

THE BRIEFING

ARUNDHATI ROY

My greetings. I'm sorry I'm not here with you today but perhaps it's just as well. In times such as these, it's best not to reveal ourselves completely, not even to each other.

If you step over the line and into the circle, you may be able to hear better. Mind the chalk on your shoes.

I know many of you have travelled great distances to be here. Have you seen all there is to see? The pillbox batteries, the ovens, the ammunition depots with cavity-floors? Did you visit the workers' mass grave? Have you studied the plans carefully? Would you say that it's beautiful, this fort? They say it sits astride the mountains like a defiant lion. I confess I've never seen it. The guidebook says it wasn't built for beauty. But beauty can arrive uninvited can it not? It can fall upon things unexpectedly, like sunlight stealing through a chink in the curtains. Ah, but then this is the Fort with no chinks in its curtains, the Fort that has never been attacked. Does this mean its forbidding walls have thwarted even Beauty and sent it on its way?

Beauty. We could go on about it all day and all night long. What is it? What is it not? Who has the right to decide? Who are the world's real curators, or should we say the real world's curators? What is the real world? Are things we cannot imagine, measure, analyse, represent and reproduce real? Do they exist? Do they live in the recesses of our minds in a Fort that has never been attacked? When our imaginations fail, will the world fail too? How will we ever know?

How big is it, this Fort that may or may not be beautiful? They say it is the biggest fort ever built in the high mountains. Gigantic, you say? Gigantic makes things a little difficult for us. Shall we begin by mapping its vulnerabilities? Even though it has never been attacked (or so they say) think of how its creators must have lived and re-lived the idea of being attacked. They must have waited to be attacked. They must have dreamt of being attacked. They must have placed themselves in the minds and hearts of their enemies until they could barely tell themselves apart from those they feared so deeply. Until they no longer knew the difference between terror and desire. And then, from that knothole of tormented love, they must have imagined attacks from every conceivable direction with such precision and cunning as to render them almost real. How else could they have built a fortification like this? Fear must have shaped it; dread must be embedded in its very grain. Is that what this fort really is? A fragile testament to trepidation, to apprehension, to an imagination under siege?

It was built – and I quote its chief chronicler – to store everything that ought to be defended at all costs. Unquote. That's saying something. What did they store here comrades? What did they defend?

Weapons. Gold. Civilization itself. Or so the guide book says.

And now, in Europe's time of peace and plenty, it is being used to showcase the transcendent purpose, or, if you wish, the sublime purposelessness, of civilization's highest aspiration: Art. These days, I'm told, Art is Gold.

I hope you have bought the catalogue. You must. For appearances' sake at least.

As you know, the chances are that there's gold in this Fort. Real gold. Hidden gold. Most of it has been removed, some of it stolen, but a good amount is said to still remain. Everyone's looking for it, knocking on walls, digging up graves. Their urgency must be palpable to you.

They know there's gold in the Fort. They also know there's no snow on the mountains. They want the gold to buy some snow. Those of you who are from here – you must know about the Snow Wars. Those of you who aren't, listen carefully. It is vital that you understand the texture and fabric of the place you have chosen for your mission.

Since the winters have grown warmer here, there are fewer 'snowmaking' days and as a result there's not enough snow to cover the ski-slopes. Most ski-slopes can no longer be classified as 'snow-reliable'. At a recent press conference – perhaps you've read the reports – Werner Voltron, President of the Association of Ski-instructors said, "The future, I think is black. Completely black," [Scattered applause that sounds as though its coming from the back of the audience. Barely discernable murmurs of Bravo! Viva! Wah! Wah! Yeah Brother!] No no no... comrades, comrades... you misunderstand. Mr Voltron was not referring to the Rise of the Black Nation. By Black he meant ominous, ruinous, hopeless, catastrophic, and bleak. He said that every one degree Celsius increase in winter temperatures spells doom for almost one hundred ski-resorts. That, as you can imagine, is a lot of jobs and money.

Not everybody is as pessimistic as Mr Voltron. Take the example of Guenther Holzhausen CEO of MountainWhite, a new branded snow product, popularly known as Hot Snow (because it can be manufactured at two to three degrees Celsius above the normal temperature). Mr Holzhausen said – and I'll read this out to you – "The changing climate is a great opportunity for the Alps. The extremely high temperatures and rising sea levels brought about by global warming will be bad for seaside tourism. Ten years from now people usually headed for the Mediterranean will be coming to the comparatively cooler Alps for skiing holidays. It is our responsibility; indeed our duty to guarantee snow of the highest quality. MountainWhite guarantees dense, evenly spread snow which skiers will find is far superior to natural snow." Unquote.

