

Blandine Chambost

CONFINEMENT JOURNEYS

24 mars - 11 mai 2020

Au début du confinement, j'ai sorti du grenier une collection de cartes postales qu'on m'avait donnée et que je n'avais jamais pris le temps de regarder. Ces souvenirs de voyage prenaient soudain un nouveau relief.

La collection avait été constituée par Marianne, une femme de lettres née dans les années 1920. Je l'avais connue dans les dernières années de sa vie. J'étudiais alors en Angleterre, et lui rendais visite lorsque je revenais en Ile-de-France. Nous ne parlions jamais du passé, mais de nos lectures et du temps présent.

L'immobilité m'a amenée à voyager avec Marianne. J'ai découvert en chemin qu'elle était née en Europe centrale, qu'elle vivait à Berlin dans les années 1930 et s'était établie en France après-guerre.

C'est l'Europe des années 1950 que j'ai redécouverte à travers ces cartes postales datées de sa main. J'ai d'abord été saisie par la beauté poignante des vues d'Italie. J'ai choisi des lieux, désertés et rendus inaccessibles par la pandémie, et les ai réunis par un assemblage qui constitue un paysage de mémoire.

Disposant d'un nombre d'épingles limité, j'ai été contrainte de défaire chaque assemblage pour en créer un nouveau. J'ai ainsi égrené les jours, en notant les réflexions que faisaient surgir les images recomposées.

C'est ainsi que les *Confinement Journeys* ont pris forme. A l'issue du confinement, j'ai pu m'approvisionner en épingles et en carton pour redessiner cette géographie intérieure, de Palerme à Perpignan.

- Confinement Journeys 01, Palermo Vicenza*
- Confinement Journeys 02, London Exmouth*
- Confinement Journeys 03, Pamplona San Sebastian*
- Confinement Journeys 04, Berlin*
- Confinement Journeys 05, Ibiza*
- Confinement Journeys 06, Basel Montreux*
- Confinement Journeys 07, Delft Amsterdam*
- Confinement Journeys 08, Cordon Briançon*
- Confinement Journeys 09, Venice Florence*
- Confinement Journeys 10, Schwarzwald*
- Confinement Journeys 11, London Canterbury*
- Confinement Journeys 12, Rome Palermo*
- Confinement Journeys 13, Burgos Palencia*
- Confinement Journeys 14, Vendée*
- Confinement Journeys 15, Vichy La Chaise-Dieu*
- Confinement Journeys 16, Berlin*
- Confinement Journeys 17, Amboise Langeais*
- Confinement Journeys 18, Ile d'Oléron*
- Confinement Journeys 19, Côte de Saintonge*
- Confinement Journeys 20, Val de Loire*
- Confinement Journeys 21, Dinard Kervignan*
- Confinement Journeys 22, Freiburg Esslingen*
- Confinement Journeys 23, Ibiza*
- Confinement Journeys 24, Illiers-Combray*
- Confinement Journeys 25, Reims Verteuil*
- Confinement Journeys 26, London*
- Confinement Journeys 27, Bordeaux Orthez*
- Confinement Journeys 28, Paris Crèvecœur-le-Grand*
- Confinement Journeys 29, Civaux Berlin*
- Confinement Journeys 30, Perpignan*



Pendant les mois de mars, avril et mai 2020, dans une mansarde au dernier étage d'un immeuble de Nantes, 120 minutes par jour, Blandine Chambost a dépouillé une boîte de cartes postales qu'on lui avait données. Dedans : des images de lieux visités par une femme pendant les années 50 et 60, des villes d'Europe - la France, l'Italie, l'Espagne, l'Angleterre, l'Allemagne, la Hollande. Découpées, recomposées, les cartes qui un jour ont raconté un voyage en racontent un autre, celui, intérieur, de Blandine, vigie, sur le mât du présent, d'une mémoire étrangère. Guetteuse de punctums, elle resignifie les fragments qui la touchent à la lumière grise du confinement imposé par l'épidémie. Les villégiatures se succèdent, des voyages en noir et blanc où parfois perce la couleur (Venise !) - puisque c'est aussi une petite histoire technique que racontent ces cartes postales d'après-guerre. Il est étrange de constater, dans les clichés du Grand Tour défaits par le découpage, qu'une catastrophe a déjà eu lieu, un peu comme dans l'apocalypse que Cortazar perçoit sous l'écran des douces images de Solentiname ou bien comme dans les campagnes placides de Sebald que l'histoire dans son reflux rend définitivement tragiques.

