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AT VILENICA

Literary Landscapes

Okrogla miza SEP na Vilenici

»Odzven prostora«

CEI Round Table at Vilenica

“Reflections of Place”

Eseji / Essays

30. Mednarodni literarni festival Vilenica
30th Vilenica International Literary Festival

**Okrogla miza SEP na Vilenici /
CEI Round Table at Vilenica**

Moderator / Moderator

Boštjan Narat

Slovenija / Slovenia

Udeleženci / Panellists

Óflaith Foyle

Irska / Ireland

Aleksandar Hemon

BiH, ZDA / BiH, USA

Blerina Rogova Gaxha

Kosovo / Kosovo

Okrogla miza SEP na Vilenici / CEI Round Table at Vilenica
»ODZVEN PROSTORA« / “REFLECTIONS OF PLACE”



30. Mednarodni literarni festival Vilenica /
30th Vilenica International Literary Festival

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Kazalo / Table of Contents

Udeleženci / Panellists	5
Eseji / Essays	
<i>Boštjan Narat</i>	16
Prostor prebliska in prostor premisleka	
A Space of Brainwaves and a Space of Reflection	
<i>Órflaith Foyle</i>	26
Reflections of Place	
Razmišljanja o prostoru	
<i>Aleksandar Hemon</i>	36
In Search of Space Lost	
Iskanje izgubljenega prostora	
<i>Blerina Rogova Gaxha</i>	56
Vdekja e poetit	
Pesnikova smrt	
The Poet's Death	

Udeleženci
Panellists



Boštjan Narat, Slovenija / Slovenia

Boštjan Narat je filozof, glasbenik, esejist, kantavtor ter avtor in izvajalec scenske glasbe. S skupino Katalena, ki jo je ustanovil leta 2001, je v štirinajstih letih izdal šest studijskih albumov. Ploščam *(Z)godbe*, *Babje leto*, *Kmečka ohcet ali tretji prispevek k slovenski blaznosti* ter *Cvik cvak!* je v letu 2011 sledila *Noč čarovnic*, 2015 pa je Katalena izdala album *Enci benci Katalenci*, posvečen predvsem otroški publiki. V letu 2010 je izdal kantavtorski prvenec z naslovom *Strah je odveč*. Spomladi 2012 je v sodelovanju z Matevžem Kolencem, Polono Janežič, Jeleno Ždrale in Blažem Celarcem posnel in izdal svojo drugo kantavtorsko ploščo *Konec sveta vedno pride nenapovedano*, sodeluje pa tudi z Neco Falk, s katero je leta 2014 soustvaril in izdal album *Od daleč*. Kot avtor glasbe za gledališče sodeluje s številnimi slovenskimi režiserji, koreografi in gledališkimi ustvarjalci. Leta 2013 je bil za svoje umetniško delo nominiran za Župančičevo nagrado. Piše in objavlja v strokovnih in literarnih revijah, oblikuje in vodi pa tudi številne pogovorne večere, od leta 2012 je voditelj in avtor oddaje *Panoptikum*, od leta 2014 pa tudi oddaje *Odprta knjiga* na RTV Slovenija. Leta 2013 je izdal zbirko esejev z naslovom *Partija*, s katero je bil nominiran za Rožančevo nagrado.

Boštjan Narat is a philosopher, musician, essayist, singer and songwriter, and performer of incidental music. In 2001 he founded the band Katalena, which has released six studio albums over 14 years. The albums (*Z godbe* (Stories), *Babje leto* (Indian Summer), *Kmečka ohcet ali tretji prispevek k slovenski blaznosti* (Country Wedding or the Third Contribution to Slovenian Insanity), and *Cvik cvak!* (Tweak-twitch!) were followed by *Noč čarovnic* (Night of the Witches) in 2011, and, in 2015, *Enci benci Katalenci* (Eenie, Meenie, Kataleenie), an album geared towards children. He published his first solo album as a singer and songwriter, titled *Strah je odveč* (Fear is Useless), in 2010. His second album, *Konec sveta vedno pride nenapovedano* (The End of the World Always Comes Unannounced), released in the spring of 2012, was recorded in collaboration with Matevž Kolenc, Polona Janežič, Jelena Ždrale, and Blaž Celarec. He also collaborates with Neca Falk, with whom he co-wrote and released the album *Od daleč* (From Afar) in 2014. As a composer of theatre music he has collaborated with many Slovenian theatre artists and choreographers. In 2013 he was nominated for the Župančič Award for his artistic work. He publishes in journals and literary magazines, and often plans and moderates discussion evenings. Since 2012 he has authored and led the show *Panoptikum*, as well as RTV Slovenija's *Odprta knjiga* (Open Book), since 2014. His collection of essays titled *Partija*, which he published in 2013, was shortlisted for the 2014 Rožanc Award.



Órfhlaith Foyle, Irska / Ireland

Órfhlaith Foyle se je rodila irskim staršem v Adaziju v Vzhodni Nigeriji. Preden se je preselila v Avstralijo, kjer je diplomirala iz družboslovnih študij, je živela v Keniji in Malaviju. Potovala je po Rusiji in Izraelu in dve leti poučevala tudi v londonski četrti East End, nato se je preselila na Irsko, kjer je postala svobodna novinarka in urednica lokalnega časopisa. Živi v Galwayu. Piše romane, poezijo in kratko prozo. Njen prvi roman *Belios* je izšel leta 2005. Prvo pesniško zbirko *Red Riding Hood's Dilemma* (Zagata Rdeče kapice), ki je bila nominirana za nagrado »Rupert and Eithne Strong Award« (2011), je izdala leta 2010. Njen kratkoprozni prvenec *Somewhere in Minnesota* (Nekje v Minnesoti) je izšel leta 2011. Naslovna zgodba omenjene zbirke je bila prvič objavljena v antologiji *New Irish Short Stories* (Nove irske kratke zgodbe, 2011). Njena druga in obenem najnovejša zbirka kratkih zgodb *Clemency Browne Dreams of Gin* (Clemency Browne sanja o džinu) je izšla leta 2014. Avtoričina besedila so bila objavljena v različnih literarnih revijah, med drugim v *The Stinging Fly*, *The Dublin Review*, *The Manchester Review*, *New Irish Writing* in *Wales Arts Review*.

Órfhlaith Foyle was born in Adazi, Eastern Nigeria to Irish parents. She lived in Kenya and Malawi before emigrating to Australia, where she received a Bachelor of Humanities. She travelled to Russia and Israel and also taught in London's East End for two years before moving to Ireland to work as a freelance journalist and as editor of a community magazine. She lives in Galway. She is a novelist, poet and short-story writer. Her first novel, *Belios*, was published in 2005. Her first full collection of poetry, *Red Riding Hood's Dilemma*, was published in 2010 and short-listed for the Rupert and Eithne Strong Award in 2011. Her debut short fiction collection, *Somewhere in Minnesota*, was published in 2011. The title story of the volume was first published in the anthology *New Irish Short Stories* (2011). Her second and most recent short story collection, *Clemency Browne Dreams of Gin*, was published 2014. Her work has also been featured in various literary magazines such as *The Stinging Fly*, *The Dublin Review*, *The Manchester Review*, *New Irish Writing*, and in *Wales Arts Review*.



Aleksandar Hemon, BiH, ZDA / BiH, USA

Aleksandar Hemon se je rodil leta 1964 v Sarajevu v Bosni in Hercegovini. Študiral je književnost na Univerzi v Sarajevu. Leta 1992 je obiskal Chicago, kjer je nameraval ostati nekaj mesecev, vendar se je začelo obleganje Sarajeva in se ni mogel vrniti. V ZDA je nato opravljal številna dela, med drugim je bil tudi vodja centra za opismenjevanje, pisec prispevkov za mladinski program Radia Sarajevo in učitelj angleščine za tujce. Svojo prvo zgodbo v angleškem jeziku je objavil leta 1995. Leta 2000 je izšel njegov kratkoprozni prvenec *The Question of Bruno* (Vprašanje Bruna), ki so mu sledili: dva romana – *Nowhere Man* (*Nowhere Man: Pronekove fantazije*, 2002), izbran za najboljšo knjigo leta po izboru revije *New York Magazine*, in *The Lazarus Project* (*Projekt Lazar*, 2008), ki je bil nominiran za nagradi »National Book Critics Circle Award« in »National Book Award« – nato pa še kratke zgodbe *Love and Obstacles* (Ljubezen in ovire, 2009) in avtobiografsko esejistično delo *The Book of My Lives* (*Knjiga mojih življenj*, 2013). V slovenskem prevodu Irene Duša so pri založbi Modrijan izšla dela *Nowhere Man: Pronekove fantazije* (2006), *Projekt Lazar* (2010) in *Knjiga mojih življenj* (2013). Njegova besedila izhajajo v številnih priznanih ameriških revijah, kot so *The New Yorker*, *Esquire*, *Granta*, *The New York Times*, *Playboy*, *The Wall Street Journal* in *The Paris Review*.

