

**57. MEDNARODNO SREČANJE ODBORA PISATELJEV IN
PISATELJIC ZA MIR**

**57th INTERNATIONAL MEETING OF WRITERS FOR PEACE
COMMITTEE**

**57^{es} RENCONTRES INTERNATIONALES DES ÉCRIVAINS
ET ÉCRIVAINES POUR LA PAIX**

**57° ENCUENTRO INTERNACIONAL DEL COMITÉ DE
ESCRITORES Y ESCRITORAS POR LA PAZ**

Podnebne spremembe, migracije, vojne – konec miru

Climate change, migrations, wars – end of peace

Changement climatique, migrations, guerres – la fin de la paix

Cambio climático, migraciones, guerras - el fin de la paz

Voda

Water

L'eau

Agua

Pot do objave (*From aspiring to published author*)

The Path to Publication: From Aspiring to Published Author

Le chemin vers la publication : d'aspirant à un auteur publié

El camino hacia la publicación: de aspirante a autor publicado



Bled 7. 4. – 8. 4. 2025

Odbor pisateljev in pisateljic za mir Mednarodnega PEN-a

PEN International Writers for Peace committee

Comité international des écrivains et écrivaines pour la paix

Comité de Escritores y Escritora por la Paz de PEN international

57. MEDNARODNO SREČANJE PISATELJEV IN PISATELJIC ZA MIR
57th INTERNATIONAL WRITERS' FOR PEACE MEETING
57^{es} RENCONTRES INTERNATIONALES DES ÉCRIVAINS ET ÉCRIVAINES POUR LA PAIX
57° ENCUESTRO INTERNACIONAL DEL COMITÉ DE ESCRITORES Y ESCRITORAS POR LA PAZ

Prispevki za okrogle mize v slovenščini, francoščini, španščini in angleščini
Germán Rojas, Kim Echlin, Uli Rothfuss, Teresa S. Cadete, Mahi Ramakrishnan, Alice S. Yousef, Tanja Tuma, Alix Parodi, Ivan Vogrič, Milan Jazbec, Dr. Metka Zupančič, Tone Peršak, Milena Šmit & Thomas Soriano, Neža Vilhelm, Tanik Günersel, Miquel Àngel Llauger, Judyth Hill, Darinka Kozinc, Krishna Bajgai, Bronislava Volkova, Lidija Golc

Prevajalci: Pimala Neupane

© Slovenski center PEN

Izdal: Slovenski center PEN

Za izdajo: Tanja Tuma

Uredila: Sara Katarina Engelsberger

Lektura v angleščini: Kim Echlin

Grafično oblikovanje: Brigita Vehar s.p.

Naklada: 150 izvodov

Ljubljana, 2025

Častna pokroviteljica 57. mednarodnega srečanja Odbora pisateljev in pisateljic za mir je predsednica Državnega zbora Republike Slovenije gospa Urška Klakočar Zupančič. Sponzorja sta Mladinska knjiga založba in Krka d.d.

57th international Writers for Peace Committee meeting will be held under the honorary patronage of her Excellency Mrs Urška Klakočar Zupančič, President of the Parliament of Republic of Slovenia.

Les 57^{es} Rencontres internationales du Comité des écrivains et écrivaines pour la paix sont placées sous le haut patronage de Mme Urška Klakočar Zupančič, Présidente du Parlement slovène.

El 57° Encuentro Internacional del Comité de Escritores y Escritoras por la Paz se celebrará bajo el honorable patrocinio de Su Excelencia Urška Klakočar Zupančič, Presidenta del Parlamento de la República de Eslovenia.

Izdal Slovenski center PEN



www.penslovenia-zdruzenje.si

<https://www.penwritersforpeacecommittee.com>

<https://www.pen-international.org/>

Zbornik je izšel s finančno podporo Javne agencije za knjigo Republike Slovenije.



Donatorji in soorganizatorji:



CIP - Kataložni zapis o publikaciji

Narodna in univerzitetna knjižnica, Ljubljana

061.2(100):821.09(082)

821.09(082)

MEDNARODNO srečanje odbora pisateljev in pisateljic za mir (57 ; 2025 ; Bled)

57. mednarodno srečanje odbora pisateljev in pisateljic za mir = 57th International Meeting of Writers for Peace Committee = 57es Rencontres internationales d'écrivains et écrivaines pour la paix = 57° Encuentro internacional del comité de escritores y escritoras por la paz : Bled, 7. 4.-8. 4. 2025 / [prispevki za okrogle mize v slovenščini, francoščini, španščini in angleščini Germán Rojas ... [et al.] ; uredila Sara Katarina Engelsberger ; prevajalci Pimala Neupane]. - Ljubljana : Slovenski center PEN, 2025

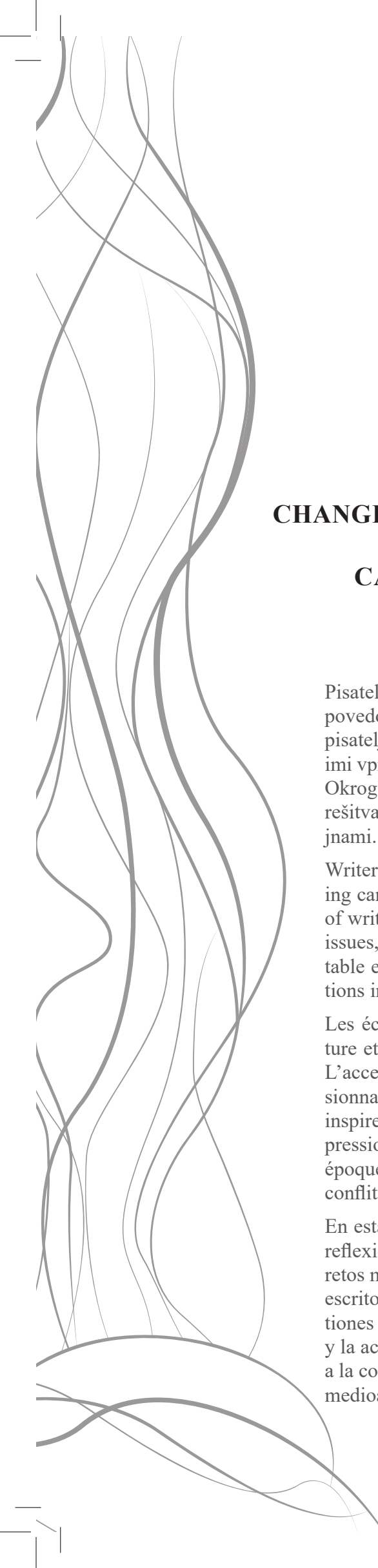
ISBN 978-961-95774-3-1

COBISS.SI-ID 229753859

KAZALO / CONTENTS / CONTENU / CONTENIDO

PODNEBNE SPREMEMBE, MIGRACIJE, VOJNE – KONEC MIRU _____	7
CLIMATE CHANGE, MIGRATIONS, WARS – END OF PEACE _____	7
CHANGEMENT CLIMATIQUE, MIGRATIONS, GUERRES – LA FIN DE LA PAIX _____	7
CAMBIO CLIMÁTICO, MIGRACIONES, GUERRAS - EL FIN DE LA PAZ _____	7
Germán Rojas (WfPC chair, PEN Chile) - The sword of Damocles hangs over humanity _____	9
Germán Rojas (WfPC chair, PEN Chile) - La espada de Damocles pende sobre la humanidad _____	11
Kim Echlin (PEN Canada) - Letter to Gaza _____	13
Uli Rothfuss (PEN Germany) - I am who I am. Committed to the freedom of the word. A contribution to the 125th birthday of Hermann Kesten _____	15
Teresa S. Cadete (Portuguese PEN Centre) - Peace comes from the ground. Does war come from heaven? _____	17
Mahi Ramakrishnan (PEN Malaysia) - Waging Peace in War _____	19
Alice S. Yousef - A Palestinian girlhood: through the looking glass _____	21
Dr. Metka Zupančič (Slovenian PEN) - Océans périlleux et terre promise incertaine _____	23
VODA _____	25
WATER _____	25
L'EAU _____	25
AQUA _____	25
Tanja Tuma (Slovenian PEN) - The Sea is Universal Sewer _____	27
Alix Parodi (PEN Suisse Romand) – L'eau _____	29
Ivan Vogrič (Slovenian PEN) - Why did Carl Joseph die in Roth's novel? _____	30
Milan Jazbec (PEN Slovène)- De l'eau à l'âme humaine _____	32
Tone Peršak (Slovenian PEN) - V O D A _____	34
Milena Šmit & Thomas Soriano - L'EAU POUR LA PAIX _____	36
POT DO OBJAVE (FROM ASPIRING TO PUBLISHED AUTHOR) _____	39
YOUNG PEN ROUND TABLE: THE PATH TO PUBLICATION: FROM ASPIRING TO PUBLISHED AUTHOR _____	39
LE CHEMIN VERS LA PUBLICATION : D'ASPIRANT À UN AUTEUR PUBLIÉ _____	39
EL CAMINO HACIA LA PUBLICACIÓN: DE ASPIRANTE A AUTOR PUBLICADO _____	39
OTHER _____	41
Neža Vilhelm (PEN San Miguel) – Sanje _____	41
Tarık Günersel (Pen Türkiye) _____	43
Miquel Àngel Llauger (PEN Català) _____	44
Prayer of the Beasts _____	44
A prisoner's paradox _____	45
He always writes with his lips _____	45
Bread _____	46
Judyth Hill (PEN San Miguel) – It's On Us _____	47
Darinka Kozinc (Slovenian PEN) - A cup in her kitchen _____	49
Krishna Bajgai (PEN Nepal) - Global Village _____	51
Bronislava Volkova (Czech PEN) _____	53
We Are, What We Watch _____	53
Here I am – your sister Earth. _____	55
Lidija Golc (Slovenian PEN) - Upanje je moč _____	56
Hope is the strength _____	58





**PODNEBNE SPREMEMBE, MIGRACIJE, VOJNE –
KONEC MIRU**

**CLIMATE CHANGE, MIGRATIONS, WARS –
END OF PEACE**

**CHANGEMENT CLIMATIQUE, MIGRATIONS, GUERRES –
LA FIN DE LA PAIX**

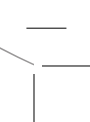
**CAMBIO CLIMÁTICO, MIGRACIONES, GUERRAS -
EL FIN DE LA PAZ**

Pisatelji so vabljeni k spodbudnemu dialogu o tem, kako lahko književnost in pripovedovanje zgodb naslovita pereče globalne izzive našega časa. Poudarja se vloga pisateljev kot opazovalcev, kritikov in vizionarjev, ki se soočajo s temi prepletanimi vprašanji ter pišejo pripovedi, ki navdihujejo razmislek, empatijo in ukrepanje. Okrogla miza raziskuje, kako lahko ustvarjalni izraz prispeva k razumevanju in rešitvam v obdobju, zaznamovanem z okoljsko krizo, človeškimi selitvami in vojnami.

Writers are invited to a thought-provoking dialogue on how literature and storytelling can address the pressing global challenges of our time. It emphasizes the role of writers as observers, critics, and visionaries who navigate these interconnected issues, offering narratives that inspire reflection, empathy, and action. The round table explores how creative expression can contribute to understanding and solutions in an era marked by environmental crisis, human displacement, and conflict.

Les écrivains sont invités à un dialogue stimulant sur la manière dont la littérature et la narration peuvent aborder les défis mondiaux urgents de notre époque. L'accent est mis sur le rôle des écrivains en tant qu'observateurs, critiques et visionnaires naviguant à travers ces questions interconnectées, offrant des récits qui inspirent réflexion, empathie et action. Cette table ronde explore comment l'expression créative peut contribuer à la compréhension et aux solutions dans une époque marquée par la crise environnementale, les déplacements humains et les conflits.

En esta mesa se convoca a los escritores y escritoras a un diálogo que invita a la reflexión sobre cómo la literatura y la narración pueden abordar los acuciantes retos mundiales de nuestro tiempo. Se hace hincapié en el papel de los escritores y escritoras como observadores, críticos y visionarios, que navegan por estas cuestiones interconectadas, ofreciendo narraciones que inspiran la reflexión, la empatía y la acción. La mesa redonda explora cómo la expresión creativa puede contribuir a la comprensión y a la búsqueda de soluciones en una época marcada por la crisis medioambiental, los desplazamientos humanos y los conflictos.