Ici non plus, pas d'évidence. C'est juste que la pittoresque endeillée des marches d'Ibiza a pour hors-champ muet des centaines de milliers de morts et d'exilés espagnols. C'est qu'il y a Berlin et les petits voiliers sur le lac de Wannsee. Il y a le casino de Vichy. Au milieu d'une place, Blandine repère un enfant grave qui regarde le photographe de l'insouciance estivale. La splendeur des places ne bruit pas des milliers de touristes d'aujourd'hui mais leur calme anticipe désormais, lorsqu'on les regarde, le silence que nous avons perçu en bas de nos maisons, sans que nous sachions s'il fallait nous réjouir de ce suspens soudain propice au chant des oiseaux ou s'il fallait bien y comprendre que la vie s'éteint en un instant. A travers l'infini diminutif de sa lucarne, à travers celui des cartes que son cutter découpe, Blandine semble nous dire qu'il n'y a pas, en Europe, au XX^e siècle, de port sûr où amarrer notre nostalgie. La voix discrète qui, à la marge des journeys, étreint par intermittence celle des autres - Stendhal, Rilke, Virginia Woolf, Jacques Brel, Robert Desnos - nous appelle alors que nous errons sur les cendres d'un monde, sur les cendres de tous les mondes. Nous ne sommes pas seuls. Nous sommes la communauté des hommes.

Christel Sola, juin 2020



I was given a collection of postcards by a woman born in the 1920s who travelled all around Europe. She was an independent mind, a polyglot and an avid reader. The collection she assembled step by step has been locked up in an attic for years. Now has come a time to turn it into something.

24.03.20





SEA FRONT LOOKING WEST, EXMOUTH.

42503

Looking at these images is reconnecting with life at a slower pace, life before fast travel, mass tourism and overconsumption. That boy riding a bicycle is the picture of freedom. What is there to learn from him in these times of isolation and global reset?

25.03.20







Pausing to reflect on our connection with the earth. Haven't we toyed with the elements to the point of tipping off their balance? Haven't we endangered species to the point of extinction? As we sit in the silence of our homes, nature talks back. The birds have never sung so loud, nor the waves roll up so clear.

26.03.20





Being confined in a city makes me more cutely aware of the vital necessity of open spaces, vast skylines and unobstructed movement. Empty streets have become rivers where swan-like pedestrians can glide.

27.03.20



With the rise of global tourism, so many historical places have turned into holiday destinations. Many locals have left to make room for short-term residents. In these days of no-travel, are these villages coming back to sustainable, deep-rooted, community life?