MountainWhite snow, comrades, like most artificial snows, is made from a protein located in the membrane of a bacterium called *Pseudomonas syringae*. What sets it apart from other snows, is that in order to prevent the spread of disease and other pathogenic hazards, MountainWhite guarantees that the water it uses to generate snow for skiing is of the highest quality, sourced directly from drinking water networks. "You can bottle our ski-slopes and drink them!" Guenther Holzhausen is known to have once boasted. [Some restless angry murmuring on the sound track] I understand... But calm your anger. It will only blur your vision and blunt your purpose.

To generate artificial snow, nucleated, treated water is shot out of high-pressure power-intensive snow cannons at high speed. When the snow is ready it is stacked in mounds called whales. The snow whales are groomed, tilled and fluffed before the snow is evenly spread on slopes that have been shaved of imperfections and natural rock formations. The soil is covered with a thick layer of fertilizer to keep the soil cool and insulate it from the warmth generated by Hot Snow. Most ski resorts use artificial snow now. Almost every resort has a cannon. Every canon has a brand. Every brand is at war. Every war is an opportunity.

If you want to ski on – or at least see – natural snow, you'll have to go further, up to the glaciers that are wrapped in giant sheets of plastic foil to protect them from the summer heat and prevent them from shrinking. I don't know how natural that is though – a glacier wrapped in foil. You might feel as though you're skiing on an old sandwich. Worth a try I suppose. I wouldn't know, I don't ski. The Foil Wars are a form of high altitude combat – not the kind that some of you are trained for [chuckles]. They are separate, though not entirely unconnected to the Snow Wars.

In the Snow Wars, MountainWhite's only serious adversary is Scent n' Sparkle, a new product introduced by Peter Holzhausen, who, if you will pardon me for gossiping, is Guenther Holzhausen's brother. Real brother. Their wives are sisters. [A murmur]. What's that? Yes... real brothers married to real sisters. The families are both from Salzburg.

In addition to the all the advantages of MountainWhite, Scent n' Sparkle promises whiter, brighter snow with a fragrance. At a price of course. Scent n' Sparkle comes in three aromas, Vanilla, Pine and Evergreen. It promises to satisfy tourists' nostalgic yearning for old-fashioned holidays. Scent n' Sparkle is a boutique product poised to storm the mass market, or so the pundits say, because it is a product with vision, and an eye to the future. Scented snow anticipates the effects that the global migration of trees and forests will have on the tourism industry. [Murmur] Yes. I did say tree migration.

Did any of you read Macbeth in school? Do you remember what the witches on the heath said to him? "Macbeth shall never vanquished be, until Great Burnam Wood to high Dunsinane Hill shall come against him?"

Do you remember what he said to them?

[A voice from the audience somewhere at the back, says, "That will never be. Who can impress the forest, bid the tree unfix his earthbound root?"]

Ha! Excellent. But Macbeth was dead wrong. Trees have unfixed their earthbound roots and are on the move. They're migrating from their devastated homes in the hope of a better life. Like people. Tropical palms are moving up into the lower Alps. Evergreens are climbing to higher altitudes in search of a colder climate. On the ski-slopes, under the damp carpets of Hot Snow, in the warm, fertilizer-coated soil, stowaway seeds of new hothouse plants are germinating. Perhaps soon there'll be fruit trees and vineyards and olive groves in the high mountains.

When the trees migrate, birds and insects, wasps, bees, butterflies, bats and other pollinators will have to move with them. Will they be able to adapt to their new surrounding? Robins have already arrived in Alaska. Alaskan caribou plagued by mosquitoes are moving to higher altitudes where they don't have enough food to eat. Mosquitoes carrying malaria are sweeping through the Lower Alps.

I wonder how this Fort that was built to withstand heavy artillery fire will mount a defence against an army of mosquitoes.

