

Okrogla miza SEP na Vilenici  
IZBIRA MED SVOBODO IN ZAPOVEDJO:  
LITERARNA AVTONOMIJA IN MEHANIZMI IZBORA

CEI Round Table at Vilenica  
CHOICE BETWEEN FREEDOM AND COMMAND:  
LITERARY AUTONOMY AND THE MECHANICS OF CHOICE



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*Urednici / Editors:*

Miljana Cunta, Tanja Petrič

*Lektura / Proofreading:*

Jožica Narat, Alan McConnell-Duff

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Izbira med svobodo in zapovedjo:  
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KONCEPT

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Choice between Freedom and Command:  
Literary autonomy and the mechanics of choice  
CONCEPT



## Izbira med svobodo in zapovedjo (Literarna avtonomija in mehanizmi izbora)

Andrej Blatnik

Navkljub priljubljenim tezam o »koncu Gutenbergove galaksije« in »zmagi črte nad črko« število natisnjenih knjig ves čas narašča, še zlasti leposlovnih knjig, literatura pa se vse bolj povezuje z drugimi kulturnimi praksami in se pojavlja v drugačnih, ne nujno s papirjem povezanih oblikah. Če je bilo v časih pred množičnim tiskom mogoče še natanko določiti, katere knjige naj človek prebere, da bi si pridobil izobrazbo, se je sedaj v skorajda nepregledni ponudbi zelo težko že odločiti, s katerimi naj poskusi. Leta 1450 je izšlo 0,3 naslova na prebivalca Zemlje, leta 1950 sto naslovov in leta 2000 kar 167 naslovov, poroča Gabriel Zaid v knjigi *Toliko knjig! (Los demasiados libros / So Many Books, 2004)*, toliko naslovov pa preberejo le redki, in govorimo le o sprotni produkciji, s katero vsako leto narašča tudi kulturna dediščina. Kateri mehanizmi dandanes usmerjajo pozornost potencialnega bralca na točno določene avtorje in dela?

Če je Virginia Woolf v svojem znamenitem spisu *Lastna soba (A Room of One's Own, 1929)* govorila o »lastni sobi« docela dobesedno, jo razumela kot osvobojeno ozemlje, namenjeno ustvarjalnemu pisanju, ter hkrati poudarjala njeno simbolno razsežnost prostora oblikovane identitete, je konec tisočletja postavil pred ustvarjalca nove zahteve. Kar umetnost po *nastanku* danes potrebuje za svoj *obstane*k, je, prav nasprotno, *javna soba*, ustvarjalčeva prisotnost v industrijskih obratih množičnih občil. Pisci današnjega časa se ne morejo ogniti diktaturi medijske prisotnosti, nastopati morajo v medijih, kadarkoli se le ponudi priložnost, založniško osebje za stike z javnostmi jih ponuja debatnim televizijskim omizjem v uporabo in trendovskim revijam v poslikavo.

Vsako leto je objavljenih vse več knjig in pozornost javnosti se razdeli na vse več delov. Le redki avtorji se izogibajo medijem in pustijo knjigam, naj govorijo same zase. Nekateri (recimo Thomas Pynchon

in J. D. Salinger) so iz izogibanja ne le medijem, temveč sploh kakršni koli javni pojavnosti, naredili privlačno medijsko zgodbo. Vsi drugi jo skušajo narediti na običajnejši način – s pojavljanjem v medijih. Avtorjevo ime postaja *blagovna znamka*, pooseblja tip pisanja in zagotavlja ustrezno raven proizvoda. Ta učinek je zlasti značilen za izdelke popularne kulture: Jason Epstein v knjigi *Založniške zgodbe (Book Business, 2001)* navaja, da je kar 63 naslovov s seznama stotih najbolj prodajanih knjig v ZDA v letih od 1986 do 1996 napisalo le šest avtorjev: Tom Clancy, Michael Crichton, John Grisham, Stephen King, Dean Koonitz in Danielle Steel.

Homogenizacija kanona (če seznam najbolj prodajanih knjig razumemo kot kanon popularne kulture) pa se dogaja tudi v »visoki« kulturi, kjer sicer niso tako pomembni prodajni rezultati kot *prisotnost v kulturnem obtoku*, ki si jo avtorji zagotavljajo prek homogenizacije učnih programov literature na vseh izobraževalnih ravneh in prek prevodov, pri katerih deluje učinek snežne kepe: prevodi v velike jezike sprožajo prevode v majhne, že prevedeni avtorji pa imajo prednost pred še neprevedenimi, saj so delno že uveljavljeni v ciljni kulturi. Hkrati pri prevajanju na poseben način narašča vloga velikih kultur: v neglobaliziranem času so sosednje književnosti vstopale v neposredne medsebojne stike, dandanes pa te velikokrat nadomesti spoznavanje prek posredne, bolj dostopne kulture. Kot pravi Jaume Cabré, je evropska *lingua franca* prevod – a ne prevod v katalonščino, slovenščino ali estonščino, temveč v angleščino, kvečjemu še kak drug večji svetovni jezik.

Vloga »tistega ki izbira« za objavo ali prevod, za nastop v mediju ali v univerzitetnem učnem programu, vloga *kulturnega posrednika*, kakor novi sloj odločujočih v kulturni industriji imenuje Pierre Bourdieu, v vse bolj nepregledni kulturni ponudbi, kjer je proizvodnja vse večja v vsaki nacionalni kulturi, vse več pa je tudi prestopanja meja, narašča enako kot ponudba. Urednik se tako iz ozadja založniške industrije – kjer je sicer, po Raymondu Williamsu, poklicni posrednik za pisatelja, vendar na njegovo ustvarjanje nima neposrednega vpliva – premakne v ospredje, podobno kakor onkraj strokovne javnosti še nedavno anonimni skrbniki galerijskih zbirk postanejo razvpiti kustosi, katerih ime jamči



za kakovost, še bolj pa za medijsko prisotnost kake razstave. Vodilni dogodki vizualne umetnosti, kakršni so Documenta, Manifesta ali beneški Bienale, vzpostavijo pravi zvezdniški sistem in velikokrat v ospredje postavijo kustosa pred umetniki, katerih dela so razstavljena. Podobno zraste vloga producenta v filmskem in glasbenem svetu: producent neposredno vpliva na končno podobo izdelka s kreativnim sodelovanjem v procesu snemanja in postane zaščitna blagovna znamka, ki jamči ne le za zanesljivo profesionalno realizacijo izdelka, temveč tudi za njegovo slogovno usmeritev.

Literatura se kaže kot nekoliko tradicionalnejša dejavnost, zdi se, da predvsem številnost tako pisateljev kot kulturnih posrednikov in založb povzroči, da je za uveljavitev blagovne znamke v leposlovju potreben močnejši promocijski aparat, kot ga premore literarna oziroma založniška dejavnost sama. Recimo tisti, ki ga omogoča televizija, kot nas poučuje izkušnja oddaj Oprah Winfrey Show, Apostrophes in Literarisches Quartett, če se omejimo samo na dolgoletne televizijske blagovne znamke, ki imajo izjemen vpliv na sprejem obravnavanih del. Hkrati pa v kanon bistveno hitreje kot po običajnih akademskih poteh vstopajo zlasti tista literarna dela, ki prejmejo najbolj cenjene literarne nagrade. David Lodge v tekstu *O Ye Laurels* (1996), objavljenem kot uvod v knjigo *The Best of Young American Novelists*, piše: »Bookerjeva nagrada, ki je desetletje prej imela na bralce majhen vpliv ali sploh nobenega, je na lepem prišla v središče medijskega zanimanja in začela zelo močno spodbujati prodajo. Pred letom 1980 so hkrati oznanili finaliste in na skrivaj izbrali zmagovalca. Po novih pravilih pa so srečanje z odločitvijo o zmagovalcu pripravili nekaj tednov po objavi finalistov – na dan banketa, na katerem oznanijo izide. Tako so se začele stave in banket je postal drama visoke napetosti, nekakšna književna noč oskarjev, neposredno prenašana po televiziji.«\*

Michael Ondaatje je ob podelitvi nagrade The Giller Prize zapisal: »Danes knjige ocenjujemo, ali so dobre ali ne, po prodaji in nominacijah za nagrado. Kritično ozračje in medijsko spremljanje pisateljev sta naključna in manična. Pisci so bodisi v središču pozornosti bodisi pov-

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\* (<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/1448>)

sem prezrti.« (Toronto Star, 4. 11. 2003.) Mnenju se pridružuje tudi Pierre Bourdieu, ki v knjigi *Na televiziji (Sur la télévision, 1996)* opozarja: »'Mentaliteta odzivnosti' danes vlada v uredništvih, pri založbah itd. Povsod gledajo skozi komercialni uspeh. Še pred komaj tridesetimi leti – in tako je bilo že od sredine 19. stoletja, že od Baudelaira, Flauberta itd. – je bil med avantgardnimi pisatelji, pisatelji za pisatelje, takimi, ki so jih cenili tudi drugi pisatelji, in ravno tako med umetniki, ki so jih cenili tudi drugi umetniki, komercialni uspeh sumljiv: v njem so videli znamenja sklepanja kompromisov s sodobnostjo, z denarjem ... Danes pa trg v vedno večji meri priznavajo za legitimno instanco legitimiranja. O tem jasno priča neka druga novotarija, namreč sezname uspešnic. Še davi sem na radiu slišal napovedovalca, ki je učeno komentiral zadnjo uspešnico z besedami: 'Filozofija je letos v modi, saj je bilo prodanih 800.000 izvodov knjige Sofijin svet.' Kot sodbo na najvišji ravni, kot poslednjo sodbo je ponujal sodbo, ki je bila izražena v prodajnih številkah. Z odzivnostjo se tržna logika vliva v kulturno produkcijo.«

Splošna floskula je, da nas pred vdorom komercialnega barbarstva v kulturo varuje slonokoščeni stolp Univerze, vendar je vprašanje, koliko je univerzitetni diskurz pri svoji želji, da bi ne zaostal za »resničnim svetom«, temveč bival z njim v sinergiji, pripravljen spremeniti svoje kriterije, k čemur ga nagovarja tudi vedno večji delež ljudi, ki se odločajo za univerzitetno izobraževanje. Približevanje »uporabnikom« običajno pomeni zniževanje ravni, zniževanje ravni pa omogoča lažji vstop med izbrane. Čeprav ni mogoče zanikati potrebe po demokratizaciji in preobrazbah kanoničnega izbora velikih avtorjev, pa je meja med »strictly limited« in »anything goes« pri izbiranju včasih zelo zabrisana – in odvisna od cele vrste prejšnjih izbir – recimo, kaj je dostopno, kaj je prevedeno, kaj je opaženo, kaj, navsezadnje, se ujema s trenutnimi estetskimi in etičnimi standardi.