THE SWORD OF DAMOCLES HANGS OVER HUMANITY

In his election campaign, Donald Trump promised that the war in Ukraine would be over in a single day and that he would resolve the war in Gaza in a short time. The former did not happen, and the latter has little prospect of happening after the “real estate project” to transform Gaza into a new Costa Azzurra failed to gain support.

Since he was elected, he has begun to make threats everywhere: a savage tariff war on his ‘enemies’ such as China and a slightly more moderate one on his ‘friends’ such as Canada, Mexico and European countries, mass expulsion of Latin American migrants, an impossible increase to 5% of GDP in European contributions to NATO, the ‘purchase’ of Greenland from Denmark, the recovery of the Panama Canal, and the incorporation of Canada as the 51st state of the Union, among other menaces.

Once he took office, he rapidly began to carry out some of his threats and added other previously unannounced measures, such as the withdrawal of the United States from the UN World Health Organisation, the reduction of funding to international bodies, and the withdrawal of his country from organisations that are making efforts to tackle the problems of global climate change. And worst of all was the introduction of total mistrust among his allies by giving Putin the status of the only valid counterpart for peace negotiations to end the war against Ukraine, while at the same behaving in a thuggish manner along with his Vice, the millennial JD Vance, in the shameful verbal abuse of Ukrainian President Volodimir Zelenski in the Oval Office, accusing him of being ungrateful for the support given by the USA to Ukraine in the war years, whose main beneficiary has been the US arms industry.

As for the conflict in the Middle East, since his idea of transforming Gaza into an ‘American style’ tourist resort was not accepted, threats began to transform that area into an inferno if the hostages were not released, and today there are open war fronts in Israel, Gaza and the West Bank, Yemen, Lebanon, Syria, Türkiye and Iran.

Trump confuses international relations and diplomacy with a casino where only players with “cards” can participate. Ukraine has no cards, Europe only a few and of low value. The rest of the world doesn’t even have access to the casino.

One might think that this is just a bluffing player who first threatens the pains of hell and then backs off when he sees that he has already brought his ‘friendly’ and ‘enemy’ counterparts to their knees. That would be the least serious. But what is extremely serious from a long-term strategic point of view is that we have seen the emergence of a new way of doing politics that subjects the democratic world to maximum tension, tries to establish a new international ‘order’ where multilateralism disappears, and where the main power behaves like an immense private company that ignores the rules of the diplomatic game and one of its main pillars: ‘pacta sunt servanda’ (pacts must be kept). Everything is ephemeral, whoever shouts loudest imposes the rules, the enemies of my enemies are not necessarily

my friends, backstabbing is the order of the day. And the main problem about this scenario is that it seems that the democratic system is, like the Titanic, taking on water on all sides. Unelected characters like Elon Musk and other high-tech multibillionaires are playing a fundamental role in this scheme, who are convinced that they possess infallible truths to solve the problems facing the world today. They receive endorsements from squalid characters like Georgia Meloni and Javier Milei and, for their part, they do not blush to support the AfD in Germany. In this context, I see a fragmented Europe as being unwilling to transform itself into a major player. It accepts, while doing nothing, a tripolar world (US, Russia, China) in which it is absent

This new political class, which emerges under Trump, puts the rule of law at a global level under strain, establishes a system that exercises power in a completely top-down manner, and pulverises democracy by not respecting the rules and institutions called to protect the rights of individuals, their social bodies, the inclusion of the most disadvantaged, and the freedom of expression. They fight for an authoritarian, individualistic and misnamed libertarian populism, which can coexist dangerously with left-wing authoritarianisms and dictatorships of different political signs.

In the face of this, we the writers of PEN International who defend freedom of expression, must demonstrate our resilience, and raise our voices against this threat, just as we have done against totalitarianisms of all sorts that have sought to curtail freedom of thought and expression since our founding in 1921.



LA ESPADA DE DAMOCLES PENDE SOBRE LA HUMANIDAD

En su campaña electoral, Donal Trump prometió que la guerra de Ucrania terminaría en un solo día y que resolvería la guerra de Gaza en poco tiempo. Lo primero no sucedió y lo segundo tiene muy pocos visos de suceder después de que el proyecto inmobiliario de transformar Gaza en una nueva *Costa Azzurra* no ha logrado adeptos.

Desde que fue elegido, comenzó a lanzar amenazas por doquier: guerra arancelaria salvaje a sus “enemigos” como China y levemente más moderada a sus “amigos” como Canadá, México y países europeos, expulsión de migrantes latinoamericanos en masa, un alza imposible al 5% del PIB en las contribuciones europeas a la OTAN, “compra” de Groenlandia a Dinamarca, recuperación del Canal de Panamá, e incorporación de Canadá como el Estado N° 51 de la Unión, entre otras amenazas.

Una vez ungido como Presidente, comenzó a concretar algunas de sus amenazas y a agregar otras medidas no anunciadas previamente, como el retiro de Estados Unidos de la Organización Mundial de la Salud de la ONU, disminución de fondos a los organismos internacionales, y el retiro de su país de los organizaciones que hacen esfuerzos por enfrentar los problemas del cambio climático mundial. Y lo peor de todo fue introducir la desconfianza total entre sus aliados al regalarle a Putin la condición de único interlocutor válido para las negociaciones de paz para poner fin a la guerra contra Ucrania, sin antes comportarse de manera matonesca junto a su Vice, el milenial JD Vance, en el vergonzoso maltrato verbal del Presidente de Ucrania Volodimir Zelenski en la Sala Oval, acusándolo de malagradecido por el apoyo dado por Estados Unidos a Ucrania en los años de guerra, cuyo beneficiario principal ha sido la industria de armamentos de USA.

En cuanto al conflicto en el Medio Oriente, como no fue acogida su idea de transformar Gaza en un balneario turístico “American style”, comenzaron las amenazas de transformar esa zona en un infierno si no se liberaba a los rehenes, y hoy hay frentes bélicos abiertos en Israel, Gaza y Cisjordania, Yemen, Líbano, Siria, Turquía e Irán.

El señor Trump confunde las relaciones internacionales y la diplomacia con un garito donde pueden participar solo los jugadores que tienen “cartas”. Ucrania no tiene cartas, Europa solo unas pocas y de bajo valor. El resto del mundo ni siquiera tiene acceso al casino.

Podría pensarse que solo se trata de un jugador blufeador que amenaza primero con las penas del infierno y luego retrocede cuando ve que ya ha llevado a sus contrapartes “amigas” y “enemigas” a su terreno. Eso sería lo menos grave. Pero lo que sí es gravísimo de un punto de vista estratégico de largo plazo es que hemos visto aparecer un nuevo modo de hacer política que somete a máxima tensión al mundo democrático, trata de establecer un nuevo “orden” internacional donde el multilateralismo desaparece, y donde la potencia principal se comporta como una inmensa empresa privada que desconoce las reglas del juego diplomático y uno de sus pilares principales: el “pacta sunt servanda” (los pactos deben cumplirse). Todo

es efímero, quien grita más alto impone las reglas, los enemigos de mis enemigos no necesariamente son mis amigos, las puñaladas por la espalda están a la orden del día. Y lo grave de este escenario es que parece que el sistema democrático está, como el Titanic, haciendo agua por todos lados. Rol fundamental en este esquema juegan personajes ambiciosos como Elon Musk y otros multimillonarios de las tecnologías de punta que pasan a lo público convencidos de que son poseedores de verdades infalibles para resolver los problemas que el mundo enfrenta hoy. Reciben apoyos de personajes escuálidos como Georgia Meloni y Javier Milei y, por su parte, no se ruborizan en apoyar a la AfD en Alemania. En este contexto, me ha parecido particularmente timorata y tímida la respuesta de una Europa fragmentada que no está dispuesta a transformarse en un actor importante, aceptando cabizbaja una división tripolar del mundo (Usa, Rusia, China) donde ellos están ausentes.

Esta nueva clase política, que surge al amparo de Trump, pone en tensión el estado de derecho a nivel mundial, establece un sistema que ejerce el poder de manera completamente vertical, y pulveriza la democracia al no respetar las reglas e instituciones llamadas a proteger los derechos de los individuos, sus cuerpos sociales, la inclusión de los más desvalidos y la libertad de expresión. Luchan por un populismo autoritario, individualista y mal llamado libertario, que puede coexistir de manera peligrosa con los autoritarismos de izquierda y con dictaduras de diferentes signos políticos.

Ante esto, los escritores y escritoras de PEN Internacional que defendemos la libertad de expresión debemos demostrar nuestra capacidad de resiliencia y levantar nuestra voz contra esta amenaza, al igual como lo hemos hecho con los totalitarismos de cualquier signo que han tratado de coartar la libertad de pensamiento y expresión desde nuestra fundación en 1921.



LETTER TO GAZA

Dear friends,

You don't know me. Since October 7, 2023, you have offered the gift of your writing, translated and shared immediately with the world. I have been one of your readers. You have defied censors and resistance in these devastating years of bombardment. Since the ceasefire, Jan. 19, 2025, you have not stopped writing. And I have not stopped reading.

Your writing is witness *and* resistance. Marcia Lynx Qualey, founding editor of Arablit.org, reflects on the volume of writing coming out of Gaza, "...it's like nothing I've seen as an editor; people in a confined space, facing imminent mortality, writing as a way of remaining real, whole, themselves. Much of the writing has been surprising, with new observations, new ideas about language, a sort of hyper-attuned writing, far more than our regular submissions."¹

Dear friends, I read so that I can bear witness. It is one thing I can do. And so, I do it. This small thing.

Some of your writers have chosen to write in a language that is not their mother tongue. Refaat Alareer, born in Gaza city, taught, wrote poetry and edited collections about Gaza.² He loved John Donne. He chose to write in English over his native Arabic to have greater access to an international audience. Fellow writer, Jihad Abusalim, wrote in a tribute, "For Refaat, English was a tool of liberation, a way to break free from Gaza's prolonged siege, a teleportation device that defied Israel's fences and the intellectual, academic, and cultural blockade of Gaza."

Refaat Alareer first posted his poem "If I Must Die" in 2011 on his blog. Then he published the poem in "Global Poetry," a magazine based in Britain and, in 2014, in a collection published in Hawaii. He last posted his poem online in 2023, shortly before he was killed in a bombing.

Friends, translators around the world joined in a spontaneous expression of solidarity and grief to translate and post "If I Must Die." There are at least 72 translations including Arabic and Hebrew.³ There are duplicate translations including a Canadian translation into Tagalog by Justine Abigail Yu from my own multilingual city. Refaat Alareer, your poem has energized and inspired all of us.

"If I Must Die" testifies to the author's death twelve years *before* his real death. These 101 words have bowed to nothing, not to language or geography or time itself.

1 Personal communication

2 *Gaza Writes Back: Short Stories from Young Writers in Gaza, Palestine* (2014) and *Gaza Unsilenced* (2015), co-edited with Laila M. El-Haddad.

3 <https://ifimustdie.net/>; <https://publishersforpalestine.org/refaat/>; <https://orbooks.com/catalog/if-i-must-die/>; Printed here with permission of the estate.

If I must die,
you must live
to tell my story
to sell my things
to buy a piece of cloth
and some strings,
(make it white with a long tail)
so that a child, somewhere in Gaza
while looking heaven in the eye
awaiting his dad who left in a blaze —
and bid no one farewell
not even to his flesh
not even to himself —
sees the kite, my kite you made, flying up above,
and thinks for a moment an angel is there
bringing back love.
If I must die
let it bring hope,
let it be a story.

Friends, we share a world of many gods and no gods, of many histories, forgotten and repressed histories. How should we gather? What is our shared morality?

Albert Camus called the 20th century the century of fear. This cannot be *our* century's emotion. Will I, as Ahd Tamimi asks, *carry on with my life as usual*? We know that we need a new contract of global responsibility. Batool Abu Akleen has written from Gaza, "We write because we are unable to do anything but writing. This is our way to say, 'We are here.'"

Friends, I do not know if the living can soothe the dead, but if we refuse to know, we are complicit in history's cruelty. We must continue to speak against rising authoritarianism around the world, in my country, in yours, and to know each other's stories. Without this, friends, none of us can be free.⁴ Dear friends, thank you for your writing.

[This essay is adapted from a forthcoming collection of essays on literature and witness, *Tell Others*].