Aleksandar Hemon was born in 1964 in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina. He studied Literature at the University of Sarajevo. He visited Chicago in 1992, intending to stay for just a few months. While he was visiting, Sarajevo came under siege, and he was unable to return home. In the USA he worked, among other jobs, as a supervisor at a literacy centre, a writer for Radio Sarajevo Youth Program and a teacher of English as a Second Language. Hemon published his first story in English in 1995. His first collection of short stories, *The Question of Bruno*, was published in 2000. It was followed by two novels: *Nowhere Man* (2002), which was chosen as *New York Magazine's* best book of the year, and *The Lazarus Project* (2008), which was a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award and the National Book Award, the book of short stories *Love and Obstacles* (2009), and the autobiographical non-fiction book *The Book of My Lives* (2013). Three of his books – *Nowhere Man*, *The Lazarus Project*, and *The Book of My Lives* – have been translated into Slovene by Irena Duša and published by Modrijan in 2006, 2010 and 2013, respectively. His work has been featured in a number of noted magazines, such as *The New Yorker*, *Esquire*, *Granta*, *The New York Times*, *Playboy*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *The Paris Review*.



Foto / Photo © Ridvan Slivova

Blerina Rogova Gaxha, Kosovo / Kosovo

Blerina Rogova Gaxha se je rodila leta 1982 v Đakovici na Kosovu. Dela kot asistentka za albansko književnost na Univerzi v Đakovici, opravlja doktorski študij na Filološki fakulteti Univerze v Prištini in piše članke in reportaže za nevladno organizacijo BIRN Kosovo. Pred tem je na zasebni šoli poučevala albansko književnost in kot novinarka delala za uredništvo radia BBC. Med letoma 2009 in 2014 je bila urednica rubrike za umetnost in kulturo pri časopisu *Zëri. Pesnica*, esejistka in novinarka je za pesniški prvenec *Gorgonë* (Gorgona, 2009) prejela albansko državno nagrado za najboljšo knjigo leta 2010. Svojo drugo pesniško zbirko z naslovom *Kate* je izdala leta 2013. Njene pesmi in eseji so bili objavljeni v številnih priznanih avstrijskih, nemških, bosanskih in romunskih revijah ter v več antologijah albanske poezije. Leta 2014 je prejela štipendijo Zveznega ministrstva za izobraževanje, umetnosti in kulturo Republike Avstrije in organizacije »KulturKontakt Austria« ter kot rezidenčna pisateljica dva meseca ustvarjala na Dunaju. Blerina Rogova Gaxha je tudi članica Kosovskega centra PEN.

Blerina Rogova Gaxha was born in 1982 in Gjakova, Kosovo. She works as a teaching assistant for Albanian Literature at the University of Gjakova, while pursuing her doctoral studies at the Faculty of Philology at the University of Prishtina and writing columns and for the non-governmental organisation BIRN Kosovo. She used to teach Albanian literature at a private college, and she has worked as a journalist for BBC radio. She edited the arts and culture section of the newspaper *Zëri* between 2009 and 2014. The poet, essayist and journalist received for her first book, the collection of poetry *Gorgonë* (Gorgon, 2009), the Albanian National Prize for the best book of the year 2010. Her second book of poetry, *Kate*, was published in 2013. Her essays and poems have been featured in several renowned Austrian, German, Bosnian, and Romanian literary magazines and in several anthologies of Albanian poetry. She received the “Writers in Residence” programme scholarship offered by the Federal Ministry for Education, the Arts and Culture and the Literary Network “KulturKontakt Austria” in 2014 and attended a two-month literary residence in Vienna. Blerina Rogova Gaxha is also a member of the Kosovo PEN Centre.

Eseji
Essays

Prostor prebliska in prostor premisleka

Boštjan Narat

Moje stanovanje je veliko trideset kvadratnih metrov. Ni ne vem kaj, ampak zame je povsem dovolj. Nima predsobe, tako da vstopiš neposredno v kuhinjo, kar se mi zdi pametno. Predsobe so v takšnih stanovanjih zapravljanje prostora. Ima majhno kopalnico in dokaj velik bivalni prostor. Stanovanje je v prvem nadstropju stare večstanovanjske hiše, stropi so precej visoki, kar daje majhnosti navkljub občutek prostornosti. Svetlobe je dovolj. Vsi pravijo, da je stanovanje zelo prijetno.

Prostor literature je izvorno intimen. Tudi kadar literatura preči meje intimnega, v smislu kreacije ali percepcije, ostaja v svojem temelju osebna izkušnja. Književnost je zavezana poglobljeni refleksiji in s tem dolgotrajnosti in sferi privatnega. In čeprav se nujno v takšni ali drugačni obliki manifestira tudi navzven in s tem vstopa v javni prostor, ostaja refleksija v svojem bistvu intimna. In skupaj z njo literatura.

Ne vem natančno, kdaj je bila hiša zgrajena. V njej je dvanajst stanovanj, moje ima številko devet. Še nikoli nisem bil na obisku v katerem koli drugem stanovanju v hiši, razen enkrat, ko je sosedi nad mano počila cev v kopalnici, kar pa bi težko imenoval obisk. Pa ne da se ljudem izogibam, samo stika ne iščem. Moja ulica je slepa in nosi ime po nekem davno pozabljenem županu mojega mesta. Ni spektakularna, morda mi je ravno zato tako všeč.

Na drugi strani privatnosti stoji javnost. Govorica javnega prostora se od govornice intimnega življenja bistveno razlikuje. Tudi časovni dimenziji sta različni. Čas v javnem prostoru teče po principu spektakla, hrupnosti in hipnosti. Dogodek v sferi javnega je nekaj, kar se na videz tiče vseh; nekaj, kar se zdi ključno in bistveno za prihodnost. Ravno prihodnost pa je tista, ki navidezno ključnost spektakelskega dogodka vedno znova razkrije v njegovi mimobežnosti in nebistvenosti. Prihodnost slej ko prej postreže z novim dogodkom, ki prejšnjega v trenutku potisne v nepomembno preteklost.

Na moji ulici se nikoli ne zgodi nič spektakularnega; nič, kar bi dajalo vtis, da se tiče vseh. Na drugih ulicah se dogajajo parade ponosa, maturantske četvorke in politični shodi. Edina javna manifestacija, ki se dogaja na moji ulici, je vsakodnevna procesija otrok iz bližnjega vrtca. Gre za čudovit prikaz skupinske psihologije in dinamike: če začne jokati eden, slej ko prej jočejo vsi. To je edini hrupen trenutek dneva.

Logika aktualizma funkcionira po principu spektakla in kratkotrajnosti. Ko se rok uporabe aktualnega dogodka izteče, kar je praviloma dokaj hitro, javni prostor sproducira ali odkrije nov dogodek. Vsak nov dogodek seveda potrebuje komentar. Spektakel potrebuje komentar, vendar komentar spektakla nujno ostaja na ravni prebliska. Mimo-bežnost in poglobljena refleksija se medsebojno izključujeta. Tako kot se izključujeta komentar in literatura.

Na moji ulici je dvajset hiš. V vseh živijo ljudje. Pojma nimam, kaj se jim dogaja, a kar koli že to je, za njih, za vsakega posebej, je to gotovo ključno in bistveno.

Bistvene stvari se dogajajo v tišini in intimi. So onkraj spektakla, tako kot je onkraj spektakla literatura. In čeprav je literatura tudi komentar, čeprav občasno reagira na aktualne dogodke, ostaja zavezana refleksiji, njeni govorici in njenemu času. Zato v svoji komentatorski drži vedno zamuja. Javno mnenje pa za svoj obstoj potrebuje vedno vnovične reakcije na vedno nove aktualne dogodke. Javno mnenje funkcionira po principu logike aktualizma, ki ji literatura ne more in noče slediti. Oziroma: če ji vendarle sledi, postane slaba. Zato literatura ne more biti v službi javnega mnenja.

Enkrat na nekaj mesecev imamo sestanek hišnega sveta. Dogodek, ki se neverjetno spretno giblje med mučnim in zabavnim. Obstaja zelo simpatična in zanimiva ideja, da je edina možna in smiselna reorganizacija družbe tista, ki se dogaja na nivoju majhnih skupnosti, ulic, četrti, blokovskih naselij; kot neka nova oblika samoorganizacije, združništva, skupnega reševanja konkretnih zadev, ki se tičejo vsakodnevnega sobivanja. Ideja mi je na načelni ravni zelo ljuba, ampak na vsakem sestanku hišnega sveta vedno znova uvidim njeno utopičnost.