The Snow Wars have spread to the plains. MountainWhite now dominates the snow market in Dubai and Saudi Arabia. It is lobbying in India and China, with some success, for dam construction projects dedicated entirely to snow cannons for all-season ski-resorts. It has entered the Dutch market for dyke reinforcement and for sea-homes built on floating raft foundations, so that when the sea levels rise and the dykes are finally breached and Holland drifts into the ocean, MountainWhite can harness the rising tide and turn it into gold. Never

fear MountainWhite is here! works just as well in the flatlands. Scent n' Sparkle has diversified too. It owns a popular TV channel and controlling shares in a company that makes – as well as defuses – landmines. Perhaps their new batch will be scented – strawberry, cranberry, jojoba – in order to attract animals and birds as well as children. Other than snow and landmines, Scent n' Sparkle also retails mass market, battery operated, prosthetic limbs in standard sizes for Central Asia and Africa. It is at the forefront of the campaign for Corporate Social Responsibility and is funding a chain of excellently appointed corporate orphanages and NGOs in Afghanistan which some of you are familiar with. Recently it has put in a tender for the dredging and cleaning of lakes and rivers in Austria and Italy that have once again grown toxic from the residue of fertilizer and artificial snowmelt.

Even here, at the top of the world, residue is no longer the past. It is the future. At least some of us have learned over the years to live like rats in the ruins of other peoples' greed. We have learned to fashion weapons from nothing at all. We know how to use them. These are our combat skills.

Comrades, the stone lion in the mountains has begun to weaken. The Fort that has never been attacked has laid siege to itself. It is time for us to make our move. Time to replace the noisy, undirected spray of machine-gun fire with the cold precision of an assassin's bullet. Choose your targets carefully.

When the stone lion's stone bones have been interred in this, our wounded, poisoned earth, when the Fort That Has Never Been Attacked has been reduced to rubble and when the dust from the rubble has settled, who knows, perhaps it will snow again.

That is all I have to say. You may disperse now. Commit your instructions to memory. Go well, comrades, leave no footprints. Until we meet again, god-speed, khuda hafiz and keep your powder dry.

[Shuffle of footsteps leaving. Fading away.]

LE ISTRUZIONI ARUNDHATI ROY

[miei saluti. Mi spiace non essere qui con voi oggi, ma forse è meglio così. In tempi come questi è meglio non scoprirsi completamente, neppure fra di noi. Se avanzate oltre la linea e dentro il cerchio, sentirete meglio. Attenzione al gesso sulle vostre scarpe.

So che molti di voi hanno fatto un lungo viaggio per essere qui, oggi. Avete visto tutto ciò che c'è da vedere? Le casematte delle batterie, i forni, i depositi di munizioni con i piani sotterranei? Avete visitato la fossa comune degli operai? Avete esaminato attentamente i progetti di costruzione? La definireste "bella" questa fortezza? Dicono che è situata a cavallo delle montagne, come un leone spavaldo. Confesso di non averla mai vista. La guida dice che non venne costruita per bellezza. Ma la bellezza può arrivare senza essere invitata, o no? Può stendersi sopra le cose inaspettatamente, come luce del sole che penetra attraverso una fessura tra le tende? Solo che questa è una fortezza pri-

Der einheimische Wein ist leicht und rein
wir werden unsre Trinkgefäße füllen und ins beschlagene Glas hineinhinsehen.
Der Zug fährt nordwärts
und die von Klöstern lesen, sind Reisende
ihre geröteten Wangen werden nicht vom Blatt einer Dattelpalme geritzt
die durch das Uran der Geschosse verdorrt ist.
Ich fühle die Vögel um vier (morgens selbstverständlich).
Ich fühle den ersten Zug um viertel nach fünf.
Ich fühle, dass ich zittre...

DIE NACHT DES ZUGEFRORENEN SEES

Ein Berg über dem andern
dann eine Stelle, an der man in Wasser tritt...
Wasser wie kaum ein anderes Wasser
Bäume, doch wie Steine
als wäre dort der Krater eines Vulkans
der vor Tausenden von Jahren erloschen ist.
Die Sonne ist kalt.
Und ein einziger Vogel wird kommen
ein Vogel, der uns
und unsere Toten
zum Tor der Hölle tragen wird.

JUBEL

Ich werde mit dem Frühzug abreisen:
Meine Haare wellen sich
und ich trage eine feine Feder am Hut
der Himmel ruft mich, er hat Blitze
der Weg treibt mich, er hat Adern.
Ich werde abreisen...
Der Weg nimmt mich auf.

