









ገጽ 517 ላይ የተጻፈው ጽሑፍ በሙሉ የተደገፈ ነው።

FRENCH

Amharique

Parlée par plus de 20 millions de personnes (et première langue pour la moitié d'entre elles), l'amharique est la langue officielle de l'Éthiopie comprise aujourd'hui par la population sur tout le territoire, ceci alors que l'on recense plus de soixante-dix langues différentes. Son nom provient de la province d'Amhara, sur les hauts plateaux d'Abyssinie. Elle s'inscrit dans une longue tradition littéraire, mais ce n'est en fait que dans la seconde moitié du 19^e siècle que l'amharique est devenue la langue de l'administration et du gouvernement qu'elle est aujourd'hui.

C'est une langue sémitique, au même titre que l'arabe et l'hébreu, mais suite à deux millénaires d'influences locales, il s'en est considérablement éloigné tant dans le lexique que dans la grammaire. L'écriture est syllabique et les voyelles y sont notées ; son alphabet n'est utilisé qu'en Éthiopie et est à peu près la même que celle du guèze, la langue éthiopienne classique devenue langue de la liturgie orthodoxe.

En Belgique, on compte de 600 à 800 locuteurs de l'amharique.

Moulou Mek

L'Homme de Ville

On peut dire des hommes ce qu'on peut dire des rats : il y a le rat de ville, il y a le rat des champs ; il y a l'Homme de Ville, il y a l'Homme des Champs. Le second spécimen humain semble avoir hérité d'une existence prédestinée: sa vie devenue dès sa tendre enfance synonyme de terre, s'écoulera ainsi jusqu'à ce qu'elle s'éteigne, et il reposera dans cette même terre qu'il n'avait cessé de creuser.

Le monde pour lui est limité par cette voile céleste qui fait dôme sur l'étendue de sa région encerclée par l'horizon ; il croira encore sans effort que le domaine où il est enraciné fait partie d'un grand tout qui forme un pays, son pays. Mais allez lui dire que la platitude de cette terre qu'il s'entête à creuser n'est qu'apparente et qu'en réalité la terre est ronde, il vous rira au nez et, pendant la veillée autour du feu, grignotant son « ashouk » éternel, il racontera à ses camarades la toute dernière blague de ce farceur de citadin. Vous pouvez lui raconter l'histoire d'Aladin et son tapis volant comme si vous la teniez pour vraie. Il ne vous contredira pas sur le moment, il a trop de pudeur. Il fera semblant d'accepter et feindra une telle crédulité qu'il vous prendra l'idée d'aller rejoindre son ashouk éternel dans un autre monde.

* * *

L'Homme de Ville s'étire et baille à n'en plus finir dans son immense lit douillet et considère

Au déjeuner, l'Homme de Ville, au régime, n'a pas le cœur à sauter l'apéritif, puis il considère avec tristesse le riche menu. Ah ! ce qu'il voudrait bien goûter ce ragoût... Non ! Ce serait aller trop loin. « Je ne me porte pas garant » a dit le médecin, son ulcère fera du sien... et cet autre plat auquel il attache un amour particulier ? Encore non ! Son foie jusque là ménagé « fera le con. » Ouf ! après tout, il n'a jamais eu un appétit débordant depuis sa dernière opération. Alors autant éviter ses plats favoris et suivre méticuleusement son régime.

* * *

Au même moment l'Homme des Champs après une veillée avec les fermiers du coin entre chez lui, embrasse ses enfants que le sommeil a enfin vaincus et se dirige vers son lit. Soudain on ne sait trop par quelle coïncidence, un rat sort d'un trou et trotte dans sa direction. C'est un rat de ville, de l'espèce des rats de ville... un petit rat.

Sans interrompre sa marche, l'Homme des Champs l'écrase du pied comme une vulgaire araignée.

(Traduction : l'auteur)

Moulou Mek (nom de plume de Moulougueta Mekbib) est né à Addis Abeba en 1941. Dès les années 60, il écrit des nouvelles ainsi que des pièces en un acte. Il s'est également occupé de l'adaptation et de la représentation en amharique de pièces telles que *Caligula* d'Albert Camus ou *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme* de Molière. Après avoir été journaliste à Addis Abeba, puis occupé un poste à l'Office National du Tourisme Ethiope, il est venu s'installer à Bruxelles pour travailler, jusqu'en 2001, au Secrétariat Général du Groupe des Etats d'Afrique, des Caraïbes et du Pacifique.

ENGLISH

Amharic

Spoken by more than twenty million people (for about half of whom it is their first language), Amharic is the official language of Ethiopia understood today by people all over the country, even though some seventy different languages are still extant. Its name comes from the province of Amhara, on the high plateaus of Abyssinia. It has a long tradition of written literature, but it was not until the second half of the nineteenth century that it became the language of administration and government which it is today.

It is a semitic language, as are Arabic and Hebrew, but after two millennia of local influences it has diverged significantly from them both in its vocabulary and its grammar. The script is syllabic and the vowels are notated; the alphabet is used only in Ethiopia and is very close to that of Ge'ez, the ancient Ethiopian literary and ecclesiastical language which is now used for the Orthodox liturgy.

There are some six to eight hundred Amharic speakers in Belgium.

Moulou Mek

The Town Man

You can say about people what you say about rats: there's a town rat and a country rat; there's a Town Man and a Country Man. The second human specimen seems to have inherited a predestined existence; from earliest infancy his life seems synonymous with the earth, and will unfold like that until it's extinguished, and he will take his final rest in that same earth which he has never ceased to dig.