Kadar pisateljice in pisatelji vstopajo v javni diskurz kot komentatorji aktualnega dogajanja, svojo legitimnost sicer utemeljujejo na

svojem pisateljskem delu, govorica, ki jo v tovrstnih situacijah uporabljajo, pa ni literarna. Seveda ne gre za novodobno posebnost, tudi Zola je svojo famozno *J'accuse* izrekel in zapisal kot pisatelj v preobleki novinarja, in to na način, ki bi ga danes imenovali tviteraški. Ko se poglobljeni premislek skrči in zgosti v geslo, sicer pridobi neverjetno moč, ustvarjalno ali destruktivno, a hkrati izgubi svojo večplastnost. Literaturi je logika aktualizma in z njo povezana govorica prebliska v temelju tuja. Pa ne da bi ji bil tuj sam preblisk, iz prebliska se rojeva. A sam preblisk je premalo, lahko ustvari začetek, ne more pa ustvariti celote. Kreatorji javnega mnenja so obsojeni na prebliske in domislice. Ne gre za to, da bi imeli omejen intelektualni domet, daleč od tega. Govorica domislic je edina, s katero je mogoče javnost sploh nagovoriti, nagovoriti v smislu agitacije. Tudi literatura je nagovor, a ni in ne sme postati agitacija.

Pred nekaj meseci sem se lotil obnove kopalnice. Tovrstne zadeve so zame precejšen stres, ampak prenova je potekala hitro in brez težav. Na neki točki sem začel v vsem skupaj celo uživati, preko izbire ploščic, straniščne školjke in držala za milo človek organizira svoje življenje, kar nudi svojevrstno zadovoljstvo. Moja nova kopalnica je črno-bela in zelo lepa. Kljub temu se v njej ne zadržujem več, kot je potrebno.

Prostorskost pisateljevanja se povezuje z njegovo časovnostjo; dolgotrajnostjo ali kratkotrajnostjo. Če se poezija dogaja v kuhinji, se roman rojeva v kabinetu, v delovni sobi, naphani s knjižnimi policami, v kateri se – kot pove že njeno ime – dogaja delo. Časovna narava tistega, kar v lepi slovenščini imenujemo *opinion making*, pa je radikalno drugačna. Je hipna zadovoljitev potrebe, ki jo ustvarja aktualna družbena stvarnost. Zato se ne dogaja niti v kuhinji niti v delovni sobi, pač pa na stranišču.

Na dvorišču pred hišo obešam perilo. Pred nekaj tedni je nekdo moje cunje, potem ko je opazil, da so v senci, obesil na drugo vrvo, tako da so se sušile na soncu. Ne vem natančno, kdo je to bil, na sumu imam starejšo gospo, ki živi v pritličju v enako velikem oziroma majhnem stanovanju, kot je moje. Prebiva skupaj s sinom, snaho in vnukom. Še vedno se ne morem odločiti, ali gre za prijaznost ali za vdor v intimo. Vrvi za obešanje perila so skupna last. Po tej logiki je moje perilo, ko je enkrat obešeno na trati pred hišo, javna zadeva.

Ideja lastne sobe, ki tako na simbolni kot realni ravni predstavlja osnovo kreativne svobode, je ideja prostora intimne in refleksije. Literatura je možna šele takrat, ko je zagotovljena lastna soba kot predpogoj njenega nastanka in poglobljene percepcije. Še en pomemben element koncepta lastnega prostora je čas. Literatura je zavezana dolgotrajnosti, tako v ustvarjalnem kot v bralnem smislu.

Trenutno se ukvarjam s predstavljanjem novega albuma, koncerti, pravo oddaje, pisanjem kolumne in teksta za Vilenico ter sodelujem pri nastajanju dveh predstav, pri eni kot dramaturg, pri drugi kot glasbenik in igralec. Prva se ukvarja s fenomenom dihanja, tema druge je epilepsija. Če temu dodam še vsak dan prevoženih 250 kilometrov in zaplet, ki ga imam z davčno upravo, lahko samo upam, da se mi do 19. junija ne zmeša. Takrat imam karto za Brazilijo.

Časovna dimenzija je v kontekstu ustvarjalnosti in njene svobode bistvena. Literatura zahteva čas, sistem, disciplino in fokus. Pomanjkanje časa povzroča razpršenost, ki onemogoča kakršno koli poglobljeno refleksijo. Iz razpršenosti se rojevajo samo prebliski. Je razseljenost duha, ki lahko zgolj analizira aktualne zadeve, nezmožna pa je sinteze in celostnega uvida.

Še vedno ne vem, čemu bom posvetil tokratno kolumno.

Govorica razpršenega in razseljenega duha je govorica prebliskov, domislic, gesel, sloganov, twiteraških zapisov in manifestativnih enovrstičnic. Ta govorica je spektakularna, privlačna in zabavna. Daje vtis, kot da ima mobilizacijsko moč, vendar to zaradi njene kratkotrajnosti in mimobežnosti ne drži. Mobilizacija pomeni spremembo, ampak sistem, ki temelji na logiki aktualizma in govori govorico prebliskov, si sprememb ne želi. Njegova tendenca je zaščita obstoječega stanja. Bolj ko je komentar glasen in spektakularen, bolj služi temu cilju. S tem ko je zvest logiki aktualizma, pomaga ohranjati sistem.

Prostor preneha biti zgolj stanovanje in postane dom takrat, ko ponuja občutek enosti, ki je močnejši od razseljenosti duha. Istost in rutina omogočata umiritev razpršenosti. Tu ne gre za dolčas, gre za dolgotrajnost.

Izstop iz prostora domislice pomeni upor proti tiraniji aktualizma in njene kratkotrajnosti. Literatura ima moč, da se temu nasilju zoperstavi. Najbolj silovita je takrat, ko si vzame čas, najbolj aktualna,

ko je najmanj aktualna oziroma ko svoje aktualnosti ne uresničuje po diktatu aktualizma. Prostor prebliska je najeta garsonjera, kamor hodi človek zgolj spat. Prostor refleksije je dom, v katerem človek dejansko živi. Literatura je odgovor na sodobno razpršenost duha, na miselno brezdomstvo, ki ga povzroča naravnost na spektakel. Misel se v kratkotrajnosti aktualizma izgublja, poglobljeni premislek družbenega stanja je vpričo bombardiranja dogodkov in tviteraških komentarjev nemogoč, odsotnost refleksije pa ohranja obstoječa družbena razmerja in aktualno politično stvarnost. Morda je bila glasnost orožje pred tridesetimi leti, danes je glasnost služabnica sistema. Edino orožje je ustvarjalna tišina, ki ne pristaja na diktaturo aktualizma in njegove kratkotrajnosti, pač pa življenje misli skozi prizmo dolgega časa in trajanja.

Moj dom je velik trideset kvadratnih metrov. Ni ne vem kaj, ampak zame je povsem dovolj. Morda bom v njem kdaj napisal roman. Ampak najprej grem v Brazilijo.

A Space of Brainwaves and a Space of Reflection

Boštjan Narat

My apartment is thirty square metres. It's not much, but it's more than enough for me. It doesn't have a hallway, so you walk right into the kitchen – which makes sense, I think. In apartments like these, hallways are a waste of space. The apartment has a small bathroom and a pretty large living area. It's on the first floor of an old apartment building. The ceilings are quite high, which, despite its smallness, gives one a sense of spaciousness. There's enough light. Everyone says it's a really nice place.

The space of literature is inherently an intimate one. Even when, in terms of its creation and perception, literature goes beyond the bounds of intimacy, it remains, at heart, a personal experience. It is bound to deep reflection and thus to continuity and the private sphere. And though it also inevitably manifests outwardly in one form or another, thereby entering the public space, reflection is fundamentally intimate. And hence, so is literature.

I don't know when exactly the building was built. It has twelve apartments; mine is number nine. I've never called on any of the other residents, except this one time when a pipe burst in my upstairs neighbour's bathroom, but I would hardly consider that a social call. Not that I avoid other people, I just don't seek contact. I live in a cul-de-sac that got its name from some long-forgotten mayor of this city. It's not spectacular, but maybe that's why I like it.

Opposite the private stands the public. The language of the public space differs considerably from that of one's intimate life. Even their temporal dimensions are different. In the public space, time runs based on the principle of spectacle, of noisiness and instantaneousness. An event in the public sphere is something that apparently concerns everyone; something that seems to have a vital and relevant bearing on the future. But it is the future that, time and time again, exposes the seeming

vitalness of this spectacular event, revealing its actual randomness and irrelevance. Sooner or later, the future will generate a new event, the last one instantly becoming a thing of the insignificant past.

Nothing spectacular ever happens in my street; nothing that would seem to concern everyone. Other streets witness pride parades, high school graduates' quadrille dances and political demonstrations. The only public manifestation that takes place in my street is the everyday procession of children from the nearby kindergarten. It's a wonderful illustration of group psychology and dynamics: if one of them starts crying, sooner or later everyone else is crying too. That's the only noisy moment of the day.

The logic of currency works based on the principle of spectacle and instantaneousness. When the expiration date of a current event has passed – which is generally pretty soon – the public space produces or finds a new one. Naturally, each new event requires commentary. A spectacle must be accompanied by commentary, but commentary to a spectacle inevitably remains at the level of a brain-wave. Randomness and deep reflection are mutually exclusive. As are commentary and literature.

There are twenty houses in my street and there are people living in all of them. I have no idea what's going on in their lives but whatever it is, it's vital and relevant to them, to each of them.