Tisti, ki izbira, svojo izbiro seveda ponuja v presojo, in tudi njegova izbira je lahko zavržena. Obstajajo alternativni kanoni, protesti proti izbiri nagrajencev, konkurenčne medijske predstavitve – vendar se vsi ti modeli *drugačne izbire* ravnaajo po nekih, čeprav *drugačnih* kriterijih.

Razmerje med avtonomijo literarnega okusa in zapovedmi trenutnih pričakovanj sprejemnikov pa vzpostavlja trenje med izbranim in prezrtim. Izvenbesedilne okoliščine po eni strani literaturi omogočajo ne le obstoj, temveč tudi odmev v javnosti, po drugi pa ji (tudi z neprilaganjem svojega delovanja konkretnemu literarnemu delu) zmanjšujejo možnosti avtonomije, s tem pa zmanjšujejo možnost za nastanek, obstanek, prepoznavo in preživetje notranje celostnega in radikalno inovativnega umetniškega dela. Vsi, ki sodelujejo pri procesih izbire v literarnem polju, zato sodelujejo tudi pri izbiranju med svobodo (novega, drugačnega) in zapovedjo (znanega in priznanega), pri katerem ne sodeluje le njihov estetski okus, temveč tudi etična izbira.

## Choice between Freedom and Command (Literary autonomy and the mechanics of choice)

*Andrej Blatnik*

Despite the popular theses about “the end of Gutenberg’s galaxy” and “victory of the line over the letter” the number of books printed, particularly in the sphere of fiction, keeps going up, and literature is becoming increasingly related to other cultural practices and is appearing in different, not necessarily paper forms. If – in the days before mass printing – it was still possible to determine with precision which books one was supposed to read in order to attain education, now – given the almost infinite choice – it is very hard to decide which are worth giving a try. In 1450, the ratio of titles per inhabitant of the Earth was 0.3, in 1950 this ratio was 100, and in 2000 as high as 167, as reported by Gabriel Zaid in his book *Los demasiados libros* (*So Many Books*, 2004). And so many titles are read only by the chosen few, and we are talking about the real-time production, which every year adds to the general cultural heritage. What mechanisms therefore nowadays direct the attention of potential readers to particular authors and particular works?

While Virginia Woolf in her famous text *A Room of One’s Own* (1929) spoke about “one’s own room” in a completely literal sense and understood it as a liberated territory intended for creative writing, and at the same time emphasised its symbolic dimension as a place of formed identity, the end of the millennium faced authors with new challenges. What art, after its *conception*, nowadays needs for its *survival*, is in fact a *public room* – an artist’s presence in the industrial environment of the mass media. Contemporary writers cannot escape the dictatorship of public presence, they have to appear in the media whenever possible, and the PR staff of publishing houses offers them up for TV round-table discussions, where they are used, and to trendy magazines, where they are presented in pictures.

More and more books come out every year, and public attention is split up into more and more parts. Very few authors avoid the media and let their books speak for themselves. Some of them (Thomas Pynchon and J. D. Salinger, for instance) have created an attractive media story out of their avoidance of not only the media, but any public appearance whatsoever. All others try to make it in a more conventional way – by being visible in the media. The author's name is becoming a *brand name*; it personifies his or her writing style and ensures an appropriate quality level of the product. This effect is particularly characteristic of popular culture products: Jason Epstein in *Book Business* (2001) states that as many as 63 titles from the list of a hundred best-selling books in the USA between 1986 and 1996 were written by only six authors: Tom Clancy, Michael Crichton, John Grisham, Stephen King, Dean Koonitz and Danielle Steel.

Homogenisation of the canon (if the list of best-selling books can be understood as the popular culture canon) is also happening in the “high” culture where sales results don't matter as much as *presence in the cultural flow*, which is ensured by the authors via the homogenisation of literature syllabi at all levels of education and via translations, which create the snowball effect: translations into major languages trigger off translation into less widely disseminated languages, and authors already translated have priority over those not yet translated, as they are already at least partly established in the target culture. Simultaneously, translation in a specific way strengthens the role of larger cultures: in pre-globalisation times neighbouring literatures were entering into direct mutual contacts, while nowadays they often become known indirectly – via more accessible cultures. According to Jaume Cabré, the European *lingua franca* is a translation – but not a translation into Catalan, Slovenian or Estonian, but into English or some other major world language.

The role of the “one who chooses” the material for publication or translation, for media appearance or inclusion into a university study programme, the role of *cultural mediators* – as Pierre Bourdieu calls the new decision-makers in the cultural industry – in the increasingly

non-transparent cultural sphere where production is growing in every national culture with ever-increasing crossing of boundaries, is being strengthened at the same rate as the supply goes up. Thus an editor moves from the background of the publishing industry – where, according to Raymond Williams, he or she is a writer’s professional mediator, but without direct influence on his or her work – to the foreground, similarly as custodians of gallery collections, previously anonymous outside professional circles, become famous curators whose names guarantee quality and – even more importantly – media coverage of a certain exhibition. Leading events of visual arts like Documenta, Manifesta or the Venetian Biennale are thus setting up a veritable star system which frequently puts custodians above the artists whose works are on display. Similarly inflated is the role of producers in the world of film or music: producers exert direct influence on the final appearance of the product through creative cooperation in the shooting process, and therefore become brand names vouching not only for efficient professional realisation of the product, but also for its stylistic orientation.

Literature appears to be a slightly more traditional art; it seems that the ever-increasing number of writers as well as cultural mediators and publishing houses has created the situation in which a stronger promotion apparatus is needed in order to establish a brand name in fiction that is actually possessed by the literary apparatus of publishing business. An apparatus similar to that owned by the television – as is well demonstrated by the programmes like Oprah Winfrey Show, Apostrophes and Literarisches Quartett, if we limit ourselves only to the long-lasting TV brand names having an extraordinary influence on the reception of the works discussed. And at the same time the canon is penetrated much faster than via ordinary academic channels by those literary works awarded major literary prizes. David Lodge in the text *O Ye Laurels* (1996), published as an introduction to the book *The Best of Young American Novelists*, writes: “The Booker Prize, which had been trundling along for a decade without making much impact on the reading public, suddenly became the focus of intense media interest, and a powerful engine for generating book sales. Before 1980 the shortlist was

announced, and the winner secretly chosen, at the same time. Under new rules, the meeting to decide the winner was held some weeks after the shortlist meeting – on the very day of the banquet at which the result was announced. This meant that bookmakers would accept bets on the outcome, and turned the banquet into an occasion of high drama and genuine suspense, a kind of literary Oscar night, broadcast live on network television.”\*

On the occasion of The Giller Prize awarding ceremony Michael Ondaatje wrote: “Books are judged today as successful or not depending on sales and jury short lists. Meanwhile the critical climate, for all the media coverage of writers, is random and manic ... The authors are either in the centre of attention or completely overlooked.” (Toronto Star, 4. 11. 2003). His opinion is shared by Pierre Bourdieu, who in his book *Sur la télévision* (1996) warns: “The ‘feedback mentality’ is nowadays the ruling atmosphere in editorial offices, in publishing houses, etc. Everything is judged through commercial success. Only thirty years ago, and it had been like that since the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, since Baudelaire, Flaubert, etc., commercial success was deemed suspicious among avant-garde writers, the writers for writers, those admired by other writers as well as among artists admired by other artists: commercial success was viewed as a sign of making compromises with contemporaneity, with money ... And today the market is increasingly recognised as the legitimate agent of legitimacy, proof being another novel invention, namely the best-seller lists. Last night I heard a commentator on the radio who learnedly talked about the latest best-seller, saying: ‘Philosophy seems to be in fashion this year as 800,000 copies of Sophie’s World were sold.’ He offered the final judgement – the one expressed in sales numbers. And through this kind of feedback the market logic is entering the cultural production.”

It is generally believed that an invasion of commercial barbarism into culture can be backed off by the ivory tower of University, but the question is to what extent the university discourse in its desire not to lag behind the “real world”, but to coexist with it in synergy, is willing

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\* (<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/1448>)

to change its criteria, which is now also demanded by an increasing share of people voting for university education. Yielding to the desire of “users” usually implies lowering the criteria, and lower criteria enable easier penetration among the chosen. Although it is impossible to deny the need for democratisation and transformations of the canonic selection of great authors, the line between the “strictly limited” and “anything goes” is sometimes quite obscure – and dependent on a number of previous choices, which define what is accessible, what is translated, what is visible and finally – what agrees with the current aesthetical and ethical standards.

The choices of whoever does the choosing are naturally offered up for evaluation, and can – of course – be rejected. There exist alternative canons, protests against the selection of prize-winners and competitive media presentations, but all these models of *different choice* follow certain – although *different* – criteria. The relation between the autonomy of literary taste and the commands of current users’ expectations creates a conflict between the chosen and the overlooked. Extra-textual circumstances on the one hand enable not only the survival of literature, but also its response in the public, and on the other lessen its possibilities of autonomy (also by not adapting the activities to a particular literary work), and thus reduce the possibilities of conception, existence, recognition and survival of the internally comprehensive and radically innovative works of art. All those participating in the selection processes in the literary sphere therefore take part in choosing between freedom (new, different) and command (known and recognised), in which not only their aesthetical taste, but also ethical choice is involved.