Sei begrüßt, freier Junge!

Deine Koffer sind Gerüche und Nektar...
frühmorgens siehst du die Bäume blau
und entdeckst, dass die Vögel schon vor dir erwacht sind.

Sei begrüßt, freier Junge!

Die Gazellen werden aus freien Stücken zu dir kommen
und die Felder werden dich angemessen ernähren.

Sei begrüßt, freier Junge!

Sei begrüßt, es wird Zeit, dass es blitzt...

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SCENARIOS OFFERED IN RESPONSE TO A DESIRE

**ADAM BUDAK,
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"During the last ten years the Fortress has represented,
to the village of Fortezza, an object of desire."
Dario Massimo, La Fortezza¹

I
Dario Massimo's book on the history of the originally Habsburg fortress of Fortezza / Franzensfeste begins with an enigmatic statement about a fortress becoming an object of desire. This statement is written in the aftermath of the demobilization of the fortress by the 'Tridentine' Alpine Brigade of the Italian army in 2005, a hundred and sixty seven years after it was commissioned into military service by the army of the Austro-Hungarian empire in the wake of the Napoleonic wars.

A garrison withdraws, and the adjoining village that was always kept at arms length by the military obtains the right to use its grounds for 'guided tours and cultural events'. These rights are made explicit in the terms of a contract dated May 2, 2005 between the Property Office of the Italian Republic and the Municipality of the village of Fortezza / Franzensfeste. A fortress, hitherto shrouded in impenetrable secrecy and the obscure reasons of a shadowy state, becomes a sort of commons situated in the fold of the Dolomite mountains. Instead of soldiers, the men and women of the village, especially those with a passion for history, go on moonlit walks to discover for themselves what had been kept so firmly shut from them behind high walls and locked gates. Dario Massimo, a local historian, writes a popular book on the history of the fortress; the occasional concert momentarily inhabits the silence of the fort; transiting tourists stop their cars and stray into the fortification, possibly drawn by rumours of buried treasure; passengers on passing trains, on their way from Austria to Italy, find their glimpses of it laced with a renewed curiosity.

Three years later, in 2008, the seventh edition of Manifesta, the European Biennial of Contemporary Art, is invited to locate itself across the Trentino-South Tyrol region of northern Italy. The fortress at Fortezza / Franzensfeste is the northernmost spur of the footprint of Manifesta 7.

Scenarios, the exhibition at Fortezza/Franzensfeste for Manifesta 7 is the work that emerges at the intersection of our responses as curators to the task of devising an adequate answer to the 'desires' that are projected on to the walls of the fortress by its new custodians. This book, though it acts as a complement to *Scenarios* (the exhibition), is also an independent anthology.

II
A fortification finds its purpose in standing up to an assault. The fortress at Fortezza / Franzensfeste has never been attacked. Having never been attacked, it has never had to embody the promise of its foundation either. Assault, unrealized, transforms the space of the fortress into an arena for the playing out of a series of never-ending scenarios. The enemy never came, but then, what if they came another day? A perception of possible threat became a threat

perception sculpted into a fold of the mountains. What if, literally, these walls could speak, this light could thicken, this silence be made tangible? Would they tell tall tales coloured by the fatigue of the eternal anticipation of an assault, or would they spin other, more delicate, scenarios?

Scenarios encounters the paradox of the fortress made redundant by its own invulnerability. It invites the visitor to consider and conceive the possibility of other scenarios: codes that encrypt latent and potential patterns for thought and affect that can shape our understandings of the past and the future, circumstances and possibility.

We all participate in the unfolding of 'scenarios' that have already framed us, preconceived our presence, even been projected on to us. These projections condition the situations and experiences that build the fortifications of everyday life. In the past, these were familiar to us as the scenarios stemming from a person's origin and social position, family, class, gender or milieu. In the course of history, the protocols and procedures of institutions (mostly of the state) gradually became ever more dominant in this 'scripting' of individual as well as public life. Today, the scripts of both public and private lives are no longer merely institutionally regulated, but increasingly subordinated to instrumental and managerial agendas, by the projected scenarios of consumerism, security and the 'conditioned' environments that they bring in their wake. Scenarios of possible outcomes dominate the current discourse in everything from finance to political alignments and military strategy. The volatile global prices of energy, food and housing are shaped by the speculative trade in the 'futures' of basic commodities like petroleum, foodgrains and land. Fortunes are made, and lives destroyed as 'trends', 'projections' and 'targets' replace the actual processes of everyday life. Each context thus imposes its rules and protocols in both explicit and implicit ways, preconceiving our presence, and entangling us and our very existence in a multiplicity of pre-scripted scenarios. And even though our presence is likely to challenge these scripts through the irreducible differences of individuality, individuality itself tends to be actualised within pre-conceived frames. *Scenarios* unfolds against this background of the question of what happens to the individual's capacity to imagine the world otherwise in a time where society itself has become a giant calculating machine? When profiling, statistics and computerized simulations have come to determine our sense of possibility?