Relevant things happen in silence and intimacy. They are beyond spectacle, just as literature is beyond spectacle. And though literature is also commentary, though it occasionally reacts to current events, it remains bound to reflection, its language and its time. That is why it is always late in its commentary stance. And the existence of public opinion depends on getting more and more reactions to more and more current events. Public opinion works on the principle of the logic of currency that literature cannot and will not keep up with. Or, in other words: if it does keep up with it, literature becomes bad. That is why it cannot be in the service of public opinion.

Once every few months, we have a residents' meeting. An event that alternates with incredible adroitness between being tedious and entertaining. There's this extremely charming and interesting idea that the only

possible and sensible reorganisation of society is the one taking place on the level of small communities, streets, districts, neighbourhoods; like some new form of self-organisation, of a cooperative, of working together on concrete everyday matters of living together. In principle, I find the idea very appealing, but at every residents' meeting, I realise how utopian it is.

When writers enter the public discourse as commentators of current events, they base their legitimacy on their literary work. The language they use in situations like these, however, is not literary. This, of course, is no novelty; Zola himself uttered and wrote his famous *J'accuse* as a writer in the guise of a journalist in what today would be considered twitter-like style. When careful consideration shrinks and condenses into a gesture, it gains incredible power, both creative and destructive, but at the same time loses its multilayeredness. The logic of currency and the language of brainwaves associated with it are intrinsically alien to literature. Not that brainwaves themselves are alien to it – literature is born of brainwaves. But a brainwave is not enough; it can create a beginning but it cannot create a whole. Public opinion shapers are doomed to brainwaves and ideas. It's not that their intellectual scope is limited – far from it. The language of ideas is in fact the only one that succeeds in speaking to the public – speaking in the sense of agitation. Literature, too, is a type of address, but it cannot and should not turn into an agitation.

A few months ago, I set about renovating the bathroom. I usually find such things quite stressful but the renovation went by quickly and without disruption. At some point, I even started to enjoy the whole thing; choosing the tiles, the toilet and the soap dish helps a man organise his life, giving him a certain satisfaction. My new bathroom has black and white tiling and is very beautiful. Even so, I don't spend any more time in there than is necessary.

The spatiality of writing is connected with its temporality, either continuity or instantaneousness. If poetry happens in the kitchen, the novel is born in the study, in a bookshelf-lined workroom where – as the name implies – work happens. But the temporal nature of what is known as opinion-making is radically different. It is the instant satisfaction of a

need created by the current social reality, which is why it doesn't happen in the kitchen or in the workroom but in the toilet.

I'm hanging laundry in the front yard outside my building. A few weeks ago, someone noticed that my clothes were in the shade and hung them on another clothesline to dry in the sun. I'm not sure who it was; I think it might have been the older woman who lives on the ground floor in an apartment of the same size or lack of size as mine. She lives together with her son, her daughter-in-law and her grandson. I still can't decide whether to view that as an act of kindness or an invasion of privacy. The clotheslines are joint property. Ergo, my laundry, once it's hung outside the building, is a public matter.

The idea of a room of one's own that, on the symbolic as well as the practical level, represents the basis for creative freedom is the idea of a space of intimacy and reflection. Literature is conditional upon having a room of one's own as a prerequisite for its creation and full perception. Another important element of the concept of one's own space is time. Literature is bound to continuity, both writing- and reading-wise.

Right now, I'm promoting my new album, playing concerts, preparing a show, writing a column and a text for Vilenica and working with others on two performances, as dramaturge on one and as musician and actor on the other. The first performance deals with the phenomenon of breathing, the topic of the second one is epilepsy. Add to that a daily commute of 250 kilometres and my complication with the tax authorities, I can only hope I don't go crazy by 19 June. That's when I leave for Brazil.

The temporal dimension is essential in the context of creativity and its freedom. Literature requires time, a system, discipline and focus. Lack of time leads to scatteredness that prevents any kind of deep reflection. Scatteredness only generates brainwaves. It is a displacement of the mind that can analyse current affairs, but is incapable of synthesis and thorough insight.

I still don't know what the topic of my next column is going to be.

The language of a scattered and displaced mind is the language of brainwaves, ideas, mottos, slogans, tweets and demonstrative one-liners.

This type of language is spectacular, attractive and entertaining. It strikes one as having the potential to mobilise, but, given its instantaneous and random nature, that is not the case. Mobilisation means change, and a system that is based on the logic of currency and speaks the language of brainwaves does not want change. Its tendency is to maintain the status quo. The louder and the more spectacular the commentary, the more it serves that purpose. By adhering to the logic of currency, it helps to preserve the system.

A space stops being just an apartment and becomes a home when it offers a feeling of unity that is stronger than the displacement of the mind. Sameness and routine allow the scatteredness to settle down. This is not boredom. It's continuity.

Stepping out of the space of brainwaves means rebelling against the tyranny of currency and its instantaneousness. Literature has the power to stand up to this violence. It's at its most fierce when it takes its time, at its most current when it's the least current or when its up-to-dateness is not achieved by following the dictates of currency. The space of brainwaves is a rented studio apartment where one only goes to sleep. The space of reflection is a home where one actually lives. Literature is the answer to today's scatteredness of the mind, of the mental homelessness brought about by this focus on spectacle. Thought gets lost in the instantaneousness of currency, careful consideration of the state of society has been made impossible due to the bombardment of events and tweets, and the absence of reflection maintains the existing social relations and the present political reality. Noise may have been a weapon thirty years ago but today it has become a servant to the system. The only weapon left is creative silence that will not submit to the dictatorship of currency and its instantaneousness but rather think life through the prism of long duration and continuance.

My home is thirty square meters. It's not much, but it's more than enough for me. Maybe one day I'll write a novel here. But first I'm going to Brazil.

Translated by Špela Bibič

Reflections of Place

Órlaith Foyle

A place, a physical place conjures borders to protect its stance in the world. For a writer, a place is a literary truth. It can be a feeling of livid hate or a conversation in a nearby pub. It can be a person's stare on the world. It can be the inside of a mind.

It can be a house. It can be a house that can speak. It can be a house that can speak of the people who live and die inside it. It can speak of what it sees and feels. It is strange to consider how a house speaks. Does it open its door and roll out its floor like a tongue? Do its windows act as eyes and is its hallway a throat leading to the belly of its kitchen and the backbone of its stairs?

A house may also be a condensed version of the world or a part of the world. If we look at Europe today, especially the E.U., it is a house full of neighbours and strangers. It speaks through various doors and mouths. It encompasses ideological futures of the one Europe while juggling loud cries of nationalistic ideals. Its spine is the various borders or non-borders of countries. Its belly is where all the fears congregate. Fears that can only be seen when the people become afraid that in such a large house they are being forgotten in favour of men and women who discuss, money, rules and law.

Such a house can speak through the voice of a writer and how it speaks depends on the writer's own place, and his or her own perspective. In today's Europe, it is difficult to call yourself a writer. There are just words that you use. They use up paper and they use up time. What good does writing do for the individual and for the world? Stories are marketed as pre-packaged clichés in varied forms of the same theme. Readers have become consumers. Books must be 'readable'. They must move units.

In today's 'place', a writer needs to be honest with herself and with her words. A simple story set in the past Europe or set in any future version must have something of the writer's own mind inside it. An individual writer cannot be disassociated from the world he or she imagines on the page. Whether the narrative is first or third person, all of it stems from a human conscience and therefore speaks to the reader's imagination and experience.

Capitalism, socialism, totalitarianism have either saluted or degraded writers and for writers who write from an 'ism's' perspective, there is a safety in portraying humanity as a collective or as the *über*-individual, the god-like dream of some ambitious tyrant. Also there is safety in saying nothing or at least saying 'the acceptable thing'. This present Europe fears annihilation by religious groups, by migrants, by big business and by a global warming holocaust of water starvation. What a writer says to this can either be added to the gospel of the day or seen as evidence of dangerous idiocy.

Recently a number of writers' boycotted American PEN's Freedom of Expression Award to *Charlie Hebdo*, the satirical French cartoon magazine. Free speech has its limits in the western world's era of liberal tolerance. If writers themselves are censoring their own colleagues, how does artistic independence survive in this time and place?

Stories began as soon as humans did. We had to invent reasons for our lives and we had to invent stories to understand the world around us. Families thrive on stories. Stories become memories. A writer writes her story first from a place within herself. Even if it is purely her story, if it is written with passionate truth, then the reader can see himself in her words.

Anna Akhmatova, the great Russian poet, wrote of personal love yet she became the voice of the Russian people. *Requiem*, and *Poem Without a Hero* are her masterpieces. James Joyce wrote of becoming the 'conscience of his race' via Stephen Dedalus, the protagonist of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*.

In the past few years the literary world has been enflamed with the works of Karl Ove Knausgaard and other fictional and non-fictional

memoirs. The individual taken to the utmost point of personal story, and even nature writing has examples of this. *H for Hawk*, by Helen McDonald and *The Shepherd's Life* by James Rebanks. For these writers, their place is their own psyche, their own spiritual and physical life.