⁴ A few of the sites I follow: <https://arablit.org/>; <https://wearenotnumbers.org/>; <https://wordswithoutborders.org/>; <https://lithub.com/>; <https://www.pen-international.org/war-on-writers-gaza-cases>. There are many others in other languages.



I AM WHO I AM. COMMITTED TO THE FREEDOM OF THE WORD. A CONTRIBUTION TO THE 125TH BIRTHDAY OF HERMANN KESTEN

What would Hermann Kesten say today about these disturbing times? As a writer, as a political thinker, as a person with a fundamentally humanitarian attitude?

Hermann Kesten.

A controversial man of letters. Rescuer, supporter of persecuted artists during the Nazi era. Emigrant, France, USA. Jew. Returnee. PEN President in the Federal Republic of Germany at a time of political and social upheaval. Humanist, cosmopolitan. Meddler.

Born in 1900 in Podwoloczysla in the Kingdom of Galicia, then Austria Hungary, today in the Ukraine, died in 1996 in a Jewish retirement home in Basel, is considered one of the main representatives of the literary 'New Objectivity' of the 1920s in Germany. Moralist and sceptic. And a humourist.

And president of the West German PEN (1972-76).

Seeking freedom, living with people, being fair, having friends. A reference back to his childhood home of Nuremberg.

After returning from exile in the USA in 1953 and becoming an American citizen in 1949, Hermann Kesten lived in Rome, which was his main place of residence until 1977. He later lived in Basel.

Short biography.

Kesten grew up as the child of a Jewish family in Nuremberg, he also experienced marginalisation here and there, but he did not live to see the Reichsparteitage and racial laws in Nuremberg. He moved to Berlin in 1927, where his debut novel 'Josef sucht die Freiheit' was published - the first part of a tetralogy 'Das Ende eines großen Mannes' (The End of a Great Man), which Kesten completed with three further novels by 1932. His acquaintance with the greats of the time: Bertold Brecht, Erich Kästner, Joseph Roth, Anna Seghers, Heinrich, Thomas and Klaus Mann.

He and his later commitment were strongly influenced by flight and exile in 1933, where he was committed to saving German-language authors and creative artists from persecution - in this context, the great Stefan Zweig called him the 'patron saint ... of all those scattered across the world'.⁵

An inventor of characters.

'I am who I am' - the title of this poem from 1974 probably characterises him best in his self-perception. - A teller of absurd stories from your life and mine.⁶

His commitment to the free word.

This is what also made him committed to people and to persecuted people from all over the world.

⁵ Stefan Zweig: Brief an Kesten vom 22.2.1941, in: Deutsche Literatur im Exil, Briefe europäischer Autoren 1933-1949, Hg. H. Kesten. Fischer, Frankfurt a.M. 1974, S. 140

⁶ Wolfgang Buhl / Ulf von Dewitz: Ich hatte Glück mit Menschen. Zum 100. Geburtstag des Dichters Hermann Kesten. Beiträge zur Geschichte und Kultur der Stadt Nürnberg, Band 24, Nürnberg 2000, S. 7

The citizen of the world.

Hermann Kesten, the cosmopolitan, lived in many places. A man with an insatiable curiosity for books and people alike. An ironic satirist, as Thilo Koch, then Secretary General of the West German PEN, characterised him - 'Your tongue and even more so your pen could be sharp and pointed, but you were wary of the disparaging caricature that degrades a person.'⁷

Differentiated and soft tones.

Freedom of the word does not mean rash use. Rather, it means being nuanced, subtle and sometimes using soft tones to emphasise that where and when the freedom of the word is manipulated or restricted, free society, democracy and therefore all of us are in danger.

My concern is relativised: there have always been such phenomena, they go under; what is important is what lasts. Hermann Kesten, his commitment to the freedom of the word, may serve as both a warning and a reassuring example.

Uli Rothfuss, Member of the Executive Committee of the PEN Centre Germany, Professor of Cultural Sciences, www.uli-rothfuss.de.

⁷ Thilo Koch: Mit Hermann Kesten in New York, beim PEN und anderswo, same place (2), S. 76/77.



PEACE COMES FROM THE GROUND. DOES WAR COME FROM HEAVEN?

Eating is a primary gesture of peace, just like breathing or smiling. Every day, when we eat, we do it close to the ground, even if we use a table, instead of one of those beautiful Eastern carpets. And wise diet patterns advise us to eat the most possibly local and seasonal products, therefore close to the ground, perhaps even prepared in a way that has caused the least possibly suffering, under the motto “Plants do not scream.” Our hearts may feel warmer, our souls may feel lighter, in the consciousness of living without harming others. Richard Rorty’s triple recipe for a life without cruelty – contingency, irony, solidarity – seems to be a contribution to a well-balanced, joyful life of creation and communication. Better said: seemed to be.

Since close wars have reached our prime time, it has become more difficult to enjoy our vegetables, seeing how a family mother from Gaza is cooking a soup from weeds, picked among ruins. It may be felt as a real party to have a bread accompaniment, made with flour that the kids have succeeded to get from a humanitarian aid truck...

Now we realize that there have always been wars, environmental crises, human displacement, mostly since rich countries began colonizing so-called poorer countries, yet rich in resources. It is just like pulling a thread out of a wool ball, like pulling a card out of a house of cards. At once any construction of a globalized world, with minimalized “clash of civilizations,” is completely thrown to the ground. Everything is, as we know, interconnected.

Here we are now, on the ground of the long history of colonization, violence, slavery, robbery, exploitation, resource extraction, seasoned with education practices and imposed patterns. Colonized peoples have, for centuries, not been given identities, names, shapes, narratives, and the rescue of millions of individuals who have been thrown to the ground remains a non-ending work until the end of our days. But have not such colonial policies been drawn far away from life on the ground?

And yet, peoples remain linked together and can eat together, smile to each other, dance with each other, just like the young IDF soldiers in Hebron dancing years ago in a Palestinian disco during a raid. Suddenly, they ignored orders and felt close to the ground. Their superiors have reprimanded them sharply.

By thinking and feeling close to the ground, we cannot but realize how senseless any war is, without even needing to proceed towards the analysis of its dimensions of cruelty, disrespect of the people’s right to live on the ground where they were born. Seeing a tank rolling over a fertile cultivated land, killing millions of grains that could feed whole populations, and this while we enjoy our prime-time meal, all that brings us to just one possible conclusion, even before we get aware of the suffering of the inhabitants of the “barn of Europe,” that has ever existed before all borders have been drawn in Eastern Europe.

Remaining close to the ground does not prevent making further geopolitical reasonings and judgments. In order to understand all implications of war and peace, a holistic approach is crucial. How long has humankind suffered under the false

segregation of mind and body, nature and culture? In short, we have to open the wide spectrum of life. Dualisms are also forms of a Manichaeism that block attention to the other's eyes, to the earth's voice. Between "us" and the "others" there is a plural palette of beings, also those that need us to be their advocate – against the destruction by wars.

Let us hope that we shall not have to endure the experience of being bombed in our homes to realize that war comes from heaven. Before that, we have a long history of the narrowing heritage of monotheistic demonization, turning every figure of opponents into foes, blocking every attempt to understand the others, every investment in diplomacy and negotiation instead of weapon production.

Isn't it still such a religion, often in its secularized form, that comes from heaven and despises the ground?



WAGING PEACE IN WAR

It is not the absence of sound
But the quiet hum beneath the scream
The stillness that cuts through the wound
And where our broken self finds the shore.

It is not the end of war
Nor the silence after the gun
But the courage to stand up straight
Despite being kicked to the ground
To see through the intoxication of manoeuvres
Of what divides, and still be one.

It is the hand that reaches across
The lines we draw, the fences we build
It is the might of the heart
That crushes the divisive narrative.

It is the child who dreams in the dark,
While bombs fall, deafening as thunder
The spark, the smallest of light
That whispers, "Begin, again and again and again...."

Peace is not just the soil where hatred dies
But the seed that dares to grow
The truth that strips away the deception
And the strength to let it show.

It is not a place, nor a distant star
But the space
Between the chaos and the calm
Between the birth and final breath
Between the wound and healing balm
Between the living and the end of life.

In the stillness of the night, where shadows dance
She emerges: dark, naked, ferocious
Her tongue a crimson flame, her eyes a magical trance
They call her fierce, her form a menace
A tempest of fury, a force untamed
But in her wrath, peace blooms
Like white flowers on a vast field.

They name her chaos, and shiver at her wrath
A storm that tears the world apart
But peace is not the loud absence

Of war, of pain, of human cries
But the courage to raise your middle finger at power
For the broken bodies, severed limbs covered in political lies.

Her necklace of skulls, a garland in place of gold
Each one a story, a battle, a cry
Her sword, a blaze of blinding truth
Rips off the masks the powerful wear
Revealing their end is furiously near
Death, the permanence that's always there.

She dances on the edge of sense
Where borders blur, and flags decay
Her steps, a rhythm so intense
It births new worlds, where walls are shattered away.

Kali does not come to merely destroy
But to strip away the trumped-up fibs
For the story untold
For the birthing of voices that rise strong
The song that rights your ancient wrong!

Like Kali, peace is not a gentle stream
Nor the eternal resting of the soul
But the infinite, the innate hunger
Would you dare to dream it with me?



A PALESTINIAN GIRLHOOD: THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS

Imagine this: your grandmother is tucking you to sleep with a bedtime story, one about a girl betrayed by her friends—Jubeineh. The women told each other stories like inheritance, and I grew up hearing them. Growing up in Palestine is a unique and profound experience, shaped by the rich history, culture, and realities of life under occupation. In the midst of these challenges, I found books.

Conflict tainted everything in Palestine, including literature. Much of the national literature that was taught to us as kids was intended to foster a special affection for the land. Once that was filled, I turned to fiction as a lifeline. I saw checkpoints, soldiers, and loss—the harsh realities of war—but I also caught a glimpse of tranquillity. Books became a world where I could escape. When I think of my Palestinian girlhood, I think of the myriad of Arabic tales I read. The clean-up versions of the Arabian Nights, folktales, and the animal tales of Kaila and Dimna immediately spring to mind. But as a voracious reader, the tales of strong women and courageous young girls are the ones I recall the most clearly.

I remember curling up in a quiet corner of our home, the world fading as I lost myself in the power of the princess Scheherazade weaving tales night after night to outwit a vengeful king. In a place where voices are frequently silenced, her ability to transform stories into a means of survival struck a deep chord. Scheherazade taught me that storytelling is a form of resistance, a way to preserve identity and raise one's voice. Scheherazade was more than just the first female character I ever met in fiction; she was presence, she was power, and she used fiction as a means of floating, a technique that will eventually enable me to transform suffering into poetry.

Then came my namesake; I followed Alice through the looking glass, totally captivated by her curiosity. Alice's courage came from her willingness to ask questions. In a place where so much seemed uncertain, her boldness reminded me to ask questions. Similar to how I struggled to accept the injustices and changes in my environment, Alice did not accept the ridiculousness of Wonderland. Her resilience in a confusing world mirrored the resilience I saw everywhere around me.

I learned how to find beauty even in the most trying circumstances from Anne Shirley's imagination in *Anne of Green Gables*. By refusing to let anyone define her value, Anne transformed adversity into experiences. I found comfort in her story, especially during days when the sound of bullets reverberated in the night sky. Anne's fierce independence inspired me to dream beyond the limits of my reality.

Harry Potter's Hermione Granger was the epitome of loyalty, courage, and intelligence. She proved that knowledge was a form of power, using one's mind could be a tool for resistance. Her commitment to protecting others echoed the values I admired in my community. Hermione's tale reaffirmed the notion that compassion and wisdom are just as important as physical prowess in achieving strength.

Pippi Longstocking crashed with a horse on her back into my life, with her wild red hair and fearless attitude, she was a symbol of freedom and rebellion. She

advocated for those unable to defend themselves and lived by her own rules. In a world where power often felt distant and unreachable, Pippi's refusal to conform offered a sense of empowerment. She showed me that being different was not a weakness, but a strength.

Beyond these literary realms, my community's elders' stories of Jubeineh were replete with lessons about courage and tenacity. My grandmother's story served as a reminder to me that courage could be found in others as well as in books. The transformational power of girls living their "normal" girlhood with "out of normal" powers and worlds I managed to navigate—confusions and questions about my changing city, waiting in dead lines across checkpoints, and seeing walls and soldiers everywhere I turned my head—was how these stories, whether from distant places or close to home, shaped my understanding of strength, hope, and identity.

