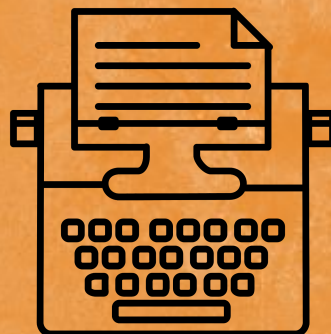


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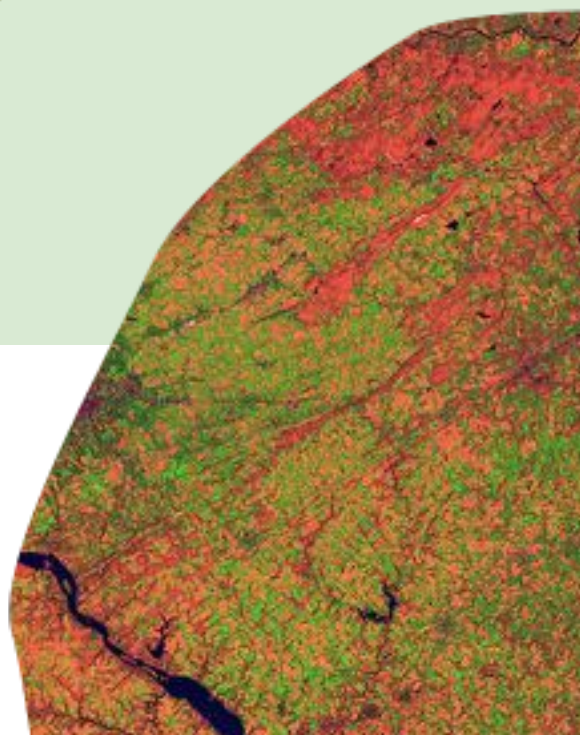
Author:

Occupy Climate Change (OCC!)

*Creative story
entry*



FORMAS



Two pages of diary

By Veronica Pero

There were 5 minutes to go before the end of the year. Francesco, a young man of 22, was in one of the rooms set up in the Rocca Paolina in Perugia, the meticulous details of the latest cartography of his city fascinated and enveloped him, making him ignore the increasingly intense chatter coming from outside. A few meters away, in fact, the atmosphere was tense, more and more people reached Piazza Italia, agitated and sweaty screaming and running from one end of the square to the other, a chaos never seen before.

Then the silence.

Everywhere in the world suddenly fell a dull silence. Many found themselves under the clock tower anxiously waiting for the last chime. The tension was palpable. The streets, the squares, the forests were motionless. Francesco took his polaroid camera ready to take a picture of the city map. It was five seconds to 12:00, four, three, two, ... Flash.

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December 29, 2200.

Dear Diary,

It was five in the morning, I got up, and like every day I walked for about a couple of hours. My goal was not to reach the bench at the end of the Corso, in the gardens of Piazza Italia, but for some reason, even though the path I walk along is always different, I found myself there, sitting on a bench that must be a few centuries old and that shows on those wooden planks, perfectly interlocked, the signs of time.

It was five o'clock and I left the house. There was a rather thick fog, cool and smelling of pine. The sounds I heard were those of traffic in the distance, the first birds and my own footsteps, which marked time with an annoyingly monotonous rhythm. A rhythm that I punctually decide to break by taking two steps with my right foot, with a little jog, and then returning to a slow pace.

I have been walking every morning for a couple of years to find myself. I look around and learn, reflect on what I see and what I have seen. It was six o'clock when the first stores started to open, the smell of fresh pine was replaced by the smell of chocolate, the mist gave way to the monumental

buildings of the city center: the cathedral, the Sala dei Notari and the Fontana Maggiore located in Piazza IV Novembre.

While I was walking I remembered an old diary of my great-grandfather that my father gave me some time before, inside I found a series of photographs representing some old demonstrations in which he took part: that square had experienced struggles against gender discrimination, had hosted hundreds of young people who had the desire to be part of a change, had seen people gathered for the "Friday for future" and to fight for the right to abortion. I have read and reread that diary several times, and I feel like I really knew my great-grandfather, that I somehow talked to him and formed an extremely strong bond with him. I've looked at that same square and, perhaps because of the descriptions found in the diary, perhaps because indeed the air and the stones have been scratched by that continuous coming and going, I've felt the tensions and the joys of those who faced issues that seem to be taken for granted to me.

"In the end, those billboards carried through the streets were not a vain effort," I said to myself. Today my steps took me through some of the inner streets, narrow alleys, medieval, and full of small museums and hidden exhibits. It's fascinating to see how this small town doesn't need large structures to enhance art. Culture seems to be one with the city: it characterizes and represents it.