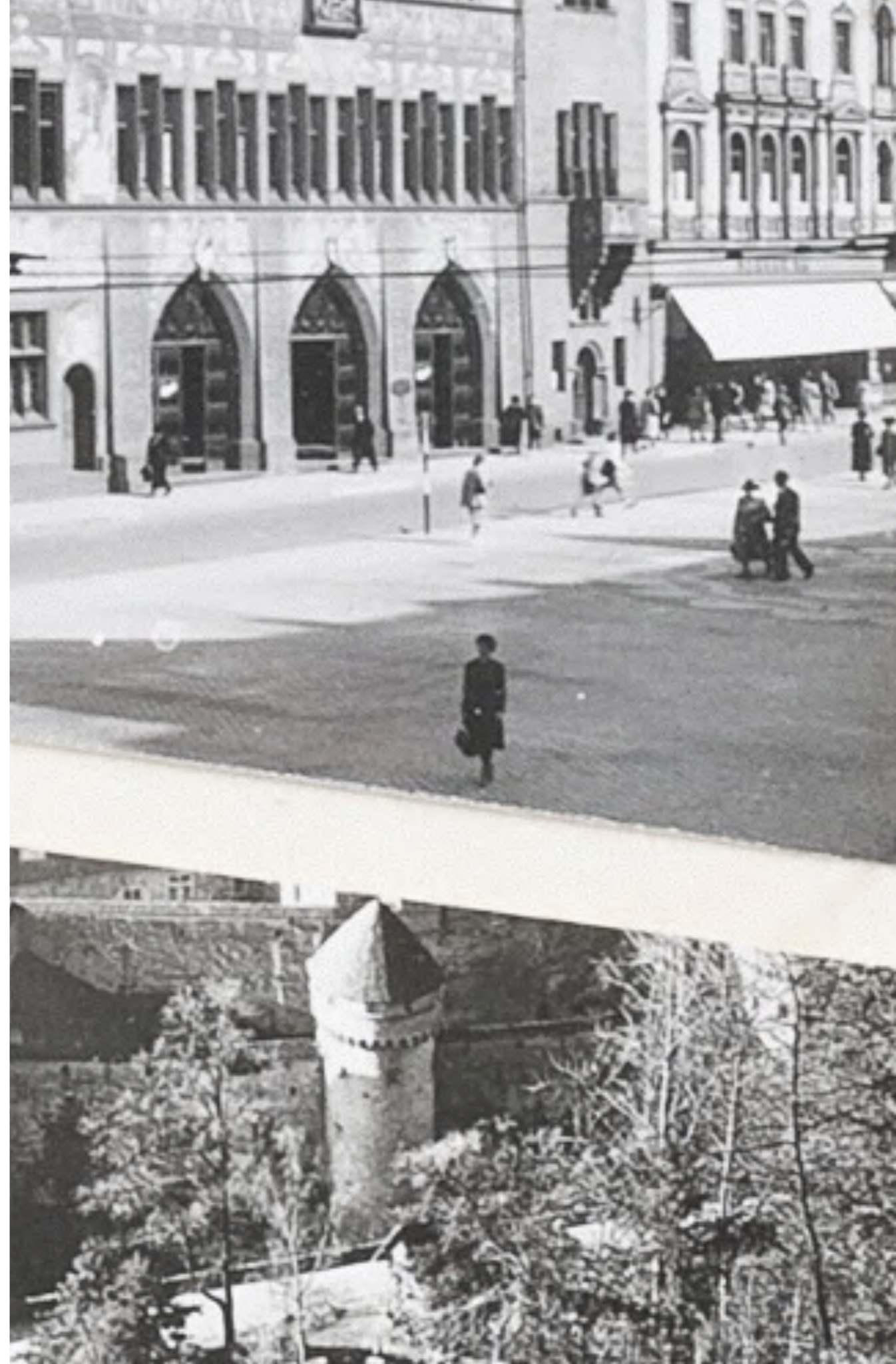
28.03.20





Some of us live in what may seem like ivory towers to others. Some of us have found refuge in fortified selves, while others are more selfless than ever. Thinking of the many carers, helpers, minders, growers, makers, givers.

30.03.20







With the rise of cheap air travel, millions of people have been ceaselessly moving fast around the globe. Today nearly 3 billion individuals are at a standstill. Remembering slow travel, the art of taking things in, wide-eyed.

31.03.20

Confinement Journeys 08, Briançon Cordon





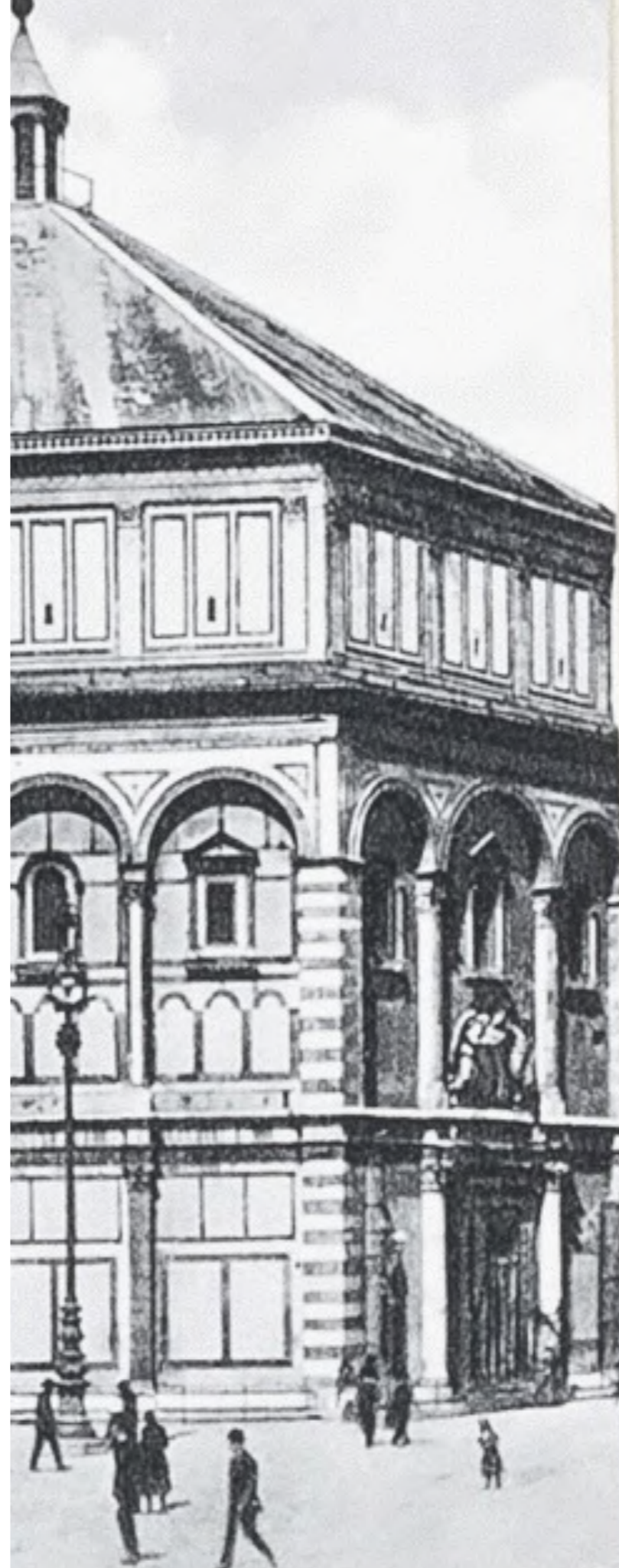
April. That time of year when everything starts to turn green and snow persists serenely. Perhaps the ice melt will slow down and all hibernating species will wake up with a dance as this inordinate spring provides the earth with a welcome breather?