Later on, I was able to navigate these stories with other girls working in the libraries on activities centred around girlhood: to show them what a girl hero does to one's life. Growing up in Palestine meant navigating a world where hardship and beauty intertwined. However, by reading about the girls' bravery, I discovered how to be a woman who questions injustice, maintains hope, and believes in the strength of her own narrative.



OCÉANS PÉRILLEUX ET TERRE PROMISE INCERTAINE

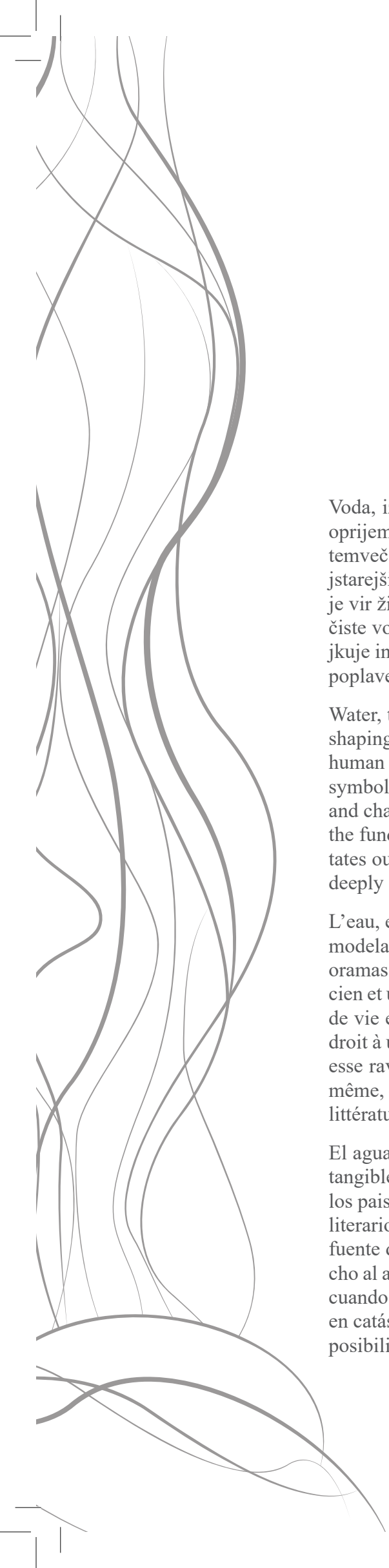
Comme pour annoncer les périples souvent tragiques des migrants naufragés dans la Méditerranée, dans ces dernières années, l'autrice québécoise d'origine vietnamienne Kim Thúy a choisi de retracer ses propres expériences d'exil dans son roman *Ru*, d'une écriture fine et novatrice qui émeut par la profondeur des expériences relatées toujours nuancées par une ironie salvatrice, voire thérapeutique. Publiée à Montréal en 2009, aux éditions Libre expression, cette autofiction et surtout une autoréflexion a obtenu en 2010 le prestigieux Prix du Gouverneur Général. L'intérêt pour ce livre n'a jamais diminué, menant à son adaptation cinématographique sous le même titre, *Ru*, réalisée par Charles-Olivier Michaud en 2023. Comme la romancière l'a avoué après le tournage, c'est le film qui lui a fait comprendre toute l'ampleur du traumatisme qu'elle a inscrit dans son œuvre.

Construit judicieusement à l'aide d'une série de fragments qui s'enchaînent thématiquement, le roman reprend la débâcle sociale et les persécutions que la famille de l'écrivaine a subies au Vietnam, avant d'échouer pendant quatre mois dans un camp de détention en Malaisie, aux conditions inhumaines, dont elle a réussi à s'échapper. Leur fuite en haute mer, livrés aux vagues périlleuses de l'océan, les épreuves des fugitifs, des « boat people » espérant une sorte de renouveau, condensées en ces lignes, en disent long sur leur expérience :

Le paradis et l'enfer s'étaient enlacés dans le ventre de notre bateau. Le paradis promettait un tournant dans notre vie, un nouvel avenir, une nouvelle histoire. L'enfer, lui, étalait nos peurs : peur des pirates, peur de mourir de faim, peur de s'intoxiquer avec les biscottes imbibées d'huile à moteur, peur de manquer d'eau, peur de ne plus pouvoir se remettre debout, peur de devoir uriner dans ce pot rouge qui passait d'une main à l'autre [...]. (15)

Cette traversée de l'océan, sur les eaux primordiales qui ne mènent pas nécessairement à une nouvelle vie, Kim Thúy (du nom complet Kim Thúy Ly Thanh), née en 1968, l'a donc vécue petite fille, puisqu'elle a échoué au Québec en 1978, sans parler un seul mot de français, cette langue qu'elle a maîtrisée pour en faire sienne. Pour elle, avoir recours à la littérature comme stratégie de survie signifie montrer, ébranler, faire réfléchir, c'est-à-dire se servir de la parole écrite pour aider à changer les mentalités. Le chemin n'était cependant pas facile, ni pour sa famille ni pour celle qui allait devenir un modèle d'adaptation « réussie » au Canada, puisque l'apprentissage de la nouvelle vie, au-delà du contact avec une nouvelle langue, stipulait surtout pour les aînés l'abandon des valeurs ancestrales, l'acceptation des mœurs tout à fait différentes, sans parler des conditions atmosphériques, des distances inconcevables, autant géographiques qu'émotives et spirituelles. Toutefois, tout comme les ouvrages qui ont suivi, ce roman de Kim Thúy rayonne d'un optimisme enjoué, pour que cette œuvre s'affirme comme un des joyaux de la littérature contemporaine francophone au sens large.





VODA
WATER
L'EAU
AQUA

Voda, izvir življenja, se pretaka tako kot brezčasna prispodoba in hkrati tudi kot oprijemljiva resničnost, pri čemer ne oblikuje le obrisov našega fizičnega sveta, temveč tudi pokrajine človeškega mišljenja in ustvarjalnosti. Voda kot eden najstarejših in najbolj univerzalnih literarnih simbolov uteleša inherentno dvojnost: je vir življenja in smrti, čistosti in kaosa, sila povezanosti in ločenosti. Pravica do čiste vode je ena od temeljnih človekovih pravic. Ljudje trpimo, kadar je primanjkuje in suša pustoši naša življenja, prav tako pa tudi, kadar se spremeni v ujme in poplave. Književnost je prepredena s pisanjem o njej.

Water, the source of life, flows both as a timeless metaphor and a tangible reality, shaping not only the contours of our physical world but also the landscapes of human thought and creativity. As one of the oldest and most universal literary symbols, water embodies an inherent duality: it is a source of life and death, purity and chaos, a force of connection and separation. The right to clean water is one of the fundamental human rights. People suffer when it is scarce and drought devastates our lives, just as they do when it turns into disasters and floods. Literature is deeply interwoven with writing about it.

L'eau, essentielle à la vie, s'écoule en tant que symbole éternel et réalité concrète, modelant non seulement les formes de notre univers matériel, mais aussi les panoramas de la réflexion et de l'inventivité humaines. L'eau, symbole littéraire ancien et universel, représente une dualité inhérente : elle est simultanément porteuse de vie et de mort, de pureté et de désordre, un vecteur d'union et de division. Le droit à une eau propre est l'un des droits humains fondamentaux. Quand la sécheresse ravage notre existence et que l'eau fait défaut, les populations souffrent. De même, elles sont affectées par les inondations et les désastres qui se produisent. La littérature est profondément liée à l'écriture sur ce thème.

El agua, fuente de vida, fluye a la vez como metáfora atemporal y como realidad tangible, modelando no sólo los contornos de nuestro mundo físico, sino también los paisajes del pensamiento y la creatividad humanos. Como uno de los símbolos literarios más antiguos y universales, el agua encarna una dualidad inherente: es fuente de vida y muerte, pureza y caos, fuerza de conexión y separación. El derecho al agua potable es uno de los derechos humanos fundamentales. La gente sufre cuando escasea y la sequía devasta nuestras vidas, igual que cuando se convierte en catástrofes e inundaciones. La literatura está profundamente entrelazada con la posibilidad de escribir sobre este tema.



THE SEA IS UNIVERSAL SEWER

excerpt from the novel *Tito's Legacy*, 2018

Divers are investigating and searching for evidence to find the culprit who released an entire colony of tuna from the fish farm during the night. The damage amounts to one and a half million euros. Yellowfin tuna are considered one of the most endangered species, yet they are also a gourmet delicacy. The farming process involves capturing young fish in nets and raising them in pens for a year or two until they reach the desired weight. Tuna do not reproduce in captivity. Fish that would otherwise circle the oceans multiple times in their lifetime suddenly find themselves condemned to swimming in circles. Someone decided they deserved freedom.

The sea was calm, shining silver in the morning like a huge cosmic mirror. The crew on the inflatable boat was ready to take the divers to the tuna pen located around a sea mile outside the bay. With the gear occupying much of the space, the three men, plus Ivo, Tomo, and the skipper hardly had a spot to sit on the boat. Both divers were in their wetsuits, masks resting on top of their hooded heads, but hadn't yet put on their weight belts or scuba tanks. Safety precautions were necessary: torches, knives, watches, and wrist-worn dive computers. It wasn't going to be a Sunday excursion. Seventy meters in probably cloudy water, thick with aquaculture waste.

Ivo Reka had dived in such places before. Below the surface of the sea where sunlight masked the level of pollution, the world became dark shadows and blackness. What once was sandy ground would be brown and muddy. Layers of fish excrement created a hard crust over everything, preventing any life from growing. Where octopi and crabs had built their homes and halibut patrolled the ground for snacks, nothing existed. Death. Emptiness. Nothing but slimy black mud full of chemicals, antibiotic residues, particles of uneaten feed, excrement, and other hazardous waste. The waves and sea currents would often push the slimy poison towards the shore. Ivo wanted to see how far the pollution from the tuna pen had spread to Zavratnica.

[...]

They checked their gear and tested the valves. Then, with Tomo holding the underwater scooter and tools tucked in Ivo's weight belt, they dived in. Ivo sensed Tomo swimming beside him and relaxed, knowing he had a reliable partner. Armstrong's "What a Wonderful World" echoed in his mind every time he swam in the depths.

I see trees of green, red roses too ... Ivo was only nine when he encountered the aquamarine of the Adriatic Sea for the first time in his life. Uncle Neven, a forty-year-old bachelor and a scuba diving and sport fishing instructor, had given him a mask, snorkel, and fin set for Christmas. Ivo's eyes had filled with bitter tears of disappointment, while snow fell outside in huge watery flakes. What was he going to do with the stupid gift? His sister got a Walkman. His uncle, however, smiled at him. "Ivice, this year you're coming with me to Mljet island. I want to show you a real coral reef and teach you to dive." Mother took him to the bookshop where they picked a richly illustrated encyclopedia on sea life in the Adriatic. Little Ivo

read the book several times and discovered incredible sea creatures that rose from the pages like images from a long forgotten realm. *I see skies of blue and clouds of white ...* When the summer holiday finally came, he and Uncle Neven travelled to Mljet. His lessons started the day he arrived. Breathing in and out, holding the air in his lungs, arm and leg movements, body position in water. Everything was important. Ivo was a good swimmer and loved learning more. Then, the day to dive in the coral reef came at last. It was around noon, with the sun shining vertically into the depths. They slid from their anchored inflatable boat into the translucent, almost airlike water. *The colors of the rainbow ...* Ivo took a deep breath and dived as Uncle Neven had taught him. The bluest blue met his eyes. A few blacktails came to greet him curiously. Without a spear gun, he posed no danger to them. A large school of small pink mullets rushed past to escape their fate in the mouth of a predator. Ivo looked around in wonder. Tiny black, yellow, gray, and blue fish had gathered around, observing him with inquisitive round eyes. *I hear babies cry ...* The bottom was paved with round stony corals growing in every direction to offer shelter to all sorts of species. Enormous obdurate mushrooms with millions of tiny holes changed from sandy yellow to light purple and green. A crab crawled down the slope of a coral colony, majestic and sure of himself, lifting his mighty claws in the air as though to challenge the whole world to a fight. Between the coral colonies, sunlight played with white patches of sand, tickling the smooth surface with golden gaiety. Tiny snails enjoyed their playground in the crevices among the colorful tentacles of sea anemone competing with the gold and purple of a sunset. When little Ivo beheld a huge starfish shining red like a glorious queen of the ocean, he didn't want to swim back to the surface. This was his world. This was what he was born to explore. *I think to myself, what a wonderful world ...*

The dive today was different. [...] Abandoned only a couple of days ago, the wire netting was already coated with a layer of light brown algae. The powerful tails and fins of the fish swimming inside the fence had produced a sort of whirlpool and swept their waste into the seafloor. With Tomo following him, Ivo circled the pen carefully. [...] He left the pen and motioned Tomo that they needed to inspect the bottom. After checking their dive computers and exchanging okay signs, they plunged deeper.