*Translated by Lili Potpara*



Udeleženci  
Panellists



Foto © Mateja J. Potočnik

## Andrej Blatnik, Slovenija / Slovenia

Andrej Blatnik, rojen 1963 v Ljubljani, je doktoriral iz komunikologije. Dela kot urednik in univerzitetni predavatelj. Je predsednik žirije za nagrado vilenica. Objavil je romane *Plamenice in solze* (1987), *Tao ljubezni* (1996) in *Spremeni me* (2008), knjige zgodb *Šopki za Adama venijo* (1983), *Biografije brezimnih* (1989), *Menjave kož* (1990) in *Zakon želje* (2000) ter kulturno-teoretske knjige *Labirinti iz papirja* (1994), *Gledanje čez ramo* (1996) in *Neonski pečati* (2005). Jeseni 2009 bo izšla knjiga zelo kratkih zgodb z naslovom *Saj razumeš? Menjave kož* so prevedene v španščino (1997), hrvaščino (1998), angleščino (1998), češčino (2002), madžarščino (2002), nemščino (2005) in turščino (2008); *Tao ljubezni* v hrvaščino (1998) in slovaščino (2000); *Labirinti iz papirja* v hrvaščino (2001); *Zakon želje* pa v nemščino (2001), hrvaščino (2002), češčino (2004), francoščino (2005) in makedonščino (2005). Španski prevod *Zakona želje* bo izšel v letu 2009 pri založbi Baile del sol, turški pri založbi Pupa, nemški prevod *Spremeni me* pa pri založbi Folio. Je dobitnik zlate ptice (1984), Župančičeve nagrade (1991) in nagrade Prešernovega sklada (2002). Andrej Blatnik je bral iz svoje proze na številnih koncih sveta. Dobil je več tujih štipendij, med njimi tudi Fulbrightovo, s katero je bival na IWP v Iowi.

Andrej Blatnik, born in 1963 in Ljubljana, holds a PhD in communication studies. He works as an editor and university lecturer. He is president of the Vilenica jury. He has published novels *Plamenice in solze* (Torches and Tears, 1987), *Tao ljubezni* (Closer to Love, 1996) and *Spremeni me* (Change Me, 2008); collections of short stories *Šopki za Adama venijo* (Bouquets for Adam Fade, 1983), *Biografije brezimnih* (Biographies of the Nameless, 1989), *Menjave kož* (Skinswaps, 1990) and *Zakon želje* (Law of Desire, 2000); and cultural theory books *Labirinti iz papirja* (Paper Labyrinths, 1994), *Gledanje čez ramo* (Looking over the Shoulder, 1996) and *Neonski pečati* (Neon Seals, 2005). A book of very short stories *Saj razumeš?* (You Do Understand?) will be published in autumn 2009. *Skinswaps* was translated into Spanish (1997), Croatian (1998), English (1998), Czech (2002), Hungarian (2002), German (2005), and Turkish (2008); *Tao ljubezni* was translated into Croatian (1998), and Slovak (2000); *Labirinti iz papirja* was translated into Croatian (2001); *Zakon želje* was translated into German (2001), Croatian (2002), Czech (2004), French (2005), and Macedonian (2005). The Spanish translation of *Zakon želje* will be published in 2009 with the Baile del sol publishing house, the Turkish translation with the Pupa publishing house, and the German translation of *Spremeni me* with the Folio publishing house. He has won the *Zlata ptica* award (1984), *Župančičeva nagrada* (1991) award, and *Prešernov sklad* (2002) award. Andrej Blatnik has read his prose in many parts of the world. He has received several scholarships abroad, including a Fulbright fellowship for a stay at the IWP in Iowa.



Foto © Johannes Puch

## Michaela Monschein, Avstrija / Austria

Michaela Monschein, rojena leta 1968 v Celovcu v Avstriji, je po maturi na trgovski akademiji študirala germanistiko in medijske komunikacije. V okviru študija je odšla tudi na semestrsko študijsko izmenjavo v ZDA in Nemčijo. Diplomirala je z nalogo »Welt der Literatur«, *Literaturbeilage der »Welt« von 1964 bis 1971* (»Svet literature«, Literarna priloga časopisa »Welt« od 1964 do 1971). V študijskem letu 2003/2004 je obiskovala univerzitetni program Kultura in organizacija na Inštitutu za kulturne študije (Institut für Kulturkonzepte) v okviru univerze na Dunaju. Od leta 1999 je zunanja sodelavka dunajske tiskovne agencije pressetext.austria, kjer pripravlja novice s področja medicine in prevaja iz angleščine ([www.presetext.at](http://www.presetext.at)). Šest let je na Inštitutu Roberta Musila v okviru celovške univerze koordinirala prireditve (literarna branja) in delala na področju stikov z javnostjo (<http://www.uni-klu.ac.at/musil>). Od leta 2001 organizira festival literature z nemškega govornega področja Tage der deutschsprachigen Literatur (<http://bachmannpreis.eu>). Leta 2006 je postala urednica za literaturo v kulturni redakciji radia in televizije ORF. Objave (izbor): *Des Kaisers neue Kleider oder Die Welt der Literatur. Literaturbeilage der »Welt« 1964 bis 1971* (Cesarjeva nova oblačila ali Svet literature. Literarna priloga časopisa »Welt« od 1964 do 1971, 2002).

Michaela Monschein, born in 1968 in Klagenfurt, Austria, pursued a degree in German Studies and Media Communications. She spent a semester as an exchange student in Germany and in the USA. She graduated with a paper "*Welt der Literatur*", *Literaturbeilage der "Welt" von 1964 bis 1971* ("The World of Literature", the "Welt" Literary Supplement from 1964 until 1971). In the 2003/2004 academic year she attended the Culture and Organization training programme at the University of Vienna Institute for Cultural Studies (Institut für Kulturkonzepte). Since 1999 she has worked as a freelancer for the Viennese press agency [presetext.austria](http://www.presetext.austria), where she prepares news items from the field of medicine and translates from English ([www.presetext.at](http://www.presetext.at)). She has coordinated events (literary readings) at the Robert Musil Institute at the University of Klagenfurt, and worked in the field of public relations (<http://www.uni-klu.ac.at/musil>). Since 2001 she has organized a festival of literature from the German-speaking countries, entitled *Tage der deutschsprachigen Literatur* (<http://bachmannpreis.eu>). In 2006 she became editor for literature on the cultural editorial staff of the Austrian national TV and radio broadcaster ORF. Publications (selection): *Des Kaisers neue Kleider oder Die Welt der Literatur. Literaturbeilage der "Welt" 1964 bis 1971* (The Emperor's New Clothes or the World of Literature. The "Welt" Literary Supplement from 1964 until 1972).



### John O'Brien, ZDA / USA

John O'Brien, založnik in urednik, je leta 1981 ustanovil revijo *Review of Contemporary Fiction*, leta 1984 založbo Dalkey Archive Press in leta 1999 revijo *CONTEXT: A Forum for Literary Arts and Culture*. Z založbo Dalkey Archive Press je ustvaril mednarodni kontekst za prebiranje in razprave o sodobni književnosti in s tem bralcem ponudil možnost, da se zavejo pomena medkulturnega oplajanja, značilnega za celotno zgodovino književnosti. V amerškem prostoru je *Review of Contemporary Fiction* osrednji vir kritičnih komentarjev in ocen komercialno marginaliziranih piscev, medtem ko je poglavitni namen revije *CONTEXT* uvažanje mladih bralcev v svetovno književnost. John O'Brien je doktoriral na Northern Illinois University s področja estetike črnske književnosti. V letih 1969–1992 je poučeval ameriško in sodobno britansko književnost, nato pa se je v celoti posvetil založbi Dalkey Archive Press. Objavil je več kot 70 člankov, med njimi vrsto prispevkov o prevajanju, ki so leta 1973 izšli v knjigi *Interviews with Black Writers* (Pogovori s črnskimi pisatelji) pri založbi Liveright ter leta 1975 v knjigi *No Signs from Heaven: Theological Tradition and the Modern Literary Imagination* (Nobenih znamenj iz nebes: teološka tradicija in sodobna književna ustvarjalnost). Literarne kritike objavlja v številnih publikacijah: od časopisov *Chicago Sun-Times* in *Washington Post* do revije *Harper's Bookletter*.

John O'Brien, publisher and editor, founded the *Review of Contemporary Fiction* in 1981, Dalkey Archive Press in 1984, and the magazine *CONTEXT: A Forum for Literary Arts and Culture* in 1999. Dalkey Archive Press was created in order to establish an international context within which to read and discuss modern and contemporary literature, and thereby break down barriers to appreciating the cross-cultural fertilization that characterizes the history of literature. *The Review of Contemporary Fiction* is one of the country's primary sources for critical commentary and review coverage of commercially marginalized writers, while *CONTEXT* aims to provide young readers with an introduction to world literature. John O'Brien holds a PhD on the Aesthetics of Black Literature from Northern Illinois University. He taught American and modern British literature from 1969 until 1992, when he dedicated himself solely to Dalkey Archive Press. He has published over 70 articles, including a series of articles on translation that appeared in *CONTEXT*, a book of *Interviews with Black Writers*, published by Liveright in 1973, and *No Signs from Heaven: Theological Tradition and the Modern Literary Imagination*, in 1975. His literary reviews have appeared in dozens of publications, from the *Chicago Sun-Times* and the *Washington Post* to *Harper's Bookletter*.