For him the world is bounded by this celestial veil which forms a dome over the extent of his region encircled by the horizon; he will also believe effortlessly that the domain where his roots are is part of a great whole which forms a country, his country. But try to tell him that the flatness of this earth that he's busy cultivating is only an illusion and that in reality the earth is round, and he will laugh in your face and, during the evening around the fire, nibbling his everlasting *ashouk*, he will recount to his friends the very latest hoot from this joker of a townee. You can tell him the story of Aladdin and his flying carpet as if you believed it. He won't contradict you then and there, he is too well-mannered. He will act as if he accepts it

The Town Man stretches in his huge comfy bed and yawns as if he'll never stop, and looks at the alarm which he himself set the night before as if at his greatest enemy. To get up, or not to get up? Let's see, what if he lazed on for a little bit longer? It's still only eight o'clock... he can still snooze till half past, yes, but he's worried that the interrupted sleep that he plans to resume may not take account of his work timetable. If that happens he can always find an excuse... but first a cigarette, he drank and smoked so much the night before that he swore never to drink or smoke again, but, when it's the drink talking... quickly he invents a reason. You have to die of something. Right, he'll die of having drunk too much and smoked too much....

When the dawn is still trying timidly to see off the last star and at the first song of the birds, the Country Man is already up and about. And at the very moment when the Town Man pulls up his covers for a second doze, Guebre is on his third furrow.

Eleven o'clock. This damn phone won't stop ringing. What should he say? That he's still asleep because of yesterday evening's binge? No, ten times no, ring on, my sweet!... at the sixth ring the phone gives up, discouraged. The Town Man draws back the curtains, sits on the edge of the bed, tries to move his stiff limbs. He succeeds, not without difficulty, stands up, has a stab at several "gymnastics" as he calls them, goes over to the tap and dunks his head in cold water... Which tie shall he wear? Let's see, the blue one? Definitely not, it's Guenet who gave it to him and today he's meeting Emebet. Yes but Emebet has never bought him a tie, so he can wear the blue one.... Yes but if it came into Emebet's head to ask, nosy parker that she is, about the provenance of the blue tie.... Oh, he can always tell her that he bought it at Untel's. But will she believe him? After these serious deliberations which last a quarter of an hour he opts for the grey-green one. That way he's on neutral ground, he won't have to give an account of himself either to Emebet or his conscience. Right, now for a little scenario destined for his boss. Another quarter of an hour of major reflection... "his engine conked out, it happens doesn't it? And why shouldn't it have happened to him? And when you think about it, goodness, it's true, he almost ran into a tanker and it was the quick thinking of the inebriated which saved him by a whisker... yes, he's always boasted to everyone that the more he drinks, the more skilfully he drives.... Then this morning before going to the office he called a mechanic who would have told him the full extent of the damage; then he had to get his motor towed to the garage and was busy for most of the morning chasing after spare parts...."

In spite of the cold shower, he notices he has a headache, that he's still a bit drunk. He leaves his house and automatically opens the door of his vehicle, puts the key in the ignition

he's already like a little old man; one restriction here... another there... if he would give up smoking and drinking once and for all, and limit his evenings out, he could eat everything he fancied... yes, but it's the same difference, the diet would just be changing its target... the pleasures of smoking and drinking, he decides philosophically, are at least as precious as those of eating.

Decidedly Guebre has a hearty appetite, thinks the wife of the Country Man fondly, then she goes back to the kitchen to fetch him the rest of the boiled meat she had reckoned on saving for the evening meal....

How long the afternoon has been! thinks the Town Man, wondering if his watch is getting worn out from being consulted so many times, convinced the clockmaker must be diddling him.... Nevertheless he kept telling himself that his lunchtime drinks on top of the long boozing of the previous evening were not calculated to improve his dynamism.... But this incorrigible servant of Bacchus will never learn... The afternoon was stretching out, he would stretch himself too. The cups of black coffee have been left behind and bottles of mineral water are transforming his office into a bottle bank. He had even begun to sink himself in calculations, cut in half by the phone ringing or the typewriter keyboard where his secretary, short of inspiration, was repeating the "Quick brown Jack jumps over the lazy fox" of her school of commerce. The ritual exit from the office. He would have given a lot to go straight home and sleep off his drinking, but he has an "important" rendezvous with the girl he met at midday at the restaurant; he has to take her to a drive-in café, invite her to dinner, make a tour of the night clubs, etc... and he will have to drink, drink, smoke and smoke all over again....

Night begins to fall. The neon signs on the buildings resume their winking; the latest hits spill out of the bars and fill the streets. The round of dancing begins; fleets(g)9(ain...3 ad1nd and 6(e)-

Without interrupting his stride, the Country Man crushes it with his foot like a common spider.

(Translation: Paula Burnett)

Moulou Mek (pen-name of Moulougueta Mekbib) was born in Addis Ababa in 1941. Since the sixties he has been writing novels as well as one-act plays. At the same time he has produced adaptations into Amharic of plays such as Albert Camus's *Caligula* and Molière's *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*. After being a journalist in Addis Ababa, then holding a post at the Ethiopian National Tourism Office, he settled in Brussels where he worked until 2001 at the General Secretariat for the Group of African, Caribbean and Pacific States.