With less and less light, they switched on their torches, exposing the slimy brown particles floating around them. Excrement, uneaten feed, and chemicals. [...] He pushed his free hand into the seabed to check for other evidence. Only a thick brown cloud of dirt rose. There was no life here. No crabs, no sea urchins, no sea cucumbers. Nothing. A submerged Gobi Desert. The noxious particles from the pen had long ago killed everything. Ivo made a wider circle under the pen, while Tomo followed him with the camera. It was depressing. Like a huge cesspit. [...]



L'EAU

L'eau, murmure primordial, s'épanche depuis les entrailles du monde, fluide ancestral qui lie le souffle du vivant à l'écho profond de l'univers. Transparente et secrète, elle s'insinue dans les creux, modèle les contours et façonne, dans son voyage, le visage changeant de la terre et de l'esprit. Elle coule, inlassable, sous la peau des jours, caressant les pierres, érodant les montagnes, et dans chaque goutte, un fragment d'éternité se laisse saisir. L'eau est mémoire, fluide du passé et promesse de l'avenir, miroir liquide où se reflètent nos peurs et nos rêves.

Élément multiple, elle porte la sagesse de l'infini, oscillant entre calme et tempête, source et abîme. Dans ses méandres, elle épouse la dualité de notre être : elle est la tendresse d'un ruisseau qui berce la forêt, et la furie d'un déluge qui dévore tout sur son passage. L'eau, douce et dangereuse, est à la fois bénédiction et malédiction. Elle nourrit les semences cachées sous la terre, puis se retire, laissant derrière elle des plaines désertées, des corps épuisés par la soif. Quand elle surgit, c'est parfois pour détruire, engloutissant les rivages et les vies. L'eau est une danse entre la vie et la mort, entre le commencement et la fin.

Ce va-et-vient, ce ballet infatigable, c'est l'histoire du monde qui s'écrit, goutte à goutte, sur la peau craquelée des continents. L'eau a vu naître les civilisations et les a englouties, elle a ouvert des routes invisibles et imposé ses frontières mouvantes. Elle relie les hommes autant qu'elle les sépare, pont invisible et mur infranchissable, océan de rencontres et de solitude.

Mais l'eau est aussi le chant d'un droit fondamental, celui de chaque être à la vie, à la pureté. Là où elle manque, l'espoir se flétrit ; là où elle abonde, elle peut emporter tout ce qu'elle touche. L'absence d'eau est une plaie béante, la sécheresse mord la terre et fige le ciel en un silence pesant. Les rivières asséchées portent le deuil des récoltes, des peuples, des rêves, tandis que les pluies diluviennes, dans leur folie, transforment les rues en fleuves de détresse. Le monde se noie ou se dessèche, et dans ce paradoxe cruel, l'humanité s'égare.

La littérature, elle aussi, s'abreuve à cette source, éternelle et insaisissable. Elle en fait un motif de contemplation, une métaphore mouvante, une toile où les mots s'écoulent comme des rivières de sens. Depuis des siècles, les poètes et les conteurs plongent leurs plumes dans les eaux profondes de l'imaginaire, capturant dans leurs vers les éclats lumineux ou terrifiants de ce miroir fluide. L'eau devient alors un personnage à part entière, une présence énigmatique qui traverse les pages et les siècles, chuchotant aux âmes des récits infinis.

Dans ses courants, elle porte non seulement la force brute de la nature, mais aussi la fragilité de nos vies, la nécessité de protéger ce lien sacré entre nous et l'élément qui nous donne naissance. Chaque goutte tombée du ciel, chaque source qui jaillit est une promesse de renouveau, un hymne à la continuité, mais aussi un avertissement silencieux : sans elle, tout s'effondre, tout s'efface.

L'eau, insaisissable et essentielle, nous invite à la rêver, à la protéger. Elle est à la fois le reflet de notre condition et le défi que nous devons relever pour préserver l'avenir. Comme elle, nous devons apprendre à couler, à contourner les obstacles, à irriguer la terre de nos gestes justes, à devenir fleuve là où le désert s'étend.

Et dans chaque goutte qui perle sur une feuille, dans chaque ondulation qui brise le miroir d'un lac, c'est l'histoire du monde qui continue de s'écrire, fragile, éphémère, infinie.

WHY DID CARL JOSEPH DIE IN ROTH'S NOVEL?

Foreign travellers on the Karst plateau, between present-day Slovenia and Italy, described it as “a table-land of bare limestone rock” where “the few trees which eke out existence on this arid waste look withered and unhealthy” (William Edward Baxter, 1849) or as “a tract of stony country, without catching a trace of vegetation” (George Spottiswoode, 1860).

During the First World War, the armies of what were then the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the Kingdom of Italy fought a grim war of attrition in the part of this “bare and desolate landscape” surrounding Gorizia and Nova Gorica, cities which together form the European Capital of Culture 2025. Although the front line where the battles took place is named – what irony! – after the river Isonzo (Soča in Slovene), one can imagine that keeping soldiers supplied with water on the Karst battlefield was one of the more serious problems facing the opposing armies.

In our case, then, the name “Isonzo Front” tends to blur the issue somewhat. To explain it better, it is enough to replace it with “the Karst battlefield”, one of the most critical points on this front or, to be even more direct, with the proper name Doberdò (Doberdob in Slovene). The name of this place still attracts attention today among those nations whose ancestors fought there in the First World War: Italians, Slovenes, Hungarians, Croats, and so on. It was a name very familiar to the Italian poet Giuseppe Ungaretti and to Giovanni Bergoglio, the grandfather of the present Pope Francis, both of whom fought there, and to many others.


Although the history books explain that attacking forces generally attempt to achieve a range of “strategic” objectives, while defenders try to prevent this, we often forget about the real and actual situation in which ordinary soldiers find themselves. In the case of the Karst battlefield, the scene of the conflicts was a desolate landscape where it looked as though both sides were fighting for a pile of rocks.

In his novel *Doberdob*, the Slovene writer Prežihov Voranc wrote: “The thirst suffered by the soldiers [there] was terrible, insatiable, like the thirst of the land on which, with which and for which they were fighting.” He added that it was a “thirsty struggle for an ever thirsty, cracked, dry, hollow world.” His description of the battlefield differed from the accounts of muddy trenches offered by his counterparts on many other battlefields across Europe during the “Great War.”

We find similar elements in Joseph Roth's *Radetzky March*, which is set on a different, eastern front, in which one of the main characters, Carl Joseph, dies while attempting to bring water to his thirsty comrades-in-arms. This action had the symbolic value of relief and hope in a context of suffering and war, which in itself personifies want and deprivation.

We do not know how many soldiers died, like Carl Joseph, in the manner described by Roth, either in the First World War or in the wars that followed. We do know, however, that the problem of supplying not only soldiers but entire populations has always been an extremely urgent one. And it is no coincidence that some people refer to water as “blue gold”. Former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan predicted





that access to and control of water sources would be one of the causes of military conflicts in the twenty-first century.

This has essentially already been happening for a long time, with growing demand for water causing conflicts between countries and ethnic groups. Water systems such as rivers are literally the subject of disputes such as those over the Nile, involving Egypt, Sudan and Ethiopia, or those over the Tigris and the Euphrates, involving Turkey, Syria and Iraq. In the ever-restless Middle East, including the Palestinian territories, one of the main causes of friction is linked to water.

With the aim of preventing conflicts, the United Nations has adopted two water conventions, although it is notable that some global (super)powers are not among the signatory states. It is no coincidence that a special branch of diplomacy known as “water diplomacy” is developing. This includes negotiations, mechanisms for resolving disputes over water sources between countries, and so on. It is also no surprise that access to drinking water is included among basic human rights.

When we talk about “access to water sources,” we risk reducing the scope of the problem, which is actually broader in that it also relates to access to food and, if we look even further, to natural resources. Food production, the entire agricultural sector and, in short, the entire population of the world depend on water. Without water there is simply no life. This is an old and simple truth.

It is incredible how many unresolved issues are connected to water: from the unequal distribution of water sources to (excessive) consumption and, in many countries, access to sanitation. Not to mention water pollution. These are extremely broad questions that raise endless sub-questions.

Perhaps this is what the Italian writer Italo Calvino had in mind half a century ago when describing his morning shower. He wrote that he was perfectly aware, despite being half asleep, how this morning ritual put him “in contact with culture and nature, with thousands of years of human civilisation and the turbulent geological processes that shaped the planet.”

DE L'EAU À L'ÂME HUMAINE

« Smoke on the water, a fire in the sky »¹ (La fumée sur l'eau, l'incendie dans le ciel), une chanson légendaire, a été chantée, jouée dans un style heavy metal classique abassourdissant par Deep Purple en 1972. La cause de la chanson a été un incendie qui avait eu lieu un an plus tôt, lors d'un concert de Frank Zappa à Montréal. Le texte parle d'un incendie si immense que même de l'eau brûlait, d'une fumée tourbillonnante dense si haute dans l'air et de la confusion qui accompagnait tout cela ; en même temps, le refrain est répété avec ferveur, « la fumée sur l'eau, l'incendie dans le ciel, la fumée dans le ciel. ».


Il y a environ 470 millions d'années, nous sommes passés du confort céleste de l'eau à la terre cosmique inhospitalière, et il y a environ quatre millions d'années, nous nous sommes installés dans une mer de savanes au nord-est de l'actuelle Addis-Abeba. Lucy et ses descendants en témoignent. Nous sommes passés d'une mer à l'autre.

L'homme, plus précisément, notre organisme, est constitué de près de trois quarts d'eau. Ce n'est qu'ainsi que nous pouvons être mobiles, pas trop lourds, nous sommes flexibles et notre cerveau est constamment en activité. Mais regardez, notre maison, notre planète, est composée d'à peu près le même pourcentage d'eau, c'est-à-dire de rivières, de lacs et d'océans. Comment nous sommes concordants et interdépendants, Homo Sapiens et la Terre Mère. Cette interdépendance et cette compatibilité ont créé un couple merveilleux, une symbiose unique.

La vie sur Terre est une perle spéciale et fortement diversifiée, délicate et robuste, alimentée par l'eau. Nous l'avons partout et nous faisons partie d'elle, tout comme elle fait partie de nous. C'est la condition de base de la survie de l'espèce humaine, qui est celle qui est allée plus loin dans son évolution parmi tous les êtres vivants. Et puis, au sommet, une déviation s'est soudainement produite : ce résultat remarquable a commencé à produire des effets qui ont abouti à entamer et à éroder l'existence de l'espèce en tant que telle. Ceci, pour le dire franchement, est suicidaire. Il est difficile d'expliquer brièvement pourquoi une telle déviation s'est produite, mais apparemment, elle fait aussi partie de la nature humaine. Peut-être, après tout, cela fait-il aussi partie de l'évolution.

À la fin du dernier millénaire, l'humanité a atteint deux pierres angulaires. D'une part, elle a accumulé tant d'armes puissantes, en particulier d'armes nucléaires, de telle manière que notre civilisation est capable de s'autodétruire à plusieurs reprises. Nous n'avons jamais vu cela auparavant dans l'histoire de la vie sur la planète. Et d'autre part, c'est également pour la première fois dans l'histoire de la même vie, que les conséquences des activités de cette même espèce ont commencé à provoquer de si grands changements cumulatifs dans l'environnement dans lequel nous vivons, ce qui a commencé à menacer la survie de notre propre espèce et de beaucoup d'autres. L'eau se trouve au cœur de cette menace et de ces changements. L'humanité a commencé à détruire son essence même – directement, son existence physique, mais aussi indirectement, selon le mode de vie, le système de valeurs, les manières de penser, les sentiments et les empathies. Il s'agit d'un changement de paradigme du pire qui doit être changé !