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## Oksana Zabužko, Ukrajina / Ukraine

Oksana Zabužko se je rodila leta 1960 v Lutsku v Ukrajini. Spada med najpomembnejše ukrajinske pisatelje, je tudi pesnica, esejistka, kolumnistka, blogerka in svetovalka pri založbi. Diplomirala je iz filozofije na Ševčenkovi univerzi v Kijevu, doktorirala iz filozofije umetnosti in delala kot raziskovalka na Inštitutu za filozofijo Ukrajinske akademije znanosti. V zgodnjih devetdesetih letih prejšnjega stoletja je predavala v ZDA kot Fulbrightova štipendistka in rezidenčna pisateljica na univerzah Penn State, Harvard in na univerzi v Pittsburghu. Njena dela so bila prevedena v številne tuje jezike. Med najpomembnejša leposlovna dela sodijo pesniška zbirka *Друга спроба* (Drugi poskus, 2005) ter prozni deli *Польові дослідження з українського сексу* (Terenska raziskava ukrajinskega seksa, 1996) in *Сестро, сестро* (Sestra, sestra, 2003). Po objavi romana *Terenska raziskava ukrajinskega seksa*, ki so ga leta 2006 razglasili za »najvplivnejšo knjigo v petnajstih letih ukrajinske neodvisnosti«, je prestopila med svobodne pisatelje. Je podpredsednica ukrajinskega PEN-a, prejela pa je tudi naslednje nagrade in štipendije: nagrado za poezijo fundacije Global Commitment (1997), MacArthurjevo štipendijo (2002), štipendijo Milene Jesenske (2004), ukrajinsko nacionalno nagrado reda princeze Olge in mnoge druge.



Oksana Zabuzhko was born in 1960 in the Ukrainian city of Lutsk. She is one of the major Ukrainian contemporary writers, apart from being a poet, an essayist, a columnist, a blogger and a publishing house consultant. She graduated in philosophy at the Kiev Shevchenko University, obtained her PhD in the philosophy of arts, and has worked as a research associate for the Institute of Philosophy of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences. In the early 1990s she lectured in the USA as a Fulbright Fellow and a Writer-in-Residence at Penn State University, Harvard University, and University of Pittsburgh. Her works have been translated into a number of foreign languages. Among her major works of fiction are the poetry collection *Друга спроба* (Second Attempt, 2005) and the prose works *Польові дослідження з українського сексу* (Field Work in Ukrainian Sex, 1996) and *Сестро, сестро* (Sister, Sister, 2003). After the publication of her novel *Field Work in Ukrainian Sex*, which in 2006 was pronounced “the most influential book in the 15 years of Ukraine’s independence”, she has been living as a free-lance author. She is Vice-President of the Ukrainian PEN. Among her numerous recognitions are Global Commitment Foundation Poetry Prize (1997), MacArthur Grant (2002), Milena Jesenska Fellowship (2004), the Ukrainian National Award the Order of Princess Olga (2009), and many others.



Eseji  
Essays



## *Freedom is another word for nothing left to lose* Pisateljstvo v 21. stoletju

Michaela Monschein

Naslov eseja za festival Vilenica, ki ga je napisal Andrej Blatnik, se glasi »Izbira med svobodo in zapovedjo«. V njem pravi, da se pisci današnjega časa ne morejo izogniti diktaturi javne prisotnosti. Videti je, da zlasti mediji radi »izkoriščajo« pisatelje, ki so pogosto prisiljeni pihati v isti rog. Svoj lonček pristavijo tudi literarna tekmovanja, še posebej tista s širokim medijskim dometom. Na to tematiko želim pogledati s perspektive t. i. kulturnega posredništva v širšem smislu, saj sem tudi sama kulturna menedžerka in novinarka. Dejstvo je, da v zvezi z načinom, kako množični mediji obravnavajo umetnike, še posebej pisatelje, prihaja do določenih trendov.

Vendar je treba poudariti, da sta tudi na tem mestu dostopnost informacij in obveščenosť bistvenega pomena. Če neke knjige ali besedila nihče ne pozna, lahko le stežka govorimo o bralcih. Nekaj časa je kazalo, da internet ponuja pravi odgovor na vsa ta žgoča vprašanja. S tako obsežnim poljem informacij moramo v prvi vrsti sploh znati upravljati, obenem pa ne smemo pozabiti, da tudi danes internet ni dostopen vsem. Na tej ključni točki imata internet in knjižni trg marsikaj skupnega.

Odločitev, kaj bomo brali, postaja vse težja. Samo v nemščini vsako leto knjižni trg dobesedno preplavi več kot 80.000 novih naslovov. Širijo se isti mehanizmi, kot jih prepoznamo pri internetu. Zahtevnejša literatura, ki predpostavlja, da ima bralec usvojeno določeno raven razumevanja jezika in kompleksnejših struktur, je dandanes sicer splošno dostopna, a v resnici ne doseže vseh ljudi. Dostopnost ni le vprašanje financ, ampak predvsem izobraževanja in kulturnih veščin. V evropskih državah bralci zahtevnejše literature predstavljajo le majhen del prebivalstva. Če malce pretiravamo, bi te bralce lahko označili kot posvečene izbrance. Naslednja, še večja dilema avtorjev in založb je v njihovi vidnosti in prepoznavnosti – ustvarjati morajo knjige, ki jih

bo nekdo kupil in po možnosti tudi prebral. Če se vrnemo k izhodiščnemu argumentu, potencialni bralci tudi najboljše literature ne bodo prepoznali, če ne bodo vedeli, da neka knjiga sploh obstaja.

Kot v svojem eseju piše Andrej Blatnik, se avtorji danes soočajo z večjimi izzivi kot kdaj koli v zgodovini. Postati morajo – razen redkih izjem – vidni, zanimivi. Pisateljevanje v osami pred računalnikom ne zadostuje več. Da bi prodali svoje knjige, morajo avtorji postati »javno znane osebe«, ki se znajo tržiti oziroma to nalogo zaupajo menedžerjem ali drugim osebam. Danes so to osnovna pravila igre, ki so na literarni sceni vsem dobro znana. Množični mediji pa so pogosto prikazani kot problematični, nanje letijo obtožbe, da avtorje izrabljajo ali celo zlorabljajo.

Leta 1977 so v Celovcu prvič potekali Dnevi nemške literature. Marcel Reich-Ranicki je ob tej priložnosti izjavil, da je osnovna zamisel tekmovanja v zблиževanju javnosti in literature. To pa ni enosmerna komunikacija, ampak dinamičen proces. Kritiki tekmovanja – ki jih ni malo – se niso strinjali in se še danes ne strinjajo, da je literaturo kakor koli moč povezati s tekmovanjem. Po drugi strani pa vsako leto kar precej avtorjev izrazi željo po sodelovanju. Prireditve se že več kot 20 let neposredno prenaša prek televizijske postaje 3sat. Čeprav je prvi televizijski prenos prireditve povzročil pravcati škandal, predstavlja danes enega ključnih javnih podijev, kjer literarno besedilo ni okleščeno le na kratek odlomek, ampak se bere pol ure. Neposredno po avtorjevem branju žirija javno razpravlja o besedilu in ga poskuša ovrednotiti, kar je spet ena redkih priložnosti, ko razprava ni omejena na dva do tri kratke komentarje in ne poteka za zaprtimi vrati. Literarna kritika ni eksaktna znanost, zato se napakam pri presoji in ocenjevanju žal ni mogoče izogniti. S podelitvijo nagrade občinstva dobi svoj glas tudi javnost. Glasovanje poteka po internetu.

Dnevi nemške literature tako predstavljajo del t. i. javnega prostora. Ključnega pomena za koncept te prireditve in njeno priljubljenost je, da ne gre za televizijski šov o literaturi ali, še huje, za zaigrano situacijo. Žirija je v vlogi kulturnega posrednika, vsakdo izmed sedmih članov v Celovec povabi po dva avtorja. Po razpravi lahko tudi avtor-

ji podajo izjavo, vendar le redkokdo spregovori. Videti je, da obstaja neko nenapisano pravilo, da za avtorja ni posebej dobro, če se priglasi k besedi. Literarni agenti, založniki in drugi že vnaprej poučijo avtorje, kako naj v Celovcu nastopijo, da se bodo pokazali v kar najboljši luči. Dandanes so avtorji, kar zadeva predstavitev, že pravi profesionalci z vsemi veščinami, ki jih potrebujejo za prodor na literarni trg. Seveda pa se najdejo tudi izjeme. Ena izmed njih je Kathrin Passig, ki je leta 2006 prejela nagrado Ingeborg Bachmann. V Celovcu je sploh prvič javno predstavila svoje literarno delo in zanj prejela glavno nagrado. Nekateri kritiki so to označili kot škandal, spet drugi kot nepričakovano darilo, kot nekaj, kar se lahko zgodi samo v Celovcu. Letos je bila zelo dobro sprejeta Caterina Satanik. Tudi ona se je javnosti v vlogi avtorice predstavila prvič.

Poleg odmevnih nagrad je zelo privlačna tudi široka medijska pokritost prireditve. Postati viden, priznan, označen kot zanimiv avtor – vse to je marsikateremu pisatelju pomagalo pri vzpostavitvi stikov z bodočim založnikom ali vsaj prispevalo k večjemu številu recenzij njegovih del. Dela sodelujočih avtorjev vse pogosteje izhajajo že kar kmalu po Celovcu. To tekmovanje je nedvomno prevzelo pomembno vlogo na literarnem trgu, je neke vrste referenčni sistem. Vendar televizijska postaja ORF in mesto Celovec od te prireditve nimata neposrednih finančnih koristi. Prireditve je stvar imidža, določenega ugleda na literarni sceni. Čeprav nekateri kritiki temu ne verjamejo, so žarišče prireditve avtorji in literatura.

Andrej Blatnik poudarja, da je sodobna evropska lingua franca prevod. Do leta 2007 so na Dnevih nemške literature sodelovale samo Avstrija, Švica in Nemčija. Nemščina je bila torej edini jezik, v katerem so bila dostopna vsa besedila štirinajstih avtorjev. Leta 2008 pa smo začeli z internetnim projektom »Bachmannpreis goes Europe«, v katerem smo besedila sodelujočih avtorjev ponudili tudi v angleškem, francoskem, španskem, italijanskem, slovenskem in češkem prevodu. Nihče ni mogel vedeti, kako bo ta ideja sprejeta in če bo naša pobuda uspešna. Tveganje je bilo precejšnje, saj tovrsten prevajalski projekt zahteva znatna finančna sredstva. Podobno kot pri besedilih, ki jih nihče ne vidi in se sploh ne ve,

da obstajajo, se je tudi tukaj pojavil pomislek, da bodo investirana sredstva izgubljena oziroma slabo porabljena, če teh prevodov ne bo nihče bral. Eksperiment pa je uspel. Roman Markusa Orthsa *Sobarica (Das Zimmermädchen)* je danes preveden v dvanajst jezikov, med njimi tudi v korejskega in bolgarskega. Wittgenstein je nekoč dejal, da so meje našega jezika meje našega sveta. Mi si prizadevamo meje tega sveta razširiti.