Such intense personal works affect the reader simply because of their intimacy, yet fictional writers go beyond their own experience in order to reflect what they see around them and, in this way, they encounter truths that they and the reader might not like to see.

The Ones Who Walk Away From Omelas is a story by Ursula Le Guin, a poet and great science-fiction writer and it is written in a near documentary style, friendly but distant and its prose brings the reader face to face with an awful and sweetly indifferent truth: people can live well knowing that a horrific truth lives in the shadows beneath them.

There is a question whether literary writers need write from the individual place at all. What does the personal have to say to the consumer world around them? A writer's tongue is just one of many in a world where people eat more than they think. The large consumer driven appetite sates itself on easily digested entertainment. Celebrity autobiographies and cookery books that colour food the same way the porn industry colours sex.

But beneath all of this is the uncomfortable feeling of being actually human in a world that dictates how you live. We are categorised more, chastised more according to political correctness, and feelings of national pride are mixed with ideas of a European brotherhood. Water is no longer a human right but a service distributed by massive corporations. Cultural diversity is accepted but suspect. How does a literary writer view the boats of migrants heading for Europe's borders? Does she or he abandon the global perspective in favour of an intimate one and vice versa? How does a writer remember who she is?

A writer is a house. She is a house that gazes outside of herself and uses her imagination and experience to see the world as it actually exists. Two writers from different eras achieve this in their work. Jean Rhys from Dominica and Herta Müller from Romania. Each deals

with the solitary life of a survivor in the midst of a world that wants to go on without them.

In her novels such as *Voyage in the Dark* and *Good Morning, Midnight*, Jean Rhys uses her life to travel further into the strange and lonely horror of a forgotten and discarded human being. Her autobiographical work is sometimes viewed as too personal, yet in her masterpiece, *Wide Sargasso Sea* Rhys used her childhood life in Dominica to give life to the forgotten character of Beatrice, Rochester's incarcerated wife from Charlotte Brontë's novel *Jane Eyre*. It is imagination made real.

Herta Müller in her novels *The Land of Green Plums* and *The Hunger Angel* uses the backdrop of life lived inside a totalitarian world, complete with the everyday banality and disposability of human life. In *The Hunger Angel*, 17-year-old Leo Auberg of German ancestry is deported to a Soviet labour camp. When he returns five years later, he is a survivor that no one can ever know. He carries horror in his head and heart. It is a bleak work of great vision.

In today's Europe, totalitarianism has been replaced by the total lure of capitalism that feeds into the political and social structure of our lives. No longer the dread of secret police, instead we have the varied fears of fundamentalism at the doors of our houses and the herd mentality of the Internet driven Newsspeak and Twittersphere direct from Orwellian prophecy.

How does the writer combat this? Does she fall back on various techniques of literary modernism, magical realism or just plain realism to question the place and time that she sees? Nostalgia for the past is popular at the moment and so is dystopia, but contemporary life can be harder to see, since the prevailing world of publishing depends so much on the quick result and the quick sale, and therefore demands only the surface story, whereas, beneath, the story is darker, full of strange solitudes and restless truths.

Experimental writing and non-linear narratives delve beneath the easy reflections but sometimes care more for the situation of language than actual human psychological and spiritual spaces. It seems to be the preferred method of reacting to the present, writing from the interior

in an individual mind; constantly re-cycling the 'I' of itself, and rarely bringing the 'I' outwards. While magical realism and its reliance on supernatural motifs has to be countered with actual human experience and plain realism, down and dirty versions of the truth need a spiritual resonance to make the being human something more than just an evolutionary result.

Europe is a large house that holds many cultures. In today's time and place, a writer needs political and cultural autonomy to write. She must use her own voice. She needs to be honest with what she sees. It is too easy to fall into the trap of looking and acting like an artist yet not being one, and not seeing into the reflection facing her. It is hard to understand what it means to be an artist. It is dispiriting to realise that writers are, more than ever, now marketed as objects that write. Creative writing and university-led writing programmes stand accused of mass-producing writers of the same calibre. There has to be room for difference, imagination and individual experience for the writer and an ability to look at the borders separating one place from another, one time from another.

In this created Europe, still ravelling and un-ravelling with various neighbours and strangers, we still read of exploration, love and hate, and we see what writers see. We see the expected banality of life in everyday prose but we also see the human mystery of living in a place and how we are part of that place until we die.

Razmišljanja o prostoru

Órflaith Foyle

Prostor, stvarni prostor, iznajde meje, da zavaruje svoj položaj na svetu. Za pisatelja pa je prostor avtorska resnica. To je lahko občutek strupenega sovraštva ali pa pomenek v bližnji gostilni. Lahko je človekov pogled na svet. Lahko je notranjost uma.

Lahko je hiša. Lahko je hiša, ki zna pripovedovati. Lahko je hiša, ki zna pripovedovati o ljudeh, ki živijo in umirajo v njej. Lahko pripoveduje o tem, kar vidi in občuti. Težko si je zamišljati, kako hiša pripoveduje. Ali odpre vrata in pomoli ven svoj pod, kot da bi bil jezik? Ali so ji okna za oči, njen hodnik pa grlo, ki vodi v trebuh njene kuhinje in k hrbtišču stopnic?

Hiša je morda tudi zgoščena različica sveta ali dela sveta. Če se danes zazremo v Evropo, zlasti v Evropsko unijo, je to hiša, polna sosedov in tujcev. Ta hiša govori skozi različna vrata in usta. Zajema ideološke prihodnosti enotne Evrope, medtem ko žonglira z glasnimi kiki narodnih idealov. Njena hrbtenica so različne obstoječe oziroma neobstoječe državne meje. Njen trebuh je kraj, kjer se zbirajo vsi strahovi. Strahovi, ki postanejo vidni samo takrat, ko se ljudje zbojijo, da se v tako prostrani hiši pozablja nanje v prid razpravljavcev in razpravljavk, zaradi denarja, pravil in zakonodaje.

Takšna hiša lahko spregovori z glasom pisatelja, kako bo govorila, pa je odvisno od njenega oziroma njegovega lastnega kraja in zornega kota. V današnji Evropi je težko reči, da si pisatelj. So le besede, ki jih uporabljaš. Te pa porablja tako papir kot tudi čas. A s čim pisanje sploh koristi posamezniku in svetu? Zgodbe so poslane na tržišče kot zavoji klišejev z različno oblikovano isto snovjo. Bralci so postali potrošniki. Knjige morajo biti »berljive«. Premikati morajo trume.

V današnjem »prostoru« ne gre drugače, kot da je pisateljica iskrena do sebe in svojih besed. Preprosta zgodba, umeščena v preteklo Evropo

ali postavljena v katero koli prihodnjo različico, mora vsebovati delež piščevega lastnega duha. Avtor kot posameznik oziroma posameznica ne more biti ločen(a) od sveta, ki si ga zamišlja na knjižni strani. Pri-poved, naj bo v prvi ali tretji osebi, v celoti izvira iz človeške zavesti in zato nagovarja bralčevo domišljijo in izkušnjo.

Kapitalizem, socializem, totalitarizem so pisatelje bodisi častili ali pa sramotili, za avtorje, ki pišejo z gledišča *izmov*, pa je varno, če upo-dabljujejo človeštvo kot skupnost ali kot nadčloveka po sanjah, podob-nih bogovskim, kakšnega stremuškega trinoga. Varno je tudi, da ne rečeš ničesar ali da rečeš le tisto, »kar je sprejemljivo«. Naša sedanja Evropa se boji, da bi jo uničile verske skupine, priseljenci, velika pod-jetja in globalni holokavst pomanjkanja vode zaradi segrevanja ozra-čja. Kar k temu pripomni pisatelj, lahko dodamo trenutni sveti resnici ali pa obvelja za dokaz nevarne behavosti.

Nedavno je več pisateljev bojkotiralo nagrado »American PEN's Free-dom of Expression Award«, ki je bila podeljena francoskemu satiričnemu tedniku *Charlie Hebdo*. Svoboda govora ima v dobi liberalne strpnosti zahodnega sveta svoje meje. Kako naj v tem času in na tem kraju preživi umetniška neodvisnost, če pisatelji sami cenzurirajo lastne kolege?

Zgodbe so stare kot človeštvo samo. Ljudje smo si morali izmisliti razloge za svoje življenje in morali smo si izmisliti zgodbe, da bi razu-meli svet okrog sebe. Družine cvetijo ob zgodbah. Zgodbe postanejo spomini. Pisateljica napiše zgodbo najprej iz mesta, ki je v njej sami. Čeprav je zgodba morda izključno njena, se bo bralec ugledal v njenih besedah, če je le napisana s strastno resnicoljubnostjo.

Ana Ahmatova, velika ruska pesnica, je pisala o osebni ljubezni, a je vseeno postala glas ruskega naroda. Njeni mojstrovini sta *Rekviem* in *Pesnitev brez junaka*. James Joyce je zapisal, da prek Stephena De-dalusa, protagonista svojega dela *Umetnikov mladostni portret*, postaja »vest svojega rodu«.