Le sommet de la politique mondiale ne le reconnaît pas, ne l'accepte pas et même le rejette, même si nous subissons tous constamment les effets négatifs des activités. Le rejet des décideurs principaux est un désastre pour tout le monde, y compris pour eux-mêmes. La nature ne connaît pas de miséricorde et est indifférente à tous ceux qui ne peuvent ou ne veulent pas s'adapter. C'est une condition fondamentale pour la vie et la survie sur Terre. Cela doit être répété encore et encore, souligné et tout doit être mis tout en œuvre en sa faveur. Mais en même temps, il est important de garder à l'esprit le fait que c'est la première fois dans son histoire que l'humanité, dispose de toutes les prouesses technologiques et de communication pour changer sa façon de fonctionner. La pression du public, de l'opinion publique et de la société civile, y compris les médias, n'ont jamais eu autant de possibilités d'être globaux et efficaces.

La Corne de l'Afrique est l'illustration la plus typique d'une détérioration drastique : une décennie de sécheresse augmente de façon exponentielle la pauvreté, détruit les fondements de la vie quotidienne et déclenche des migrations à grande échelle, fortes de plusieurs millions de personnes vers d'autres parties du continent et du monde. Cela perturbe l'équilibre naturel mondial de l'existence, augmentant les menaces à la sécurité, la méfiance et les hostilités.

L'eau est nécessaire à la production de tous les fondements de nos vies, des métaux, des plastiques, de l'énergie, du papier, dans le traitement et la distribution, cette chaîne s'étend à l'infini. En environ cinquante mille ans d'histoire, l'Homo Sapiens est allé si loin de telle manière que notre système solaire pourrait devenir une deuxième maison. Il est tout à fait possible qu'il y ait des réserves d'eau à l'état d'agrégats glacés sur Mars, profondément sous la surface. Il est tout à fait possible que ce serait similaire, voire meilleur, sur certaines lunes de Jupiter et de Saturne. C'est la base de l'émergence de la vie dans des conditions connues par notre espèce. Mais peut-être que nous ne sommes vraiment pas seuls. Mais nous n'existerons plus si l'humanité, en particulier ses dirigeants politiques, n'est pas capable de réconcilier son existence avec la nature et l'environnement dans lequel nous vivons et travaillons.

Quand notre âme pleure, elle l'illustre doucement par des larmes. Quand la nature pleure, elle le montre par des pluies acides.

L'image, qui se manifeste par le manque d'eau, est bibliquement apocalyptique et familière. Beaucoup de gens écrivent et chantent à ce sujet, l'illustrent. Qu'elle nous fasse prendre conscience.

L'eau, c'est la vie, réveillons-nous!

V O D A

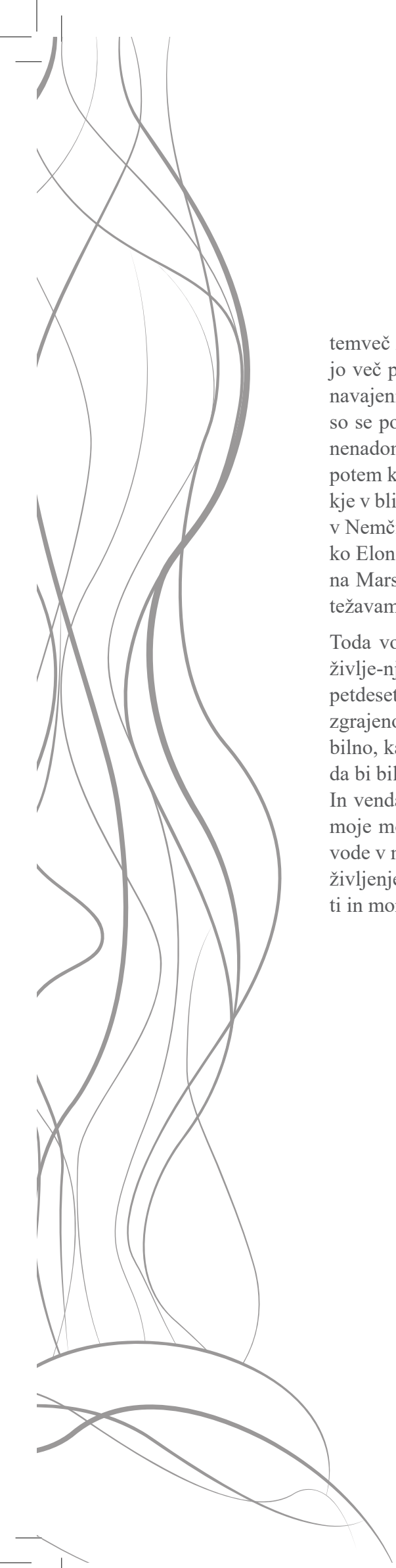
Moja mati, ki se je rodila deset let po začetku dvajsetega stoletja na podeželju, v vasi vrh hriba, kjer so ljudje raje kot vodo pili vino, tudi zato, ker je bilo treba vodo nositi iz studenca v globoki grapi, je imela do vode prav poseben odnos. Lahko bi rekli, da se je vode bala, in da se ji je zdelo, da je vode preveč, več kot je kdorkoli potrebuje. Ka-dar je šla v Maribor, običajno na obisk k svojemu najstarejšemu sinu in je morala čez glavni most čez reko Dravo, je vedno šla čez po sredini cestišča, približno enako od-daljena od ograj na obeh straneh mostu, ne glede na tedaj resda še ne tako gost promet. Nikoli ni šla po ozkem pločniku ob cestišču in ograji mostu in nikoli ni pogledala v ži-vahno reko, ki je pod mostom odtekala proti jugu in izlivu v še veliko večjo Donavo. Tako je ravnala, ker se je bala, da jo bo voda zvlekla vase, in da bi lahko kar skočila čez ograjo v globoko reko, znano po vrtincih, in se seveda v njej utopila, ker se nikoli ni naučila plavati. »Voda me vleče vase,« je razlagala svoj strah in svoje vedenje na mostu, ki ga je vedno prehodila tako, da je ves čas gledala strogo predse, ne levo ne desno, da je voda ne zmamila vase.

Poleg tega je mati samo enkrat v življenju videla morje. Na obalo jo je na izlet odpeljal najstarejši brat, njen najljubši in najbolj cenjeni sin, in ko je stala na obrežju in strmela v morje, je menda rekla samo: »Koliko je tu odvečne vode! Koliko njiv bi lahko bilo tu namesto vse te vode!«

Njen odnos do vode kot nevarne ali v večji količini celo sovražne entitete se, kolikor vem, vse do konca, do njene smrti, ni spremenil. Voda se ji je zdela nevarna, kot nekaj, kar tako rekoč preži na človeka, še zlasti na ženske, kar niti ni čudno, kajti na slovenskem podeželju, vsaj v krajih, kjer sem jaz preživel otroštvo, so vse ženske, ki so se iz kakršnihkoli razlogov, pa to ni bilo tako redko, odločile za samomor, šle, kot smo rek-li, v vodo. Zelo zelo redko katera je izbrala strup. Moški so se praviloma obešali. Tak-tudi obe, četudi manjši reki, Pesnica in Ščavnica, ki sta tekli v bližini vasi, po katerih sva se z materjo, dokler sem v letih otroštva živel z njo, selila od vasi do vasi, še niso bile regulirane in tako je bilo v obeh dovolj globokih tolmunov, ki so zagotavljali nep-lavalkam, kot so tedaj podeželske ženske vse bile, vse pogoje za uspešne samomore. Lahko bi rekli, da je voda, če je le bilo dovolj v strugi in tolmunih, vlekla vase tudi druge ženske in ne samo mojo mater. Poleg tega je bilo tedaj, ko so si ljudje ob dolgih zimskih večerih še pripovedovali zgodbe, pogosto tudi mogoče slišati, da so v vodi pogosto končali svoje življenje neprevidni otroci in kaj pa kdaj tudi kak odrasel moški, ki je morda kje popil kozarec vina preveč in potem domov grede padel s preozke brvi, četudi celo z brvi čez kak manjši potok.

Vendar je treba poudariti, da voda ne buri naših domišljij samo ob razmišljanju o pre-teklih časih ali ob spominih na »stare čase«. Zgodí se, da v svoji oholosti in navdušenju nad napredkom, ko se nam zdi, da že skoraj popolnoma obvladujemo naravo, in da je človek, kot vrsta, dejansko postal gospodar ne samo Zemlje,





temveč že tako rekoč vesolja, in da nas sile narave, kot smo včasih rekli, ne morejo več presenetiti, potem pa se nekega zlije izpod neba veliko več vode, kot smo navajeni in neukrotljiva voda zali-je številne hiše, cele vasi in mesta in ljudje, ki so se po ulicah še dan pred tem ponosno prevažali z luksuznimi avtomobili, so nenadoma prisiljeni brodirati po deroči vodi ali se celo s čolni voziti po istih ulicah, potem ko je morda njihove avtomobile udarni val vode celo zrinil na kakšno njivo kje v bližini, kot se je to marsikomu zgodilo pred le-tom in pol tudi v Sloveniji, lani v Nemčiji in nedavno tudi v Bosni in Hercegovini in še marsikje. Skratka, medtem ko Elon Musk načrtuje naselbino oziroma neke vrste azil zase in svoje oboževalce na Marsu, se množice t.i. navadnih ljudi še vedno kar pogosto otepajo z enakimi težavami, kot so se množice otepele, odkar obstaja človeštvo.

Toda voda je po drugi strani čudežna in čudovita substanca. Je pogoj in bistvo življenja. V vodi se je življenje začelo in vse, kar živi, sestoji praviloma iz vsaj petdesetih odstotkov vode. Moje telo je, kakršnokoli že je in kakršnokoli je videti, zgrajeno iz več kot petinpetdesetih odstotkov vode, pa je vseeno videti čvrsto, stabilno, kar zadeva izgled in vsaj za zdaj tudi še uporabnost in zanesljivost in, kot da bi bilo vse kaj drugega, samo v največje delu prozorna anorganska tekočina ne. In vendar sem jaz, kot rečeno v daleč največjem odstotku voda! To velja celo za moje možgane! In četudi v približno sedemindvajsetih litrih oziroma kilogramih vode v mojem telesu ni ničesar, ne kalorij, ne kakršnihkoli hranilnih snovi, je moje življenje, celo moja pamet, kolikor je pač premorem, v bistvu odvisna od vsebnosti in morda celo od čistosti vode v mojem telesu.

L'EAU POUR LA PAIX

«On parle toujours de la violence du fleuve, jamais de celle des berges qui l'enserrent»

Bertolt Brecht

Il existe le risque de s'épuiser à vouloir entrer dans tous les plis des questions d'expertise technique, géopolitique, stratégique, juridique, humanitaire, concernant le sujet de «l'eau et la paix». Pour s'en prémunir, la pleine conscience d'une incarnation privilégiée, littéraire en somme, de notre rapport à l'eau, s'impose. Car cette incarnation est indispensable pour la paix intérieure de l'individu et a fortiori pour la paix avec autrui. Il est donc nécessaire de rappeler ce lien étroit, poétique avec l'eau, dans son rapport avec la paix.

Si la littérature est capable de «dépasser» le langage technique, elle devient ce vrai lieu de la paix qui encourage les femmes et les hommes à se parler et à s'entendre pour définir les intérêts

communs. Il est bon de considérer comme vital notre rapport langagier, poético-littéraire aux questions d'écologie au sens le plus large, dès lors que la notion de beauté est en jeu.


Le sentiment de cohérence qu'exprime la beauté vive de l'eau, de la nature, va à l'encontre de la visée utilitaire qui détourne toute chose en objet de spéculation. **Elisée Reclus** (1830-1905), écologiste avant l'heure, l'a bien compris puisqu'au moment où la civilisation industrielle s'installe avec violence, il va miser dans son **Histoire d'un ruisseau** ainsi que dans son **Histoire d'une montagne** sur la «beauté sauvage» comme l'arme esthétique dans laquelle les hommes trouveraient de quoi résister à l'énergie essentiellement prédatrice du Capital. «L'histoire d'un ruisseau, même de celui qui naît et se perd dans la mousse, est l'histoire de l'infini»...

A présent, les prédateurs se sont approprié beaucoup de ressources vitales pour l'humanité, tout en détournant le sens des mots, polluant ainsi le langage avant les langues elles-mêmes. Prenons l'exemple de quelques mots parmi les plus beaux concernant l'eau dans tous ses états. Ruisseler: le ruisseau qui ruisselle est depuis toujours lié au plaisir de l'eau pure et transparente.