Letos smo kot sedmi prevodni jezik dodali še hrvaščino. Izhodiščni cilj projekta, ki mu sledimo še danes, je povečanje mednarodne dostopnosti nemške literature, s tem pa spodbujanje dinamičnega procesa diskusije, prebiranja in prevajanja nove literature. V prihodnosti – če se sanje uresničijo – načrtujemo projekt, v katerem prevajanje ne bo več potekalo samo enosmerno. Do takrat pa ...

Danes možnosti izbire med svobodo in zapovedjo skoraj ni več. Pisateljevanje se je verjetno razvilo v t. i. običajen poklic, ki zahteva dosti več kot samo pisanje. Ne vem, če je to res izguba. Svoboda je krasna beseda, prepričana sem, da bi vsi radi živeli v takem spoštovanja vrednem okolju. Žal pa imajo le redki na voljo dovolj sredstev, ki jim to svobodo omogočajo. Ostali morajo tako ali drugače sprejeti pravila igre. To pa je zanje lahko priložnost, izziv ali preprosto zabava.

*Prevedla Ana Jasmina Oseban*



## *Freedom is another word for nothing left to lose* Writing in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

Michaela Monschein

“Choice between Freedom and Command” is the title of Andrej Blatnik’s Essay for Vilenica. It is stated that writers nowadays cannot escape the dictatorship of public presence. Especially the media seem to “use” the writers who are forced to play along. Literary competitions, especially the ones with huge media coverage, therefore should also be considered as to blame. My approach to this theme, as one of the so-called cultural mediators in a broader sense, being a cultural manager and journalist, determines the way the whole issue will be addressed. It’s obvious that there are problems in the way artists and especially writers are treated by the mass media.

But, and this but is worth mentioning, it’s all about information and access. If nobody knows about a book or a text, it will hardly find any readers. The Internet seemed – at least for some time – to be the answer to all these pressing questions. But how to make a decision on what to do with this vast amount of information and never to forget that the Internet is still not accessible to everybody? Exactly at this crucial point the Internet and the book market have a lot in common.

The decision on what to read becomes more and more difficult. Every year more than 80,000 new titles in German alone literally flood the book market. The same mechanisms as with the Internet become more and more prevalent. Literature, at least a more elaborate kind – the kind that requires a certain understanding of language and complexity – is nowadays readily available but not accessible for all people. And it’s not all about money but about education and cultural techniques. In each European country readers of literature are only a minority of the population. Being sarcastic, one may call these readers even a happy few. The next and even more pressing problem for authors and publishing houses is how to become visible at all, how

to create the one book that somebody is going to buy and hopefully also to read. Back to the initial argument, the most beautiful literature is only going to be recognized if the potential readers know that this book exists.

As Andrej Blatnik states in his essay, authors nowadays are faced with more challenges than ever in history. They – apart from a few exceptions – have to become visible, interesting. Writing alone, sitting alone at the computer, is no longer enough. In order to sell books, authors have to become a “public person” to manage themselves or have others to do this. It’s nowadays a well-known part of the game of the literary community. The mass media are often seen as a problem, being accused of using or even abusing authors.

In 1977, the Days of German-speaking Literature were founded in Klagenfurt. Marcel Reich-Ranicki stated back then that the basic concept of this competition is to bring the public and literature together. Not in a one-way situation but as a dynamic process. The critics of the competition – and there are many of these – thought and still think that literature and competition are not compatible. On the other hand, each year there are many authors who want to take part. For more than 20 years the event is being broadcasted by 3sat live on TV. Being a big scandal for the first time, it is one of the main assets now, most probably the last TV format where literature is not reduced to a short clip but is being read for half an hour. Directly after the reading the jury discusses the text in public, tries to judge it, also one of the last moments where taking about texts is not confined to two or three short comments or happens behind closed doors. Literary criticism is not an exact science, therefore there is no way to avoid judicial errors or even misjudgments. To give the public a voice, also one prize is awarded directly by the public. Voting is only possible via the Internet.

So, the Days of German-speaking Literature are part of the so-called public room. Essential for the concept and its acceptance is that it’s not a literature-show on TV or even worse a casting show. The jury maintains the role of the cultural mediator, each of the seven members invites two authors to Klagenfurt. After the discussion the authors are

allowed to give a statement. Hardly anybody ever speaks up. It seems to be commonly agreed that speaking up is no advantage. The literary agents, the publishers and others coach the authors before they come to Klagenfurt on how to present themselves in a hopefully favorable light. Nowadays the majority of writers are professionals in presentation. They have acquired the skills that make them fit for the literary market. On the other hand there are always exceptions. For example Kathrin Passig, who in 2006 was awarded the Ingeborg-Bachmann-Preis. In Klagenfurt she presented for the first time ever a literary text and was awarded with the main prize. For some critics a scandal, for others an unexpected gift, something that only can happen in Klagenfurt. This year Catarina Satanik was very well much welcomed. It was also her first appearance ever as an author in public.

Apart from the prizes awarded, the coverage by the media is one of the most attractive characteristics. Becoming visible, being acknowledged, being perceived as an interesting author has helped many authors either to find a publishing house or, at least, to get more reviews for their books. Nowadays books of the participants are more and more published very shortly after Klagenfurt. There is no doubt that this competition is part of the literary market, a reference system. The main difference is, though, that the ORF and the City of Klagenfurt gain no direct monetary benefit. The benefit is image, a certain standing in the literary scene. Although some critics are not willing to believe it, the main focus is on the authors, on literature.

Andrej Blatnik stresses that the European lingua franca is translation. Until 2007 the Days of German-speaking Literature were concentrated only on Austria, Switzerland and Germany. German was therefore the only language in which the texts of the 14 authors were accessible. In 2008 the Internet-project "Bachmann-Preis goes Europe" started with translations in six languages: English, French, Spanish, Italian, Slovene, and Czech. Nobody knew whether this idea would be working, whether this initiative would be successful. The risk was enormous, as a translation-project like this costs a considerable amount of money. As with texts, if nobody looks at them, nobody gets to know their exist-

ence, if nobody cared about these translations, the money would have been in a certain sense wasted or at least spent without visible gain. But the experiment worked. Markus Orth's book *The Chambermaid* (*Das Zimmermädchen*) is now being translated into twelve languages including Korean and Bulgarian. Wittgenstein once stated that the limits of one's world are defined by one's language. We tried to make this world a little bit bigger.

We added with Croatian a seventh language for the translations this year. The aim of the project was – and still is – to enhance the international accessibility of German-speaking literature, to start a dynamic process of discussion, reading and translation of new literature. One day – if dreams come true – there will be a project where translation is not one way any more. But, until then ...

Today the choice between freedom and command hardly exists any more. Maybe writing has become more like a so-called normal profession, requiring so much more than just writing. I don't know whether this is a real loss. Freedom sounds wonderful, I think we all would love to live in this sacred country. Unfortunately only a few have the means to be really free. All others will have to play along in one way or the other. This can be a chance, a challenge or even fun.

## Svoboda in pisatelj

John O'Brien

Preskočil bom vprašanje o tem, če in na kakšen način trg nadzoruje pisatelja ali vpliva nanj, o tem, kakšna besedila bi radi objavljali komercialni založniki, kaj želijo prodajati knjigarne in Amazon, o tem, čemu mediji posvečajo največ pozornosti, kaj za prihodnost pisanja in distribucijo besedil pomeni elektronsko založništvo, ter seveda vprašanja o stalnih pritiskih in vplivih vlad in številnih interesnih skupin, ki skušajo cenzurirati vse, kar povedo pisatelji.

Vse to na tak ali drugačen način zadeva pisatelje in ima vpliv vsaj na to, ali bo avtor s svojimi deli postal znan in ali bodo ta sploh objavljena. Še posebno v Združenih državah je trg najbolj učinkovita oblika cenzure, kar je poznamo ljudje. Če trg – od založnika preko medijev do knjigarn – verjame, da se neka knjiga ne bo dobro prodajala, ta knjiga ne bo izšla. Torej, eksperimentalna dela in večina del v tujih jezikih ne bo v Združenih državah nikoli ugledala luči sveta. Ideja o trgu kot merilu je tako močno vcepljena v ameriško mišljenje in v prepričanja, da ostaja trg brez dvoma najboljša in najbolj relevantno sredstvo za odločanje o tem, kaj bo objavljeno in kako bo sprejeto.

A v zvezi s pisateljevanjem obstajajo tudi estetska vprašanja, o katerih se sploh ne govori, če pa že, ostajajo ta pisateljem povsem neznana. Primer je dolgoletno prepričanje, da je pisatelj na takšen ali drugačen način produkt svojega časa: reflektira ga, piše o njem in je njegov suženj. Če nekdo razume kulturo in zgodovino nekega obdobja, potem lahko razume pisatelja in njegova dela. Pisatelj pri tem nima besede. Ali pa, variacija na isto temo – da je pisatelj skupek svoje lastne izkušnje: od otroštva naprej; od gospodarskega in družbenega razreda naprej; od posebnih psiholoških zvijač in nagnjenj naprej. Vsi ti in podobni vidiki prispevajo k determinističnemu gledanju na to, kaj pisatelj lahko počne in kako lahko to počne. Tudi če s svojim pisanjem

navidezno presega svojo dobo, se v skladu s tem nazorom dejansko le odziva nanjo in tako ostaja znotraj nje.