01.04.20

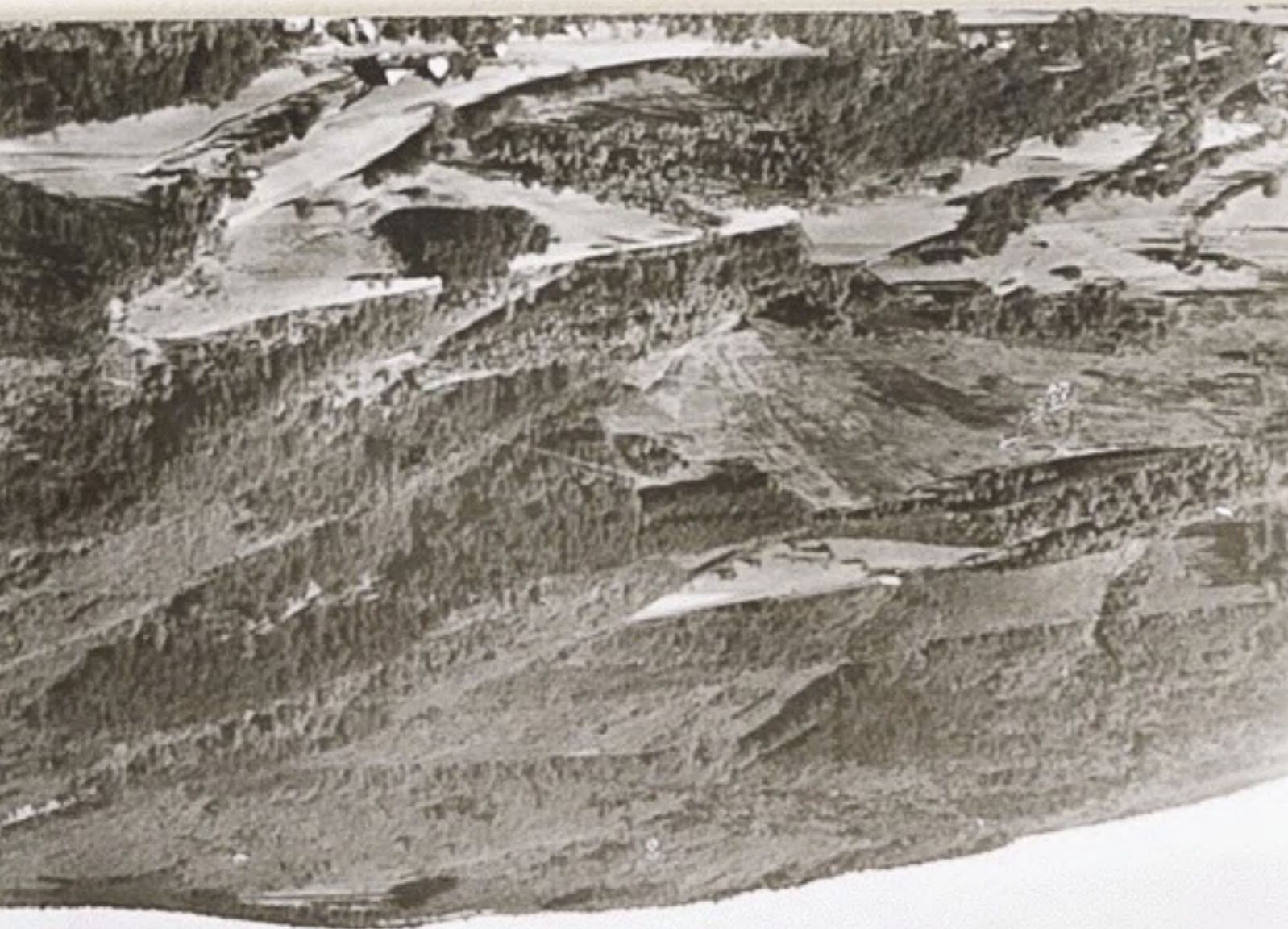


Stendhal wrote about the overwhelming ecstasy of being exposed to an overabundance of beauty. In these days of utter scarcity, aren't we prompted to go within, explore with our mind's eye and marvel from the depths of our souls?

02.04.20







The woman who built this collection was born in the 1920s and started traveling around Europe in the 1950s. It is perhaps easier for us now to imagine what it must have felt like to cross borders, discover landscapes and reunite with people after WWII.

03.04.20





“While we may have more still to endure, better days will return: we will be with our friends again; we will be with our families again; we will meet again.” The stirring address of a 93 year-old monarch, whose first broadcast was in 1940 when she and her sister spoke to child evacuees.

06.04.20



“True happiness is to enjoy the present, without anxious dependence upon the future... The greatest blessings of mankind are within us and within our reach. A wise man is content with his lot, whatever it may be, without wishing for what he has not.”
Seneca
Try a little Stoicism.