As curators, our intention of bringing this project to the fortress at Fortezza / Franzensfeste consists in aiming to provoke reflection on how we all come to fulfil and perform the parts scripted for us in the kind of scenarios we have gestured to above. We have invited ten writers to respond with texts to the enigma of the fortress, to its sonorous walls, its labyrinth of memories, its whisper of war, its tales of lost gold, its shimmer of water. Novelists, philosophers, historians, poets, playwrights, musicians and artists have sent in texts in the form of letters, briefings, dialogues, poems and meditations. This book contains each of the texts, in English, German and Italian.



Ten texts arc through *Scenarios*. Ten writers speak in different voices, in different languages, trying out different registers of utterance. Some tell stories, others ask questions. Some speak of homes left behind, others of the road. Some give voice to the limits of vision, others consider what it means to listen.

Some texts speak to each other. Some stand alone. Some sing, some speculate, some argue.

Adriana Cavarero constructs a response to Plato's parable of the shadows in the cave in the form of an encounter between robust masculine stone and flowing female water. Mladen Dolar offers a meditation on the bounded closed-in nature of a fortress and the unboundedness of a voice. Margareth Obexer contributes an array of epistolary fragments communicating the arrested progress of a would-be immigrant's journey to Europe. Glen Neath presents a delirious monologue that articulates the fatigue of besieged alertness. Saskia Sassen delivers a thesis on the fluid history of migration and the necessity of learning to live with strangers. Shahid Amin traces the history of the words that move with mobile people. Rénee Green investigates the thresholds of visibility in a series of condensed, encrypted and almost telegraphic notes to herself. Thomas Meinecke speaks of voice, rhythm and music as the elements of a soft aquatic invasion carried out by slaves (and the descendants of slaves) that breaches the high walls of transatlantic culture. Saadi Yousef writes a cycle of *Fortezza* poems, invoking unseasonal journeys, missed appointments and the derailment of the twenty first century. Arundhati Roy undermines the defences of instrumental reason dressed in high altitude combat fatigues with a briefing about missing gold and melting snow.

In addition, we have invited Héléne Binet, a photographer known for responding to the inner lives of buildings with images that play a delicate game between revelation and concealment to make pictures of the fortress especially for this book. Her pictures are not 'representations' of the fortress, instead, they depict what the building 'does' to light, air and space. It is our wager that these pictures, with their attention to surfaces, arches, passages and vistas 'write' yet another story of the fortress.

The texts rush, stammer, flow, whisper, stop, persuade and move on. They laugh, wonder, sigh and ask us to imagine things, and to just stop and listen. The common thread that binds them is the fact that each of these contributions has been wrought as a specific response to the built form of the fortress at Fortezza / Franzensfeste, its location and history. Some stay close to the architecture and the physical location of the site, others step aside or climb higher altitudes. But each text makes the fortress speak a different language, such that its original function of invincible invulnerability is dissolved in a plurality of expressions.

The parable of Babel stages the advent of a multitude of voices and languages as the result of a divine retribution for the sin of pride. From this, it is said, springs the tragedy of incomprehension. The babble of words inside Fortezza / Franzensfeste offers a different scenario for thinking about the relationship between speech, stone and lost power. It suggests that the ultimate redundancy of the architecture of might is not necessarily a bad thing if it yields to the soft reclaiming of space by words that populate a dead fortress with tidings from many worlds. If incomprehension is a tragedy, then translation, and the possibility of breaching the walls between different languages and ways of speaking through acts of generous reading and listening, is a precious gift. A dead fortress can sometimes become an alive library. The house of war can become a shelter for migrant words.

1 Dario Massimo: La Fortezza (English translation by Simonetta Da Ronch), Bressanone / Brixen 2007.