V minulih letih so književni svet razvnela dela Karla Oveja Knaus-gaarda ter drugi fiktivni in stvarni spomini. To, da se posameznik kot oseba razgali do kraja; vendar podobne primere najdemo celo v zapisih o naravi. Takšni deli sta *S kot sokol* Helen McDonald in *Pastirjevo življenje*

Jamesa Rebanksa. Za te pisatelje je kraj njihovega bivanja lastna duševnost, njihovo lastno duhovno in telesno življenje.

Tovrstna intenzivno osebna dela se bralca dotaknejo preprosto zaradi svoje zaupnosti, vendar pisci leposlovnih del sežejo tudi onkraj lastne izkušnje, da bi odzrcalili, kar vidijo okrog sebe, pri tem pa trčijo ob resnice, ki jih oni in bralec nemara ne želijo videti.

Tisti, ki odhajajo iz Omelasa je zgodba izpod peresa Ursule Le Guin, pesnice in sijajne avtorice znanstvene fantastike; napisana je v skoraj dokumentarnem slogu, ki te nagovori, vendar je suh, njena proza pa bralca sooča s strašno in očarljivo brezbrizno resnico: ljudje so zmožni živeti po svoje, čeprav dobro vedo, da v sencah spodaj ždi grozo vzbujajoča resničnost.

Vprašanje je, ali je nujno, da književniki zajemajo iz svojega osebnega kraja. Kaj ima to osebno sploh povedati potrošniškemu svetu, ki ga obdaja? Pisateljev jezik je samo eden od mnogih na svetu, kjer ljudje porabijo več časa za prehranjevanje kot za premišljevanje. Velik, potrošniško gnan apetit poteši samo zlahka prebavljivo razvedrilo. Življenjepisi slavnih oseb in kuharske knjige, ki kažejo hrano v podobni luči, kot pornografska industrija prikazuje spolnost.

Toda pod vsem tem tiči neprijeten občutek, da si na svetu, ki ti narekuje, kako naj bi živel, v bistvu pač človek. Čedalje bolj nas predalčkajo, čedalje bolj nas grajajo, da nismo politično korektni, občutki narodnega ponosa pa so pomešani z zamislivi o evropskem bratstvu. Voda ni več človekova pravica, marveč dobrina, ki jo delijo mogočne korporacije. Kulturni raznolikosti se prikimava, vendar je sumljiva. Kako književnik oziroma književnica gleda na čolne z izseljenci, ki plujejo proti evropskim mejam? Se odpove globalnemu stališču v prid zasebnega, in nasprotno? Kako se pisateljica spominja, kdo pravzaprav je?

Pisateljica je hiša. Hiša, ki upira pogled navzven, pri čemer uporablja svojo domišljijo in izkušnjo, da bi videla svet, kakršen dejansko je. Dve pisateljici iz različnih obdobj v svojem delu dosežeta ta cilj. Jean Rhys z Dominike in Herta Müller iz Romunije. Obe obravnavata samotno življenje preživelke sredi sveta, ki se hoče vrteti dalje brez njiju.

V svojih romanih *Potovanje v temo* in *Dobro jutro, polnoč* Jean Rhys vzame lastno življenje kot izhodišče za potovanje v čudno in samotno grozo pozabljene in zavržene osebe. Pisateljčino avtobiografsko delo včasih ocenjujejo kot preveč osebno, celo ko gre za njeno mojstrovino *Široko Sargaško morje*; Rhysova se je oprla na svoje otroštvo na Dominiki, da bi oživila pozabljeni lik Beatrice, Rochesterjeve v čumnati zaprte žene iz romana *Jane Eyre* Charlotte Brontë. To je domišljija, ki se prevesi v resničnost.

Herta Müller v svojih romanih *Živalsko srce* in *Zaziban dih* vzame za ozadje življenje v totalitarnem svetu z njegovo vsakdanjo banalnostjo in pograšljivostjo človeškega življenja vred. V *Zazibanem dihu* sedemnajstletnega Lea Auberga, potomca nemške družine, preženejo v sovjetsko delovno taborišče. Ko se po petih letih vrne, je preživelec, ki mu ne bo nikoli nihče prišel blizu. V svoji glavi in srcu nosi grozo. To je temačno delo, ki vsebuje pomembno vizijo.

V današnji Evropi je totalitarizem nadomestila vseprisotna vaba kapitalizma, ki se zajeda v politične in družbene strukture naših življenj. Ne trepečemo več pred tajno policijo, pač pa nas namesto tega pestijo različni strahovi pred fundamentalizmom na pragu naših domov ter čredna mentaliteta internetno vodenega novega govora in Twitterjevega omrežja, vzeta naravnost iz orwelovske prerokbe.

In kako se naj pisateljica postavi temu po robu? Se naj zateče k različnim tehnikam literarnega modernizma, magičnega realizma ali čisto navadnega realizma, da bi prevprašala kraj in čas, ki ju zaznava? Nostalgija za preteklostjo je trenutno priljubljena, prav tako distopija, težje pa je imeti pregled nad sodobnim življenjem, saj v založništvu močno prevladuje odvisnost od hitrih rezultatov in hitre prodaje, zaradi česar se zahteva zgolj površinska zgodba. Ampak zgodba, skrita pod površjem, je temačnejša, polna čudnih samot in neudobnih resnic.

Eksperimentalno pisanje in nelinearne pripovedi segajo globlje od lahkotnih premislekov, vendar jih položaj jezika zanima včasih bolj kot pa stvarne človekove duševne in duhovne širjave. Zdi se, da je pisanje iz notranjosti posamičnega uma prednostna metoda odzivanja na sedanost; nenehno recikliranje lastnega »jaza«, pri čemer se »jaz«

le poredko prenese navzven. Magični realizem in njegovo opiranje na motive nadnaravnega pa je treba soočiti s konkretno človekovo izkušnjo, medtem ko neolepševalni realizem s svojimi pritehnimi in umazanimi različicami resnice potrebuje duhovni odzven, da bi iz človeka napravil nekaj več kot zgolj rezultat evolucije.

Evropa je velika hiša, ki vsebuje mnogo kultur. V današnjem času in na današnjem kraju potrebuje pisateljica politično in kulturno neodvisnost, da bi lahko pisala. Uporabljati mora lastni glas. Gojiti mora iskrenost do tega, kar vidi. Preveč zlahkoma zdrsne v past, da je videti kot umetnica in da se tudi vede tako, čeprav to ni, in sploh ne vidi odseva, ki se ji kaže. Težko je razumeti, kaj pomeni biti umetnik. Spoznanje, da so pisatelji danes bolj kakor kdaj koli prej postavljeni na trg kot objekti, ki pišejo, nas spravlja v potrto. Programe za ustvarjalno pisanje in univerzitetne programe za pisanje obtožujemo, da množično proizvajajo pisce enakega kalibra. Pisatelj nujno potrebuje prostor za različnost, domišljijo in posamično izkušnjo, potrebuje pa tudi zmožnost, da se zazre v meje, ki ločujejo en kraj od drugega, eno dobo od druge.

V tako ustvarjeni Evropi, ki se še vedno zapleta in razrešuje zaplete z različnimi sosedi in tujci, še vedno beremo o izkoriščanju pa o ljubezni in sovraštvu ter vidimo tisto, kar vidijo pisatelji. V vsakdanji prozi vidimo pričakovano plehkost življenja, vidimo pa tudi človeško skrivnost, da bivamo na nekem kraju in da smo del tega kraja vse do svoje smrti.

Prevedla Miriam Drev

In Search of Space Lost

Aleksandar Hemon

Whenever I write about my parents I am compelled to open with the following statement: My parents arrived in Canada at the height of the war in Bosnia. They had left Sarajevo in the spring of 1992, just as the siege was underway, wandered as refugees around Bosnia and Serbia, finally, in December of 1993, landing in Hamilton, Ontario, a dismal steel-mill town 30 miles from Toronto. They brought nothing with them, except for Mak, the family Irish Setter. This displacement is the central event of their life, what split it into the before and the after. Everything after the rupture took place in a damaged, incomplete time – some of it was forever lost and forever it shall so remain.

Upon their arrival in Hamilton, they at first lived in a rental two-bedroom apartment on the fifteenth floor of a non-descript building, paid for by the Ontario government and modestly equipped with donated second-hand furniture. They took English classes with other refugees and immigrants, acquiring words for things they lost or didn't have. The very scarcity of possessions reminded them that they were foreigners living in someone else's space, relatively comfortable as it was, and that their home space – Sarajevo, Bosnia – was now in the before, beyond their reach.

Back in Bosnia, my family possessed property, which is to say: we had spaces we called our own. Not only did we live in an apartment, pretty big by the standards of socialist housing, but we also had a couple of cabins (one each to be inherited by my sister and me) in Jahorina, a mountain outside Sarajevo. My parents loved the mountain; nearly every weekend, they would drive to Jahorina, with or without their children.