07.04.20





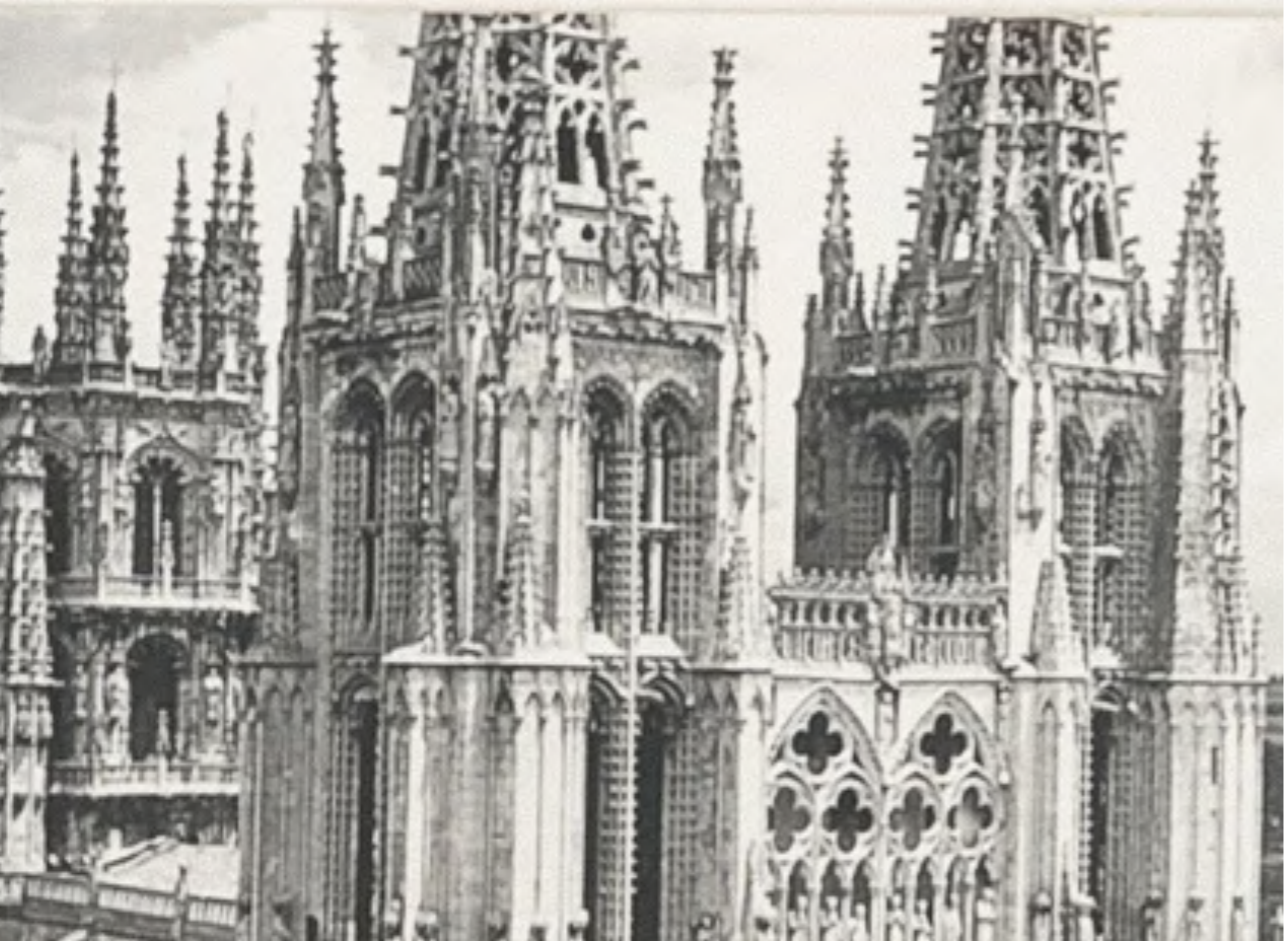
Confinement Journeys 13, Burgos Palencia



While most of us have to work from home, many have to get out and work, in supermarkets, in public health, transport and hygiene, in providing daily assistance to the elderly, the refugees, the destitute, the homeless.