La transparence, celle des eaux vives, est devenue aussi le symbole d'une démocratie saine, où ne sévit pas la corruption avec ses eaux troubles. Et voici que les puissants utilisent un langage même trop transparent, en fait menaçant, afin de noyer le poisson dans un étang fangeux. Le syntagme néolibéral qui promettait quasi poétiquement le «ruissellement heureux» des richesses, des capitaux vers le bas de l'échelle sociale, s'est avéré au compte-gouttes comme un gros mensonge baigné d'eau sale...

Les jeunes en Serbie protestent d'une manière inédite contre la démocratie polluée





par la corruption et le népotisme politique, quand ils défilent au-dessus du Danube, le fleuve qui inspira plus d'un écrivain, notamment **Claudio Magris** (*Danube*) et **Elias Canetti** (*La langue sauvée*). Depuis des mois déjà, la marée humaine, paisible, refusant toute violence, mais d'une vitalité surprenante, submerge les artères de la capitale, Belgrade. Elle est sortie avec force du lit de la «rivière balisée». Avec ses courants nouveaux, elle a inondé les sentiers battus de la société. Les jeunes sont rejoints par leurs parents et leurs grands-parents qui se sont rendus compte d'avoir trop longtemps survécu dans l'eau stagnante et croupie qui flétrit toute démocratie vibrante.

Ensemble, ils n'exigent pas moins que l'assainissement de l'environnement, celui des eaux opaques de la politique: ils veulent la transparence du pouvoir et le fonctionnement limpide des institutions. Ils rejettent le «ruissellement» de la corruption qui mine le droit à l'égalité des chances en irriguant les cloaques souterrains de la société. Elles et ils poursuivent leur écoulement pour la liberté et la démocratie, calmement, avec l'assurance d'une force tranquille, celle d'une grande rivière à laquelle donnent raison les millions de gouttes qui la forment depuis toutes les sources...

Et c'est encore contre les démons de la guerre et leur avidité de destruction, menaçant la paix, les saisons et les perles de la plus belle eau, que résonnent, à distance d'un siècle l'un de l'autre, à l'unisson, les voix pacifistes et révoltées d'Elisée Reclus et d'Elias Canetti.





**POT DO OBJAVE (FROM ASPIRING TO PUBLISHED
AUTHOR)**

**YOUNG PEN ROUND TABLE: THE PATH TO
PUBLICATION: FROM ASPIRING TO PUBLISHED
AUTHOR**

**LE CHEMIN VERS LA PUBLICATION : D'ASPIRANT
À UN AUTEUR PUBLIÉ**

**EL CAMINO HACIA LA PUBLICACIÓN: DE
ASPIRANTE A AUTOR PUBLICADO**

Okrogla miza Mladega PEN-a (Vodnikova domačija v Ljubljani) z naslovom: Pot do objave (From aspiring to published author). Mladi bodo govorili o ustvarjanju mladih, prepletanju različnih zvrsti umetnosti (podkasti, filmi, literatura ...), poti do objave knjige, o literarnih sistemih v različnih državah – založbe, kritike, nagrade, o podpori mladim avtorjem in avtoricam, kako jih obravnavajo razni kulturni posredniki od agentov do založb.

Young writers will discuss the work of the fellow artists, the intertwining of different art forms (podcasts, films, literature, etc.), and the journey to publishing a book. They will look critically at the literary systems in various countries – publishers, literary reviews, awards, publications in literary magazines and the support for young authors. With fully pledging to the youth to be our future, how are they treated by cultural intermediaries, from agents to publishers and how experienced older colleagues can support them?

De jeunes écrivains et écrivaines discuteront du travail de leurs pairs, de l'interconnexion entre différentes formes artistiques (podcasts, films, littérature, etc.) et du parcours vers la publication d'un livre. Ils examineront de manière critique les systèmes littéraires de divers pays – éditeurs, critiques littéraires, prix, publications dans des revues littéraires et soutien aux jeunes auteurs. Bien que les jeunes soient pleinement considérés comme l'avenir, comment sont-ils traités par les intermédiaires culturels, des agents aux éditeurs, et comment des collègues expérimentés peuvent-ils les soutenir ?

Los escritores jóvenes, hombres y mujeres, debatirán sobre el trabajo de sus compañeros/as artistas, el entrelazamiento de diferentes formas de arte (podcasts, películas, literatura, etc.) y el camino hacia la publicación de un libro. Analizarán críticamente los sistemas literarios de diversos países: editoriales, reseñas literarias, premios, publicaciones en revistas literarias y el apoyo a jóvenes autores. Con la plena conciencia de que los escritores y escritoras jóvenes son nuestro futuro, se buscará responder a la pregunta: ¿cómo les tratan los intermediarios culturales, desde agentes a editores, y cómo pueden apoyarles los colegas mayores con experiencia?



OTHER

NEŽA VILHELM (PEN SAN MIGUEL)

SANJE

Sedimo za mizo, hladno je, temno. Prostor razsvetlujejo sveče. Ne vidim vaših obrazov. Samo obrisi ste, a vendar čutim, da ste moji. Govorimo, a nas ne slišim. Postajate čedalje bolj prozorni, oddaljujete se in izginjate v vlažne stene. Kričim, kličem vas, a vseeno odhajate. Ostane samo vonj po krvi.

Stojim na robu Nebotičnika. Višji je kot v resnici. Dan je lep, a ne čisto jasen. Gledam naprej, vidim obrise gora, obrise mesta. Potegne močan veter, Nebotičnik se maje. Pogledam navzdol, ljudje so kot mravlje. Hiše kot lego kocke. Piha, šumi, piska, škripa. Majem se, lovim ravnotežje, poskušam se obdržati na površini. Veter potegne z druge smeri, zabriše me ob steklo. Ne razbijem se.

Jakoba imam v naročju. Hodiva po ulici, ki je ne prepoznam, prepoznam pa bližino, ljubezen in mir. Vidim razpoke, ki bežijo od mene. Širijo se, postajajo vse globlje, kažejo zobe, nekaj podobnega slini brizga iz njih. Začutim veter, ki vleče Jakoba iz mojih rok. Ne morem ga zadržati, pada v grlo zobate in slinaste pošasti. Samo stojim, ne morem se premakniti, ne morem kričati. Usta se zaprejo, razpoke se mi približujejo. Na njihovem mestu zrastejo spominčice.

Grem v gozd, tam je mir, tam je lepo, tam sem doma. Poznam ga do zadnje trave, veje, drevesa, jase, potočka. Vedno vem, kdo sem in kje sem. Nekega dne me v gozdu zajame neki čuden občutek. Vse je enako kot prej, a vse drugače. Ničesar ne prepoznavam. Ne vem, kdo sem, kje sem. Strah me je. Vem, da hodim v krogih, ne znam ven, ne upam stopiti iz uhojene poti. Izgubim se v gozdu in iščem pot ven, iščem znamenja, hodim v krogu, ne upam ven.

Slišim lomastenje, voham smrad, čutim žgočo tekočino na hrbtu. Tečem, tečem, ne pridem nikamor. Padem in se ozrem nazaj. Vidim številne oči, številne noge, številne zobe. Čutim strah in željo po begu, a ne zmorem nikamor. Zmrznem. Vidim usta, ki se odpirajo, in temo, čutim bolečine, kot bi kdo zabadal nože vame.

Sopara pritiska na moje prsi, na vse pretege se trudim vdihniti. Ne gre, diham in se dušim. Primem se za vrat, razširim roke v zraku, kot bi hotela zgrabiti zrak in ga privabiti k sebi. Ne gre, nič se ne premakne, vse stoji. Diham, da se čedalje bolj dušim. Svet se vrtili okoli mene, vidim samo razmazano sivino. Vse hitreje se vrtili, sivina je čedalje bolj brezoblična. Padam, a tal ni, padam, se vrtničim, nikjer ni trdnosti, samo vrtenje in sivina, sivina in vrtenje, vrtenje in sivina ...

Poletje je, vroče in soparno, dihati se komaj da. Poskušam narediti prepih, odprem vsa okna, vrata, a se premakne nič. Ugasnem luči, ležim v postelji in se potim. Ležim na hrbtu, noge imam pokrčene in se intenzivno smilim sama sebi. Na stegnu, seveda na tisti strani, ki je ne vidim, in tam, kamor komajda sežem, nekaj začutim. Nekaj polzi. Ne, hodi. Ne, plazi se. Vstanem, pa je še vedno tam. Polzihodiplazise v drugo smer. Kamorkoli gre, tega ne morem doseči. Že vidim veliko, tolsto mesarsko muho, velika je približno toliko kot jaz, ki leže na tisoče jajčec v moje mednožje. Zareži se, vame butne smrad po gnilem, in reče: Boš vsaj nekaj rodila.

Kuham nekaj zelenjavnega. V lonec z vodo mečem vse, kar imam. Nekaj sestavin ne poznam. Posolim, popopram, pokrijem. In sem in tja pogledam, kako kaj kaže. Čorba počasi vre, klokota in diši. Postajam lačna. Ko se mi zdi, da bi lahko bilo

kuhano, si nalijem nekaj zajemalk na krožnik in sedem za mizo. Zaželim si dober tek in zajamem. V žlici vidim človeško oko, ki zre vame. Kdo si?

V sredinec, tja, kjer se ta konča in prehaja v kazalec, me je pičila neka žuželka. Podobna je bila sestradani čebeli. Ker je odletela, sem na pik kmalu pozabila. Ponoči pa se je na tem mestu oblikovala rana pol centimetra krat četrť centimetra. Brez kože. Ko zjutraj to opazujem in se čudim, opazim, da imam nad levo obrvjo podobno ranico, manjšo, pika se ne spomnim. Obe rani razkužim, namažem in odidem v knjižnico študirat za en prevod. Tam me začne pošastno skeleti hrbet, srbeti in pikati, ampak ne na površini kože, pod njo, kamor ne dosežem in se niti slučajno ne morem dovolj popraskati, da bi minilo. Ko vstanem, da bi odšla na stranišče in pogledala, kaj me muči, me močno preseka ostra bolečina, kot bi me nekdo urezal. Stečem proti stranišču, vmes opazim poglede izpod čela in čutim vrtajoče poglede na hrbtu. Končno prispem, hitro zaprem vrata in slečem majico. Z njo vred slečem tudi kožo s hrbta. Cel hrbet boli, kot bi me nekaj ogromnega pičilo. Omedlim in se prepotena zbudim v postelji z bolečino v hrbtu. Poležala sem sršena.



PEACE?

p e a c e

e a c

e a

a

!

in pieces

not even in pieces

Tarık Günersel

4.6 B 2025

(including the age of Earth)

PHARAOH

O slaves!

If you want safety,
Always obey Me,
God's voice, reason.
“Critique”? Treason.

U may ask

Incl sion
or coll sion?

MIQUEL ÀNGEL LLAUGER (PEN CATALÀ)

PRAYER OF THE BEASTS

Oh Lord of Beasts,
who live in the plain and the hill,
in the trunk of the olive tree and in the nest of the nightingale,
sorry for the inconvenience.

You know it's only once in a while
that we come to disturb you with prayers,
as we need our time for grazing,
for the bloody struggle.

And if we have any free time
we prefer to wallow in the dust
or stop by to see
the twilight so sweet.

But today we have a complaint about a primate,
the one that speaks five thousand strange languages,
the one that walks upright,
the one that stole the fire that burns in your guts.

We do not want to object
that he uses the fire to roast us: your law takes him there;
but he plays with flames and will make
of the tree of life, dead wood.

He doesn't mind cutting down a two-hundred-year-old pine tree,
sending poisonous rain,
flooding the valleys, drying up the ponds
or locking three dolphins in a pool.

And he soils the shark's water,
the swift's and the robin's air,
the mountain, the plain and the cave
with the blackness that fills his chest.

So release us from this evil
danger, from this son of the tapestry
of brothers and sisters, save us
from this wicked depilated mammal.

Or make him leave this way
that offends us and You
and make him find the harmony
that binds him to all, and to everything, and to himself,
amen.





A PRISONER'S PARADOX

A jailer, why doesn't he sing? Only the prisoner does. No jailer is known to sing
Mahmoud Darwish

*Hours creep by
and the prisoner's silence
darkens further
that of the jailer.*

*And what could they say to each other?
They don't share words,
or streets, or nostalgia
for another world.*

*At night they part
without a farewell,
and the prisoner's paradox
unfolds.*

*The jailer curses
his wife and children,
and with his feet on the table
he watches a match.*

*The prisoner releases his unrest
and rage to the sounds
of a very sad song...
but a song nevertheless.*

HE ALWAYS WRITES WITH HIS LIPS

Mandelstam at Voronezh

He always writes with his lips,
he whispers verses.
No desk, no pen,
no paper, no stopping.