Immersing myself in my thoughts, I finally arrived at my bench, a bench where I have spent several hours of my days, enchanting myself and observing a large cypress tree at the end of the street, in the last year I have often spoken to it. I do this to keep him company and always hope to get some response from him. I'm sure he's experienced a lot over his years. On reflection, if anything has changed since my great-grandfather's years, it is this: there are a lot more green areas than there used to be.

"Hi, a lot has changed over the last few decades hasn't it?" I start to say, "How did you survive all these years, it must not have been easy for you I guess, on the side of the road I mean, I don't mean to imply that you aren't strong enough to live that long, but the conditions of your habitat were questionable."

These are the questions I asked Cypress today, of course he didn't answer me, at least not in words. I stood still enough to lose track of time, until I felt my eyelids weighing down. I closed my eyes and suddenly I heard a strange rustling sound as if the cypress was actually trying to communicate. A wind that I took for granted.

I walked over and sat at its feet, on a slightly raised root. I closed my eyes again and began to feel the tree with my hands, touching its roots and bark. I smelled its scent and heard the sound of tiny worms

beneath it. Suddenly I became thirsty and instinctively poured some of my water on the tree, as if I knew it needed it. I sat at the foot of the tree for about an hour and watching the intertwining of its branches reminded me of when my father and I used to go to the Rocca Paolina to look at the map of the city. I was enchanted to observe the branching of the streets, their joining and dividing, I walked through them with my eyes, I was immersed in them. So I went again to the Rocca, not far from there.

This morning's exhibition was particularly interesting. In addition to the map of the city and its reconstruction to scale in plaster, there was an old city map dated 2031. There was something familiar about that map, as if I had seen it before. I looked at it for quite some time until I started comparing them to see what had changed since then.

"Surely the outskirts of the city have been expanding while leaving the center unchanged," I said to myself, but as I walked through them with my fingers and my eyes several times, I noticed something rather peculiar, a substantial difference.

"I used to walk those streets with my husband," said an elderly woman addressing me.

"You see - she resumed guiding my hand - here I lived and here my husband, every day we both had the habit of going along this road to go to each other's neighborhood and for years we never met" she said with a slightly nostalgic tone.

I invited her to walk the same route together again. That was the difference, each neighborhood was connected by green paths. We walked and talked for about half an hour, and as we walked, everywhere I turned, whatever corners I took, at least a dozen people were taking the same route as us and going from one suburb to the next.

Once I was driven home, the old lady turned to me and showed me an old photo, taken with a polaroid, of her husband, and suddenly it came back to me. A photo of the same map dated 2031 was in one of my great-grandfather's journal pages. A chill ran down my spine. The idea of being fascinated and looking at that same map as my great-grandfather did, decades earlier, made me smile.

I ran home, grabbed the journal, opened it and picked up the photo. I looked at it closely and once I turned it over I noticed a small faded writing on the back. I tried hard to figure out what it said. I stood at my desk under a strong white light. The text read:

"To my great grandson, I have done everything I can to give you a better world, enjoy it as I have enjoyed mine, preserve it so your children can enjoy it as you and I did before them. P.s I know you don't care but look at this beautiful map. I love you."

Suddenly, somehow, I found myself. I hope that with this diary I can help my grandson as much as my grandfather helped me.

Yours Alessio.

December 29, 2200

Dear Diary,

It was five o'clock in the morning when I opened the curtains of my window. Like every day this morning, a fog was hiding the streets, the buildings and the trees. I went down to the living room, got a glass of water and turned on the television, I had to give it a few taps to get it to work. The news of the day was not good, honestly by now I'm not hopeful that things will change.

"Heat wave expected from tomorrow through the end of the week. Temperatures will reach 50 degrees. Stay the... "

I turned off the TV and took the opportunity to take my monthly walk. I got dressed, but since the fog seemed particularly thick today I decided to wear extra protection.

The streets weren't crowded, by now people are afraid to go out and anyway there aren't great things to see except some old exhibitions to admire old landscapes. I have crossed via del corso, from Piazza IV Novembre to the gardens of Piazza Italia, I have not made great detours, I wanted to reach as soon as possible the benches on which to sit down and take a breath.

I sat down. I closed my eyes and tried to imagine what was beyond the fog: some green forest in the distance, a blue sky, snow-capped mountains in the background. I know that what I would see, if I could, are extremely ruined roads, closed buildings, and a few pavilions meant to protect the few remaining parks, but I try to think that there might be something more. A cypress tree across the road was the only one that kept me company today, but it didn't look very good - it was pretty dry. I reached out to touch it and its bark fell off at the mere touch of my hands. It is very weak, like us.