08.04.20





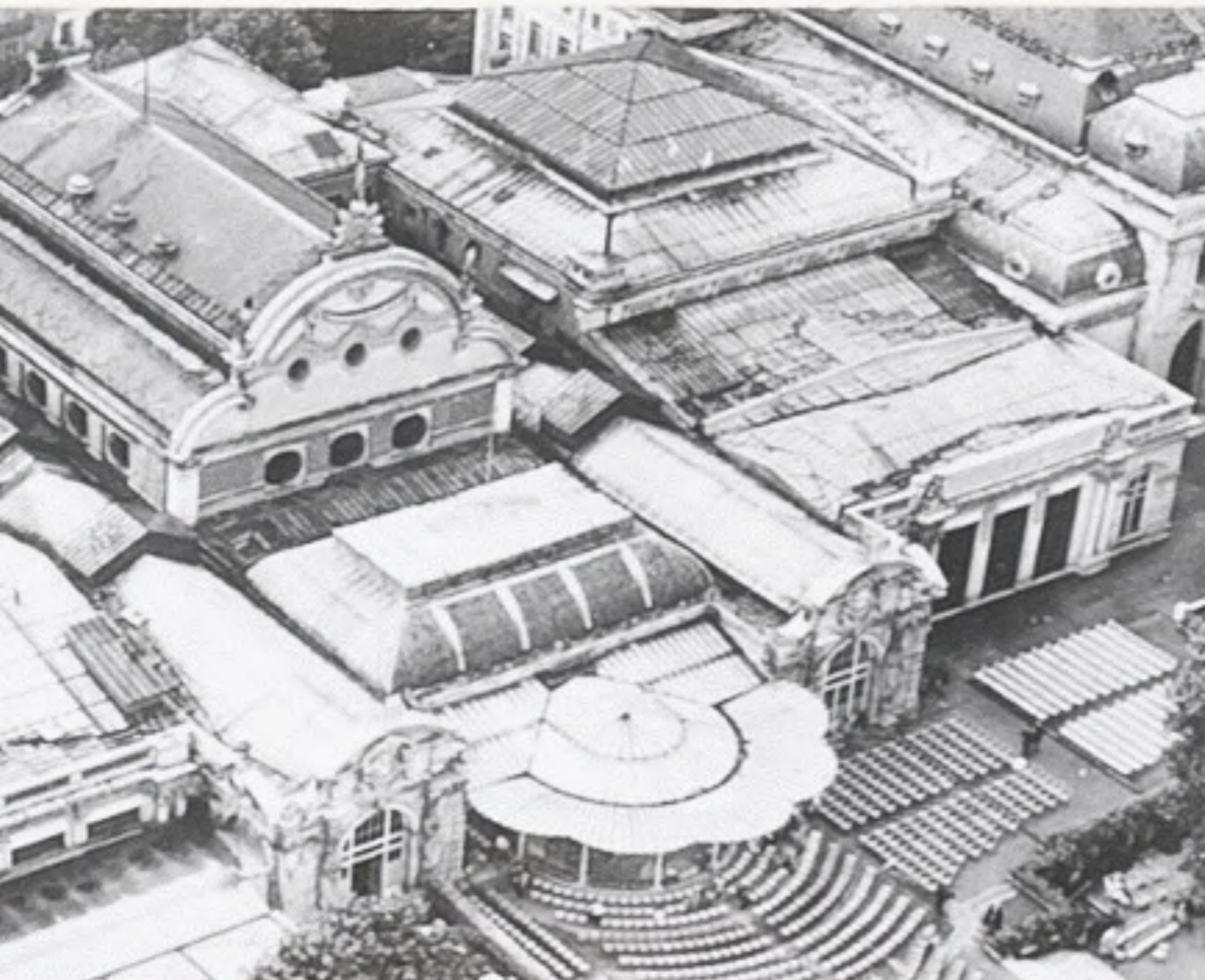


For children with a sunny disposition or with imaginative parents, these days have a sense of adventure. For others living in lockdown must be unimaginably hard. Pictured here is a holiday home for war orphans. The postcards are dated 1952, and there's something of a Hopperian absence in them.

09.04.20







However hard we try to carry on with our lives, there are shadows veiling the light we hold. Remembrance of darkness past, vibrations of present sorrow. The sun is shining forcibly - ironically? Good Friday mood.

10.04.20



Berlin Alexanderplatz



Berlin Schlachensee



Am Schlachensee





“Have patience with everything that remains unsolved in your heart. Try to love the questions themselves, like locked rooms and like books written in a foreign language. Do not now look for the answers. They cannot now be given to you because you could not live them. It is a question of experiencing everything. At present you need to live the question. Perhaps you will gradually, without even noticing it, find yourself experiencing the answer, some distant day.”

Rainer Maria Rilke, *Letters to a young Poet*

13.04.20





And so our collective individual multiple singular journey continues - onwards, inwards we go. There are colourful areas, full of blossom and glow, interspersed with bleaker patches. Ghostly sequences from the past and unreal flashes into the future. Time to live ever more fully in the present, bridging the gaps between the known and the unknown.

14.04.20



Mapping our inner island. Is it tropical? Volcanic? What is the coastline like? Are there wide, sandy beaches? Or rather, secluded creeks? Has it been deforested? Or is it covered with vast expanses of evergreens, prospering with wildlife? What is our climate? And how do we nurture this inside world, our oyster?