He always writes with his lips,
sailing the boulevards
or revolving in a gloomy
hideout for deportees.

He always writes with his lips,
and the whispering outlines
the notes he awaits
and knows will come.

BREAD

happy to eat the bread that was baked
in the poets' oven
R.S. Thomas

*Almost every evening, at this time,
I eat some of this bread*

*which doesn't want anything other than
the same old things, oil and salt.*

*Crusty bread like the branch that breaks
under the heavy snow,*

*or spongy like the prairie invented
by that painter who goes to the fields.*

*Bread from the poets' oven, which takes me
to the edge of a hollow sleep.*



IT'S ON US

It's the old grief again,
come today,
on this night of Shabbat, of *Jumu'ah*,

a time to rest, ourselves, our lands, our ancient hatreds.

Would this was a night of olives and honey,
of figs and pomegranates,
of sweetness.

Who by heart, and who by soul, who by dream and who by drift,

Who by *תְּדַבֵּר*, by prayer, by *عَالص*,
who by love and who by sorrow,
who by peace and who by disaster,

Homeseekers, Godwrestlers, Journeymakers,
who by light and who by forest,

Today, all are called to stand at the gates of Gaza,
the walls of Mariupol, the orchards of Donbas,
sands of Sudan, fields of Yemen.
Rings and words sewn into our hems,
hearts hidden beneath suitcase lining.

Today we cry out for peace
to the Source of all Light,
to all who will listen,
all who will hear—

Let them hear!

Today we bless and invite the quiet
the poem summons,
be for us an *alef bet* of safety.

Neruda said,
*If we ...for once could do nothing,
perhaps a huge silence
might interrupt this sadness
of never understanding ourselves
and of threatening ourselves with death.*

Love is the User Manual, on hard days & holy days...
V'ahavta ...and you shall love...

May our lives be a blessing,
may we live and let live
each day to its fullest
for the sake of all that is life,

O New ear, that hears! O little sister, o my brother!



DARINKA KOZINC (SLOVENIAN PEN)

A CUP IN HER KITCHEN

(a part of story Ana)

There is a cup in her kitchen. On the shelf. Blackened with time. A brass cup. With hand-carved motifs and interlaced windings.

In the summer afternoon the girls played along the brook, balanced on slippery marble stones, cooled their feet in low water. The older girl was visiting with the younger girl. The older girl suddenly said that she did not want to play anymore and headed for the puppy that came towards her as far as the chain allowed him. It was hot. There was no water in the cup. She bent down and took the cup in her hands. Heavy cup. Someone else's cup.

Can I have it? She asked the younger girl who caught up with her.

Take it! She shrugged her shoulders. As you see, we gave it to the dog. The girl carefully washed the cup when she returned home and placed it on a carved cabinet, which she had inherited from her grandmother. The girl loved things that held their stories

A young girl Ana in Cairo was trying to get used to new sounds, to the heat and to everything foreign to her that surrounded her.

Actually, I was lucky! she thought. It's a good thing that Albin refused! He probably had enough of Africa from the time he was a soldier. She touched the bed. Alone in bed. What luxury! Alone in the room. She looked over the room, the carved wardrobe, and the soft carpet on the ground.

After a month of living in Cairo, Aunt Luiza sent her to the market to buy vegetables. She gave her money and a local male servant to accompany her and carry what she bought.

"And buy yourself a nice souvenir," she ordered her.

She was attracted to the colourful vigour and a thousand sounds at the bazaar.

In her first, she was holding the money that was left from what she bought at the market for her aunt. She carefully looked over the displayed goods. Her eyes caught a glimpse of a brass cup. It was so polished it shone like gold. She held it with her left hand. It was heavy. The salesman was very pushy. She opened her palm in which she had the leftover change.

"This is all I will give you for it!"

The salesman in a bright galabeya shook his head; his eyes had a cunning shine to them.

"I don't have any more!" Ana stubbornly persisted.

He shook his head again. With a heavy heart, she put the cup down. She really liked it.

She turned her back to the salesman and took a step to the side.

He ran after her and held out his hand for the money. She gave him all the change she had and the cup was hers.

But the girl did know the story of the cup. She heard them talk of Ana. They spoke about her as if she were a fraud. They said she lives in a mansion and has servants. They cursed her. The stories from far away places were forgotten. The houses hid their secrets. Only here and there a tiny trail showed the time gone by. The time when girls and women left their homes, the time when young mothers did not appear in family photographs, the time when some had to rescue the whole family. The dust has collected, she thought.

Saturday was a cleaning day. She sprayed the surface with a cleaning solution that can tackle any kind of dirt. The surface shone like gold.

(THE ALEXANDRIANS-Aleksandrinke)



GLOBAL VILLAGE

A gloomy silence
Situated hanging on wall
The wall which has several ears
Was listening the whispering.
The whispering which was making
Conspiratorial plan.
Silence of the room
And conspiracy of whispering
Was dissolved regularly
By the longer wall clock.

When in room
Serially the magnifying digital era entered
That displaced the rumors
Silence began to reign throughout the room.

The digital things of the room
Have digital eyes,
Which is looking over the world.
Having mind made up of silicon
Which stores a number of information.

The digital age by devouring the universe
Has made global village.

The unseen roof of the global village
The cyber space has been hanged
The digital tower has been standing there
Looking down from that tower
The countries are seen as village
Continents are like city
The broken border
Relationships are been loosening
Leaving caste and religion
Like borderless sky
Widely been spreading
All are been open.

In this transparent digital age,
Having no wonder and secrets
All secrets are been leaked with
Tablet, IPod, smart phone,
From the TV screen and computer's monitor
The shameless eyes are viewing the destructive dream.

I am a global citizen
My country is the world
My religion is the humanity
The entire world indeed one family.

(Translated by Pimala Neupane)



WE ARE, WHAT WE WATCH

1

The new era has come.

We, dispersed to all corners of the world,
are no longer dispersed. With a click of a button or two
we can connect at will. And we do.
Intoxicated by this miracle,
we send millions of easy messages.
Everything is suddenly deemed worthy of sharing
with many others, as often as possible.
We lose ourselves in this labyrinth of signs;
the miracle of connection explodes and dies.
We forget that to communicate a meaning
we need the solitude we persistently steal
from ourselves and others.

2

Our life is the life of television programs.

What we know about the world
is theirs.
We are the mere shambles of these visions.
We try to resemble them
and so
we remove ourselves
from the beat of our own blood
from the air of our own lungs.
We are glad
that for a moment
we do not have to respond
to the intrusive questions
that we do not have to fill out
the tiresome forms
to stare at the blinding e-mail or web page
in our computer to struggle
with a car or another technical
instrument so indispensable for our well-being...
We are relieved
that we do not have to choose
among the five thousand artifacts
that shout at us in the grocery store.
We are daily bombarded
by hundreds of adds, which
wash our brains

fill them with a constant buzz
interfere with our essence
and reduce it to

sugar cubes
with which persistently sweeten
the life that has ceased to have
any taste of its own.

3

Looking for love,
in the history which is no longer ours.
We are a tiny part of a foggy universe
which no longer matters to anyone.
We die without a trace,
unnoticed.
We feed on pictures
which are offered to us daily
without rhyme or reason.
They expect
our complicity and participation
without movement, without voice,
without love or lovemaking.
They cheat our solitude.
We no longer miss anyone.

4

Violence is more common than bread and butter today.
More common than the caress or words of our close ones.
Nothing
can be taken seriously any longer.
Nothing
is allowed to matter anymore.
The days leave without a trace
filled with virtual kitsch
with personalities fighting for a “better tomorrow”
loving and killing
their partners on the screens large and small.
We watch all this
with moderate interest
without compassion.





HERE I AM – YOUR SISTER EARTH.

I shine bright in my green coat.
My depths, mysterious and black
are the home of blinding diamonds
which when brought to the surface
swallow the light, for they are the reflection
as well as the carrier of visions.
People collect them, to add
brightness and light to themselves, lacking in their souls.
My miraculous waters are the home
for hidden kingdoms unheard of
and when the time comes, they transform themselves
into a cleansing bath, from which
there is no salvation nor recall.
My inner fire never dies away,
only on the surface it cools off and from the lava
it forms slowly and surely
layers of firmness and nutrients and a seat
for so many fantastic species
of animals and plants,
a sight for sore eyes
Only man in his foolishness
fights me instead of honoring me
and bitterly loses.
I am patient and tolerate the aberrations
of this intrusive brat a long time without grumbling.
Just like he doesn't, I don't ask him
when I charge into battle
against his wanton civilization.
For I am the mistress over the life
and death of my children.
I am the Earth. I am yours.

UPANJE JE MOČ

Od tistega novoletnega večera
z dežjem, kuhančki, lučkami
ob Ljubljani, od izmenjavanja
informacij o zdravnikih,
bolečinah, kuhanju, obiskih
in voščilnicah,
kaj je ostalo od tega večera?
Kje si ti, draga moja?


Nekaj rdečkastih fotografij?
Dve telefonski številki?
Dve nobel bonbonieri
in Ifijin krožniček
v bogkovem kotu spomina,
po katerem se mi toži?
Kje si sedaj ti?

Ne vem, od kod se je kljub temu,
da te ni,
vzelo upanje. Vzniknilo je prav
sredi večera, ko sem poletela
preko stopnice, a nisem padla.
Vedela sem, da je to upanje,
ker se vrat sploh ni dalo zapreti.
Ne narahlo ne grobo, vsakič
so škrtnila in vztrajno ostala odprta.
Bila si nekje blizu.

Lisel Müller mi je kasneje,
doma, pritrdila, kakor bi sedela
z menoj na utrujeni sedežni:
Upanje, edini dar, ki ga ne moremo uničiti.
Argument, ki zavrača smrt.
Genij, ki izumlja prihodnost.
Vse, kar vemo o Bogu.

Izvlekla sem oranžni zločljivi dežnik
in ga razprla v bližajoče
se novo leto. Prijela sem te pod roko,
na tlakovcih je začelo drseti.
Za zgrinjanje množice je bilo prezgodaj.
Voščila sem fantu, ki mi je bil enkrat
veliko povedal o sebi in svoji družini,
in je šel slučajno mimo;





oči so se nama razveselile blagoslovljenega hipa,
stisk rok je bil topel, blag, a čvrst.
Tudi ti si bila tam.

Lisel še pravi,
da je upanje serum, zaradi katerega prisegamo,
da ne bomo izdali drug drugega.
Midve se nisva.

Naše resnično obzorje je obzorje nedosegljivega.
Upanje je moč, da bomo še naprej verjeli, delovali
in brez nestrpnosti čakali, kolikor bo potrebno.

HOPE IS THE STRENGTH

From that New Year's Eve
lush with rain, cups of mulled wine, with all the little lights
alongside Ljubljana, from sharing
information about doctors,
pains, cooking, visits
and greeting cards,
what remains of that evening?
Where are you, my dear?


Some faded photos?
Two phone numbers?
Two fancy chocolate boxes
and Ifi's little plate
in the holy shrine of memory
I yearn for?
Where are you now?

It's still a mystery from where,
despite your absence,
hope emerged. Arising only just
in the middle of an evening, when I stumbled
over a stair, but did not fall.
I recognized it as hope,
because the door refused to be shut.
Not gently neither forcefully, each time
it clacked and defiantly remained open.
You were somewhere close.

Later, at home Lisel Müller
confirmed, as if we were both sitting
on an ancient, worn-out sofa:
Hope, the only gift that can't be destroyed.
The argument that spurns death.
The intelligence that invents the future.
All we know of God.

I brought out my orange foldable umbrella
and unravelled it into the coming
New Year. I took your arm,
the cobblestones were getting wet.
It was still too early for the crowd to gather.
I said my greetings to a boy, who, at one time
shared with me much about himself and his family,
and who just happened to pass us by;
our eyes filled with delight from this blessed moment,





the handshake was warm, gentle but firm.
And you were there.

Lisel also spoke,
*that hope is a serum, which makes us pledge
not to betray each other.*
We didn't.

Our true horizon is a prospect of the unattainable.
Hope is the strength for us to keep believing, acting
and patiently waiting for as long as it will take.