They insisted it was the nature (always good for you) that drew them, but they loved the cabins because they could keep busy. My parents are

the kind of people who always have to be doing something, ever in the middle of a number of short- and long-term projects; the kind of people who believe they'd die the day they have nothing to do. Thus Mother cleaned and organized the cabins, pickled vegetables, roasted peppers on an outdoor grill my father built, etc. Meanwhile, Father had a workshop in the cabin basement, he'd build a nailless table; restore an old chair, extending its lifespan indefinitely; construct shelves for our Sarajevo apartment; design and develop the who-knows-whats of handy men, which his unhandy son could never truly appreciate. Upon return from Jahorina at the end of the weekend, Mother would often complain that Father hadn't left the basement the whole weekend, except to eat and sleep. Now I understand that in the mountains, as well as in Sarajevo, they were perpetually invested in constructing their life, in continuously defining and refining the space in which it unfolded. In a country marked by many generations of abysmal poverty, where socialism was the ideology of the day, there was little money to get the goodies; and there were few goodies to get. The quality of life had to be built from scratch – construction instead of consumption. The vague, distant goal of my parents' lifetime project was to enjoy a modest retirement, living in Jahorina, a theme park of their hard work, where everything around them spoke of their time in the world.

With their displacement to Canada, they lost all that, and much more. At the beginning of their life in Hamilton they had to find work, learn the basic ways of being in North America – no family, no friends, no neighborhood, only the illogical vagaries of the English language, plus cars, malls, and long, dreary winters devoid of mountains.

But after a while, things looked up a bit. First, more family arrived: two of my father's brothers with their broods, some cousins, and even some friends. Now they could get together to reminisce about the previous life and pool their knowledge of and kvetching about the ways "Canadians" did things. Moreover, my parents got a job as superintendents in a forty-apartment building, which included a modest pay plus rent-free lodging. Mother cleaned, collected rent, chit-chatted with tenants, as she used to with her Sarajevo neighbors, kept things

in order, while Father repaired things in the building, took care of the garbage, all the while working in a factory, at a job well below his engineer qualifications, but just above his knowledge of English. Most importantly, the vast basement of the building was big enough for my father to carve out some space and set up a workshop. He had just started beekeeping again (one of his lifelong projects). The germ (two weak hives) of his future apiary on a farm outside Hamilton was donated by a fruit producer, who depended on bees' pollinating to increase the yield. In his basement workshop, Father not only constructed hives and frames, but also restored the pieces of furniture wasteful Canadians commonly dumped in the garbage. He even experimented with drying meat in the basement; he hung some pork, lightly smoked elsewhere, near a window with a ventilator. It was edible, but far from being impressive, or even enjoyable, although my father insisted it was as good as any dried meat.

The meat-drying debacle, however, pointed at one of the crucial issues related to my family's displacement. They, as many immigrants do, identified themselves by way of the food they ate – the food was one of the few conduits of continuity between the before and the after. Among my family in Canada and their friends much time was spent debating dietary differences between *them* (Canadians) and *us* (people from Bosnia and former Yugoslavia), with the subset of differences related to dried and smoked meat: *their* bacon was soggy; *they* didn't know how to make sausage; *their* sour cream was not thick enough; *they* didn't eat things we ate, and were fat and incapable of truly enjoying life because *they* worried about getting fat all the time.

My father would occasionally return from a simple mission of fetching milk with a couple of lamb heads he discovered in the remote corners of the supermarket. He'd demand from my mother to boil them, which she refused. Much of the lamb heads' beyond-dog-food-factory afterlife was spent in the fridge, their eyes bulging in morbid surprise whenever it was opened. Father would finally deal with Mother's boycott by boiling the heads himself and then demonstratively sit at the table, my mother scoffing, picking lamb brains with a tip of a knife,

relishing not only the alleged taste, but also the fact that lamb heads, given the pleasure they provided, were ridiculously cheap in Canada.

Because my parents grew up in poverty and worked hard for everything that they would eventually lose, they were tormented by Canadian wastefulness. To them, and Father in particular, there were always so many uses for things nobody seemed to want. Once, the real estate company that employed them decided to replace a large number of old refrigerators in the building, their warranty lifespan having ended. My father was thus instructed to remove the fridges from the apartments and leave them by the garbage shed where they would be picked up and taken away. He could not get over all those good, perfectly functioning fridges ending up as scrap metal – to his destitute mind the waste was unimaginable. He talked to everyone he knew in Hamilton, beginning with family, to ask them if they needed another fridge; he called me in Chicago, only to be disappointed that I had little need for extra refrigeration. Mother, who could be described as a pathologically honest person, was beside herself as he was trying to give away someone else's property. She begged me to interfere, but I could not help, as I was not, I hasten to admit, up to par with the difficult ethical conundrum the situation presented: does waste still rightfully belong to someone who wasted it?

The fridge overabundance, however, offered a possible solution to the smoked meat problem. At a family get-together, my father and his brothers spontaneously brainstormed: suppose they take two of those old fridges, rip out the plastic lining inside, put them on top of each other and drill a whole in between, and then another one at the top, to which they could attach an improvised tin chimney they would stick out of the basement window – they could smoke meat in the basement! My mother was desperate, and complained to me about their obsessions with smoking meat, which blinded them to life and laws in Canada. There was nothing I could do, of course. Fortunately, the project was cancelled when they discovered a farm outside Hamilton, owned by a Slovenian, where you could select and personally meet your pig before it was slaughtered and smoked to your heart's (and stomach's) content.

The irreducible problem with living in an apartment building was that my parents were always in someone else's space, so when they had a chance to buy a house in a cul-de-sac they grabbed it with their calloused hands. The house was modest, with a small backyard and a structure that the real-estate agent referred to as the Barn. It was, in fact, a workshop, which one of the previous owners – an Austrian-born engineer – built for himself. In no time the family joke became that my father bought the Barn and the house that came with it. My mother claims that my father lives in the Barn and comes to the house only to eat and sleep.

For some immigrants, property is what they own, what gives them proper legitimacy – their piece of the foreign land, which becomes home by virtue of belonging to them. But for my parents the house, the Barn and the piece of land they acquired were but half-empty shells that could be filled out with their projects, a space for their agency. A deed was not enough to make that space their own – like the early settlers, they needed to reshape it to fit who they are.

In the fifteen years that they've lived there they've undertaken a number of projects that transformed the space into a domain for their self-(re)actualization. My father added a chimney to the house, which required his carrying bricks up the ladder to the roof, my mother fretting (as I called to inquire how it was going) that he might fall and crack his spine. The chimney allowed them to place a wood-burning stove in the basement, so that when I call in the winter to check in, their report often features a quaint fire crackling in the stove as Canadian snow is falling outside. They also unloaded, with my uncle's help, a truckload of soil in the corner of their backyard so as to establish a vegetable garden, where every summer they grow tomatoes, peppers, onions, cucumbers. The list of additions and improvements to the original property is long and impressive, while the Barn became the veritable headquarters of all the (re)building projects. This is where Father built an outdoor table and benches so that in the summer they can lounge in a deep shade and proudly consume their meals entirely (the requisite meat notwithstanding) from what they harvested

in their own garden. Most importantly, the Barn is where Father's many beekeeping operations take place, where he makes his hives and frames, extracts honey, keeps a shelf (he built himself) entirely dedicated to the propolis reserves. All this requires: a wall of screwdrivers; boxes of nails and screws of all sizes; electric tools he buys behind my mother's back, or with the Home Depot gift certificates I give him for Christmas; plastic buckets and jars for honey; old sweaters and overalls he wears to work, which he refuses to let Mother wash lest they disintegrate; a refrigerator containing pots, which had been there for so long that they contain mysterious ecosystems; various objects collected for no obvious purpose other than forestalling wastefulness – say, a tray full of dull knives, etc. There is also a wood-burning stove; a cord phone he picks up when I call; an ancient stereo that allows him to hum along with the CDs of choral music or listen to the immigrant programs in the many languages he can understand (Bosnian, Serbian, Croatian, Ukrainian, Polish, Russian) and many he cannot. Clusters of plastic bags hang off the nails in the crossbeams, weighted with stuff (hinges, nozzles, bolts, abrasive paper) that might become useful for some undetermined future project.

And then there is one wall that in its random, perplexing combination of fragments looks like an art installation: a magazine cover with a picture of Jane Fonda and heading *Me Jane*; incredibly entangled extension cord hanging off a nail; 2007 calendar from the Louvre featuring Mona Lisa inside a picture frame too big for it, with another frame on top; road map of Europe, a begrimed mirror obscuring Scandinavia; couple of stopped clocks, showing different times, one of them partially covering Fonda's face; single bulb, thumbtacked in its packaging right above the mirror; an unused timer above it. It was late December last time I visited the Barn, and there were two mature pumpkins on the floor. Other than the honey in plastic buckets and jars, nothing that enters the Barn ever leaves it – it is a waste-free space. Some native-born stranger would see it as a place of hoarding, but everything in it makes perfect sense not only to my father, but to me as well: the inside of the Barn is the inside of my father's head, the

clutter an emanation of his mind, the overpopulated territory of his personal sovereignty.