Half an hour later I decided to go home as the air was extremely thin, heavy and hot. Walking home I couldn't help but notice that the only noises I could hear were the exasperating traffic and the cans and bottles thrown from the windows. People don't even go out anymore to throw their garbage in the buckets, everywhere there are mountains of waste covering the streets. We have entered a vortex, a vicious circle that leads us not to care about each other, let alone the environment. By now, in order to survive, we have to move on. This situation is quite exhausting. In recent years there have been

many deaths due to drought. Water and the few crops are rationed unfairly. My neighborhood is suffering from this. Most of the resources are sent to the wealthy part of town, which survives at our expense.

I recovered by breathing two deep breaths of oxygen from the reserve I keep in my pantry and climbed to the roof. From there I can get a better view of the longed-for horizon, as the dust is mostly concentrated at street level. Sitting on the now ruined tiles I look as far as I can, and the rays of the sun beating down on the steel walls that separate us from the wealthy neighborhoods mark a clear, impassable boundary, beyond which tall skyscrapers try to overcome the waste and smog that is accumulated on our side of town. Over there they pretend that nothing is happening and they pretend well. The only solution for me is to try to get to that place, seek shelter and maybe a better life.

"A better life for how long?" I wonder. After all, sooner or later, but I think soon, even on the other side of the wall will suffer what we live here today.

I went out in search of water: a good supply that would be enough for this week of fire. Finding it was extremely difficult, I should have gone to the stores this morning and avoided standing on the roof, luckily not far from the train station I found a rainwater basin, I should be able to filter it and make it acceptable. The shutters are closed, and night has fallen. The only thing to do is to hope that this time too will go well.

Yours Alessio

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Francesco woke up from a sleep that seemed endless. He looked at the clock, it was 12 o'clock, exactly the same as a few seconds before, yet it seemed to him to have slept if not dreamed. More than a dream it seemed to him a memory, extremely vivid. He hurried out of the fortress, dazed and frightened, and it didn't seem strange to him to see disoriented people looking around the square and the streets. He looked up at the sky and a strange aurora slowly dissipated into the ether. He didn't have time to think about what he saw and what happened that he lent himself to help a girl up, she looked like she had hit her head hard and was barely holding on.

"Thank you," the girl told him. "I think I hit my head hard and dreamed, I can't quite remember."

"Don't worry" he replied, "you simply fell down. Let's go find a bar and ask for ice."

In the evening at home he thought a lot about that girl, the strange atmosphere that had been created, and the strange feeling of heaviness that had settled over him since 12:00 that morning. Francesco spent several hours tossing and turning in bed, trying to chase away that weight he carried inside: "is

it possible that there is more? That it's not just a feeling?" he thought. He began to reflect on what he had dreamed, closed his eyes to be able to better imagine it. At first he thought they were his visions, one of his usual nightmares. Soon he realized that he was not the protagonist of his dream and maybe he was not even the imaginary boy, although in reality they resembled each other, rather he was a piece of paper or perhaps a diary. He was in an outward position anyway.

By now the little bit of sleep had vanished, he picked up the phone, it was 2:00 am and a little out of boredom, a little out of curiosity, he began to search what could be the meaning of his dream, what lucid dreams were and more, but among Freud's texts he found very little of interest. - What is a lucid dream -, - premonitory dreams, do they exist? -falling asleep on the spot, 12 o'clock on December 29, 2031, what happened? -

He began to scroll through the hundreds of pages full of links, articles about what happened on December 29: between the description of the night of St. David and some stories of civil struggles of decades before, finally appeared something interesting, a small blog maintained by a certain "Alicepop26". A page entirely dedicated to a strange event that had happened to him that day, she had described it as a warning, a request for help from her future niece and her cat. "News from the future" he whispered, "I was hoping it would be something interesting, do you think it's possible to get in touch with people from the future?!" he said turning to the budgie he had in his room, "I must have had a blood pressure drop and this will just be a fantasy story".

He turned off the phone and covered his head with the comforter. His mind was racing and his thoughts were running wild. He turned the lamp back on, staring at the wall he began to think. He thought that it was ridiculous, that it was not possible that he had had a vision, that that was his nephew or something else, surely, if that was ever the case, he would not have wanted such a bleak future for him.

He picked up the phone again and started to do a little research to understand in which direction the world was going, there were many unpleasant news. Among these, he noticed that what was the famous climate clock, now forgotten by many, that day marked the last year available to mankind to reverse course and be able to return to the earth a little 'breath. Whether it was a dream or a warning was of little importance, it was necessary to act, took the photo taken that afternoon at the Rocca Paolina and wrote a small text on the back in the hope that one day it could reach his grandson. Society had arrived at a crossroads, the choices he would make from that day on would determine the future of the next generations.