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AN OPEN LETTER TO SERENE RESTLESSNESS

Dear World,

I was born in a country where yelling is free of charge. Dancing and singing is allowed. And the menu is the customer's choice. I read about freedom and censorship, see the teaching material and feel what goes to and fro on shifting ground. This is the truth that I know, fortunately. The denial of liberty was never tangible to me, I know only the task of dedicating myself to learning, to the absorption of Morality and the practice of good habits, compassion and kindness, ethics and respect for our neighbour. A precept established by my dear parents, who always planned to offer me a view of the World as being something sparkling but with no filters.

School was always within my reach (there were days when I was so excited by the obligation), as was the hospital (even if governed by slow and exasperating processes), medications – while indispensable were also part of the cure (an option which is not a reality for everyone), libraries were victims of my bookish greed and I never felt cold from lack of clothing. The stability and consistency of these dynamics were always certainties to me, little valued and thought to be the same for everyone. Now that I am grown, my reality is different, my vision is disillusion. Nothing is the same for all, opportunities are not linear and happiness is not impartial. I fear I will continue to grow along with the knot in my stomach, when scenes of atrocity and injustice unfold before my eyes. But there is a factor that calms my mind: I belong to a community that is called the European Union.

I was born in Portugal. A member of the EU since 1986, my country is in a bubble of organisation and principles, regulations and procedures, common to the 28 Member States. There is no better impression than feeling the support and comfort we find at the epicentre of a community joined by the same values and principles, governed by common rules and objectives. Knowing that liberty prevails, the monumentality of choice is essential, the power to vote is paramount, or human rights are the beat to which we march, a deep sigh of relief. Dear World, I assure you of this: I know of no sensation like wandering through these Member States and feeling the confidence of being at home. An expanded European Union is like a house with more rooms. It is like a Palace, the space is expanded but the family is strict about the coherence of the house rules. It is necessary to maintain order with so many people and so much space to coordinate.

Even so, my feeling is not one of frivolity or revelry. There goes my carefree adolescence and, now that life today demands deliberations, solutions and decisions, I feel the burden of Time and Space on my shoulders. The years have passed, continue to pass and will go on passing. I feel that, for me, they are passing at a devastating speed, and the effects are overwhelming. Which way should I turn? I benefit from a sufficient offer, but the real choice is not simple or inconsequential. I believe I share this feeling with various citizens of the European Union. The despair of wasted



potential is the feeling that hits us when we see the hour of our emancipation arrive. The European Union has so much to offer us. That's the truth. But how can I enjoy these rights and fulfil those obligations as a European citizen? It is the Book of Unrest. We become increasingly aware that the world is not just, wholesome or harmonious. The world is not to blame. We are the ones to blame. We are the ones who created it. But life moulded by disappointment at such a tender age will determine the whole future. Changing this disillusioned feeling is the challenge of the European Union. How? By investing in that which is close to our hearts.

I witness the departure of close friends, leaving for places that are not close to me. You take my heart and my hope with you. Is this not the worst that is to come? The giving up, the pain of leaving it behind. But I begin to understand that London is nearby and I can go to Barcelona for lunch, if I wish. And I do. Who knows? I may just pick up my material life, and bet on the ready-set-go-option, too. But do you know what I lack, World? Purchasing power. The power to decide if I want to stay in my country or in another that gives me a job, that gives me stability, peace of mind and a truce in this endless fight. I wonder if we could send bottled tears to all Member States? It is the feeling of losing the ones dearest to us, who leave everything but their presence. I don't want to have to go. I want to choose whether I stay or whether I go.

This is one of the challenges of such an expanded European Union. Cultural borders cannot be eliminated, but they can be mitigated. To help us always feel at home. And now that we have so much in common, it would be so good if we could get a little bit closer and create a cheap and efficient transportation network. Because the youth around here do not have money, but they have a great desire to embrace those whom necessity took away. The youth around here feel lucky to belong to a community that fights for the empire of liberty, the monumentality of choice, the power to vote, human rights and a fair trial. So they would like for it to be easier to move around in this big Palace. We have common languages, common currency, common goods and common values.

All that is left is to believe that the European Union is our home. That we belong here, that we should grow up in her bosom. For that reason, dear World, I know that I am being selfish and unfair in feeling lucky to be in this bubble. I live in an existential dilemma for that very reason. But we cannot give up. Not even on ourselves.

Yours faithfully,

Ana Margarida Meira