15.04.20



*Ses belles plages.
Son doux climat.
Ses forêts.
Ses huitres. Ses moules.*





Social distancing: maintaining a physical distance between people and reducing the number of times people come into direct contact with each other. Isn't distance a relative notion? Closeness an immaterial one? Sharing the deep blue silence and a boat with kindred spirits currently anchored oceans away.





Certain stories told by generations before us now take on a new significance. My mother-in-law was born in the Loire Valley where her parents had escaped after their home city up north was bombed to the ground. Where did you find refuge when the invisible enemy was declared? Does a river run through it? Can you smell the roses?

17.04.20





“Une île
Une île au large de l’espoir
Où les hommes n’auraient pas peur
Et douce et calme comme un miroir

Une île
Calme comme un matin de Pâques
Offrant l’océan langueur
D’une sirène à chaque vague”

Jacques Brel
19.04.20



Esslingen a. N. Marktplatz mit Ditzig





Today I am this boy standing in the middle of the market square. Standing still while everyone is milling about. Staring at the invisible horizon, looking myself in the eye with a question. What now? Can we really go back to life as it was before? Shouldn't we be more daring, more imaginative, more unified? Wiser, wider?

20.04.20



Some days we feel anchored in the safety of a quiet harbour. Others we have the irrepressible urge to push the boat out, to set sail and cross uncharted seas. Today I am a three-mast sailboat chasing the sun. The destination “is not down in any map; true places never are.” Herman Melville, *Moby Dick*

22.04.20





Day after day we observe spring unfold, from bud to leaf, with inordinate attention. “Le véritable voyage ne consiste pas à chercher de nouveaux paysages, mais à avoir de nouveaux yeux”. So wrote Proust who spent 15 years as a recluse, remembering things past. Yet isn't the real journey one in the perpetual fullness of the present?

24.04.20





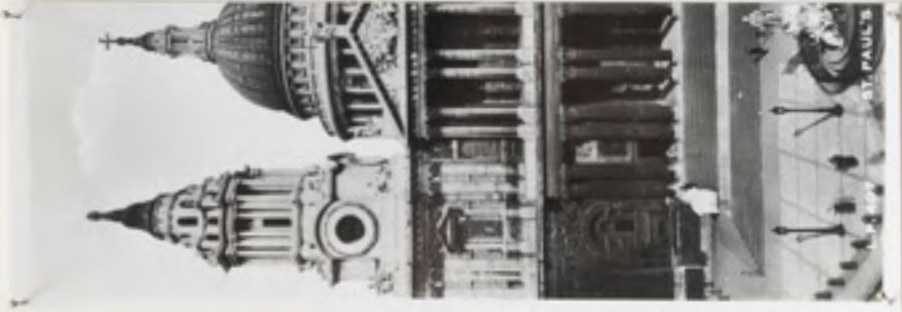
Gilbey



Every day we are assailed by faceless, meaningless numbers. Yet away from the spectre of death is the daily miracle of life. The overwhelming sense of togetherness that is urging us to keep physically apart. Time to reinvent our individualities with a renewed sense of common purpose. United we rise.

29.04.20

Confinement Journeys 26, London



“sitting on the bus going up Shaftesbury Avenue, she felt herself everywhere; not 'here, here, here'; and she tapped the back of the seat; but everywhere. She waved her hand, going up Shaftesbury Avenue. She was all that. So that to know her, or any one, one must seek out the people who completed them; even the places.” Today I am Mrs Dalloway, stream-of-consciousness across London.

30.04.20





One week to go before the end of lockdown in this country. What are the most pressing commitments awaiting us? Are we going to walk, drive, cycle, where to? Some people will be rushing back to the hairdresser's. Others will be forced back into commuting, while all they might be aspiring to is a donkey ride out of the city walls.

04.05.20







Here we are, suspended, at the junction between before and after. The clock is ticking. Some are about to come back to town. Many are hesitating whether or not to send their children back to school. What is the “new normal” life we are returning to? Can we set our own terms? And decide to build on some of the ground established during this extra-ordinary period?