Takšna stališča o pisateljih in njihovih delih že zadnjih nekaj stoletij poganjajo pravo industrijo za akademike in učenjake. Preučiti je treba le obdobje in nato umestiti pisatelja v dobljeno shemo, rezultat pa je neskončno število člankov in knjig, ki razlagajo književna dela. To je zares industrija in kot vsaka industrija ima tudi ta dobre razloge, da se zaščiti in brani kot edino sredstvo za sporazumevanje s književnimi deli. V tem mašinerijskem pristopu do književnosti se izgubi tako sólo delo kot objekt, pa tudi tisto, kar se pravzaprav dogaja v ustvarjalnem procesu. Kljub temu tovrstni pristopi dobro služijo industriji, zlasti pa tistim akademikom, katerih vsakdanji kruh je odvisen od njene veljave. Podobno kot trg je tudi ta industrija v ZDA bolj ali manj nesporna. Izjema so spori znotraj nje, ki se nato končajo v še eni manifestaciji njenega uspeha: v knjigah, ki obravnavajo te spore in skušajo definirati njihove pogoje.

Najnovejši pojav znotraj omenjene industrije je nastanek kulturne kritike, ki prestavi književno delo popolnoma stran od vsakršnih estetskih norm ter spremeni pisatelja v ne-entiteto in njegovo delo v amalgam oziroma produkt kulture. Znotraj tega sistema postane vsako delo bolj ali manj zamenljivo: film, roman, pesem, strip, televizijski program, novice, moda in vse, kar lahko spravimo v kategorijo »kultura«. V okviru sistema seveda ne obstaja nobena pisateljska svoboda in, skoraj dobesedno, ni več niti pisatelja: kultura piše besedilo. Na ta način so se začele že številne akademske kariere, sólo delo pa postaja skoraj nepomembno. Pisatelji in dela, ki temu sistemu morda ne ustrezajo v celoti (čeprav bi teoretično morali ustrezati vsi in vse), so enostavno prezrti: podobno kot jih lahko trg prezre v kapitalistični družbi.

Na tej točki bi rad podal skromen predlog, ki pa ni izvirno moj in je za povrh zelo nepriljubljen in na splošno prezrt. Ta pristop ni nov, temveč izvira od Aristotela in so ga v novejših časih nadaljevali Etienne Gilson in tista večno čudaška in prezrta skupina ruskih teoretikov, napačno poimenovanih »ruski formalisti«, še zlasti Viktor Šklovski.

Da poenostavim: umetniško delo je nekaj, kar je narejeno. Ni misel niti izraz misli, prav tako ni dejanje – umetnost je početje in izid tega početja je objekt. Da bi pa bil ta vidik še bolj nepomemben za sodobni čas: umetniško delo je narejeno zgolj z namenom, da postane objekt lepote, toda trenutno tega argumenta ne želim razvijati dalje.

Šklovski je prenesel tovrstni pristop k umetnosti na drugo raven: trdil je, da se je umetnik naselil na območju svobode in pri tem sam »izbiral« vplive. Te ideje, stare zdaj že skoraj stoletje, ni nadaljeval domala nihče. Za osnovo svojega argumenta je Šklovski izpostavil, da so pisatelji iskali uporaben material tako v svojem življenju kot v drugih umetniških delih in pri tem običajno – namesto da bi se odzivali na čas, v katerem so živeli – skočili generacijo ali dve nazaj in poiskali oblike in strukture, ki niso bile več v rabi. Če nadaljujemo to misel, Hemingway, denimo, je surovo snov za svoja dela črpal iz svojega življenja, obliko pa je iskal pri Jane Austin: mislim, da do zdaj še nihče ni postavil te domneve. Vsekakor pa je Šklovski spet in spet dokazoval ta postopek izbire pri delu, da je šlo za zavestno izbiro in da je pisatelj bolj ali manj »prekrižal pot« kakšnemu pisateljskemu kolegu in njegovemu delu, da bi se polastil vpliva. Šklovski je šel celo tako daleč, da je trdil, da pisatelji naredijo enako tudi s svojim življenjem: ker potrebujejo surov material, iščejo izkušnje, ki tak material nudijo (to argumentira s pomočjo Tolstojeve *Ane Karenine*: Tolstoj se je moral najprej zaljubiti, da je našel material, saj do takrat še ni poznal zaljubljenosti).

Ta vidik o pisatelju poudarja oziroma povzdiguje njegovo svobodo: pisatelj lahko počne, kar želi, z eno samo omejitvijo, imeti mora namreč prirojeno sposobnost pisanja ali vsaj nagnjenje k temu. Iste vidike najdemo pri Williamu Carlosu Williamsu in njegovi pesmi *Pomlad in vse*, ki je bila napisana približno takrat, ko je Šklovski formuliral svoje drzne izjave o umetnosti, čeprav očitno nista vedela drug za drugega (Stalin je dobro opravil svoje delo in je Šklovskega utišal, ameriški trg pa je naredil enako z Williamsom).

Tako Šklovski kot Williams in mnogo pozneje ameriški romanopisec Gilbert Sorrentino so znotraj tega obsega svobode razglabljali o tem, kako pisatelj koplje v sebi za materialom, kar nedvomno velja tudi

za Sorrentina samega. Nekdo lahko uporabi lastne nevroze kot material, a ne na naiven način, ki ga kritiki pogosto pripisujejo pisateljem, temveč zelo zavestno z izbiranjem resnične osebnostne hibe kot osnove za material in hkrati sredstva za vzpostavitev strukture.

*Prevedla Kristina Kočan*



## Freedom and the Writer

John O'Brien

I am going to skip the issue of whether and how the writer is influenced or controlled by the marketplace, such things as what commercial publishers are looking to publish, what bookstores and Amazon are looking to sell, what the media will pay attention to, what electronic publishing may or may not mean to the future of writing and distribution of texts, and of course the ongoing pressures and influences of governments and various interest groups that seek to censor what writers say.

All of these are pertinent in one way or another to writers, and indeed at least have an influence on whether a writer and his works become known, or even published at all. The marketplace, especially in the United States, is the most effective form of censorship known to man. If the marketplace – from publishers to the media to bookstores – does not believe a book will sell well, it won't get published. Therefore, experimental works and most works in a foreign language will never see light of day in the United States. The idea of the marketplace as determiner is so deeply engrained in American thinking and beliefs that it goes unquestioned as the best and most reasonable means for deciding what will be published and how it will be received.

But there are aesthetic issues concerning how writers work that are generally not widely talked about, or talked about in ways that are utterly unfamiliar to writers. One example is the long-standing belief that a writer, in one way or another, is a product of his age: reflecting it, writing about it, and a slave to it. If you understand the culture and history of a period, then you can understand the writer and his works. The writer has no choice in this matter. Or, a variation upon the same theme is that a writer is a sum total of his experience: from childhood onwards; from economic and social class onwards; from peculiar psychological quirks and dispositions onwards. All of these

views, and others like them, amount to a deterministic view of what the writer can do and how he can do it. Even if a writer might appear to be writing outside of his period, he is in fact, according to this view, merely reacting to the period, and thus remains within it.

Such approaches to writers and their works have formed an industry for academics and scholars for a few centuries. Examine the period and then feed any writer into the schema one develops, and out come endless articles and books explaining the literary works. And this is indeed an industry, and like any industry, has good reason to protect and defend itself as the only means for coming to terms with works of literature. What gets lost in this machine-like approach to literature is the work itself as object, as well as what actually happens in the act of creation. And yet these approaches have served the industry quite well, especially among academic scholars whose livelihood depends upon its legitimacy. Like the marketplace in the United States, this industry goes largely unquestioned, except for the battles that wage within the industry itself, which then result in yet another manifestation of the success of the industry: books that deal with the battles and seek to define the terms of battle.

The most recent development within this industry has been the emergence of cultural criticism that by and large completely removes a work of literature from any aesthetic norm and reduces the writer to a non-entity and the work of a writer to an amalgam or product of the culture. Within this system, any work is more or less interchangeable with another: a movie, a novel, a poem, a comic book, a television program, news coverage, fashion, and whatever else can be boxed into the category of "culture." And within this system, of course, there is no freedom for the writer, and in an almost literal sense, there is no writer at all: the culture writes the text. As such, more academic careers have been launched, and the work itself becomes nearly irrelevant. For writers and works that seem not to fit neatly into this system (though theoretically everything and everyone must fit), they're simply ignored: much in the same way that the marketplace can ignore them in a capitalistic society.

I want here to make the most modest of proposals, but one that is not original to me at all, and one that is highly unpopular and generally ignored. The approach is not a new one, having originated with Aristotle and continued in modern times by Etienne Gilson and by that ever-strange and overlooked group of Russian theorists mis-named “the Russian Formalists,” in particular Viktor Shklovsky.

To simplify: a work of art is something that is made. It is not a thought, nor an expression of a thought; nor is it an action; art is making, and the result of this making is an object. Further, to make this view even more irrelevant to contemporary times: it is made for the sole purpose of being an object of beauty, but I do not want to pursue this line of argument here.

It was Shklovsky who carried this approach to art to another level by saying that the artist inhabited a realm of freedom in which he “selected” his influences. This idea, now almost a century old, has been pursued by almost no one. As the basis for his argument, Shklovsky pointed out that writers looked around for usable materials, both from their lives and from other works of art, and usually – **rather than** responding to the times in which they lived – jumped back a generation or two to find forms and structures that had fallen into disuse. Following this line of thought, Hemingway, for instance, mined his life for raw materials, but in fact leapt back to Jane Austen to find a form: I don’t believe that anyone has made this suggestion before. At any rate, Shklovsky again and again demonstrated this selection process at work, that it was a conscious selection, and that the writer more or less put himself “in the way of” certain writers and their work in order to have the influence take hold. Shklovsky even went so far as to suggest that this is also what writers did with their lives: needing raw materials, they would seek out those experiences that would provide the material (he makes such an argument in relation to Tolstoy’s writing of *Anna Karenina*: that Tolstoy had to fall in love with someone in order to get material because he had not yet in his life been in love).

This view of the writer places an emphasis upon, or makes pre-eminent the freedom of the writer to do as he will, with the only limi-

tation being some innate ability or inclination to write at all. One can also see the same views expressed by William Carlos Williams in *Spring and All*, composed at just about the same time that Shklovsky was making his daring declarations about art, even though the two apparently had no knowledge of each other (Stalin did a good job of silencing Shklovsky and the American marketplace did the same for Williams).

