna. I went there, obviously with the obligation either to stay overnight at her office, if available, or returning home no later than curfew, I stayed there on her ship for three days. I remember the many recommendations of my parents: from the moment a person does not respect the curfew, your phone sends the localization to the police, even with your mobile phone off, thanks to GPS. But this is rare, because the means of transport are always driven by the staff and never by individuals, so it is unlikely to be around after 11PM. Whenever I can, however, I go to see Massimo. I reach the Sisto ship, which is located at the coordinates 41°88'87' N12°46'91'E. The name of the boat derives from the old monument that stood near that place, almost seventy years ago: Ponte Sisto. This bridge, which has nothing to do with our typical ship bridges, allowed people to cross the Tiber, the symbol of the city of Rome. In its memory, every single ship that today is stopped right where the river used to flow, is placed a plaque bearing an engraving:

"Here the blond Tiber shone, mirror of the soul of the ancient city". Many times I have wondered about the meaning of that sentence. It was enough for me to see a single photo of the old city at night, with the lights and monuments reflecting on its surface.

The ship where Massimo lives is physically the same as mine, also the view isn't that different after all. Perhaps the only difference is that there are more ships around than in my house. At these coordinates, there are three Meat Labs, the laboratory-boats that deal with the production of synthetic meat. This artificial meat has been adopted since 2097, the years of the deepest environmental crisis ever recorded. In those years, thousands of people refused, some of them went on hunger strike going to protest at the institutional poles. Over the years, however, people had to adapt to this novelty, because most of the consortia and organizations that dealt with livestock farming were dismantled. Climatic factors were the first causes of abandonment of this ancient tradition: the food grown for animals was no longer edible due to the quality of the air and the presence of water, causing radical rot and terrible epidemics. The focus was therefore on the production of in vitro meat, a product on which scientists had already been working for over fifty years to save the situation.

I have never visited the Meat Lab for real, just through a guide on Vyta, which showed a ship just like the residential ones, but with huge machinery that, due to their size, replace the cabins. It's estimated that in two months of in vitro meat production, 50,000 tons of meat are generated from just ten muscle cells of pork, one of several extinct animals, which, however, thanks to its stem cells capable of self-renewing, can produce others. My mother and father work in one of the Meat Labs, at Massimo's coordinates, so very often it happens that I take advantage of the passage of the company boat to put my nose out of my comfort zone, even if it is equivalent to going to a context just like mine. He too would have liked to work in the lab, but our aptitude tests showed that we would both be more likely to "perform other duties" and bla bla bla. We were upset, there is no point in making fun of ourselves. Among the various possibilities of carrying out the tasks offered by our company, that of working in in vitro meat laboratories is one of the most attractive. When we were both assigned to textile fiber workshops, he decided to contribute to the economy of our community, while I chose to continue to specialize in biology. Grandma Francesca Romana and I have always talked about many things, and there were very few that she really did not want to address: one of these was precisely the university topic. He dreamed of a very different education for my father from that dedicated to us new generations. She would have liked so much for him to

study literature, economics, law, and the mere fact that these words are almost unknown to me speaks volumes about today's consideration of these practices. There is no reason to deal with political or economic doctrines, because there is no way to change the rules and laws we live with, which are made specifically for our current situation. For example, the economy is not something that must concern us closely, on the contrary... or at least this is what schools have been offering for years, during orientation days. So girls and boys, after finishing high school, can choose to continue their studies and specialize in one of the following degrees: biology, ecology, chemistry. It happens if they don't want to immediately carry out the aptitude tests to decide the socially useful job they are going to fill. They are very similar and certainly connected branches, but the meaning of the specific choice lies in the fact that upon obtaining the degree, the graduate will cover immediately exactly the role for which he studied: my grandmother has always called this procedure "science fiction". This year I started my second year of oceanography: we study the few primitive species that still inhabit the seas, but above all the others, which are in daily mutation, due to the alteration of the waters that host them. The various fishes that swim under our ships are not edible and science, which for years has wanted to carry out the same procedure as in vitro meat, is trying all of them in order to alter their biochemical and genetic composition.

The main reason why I study oceanology, however, is one above all: what I study gives me hope. For months I have been busy comparing the various sea level data, starting from 2035 to today: never before has a lowering of the seas been seen as important as recorded at this time. During the lessons, our professors tell us that these are approximate data and above all not to be disclosed because they are sensitive data. In my opinion, however, they ask us not to talk about it because they could instill a glimmer of hope, and hope, we know, it's the light that comes out of the cracks, but the cracks are uncomfortable. My professor, however, was unbalanced with me, she told me that there are rumors that the glaciers are slowly reforming. Perhaps this one life I know is just a stalemate, perhaps out of here, there is still something to believe in.