06.05.20





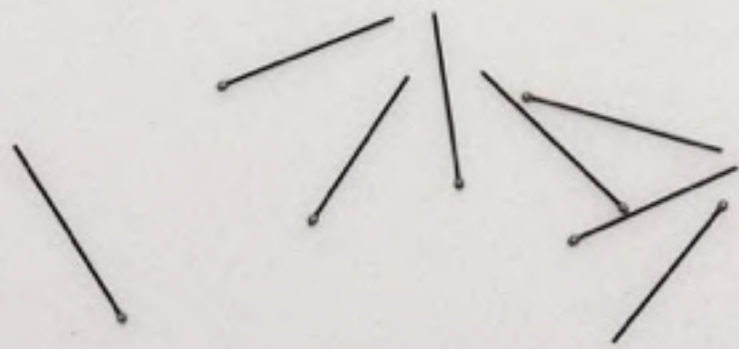
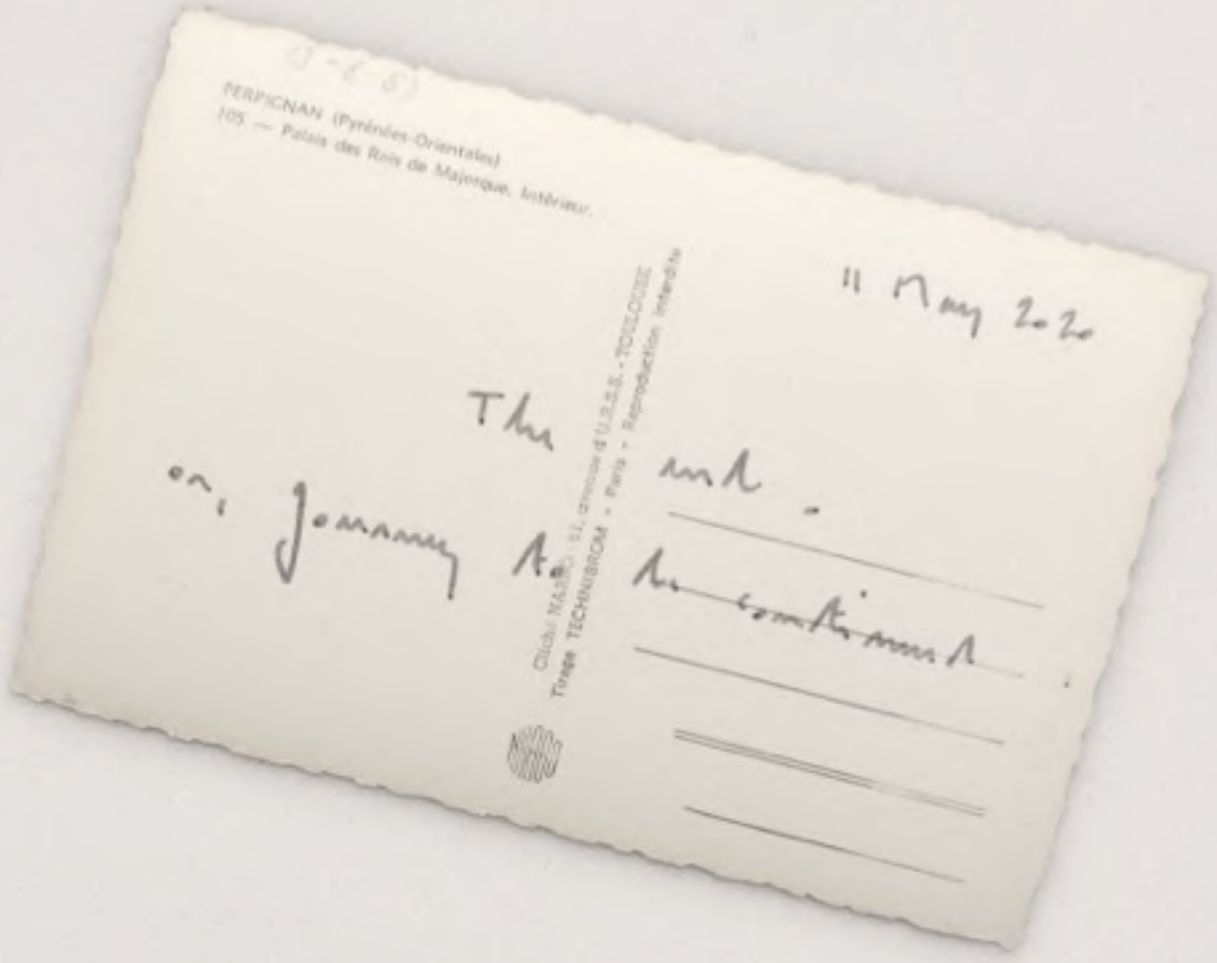
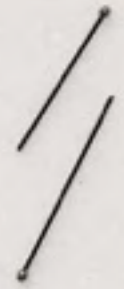
Insel Lindwerder



“Un jour après un jour,
Une vague après une vague.
Où vas-tu ? Où allez-vous ?
Terre meurtrie par tant d’hommes errants !
Terre enrichie par les cadavres de tant d’hommes.
Mais la terre c’est nous,
Nous ne sommes pas sur elle
Mais en elle depuis toujours.”

Robert Desnos, Terre
08.05.20





Confinement Journeys comes to an end in Perpignan, whose train station was once humbly designated as the centre of the world by Salvador Dali. Having access to a limited supply of pins and board during these 8 weeks of lockdown, I had to undo each composition to assemble the next one. Like Penelope unweaving what she had woven the day before. Maybe one day I will reassemble and tell the whole tale, in digital form or in real space. Maybe I'll meet you in Rome, Berlin or Burgos.

11.05.20



Une sélection de *Confinement Journeys* est présentée chez Dilecta en juillet 2020.
Prix et disponibilité sur demande.

contact@blandinechambost.com