Both Shklovsky and Williams, and much later the American novelist Gilbert Sorrentino, speculated that, within this realm of freedom, the writer could mine himself for materials, which is certainly the case with Sorrentino himself. One example of this is to use one's own neuroses as material, not in the naïve way that critics often attribute to writers, but very consciously, selecting the very flaws of one's own personality as the basis for material as well as providing a means for structure.

## Avtor pod žarometi

Oksana Zabužko

Problemi, ki jih je Andrej Blatnik osvetlil, medtem ko je natančno označil slepo ulico, v kateri se je znašla literatura v svetu tržne in informacijske tehnologije, krepko presegajo literarni okvir. Najprej sem pomislila na družbeni poskus, ki ga je pred dvema letoma izvedel *Washington Post*; virtuoza Joshua Bella so prosili, da je na washingtonski postaji podzemne železnice v času največjega prometa kot anonimen ulični glasbenik igral na svojo stradivarko. Namen tega poskusa je bil, da bi preverili hierarhijo sodobnih ameriških vrednot – da bi videli, koliko ljudi bi se na poti na delo ustavilo z namenom, da bi uživali v najboljšem brezplačnem koncertu, ki bi ga po vsej verjetnosti slišali v svojem življenju. Rezultati so bili šokantni, saj se je v približno 40 minutah, kolikor je Joshua Bell igral na violino, od 1097 mimoidočih, ki so jih posnele varnostne kamere, 7 mimoidočih ustavilo in poslušalo, 27 pa jih je vrglo kovance v Joshuovo violinsko škatlo. Preostalih 1070 je korakalo mimo, ne da bi kar koli opazilo, saj preprosto **niso slišali** (nihče izmed 40 mimoidočih, ki so jih kasneje intervjuvali, se ni spomnil na glasbenika, ko so jih spraševali, če so zjutraj na postaji podzemne železnice opazili kaj nenavadnega).

Ko sem v *Washington Postu* prvič prebrala to poročilo in kasneje na internetu gledala video posnetek (ogled slednjega močno priporočam vsem, ki verjamejo, da Huxley in Orwell spadata v zgodovino, ali pa se jim zdi zadnja različica filma *1984*, ki jo je posnel Ben Elton, prej zabavna kot grozovita), sem vse skupaj vzela za nič manj kot rekvizem človeški rahločutnosti. Bachova mojstrsko zaigrana *Chaconne*, ki je v srce parajoči samoti odmevala v prometni konici na podzemni železnici, me je zadela kot prisposoda zvona, ki bije za vso umetnost – saj je v naši civilizaciji umetnost in samo umetnost tista, ki v sebi nosi nekaj, kar bi lahko označili kot institucionalno odgovornost za *l'education sentimentale*. Ne glede na to, v kakšni družbi sem pripo-

vedovala to zgodbo, je bila reakcija intelektualcev tipična in je sledila moji lastni – po vzorcu so tožili o neprijetnem položaju, v katerem se je znašla visoka kultura v svetu, ki ga poneumljajo reklame (nekateri so tudi začeli špekulirati, koliko ljudi bi v njihovi lastni državi uspelo pritegniti glasbeniku enakega kova, kot je Joshua Bell, in rezultat je bil vedno v sramoto Američanov). Vendar, kadarkoli je v moji ciljni skupini tudi kakšen profesionalc, ki misli, da ve, kako se vrtil svet, na primer študent prava z Dunaja, vodja banke iz Londona ali trgovec z umetninami iz Kijeva, vedno dobim enako, prozaično razlago neuspeha Joshua Bella: »Napačen marketing!«

Marketing se pojavlja kot ključna beseda. Kajti kdo bi lahko (po)dvo-mil, da bi isti Joshua Bell, ki bi nastopal na podzemni železnici in bi ga obkrožale televizijske kamere, v ozadju pa bi visel plakat Carnegie Halla, ki bi predstavljal njegovo veličino (in bi bila na njem navedena redna cena vstopnic za njegove koncerte), kmalu zbral množico, ki bi bila dovolj velika, da bi bilo treba poklicati policijo, ki bi zbrane razgnala? Res je, da ni več kvaliteta tista, ki odloča o uspehu, ki ga bo umetniško delo doživelo pri občinstvu – to vlogo je prevzel marketing, pa če je to prav ali ne. Ko umetnost vzamemo iz njenega legitimnega tržnega prostora kot na primer iz osvetljene izložbe, je tako, kot da bi prenehala obstajati. Vsi smo postali tržni – in slabo se piše tistim, ki nismo.

Ker moje ime med literati moje države predstavlja eno izmed blagovnih znamk, se še predobro zavedam, da od vseh kvalit, ki nas naredijo primerne za prodajo, kvaliteta dela ni več najpomembnejša. Biti »slaven pisatelj« ne pomeni več toliko biti pisatelj, temveč biti slaven. Od vseh novinarjev, ki me kličejo za politične komentarje, javnih aktivistov, ki trkajo na moja vrata, da bi dobili moj podpis v znak podpore njihovim prizadevanjem, urednikov bleščečih revij, ki prosijo za mojo sliko, da bi jo uvrstili na seznam »10 naj žensk«, »100 najbolj pomembnih oseb« ali kakšen drug »naj« seznam v moji državi, ki ga ravno izdajajo, jih je, tega se zavedam, malo takšnih, ki so se prebili skozi več kot eno mojo knjigo. Znana sem namreč po tem, da uporabljam zelo kompleksen jezik, in ponavadi me imajo za avtorico, ki jo berejo predvsem akademiki in intelektualci. Kljub temu se moje knjige

prodajajo s hitrostjo, ki je nenavadno visoka za visoko literaturo; ena izmed mojih zadnjih knjig, obsežna, 650 strani dolga literarna študija o hereziji pri ženskah, je bila prodana v približno 20.000 izvodih v 15 mesecih. Če bi jo izdala pod psevdonimom, bi bil izid, se bojim, precej podoben tistemu, ki ga je dosegel Joshua Bell na washingtonski postaji podzemne železnice. Večina ljudi kupi knjigo, ker sem »slavna«, kar je po mnenju kritikov sinonim za »škandalozna«, »provokativna«, »kontroverzna« ali celo »čarovnica« – vse to so lastnosti, ki imajo, tako se zdi, največjo moč, da ženski pisateljici pridobijo ugled sodobnega klasika. Biti »blagovna znamka« pomeni prodajati predvsem svojo osebnost. Če ima človek srečo, si na takšen način zgradi okvir, izložbo, v kateri njegovo delo postane **vidno**.

Literarno delo samo po sebi je brez moči, pa čeprav je mojstrovina, razen če ga obdaja sijoča avreola avtorjeve publicitete (Barthesova prerokba o smrti avtorja se je izkazala za napačno), kar lahko dokažemo s preprostim dejstvom, da so v 20. stoletju v Ukrajini ustvarjale precej boljše pisateljice od mene, ki se jih kljub temu nihče ne spominja kot »klasikov« in so do sedaj že skorajda pozabljene. Te moje književne matere niso imele sreče z marketingom. Lahko rečemo, da njihovih osebnih zgodb niso nikoli povzdignili v medijske mite – kar je *conditio sine qua non* za pisatelja v dobi, ki jo po Umberto Ecu zaznamuje »izguba zasebnosti«. Le kdo bi bral neke mrtve dame, razen če so v svojem času slovele kot dobre ljubice ali požiralke moških oz. »čarovnice«?

Ko problem projiciramo na mednarodno prizorišče, kjer igro diktira angleščina, lingvistična trdna valuta za globalno vas, se začnem spraševati: Kaj če je knjigo, ki lahko spremeni moje življenje, že napisala kakšna sorodna duša recimo v albanščini, malezijsčini ali svahiliju? Možnosti, da bi kdaj našla to knjigo, so enake ničli. Na mednarodnem prizorišču je publiciteta vsakega avtorja odvisna od publicitete njene oz. njegove lastne države. Kdo pa bo bral neko osebo, katere ime se ne da izgovoriti, njena država pa se nikoli ne pojavi v najpomembnejših novicah, razen v poročilih o naravnih katastrofah in človeških stiskah?

Kot je rekel Max Frisch, ljudje pravzaprav ne slavijo talenta – slavijo uspeh. Če si nadarjen/-a pisatelj/-ica želi biti slaven/-vna, se neizo-

gibno ujame v konflikt zvestob. Nadarjenost je, kot je govoril Kant, sposobnost ustanoviti lastna pravila; zato vedno traja nekaj časa, preden jih drugi sprejmejo. Ideja takšne odložene sprejetosti je popolnoma neznana današnji kulturi takojšnje ugoditve. Po drugi strani je uspeh najlažje doseči tako, da človek ravna v skladu z že obstoječimi pravili. Izbira je vedno naša – ali ostati zvest svojemu talentu, se pravi, vztrajati pri tem, kar čutimo, da naj bi povedali, in sprejeti vsa bodoča tveganja; ali pa ne tvegati, se podrediti temu, čemur so komunisti včasih rekli »družbena zahteva« in kar je potrošniška družba omiljeno poimenovala kot »pritisk tržišča«. Toda zadnje bi lahko bilo tudi zelo totalitarno. V svojem arhivu hranim pismo ameriškega agenta, ki se je pred nekaj leti zanimal za moje delo in mi ponudil svojo pomoč pod pogojem, da spremenim svoj stil. Njegova navodila so bila napisana kot informacije o tem, kako naj bi kreativno pisala za ljudi, ki imajo motnjo pomanjkanja pozornosti – pisanje krajših stavkov, izogibanje tematskim odklonom, razvijanje le ene ideje v posameznem odstavku itd. Vsaj evropski agenti ostajajo manj neposredni pri usmerjanju avtorjevega dela – čeprav nihče izmed njih te dni ne bi bil srečen z *Uliksesom*, *À la recherche du temps perdu* ali *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*. V sodobni literarni infrastrukturi preprosto ni več prostora, da bi lahko producirali takšna dela. Če primerjam – pred 20 leti seznami najbolje prodajanih knjig še niso bili samo smeti in so se na njih znašli tudi avtorji kot Marquez ali Kundera; od takrat se je velikost izložbenega okna, v katerem se opazi »resna literatura«, dramatično zmanjšala. Pravila igre sedaj narekuje avdiovizualna kultura, natančneje šovbiznis.

Za literaturo to predstavlja še posebej velik izziv, saj ni s samo naravo pisanja nič bolj nekompatibilno kot šovbiznis. Pisanje je že po definiciji samotno delo. Potrebuje zasebnost. Kadar delaš na romanu, moraš oditi iz svojega življenja, da bi po spominu ustvaril vzporedni svet. Za to je potreben popoln nadzor nad mentalnimi viri in prav ta nadzor pogosto povezujejo s pisateljevo svobodo. Ne glede na to, kako velikodušno postavimo javnosti na ogled svoje nazore, življenjepis, družbene večine ali kak drug »digitalni del« svoje osebnosti, bi moral ostati naš najbolj ustvarjalni del vedno zaščiten pred javnostjo. Brž



ko prekršimo to pravilo in dovolimo, da se hrupna množica agentov, urednikov in kritikov pomeša z našim notranjim glasom, ki nas vodi in usmerja skozi tekst, se znajdemo v težavah – takrat se začne prava »avtorjeva smrt«.

Bila sem priča nekaj vzorčnim primerom med svojimi kolegi. A., ki je bil nekdanj uspešen romanopisec, je v želji, da bi obdržal pozornost javnosti, leta in leta preživel na bralnih turnejah, medtem ko je kakovost njegovega pisanja oslabela in se spremenila v dolgočasno recikliranje »poročil o uspehu« za novinarje. Danes hodi na turneje kot pevec rokovske skupine in je pri tem prav patetičen, ampak mladi še vedno obiskujejo njegove predstave, da bi videli »pojočega klasika« – zanimivost, primerljiva z bradatimi gospemi iz kakšne minule obrobne predstave. Še bolj odvraten je primer B., ameriškega pesnika, ki je naredil samomor zaradi, kot mi je napisal njegov najboljši prijatelj, »publicitete«. B. je bil znan po tem, da je sanjal o osmrtnici v vseh večjih časopisih in se pritoževal, da v *New York Timesu* ne dobi dovolj vrstic. Kadarkoli me zamika, da bi nekaj svoje pisateljske identitete žrtvovala za boljšo oceno na tržišču, pomislim na ta dva, ki sta kot kakšna rimska gladiatorja umrla v središču pozornosti – eden fizično, drugi pa duhovno, in si rečem: pazi!

*Prevedla Renata Krivec*



## An Author in the Spotlight

Oksana Zabuzhko

The issues raised by Andrej Blatnik, while thoroughly mapping the blind alley down which literature has found itself in the world of market and information technologies, reach at the same time far beyond literary matters. My first thought was about the social experiment attempted 2 years ago by the *Washington Post* – when virtuoso Joshua Bell was asked to play on his Stradivarius in the Washington, DC subway during rush hour as an anonymous busker. The purpose of the experiment was to check the hierarchy of the contemporary American values – to see how many people would stop on their way to work, to indulge themselves in the best free concert they might ever hear in their lifetime. The results proved shocking: during some 40 min of play, Josh Bell won, out of 1097 passersby recorded by the hidden cameras, there were 7 who stopped to listen, and 27 who dropped coins into his violin-case. The other 1070 marched by without giving any notice: they simply **didn't hear** (none of those 40 interviewed later in the day, when asked if they had noticed anything unusual in the subway that morning, remembered the musician).

When I first read this account in the *Washington Post*, and watched the video on the web (the latter strongly recommended to everyone who believes that Huxley and Orwell belong to history, or finds Ben Elton's recent remake of *1984* amusing rather than gruesome), I took it as no less than a requiem for human sensitivity. Bach's masterfully played *Chaconne* resonating in a heart-rending loneliness in the rush hour subway struck me as a bell tolling for all arts – since in our civilization it is art, and art alone, which bears what one may call an institutional responsibility for *l'éducation sentimentale*. In whatever company I have since told the story, typically, the reaction of intellectuals follows my own pattern: they lament over the plight of high culture in the world dumbed by commercials (also, some plunge into specula-

tions about how many people a musician of the same class would have gathered in their own country, the score being always to America's disgrace). Yet, whenever my target group includes one of the professionals who think they know how the world runs – a law student from Vienna, a bank manager from London, an art-dealer from Kyiv – I immediately receive the same matter-of-fact explanation of Joshua Bell's failure: "Wrong marketing!"

Marketing comes as a key word. For who would doubt that the same Josh Bell performing in the subway surrounded by TV cameras, under a huge Carnegie Hall poster advertising his grandeur (and listing regular ticket prices for his concerts!), would have soon gathered a crowd big enough to call for the police to disperse the crush? The truth is, it is no longer the quality that decides about the success of a work of art with the audience – it is marketing, right or wrong. Once taken out of its legitimate market space, like from an illuminated window-case, art becomes as good as nonexistent. We have all become marketable – and woe to those of us who have not.

Being myself one of the "brand names" in my country's literature, I know only too well that of all the qualities which make us marketable the quality of our work is no longer the first priority. Being "a famous writer" is not exactly about being a writer – it is about being famous. Of all the journalists calling me for a political comment, the public activists knocking on my door for my signature in support of their actions, the glossy magazine editors asking for my picture for the country's "top 10 women", "top 100 VIPs", or some other "top" list which they happen to feature, few, I am aware, have made it through more than one of my books. (I am notorious for my complex language, and am usually regarded as an author for the eggheads.) Still, my books sell at a rate, unreasonably high for high-brow literature – my recent one, a voluminous, 650-page literary study on women's heresies, sold some 20,000 copies in 15 months. Were it published under a pseudonym, the outcome, I am afraid, would have been closer to that of Josh Bell's in the Washington, DC subway. Most people buy the book because I am "famous", which, according to the critics, stands for "scandalous", "pro-

vocative”, “controversial”, or even “a witch”: the characteristics which seem to have the foremost power to win a woman writer the reputation of a contemporary classic. Being “a brand name” means that, before anything, you sell your personality. If you are lucky, by this you build a framework, a windowcase in which your work becomes **visible**.

That literary work by itself, be it even a masterpiece, is powerless, unless surrounded with the shining halo of the author’s publicity (how wrong proved Barthes’s prophesies on the death of the author!), can be proved by a simple fact that in the 20<sup>th</sup> cent. Ukraine has witnessed better women writers than me, who, nevertheless, were never remembered as “classics”, and are by now almost forgotten. Those literary mothers of mine were not lucky in marketing. Which is to say, their personal stories never amounted to media myths – a *conditio sine qua non* for a writer in the age, stamped, after Umberto Eco, with “the loss of privacy”. Who on earth is going to read some dead ladies, unless they were in their time famous as great lovers and man-eaters – aka “witches”?

When projecting the problem on the international stage, where the game is ruled by English – a linguistic hard currency for the global village – I keep asking myself: what if the book which can change my life has already been written by some kindred spirit in, say, Albanian, Malay, or Swahili? My chances to ever come across it are close to nil. On the international stage every author’s publicity depends on that of his/her country. Who is going to read some guy with an unpronounceable name, if his country never appears in the top news features, unless for reports on natural disasters and human misery?

As Max Frisch observed, people do not really celebrate a talent – they celebrate success. If being celebrated is what a talented writer wants, s/he gets inevitably trapped within a conflict of loyalties. Talent, as we all remember from Kant, is the capacity to establish the rules of one’s own, which is why it always takes time to be accepted. The idea of such suspended acceptance is totally alien to today’s culture of immediate gratification. Success, on the other hand, is most easily won by complying with the rules already existing. The choice is always ours: whether to be faithful to our talent, that is, to insist on

what we feel we should tell, and accept all the incoming risks – or to play it safe, obeying what communists used to call “social command”, and what consumerist society dubs, more mildly, as “the pressures of the market”. The latter, however, could be quite totalitarian as well. In my archive I keep a letter from an American agent who, some years ago, got interested in my work and offered me his services under the condition that I should change my style. His instructions read like a briefing on creative writing for people with attention deficit disorder: writing in shorter sentences, avoiding digressions, sticking to no more than one idea per paragraph, etc. At least European agents remain less straightforward while trying to direct your work – even though none of them would these days be any happier with *Ulysses*, *À la recherche du temps perdu* or *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*. There is simply no room left in contemporary literary infrastructure for such works to be produced. As compared to 20 years ago, when bestsellers’ lists were not yet all trash and used to include Marquez and Kundera, the size of the windowcase in which “serious” literature is spotlighted has dramatically narrowed. The rules of the game have been taken over by audiovisual culture, or, more precisely, by showbiz.

For literature this presents particularly grave a challenge, as there is nothing as incompatible with the very nature of writing as showbiz. Writing is by definition a reclusive occupation. It requires privacy. When you work on a novel, you have to depart from your life to create a parallel world out of your memory. For this you need a full command over all your mental resources, and it is this very command that is commonly associated with the writer’s freedom. No matter how lavishly we might expose to the public our views, our biography, our social skills, or whatever other “digital parts” of our personality, the most creative part of ourselves should always stay protected from publicity. As soon as we break this rule and let the rackets crowd of agents, editors, and critics blend with our inner voice, which keeps us driving through the text, we are in trouble; that is when the true “death of the author” begins.

I have witnessed some exemplary cases among my colleagues. A., a once successful novelist, spent years on reading tours to stay in the spotlight,

while his writings in the meantime wilted into a tedious recycling of “success reports” to the press. Today he tours with a rock band as a singer, in which capacity he is rather pathetic, yet young people still attend his performances to see “the singing classic” – a curiosity similar to the bearded ladies of the bygone sideshow. More gruesome is the case of B., an American poet who committed suicide, as his best friend wrote me, “for the publicity”: B. was known to have dreamed about an obituary in the major newspapers, and complained about not getting enough column inches in the *New York Times*. Whenever I feel tempted to sacrifice some of my writer’s identity for the sake of being better validated on the market, I think of those two who have died in the spotlight like Roman gladiators – one physically, another spiritually – and say to myself: Beware!