But there is more: behind that *Me Jane* wall there is an additional room he built to house a circular saw, above which smoked meat hangs to dry, as the smokehouse, immediately beyond the Barn, tends to be overcrowded. With the smokehouse, which he built brick by brick, the meat-smoking issue was resolved: chunks of bacon, hocks, loins and sometimes salmon hang inside. Next to it is a brick oven which he, yes, also built in order to roast meat using the *sac* method (a conical cast iron lid topped with ashes and ambers covers a pan). And then there is a wood storage area under a roof which Father, of course, improvised himself. If you walk under that roof, between tall stacks of firewood needed for the stoves, smokehouse and brick oven, you come upon another shack which contains more stuff. I'm not sure what's in it, but whatever it is, it must be very valuable – as in that Zen parable in which a master responds to the question: “What is the most valuable thing in the world?” by saying: “A dead cat's head – because you can put no value on it.”

If the Barn is the mind, the apiary is the soul. There are between twenty and forty hives in a small clearing facing east just beyond the clutter complex. In the summer, it is abuzz with the bees getting out to do their work, a sight and sound so pleasing that Father has placed a chair (recovered from the garbage) just above them, so that he can sit in his throne and enjoy his domain. At the foot of the chair there is a little tombstone reading *Mak 2006*. The ashes of Mak, our first and only family dog, are scattered there. If my father ever experiences transcendence, this is where it takes place, an instant before the hum of working bees causes him to doze off.

The sovereignty of the domain is, however, precarious, ever in need of protection. Although every year my parents return to Sarajevo for a couple of months at the end of the (usually long) winter, they are reluctant to leave their territory in the summer: they worry about the heat scorching the garden, about bee swarms escaping the hives without supervision, about burglars, about any number of unforeseeable

things – once upon a time they had left their home and never went back. Protecting and maintaining the space they have in Canada has become their primary, overarching project.

And they're willing to fight for it. The greatest of the battles, so far, was the one against raccoons. One summer, not so long ago, a family of raccoons living in the back woods discovered the pleasures of my father's apiary. They came upon some empty hives and figured out a way to lift the tops, pull out the frames and then scrape and lick off honey residues. My father would find his hives toppled over, frames and tops strewn around, many of them damaged – recalling the demise of his apiary in Bosnia, where drunken Serb soldiers had spitefully destroyed his hives, thereby ending the history of the Hemons' beekeeping in the homeland. Attracted into the domain by the smell and taste of honey, the raccoons also stole vegetables from the garden, chased away feral cats my mother liked to feed, and were certainly eyeing the smoke house. After one particularly egregious raid, having put the hives back in their place and replaced the frames and tops, Father nailed one corner of the top to each hive, so that you (being human) would have to lift the top slightly, then swing it to the side to get to the frames. In no time did the inhuman raccoons figure out how to overcome that obstacle, and the battle intensified. Father would call me to rant about raccoons, those devious, evil animals, and declare his determination to end their incursions by ending their lives. At family get-togethers spontaneous brainstorming sessions were now devoted to the means of raccoon entrapment and subsequent liquidation. One day, I called and the first thing my mother said was: "Your father is going crazy about those raccoons. I don't know what to do. You've got to talk to him." She had just watched the local news featuring a story about a man who killed a raccoon with a shotgun, which was illegal in the city of Hamilton, where only Animal Control was to handle wildlife. "Your father does nothing but plotting how to kill those raccoons." Apart from being the kind of animal lover who chats with squirrels and worries about feral cats when they miss a meal she has put out for them, she worried that my father could be arrested: the TV showed the raccoon

killer entering a police car handcuffed. Sometimes, I'd have them both on the phone – Father in the Barn, Mother in the kitchen – and they'd argue, essentially, over jurisdiction: he claimed his right to kill the raccoons, as they were trespassing his domain, she insisted on the fact that they were in Canada, where laws are to be obeyed.

Finally, my father devised a trap which allowed him to capture four baby raccoons. He imprisoned them in a deep barrel, on top of which he placed a heavy piece of flat wood. He was confident there was no way they could get out. He expected the mother raccoon to come look for her babies and fall into the same trap. He patrolled his domain diligently, hoping to catch the mother before she figured out a way to escape, and then exterminate the whole pest family. But the baby raccoons in the barrel managed to escape. On one of his patrols, he discovered that the piece of wood was pushed off the barrel, where now only one raccoon remained. Apparently, they got on one another's shoulders, making a raccoon ladder of sorts, lifted the lid and got away. They left behind the volunteer, probably the youngest one, to deal with my father's fury. He had made a tactical mistake of not killing them right away and lost the battle. To his credit, Father acknowledged his defeat and released the last raccoon. But he turned his anger on my mother and her soft-hearted animal loving – it was because of her nagging that he hadn't executed the baby raccoons right away. They'd argue on the phone with me with such intensity that they wouldn't hear me hanging up. When they calmed down and we talked again, I urged Father to call Animal Control, that they would take care of it, and eventually they did. It was always the most obvious and diplomatic solution, but Father's obsession, now I understand, was related to his jurisdiction principle: his domain was his responsibility.

Unlike the raccoons, I'm in awe of my parents. The lazy, terrible clichés available in the North American mainstream culture present immigrants as innocent new arrivals. In the condescending native imagination, immigrants are swallowed and digested by the host culture and its practices, which are presumably so recondite as to make new immigrants akin to children. What such platitudes fail to see

is the resourceful transformative power of immigrants, even of those who, like my parents, arrive in their mid-fifties with a scant knowledge of English. My parents did what the early North American settlers had done once upon a time: they transformed the space they found themselves in. Even if my parents didn't have to decimate the natives, they did have to deal with bureaucracy and papers, with finding jobs and getting fired, with the language deficiency conducive to condescension, all the while constructing a space that could be indelibly their own.

The domain that my parents have built for themselves is perfectly sovereign. In it they do and create things that allow them to be themselves; this is where they have agency, a bubble outside of which they are reduced to passivity inflicted by history. Their house, the Barn and the backyard is one place where they're not refugees. Time they could not regain, but space they could, and they did.

Iskanje izgubljenega prostora

Aleksandar Hemon

Kadar koli pišem o svojih starših, moram začeti z naslednjim stavkom: Starši so prišli v Kanado na vrhuncu vojne v Bosni. Sarajevo so zapustili spomladi 1992, ko se je začelo obleganje, nakar so se kot begunci selili križem kražem po Bosni in Srbiji, dokler niso decembra 1993 končno pristali v Hamiltonu, turobnem jeklarskem mestu v provinci Ontario, slabih 50 km od Toronta. S seboj niso vzeli ničesar razen Maka, družinskega irskega setra. Odselitev je prelomni dogodek v njihovem življenju, trenutek, po katerem se vse deli na prej in potem. Po njej se je vse zgodilo v poškodovanem, nezaokroženem času – marsikaj se je izgubilo za vekomaj in bo izgubljeno za vekomaj tudi ostalo.

Po prihodu v Hamilton so sprva živeli v dvosobnem stanovanju v petnajstem nadstropju nevpadljive zgradbe. Skromno so ga opremili s podarjenim pohištvo, najemnino pa so jim plačevale ontarijske oblasti. Tako kot drugi begunci in priseljenci so obiskovali tečaj angleščine in pridobivali besede za reči, ki so jih bodisi izgubili bodisi jih niso imeli. Skromna lastnina jih je opominjala, da kot tujci živijo v prostoru, v katerem jim je sicer razmeroma udobno, ki pa pripada nekomu drugemu, in da njihov domači kraj – Sarajevo, Bosna – leži zdaj v preteklosti, nič več na dosegu rok.

V Bosni smo živeli na svojem, s čimer želim povedati, da smo bili lastniki prostorov, ki smo jim rekli naši. Ne le da smo živeli v stanovanju, precej velikem po socialističnih standardih, na Jahorini smo imeli tudi brunarici (eno naj bi podedovala sestra, eno jaz). Starši so se na Jahorino radi vračali, in sicer skoraj vsak konec tedna, pa če sva šla otroka z njimi ali ne.

Vztrajno so nama razlagali, da jih vleče v naravo (v njej ti vedno dobro dene), v resnici pa jih je vleklo v brunarici, kjer so se vedno

s čim zamotili. Starši sodijo med ljudi, ki morajo nenehno kaj početi, in se venomer ukvarjajo s kopico kratko- in dolgotrajnih projektov, med ljudi, ki so prepričani, da bodo kar umrli, če se ne bodo s čim ukvarjali. Mama je urejala brunarici, vlagala zelenjavo, pekla paprike na žaru, ki ga je zunaj sezidal oče, itn. Oče se je medtem motal po delavnici, ki si jo je uredil v kleti: v njej je brez žebeljev sestavil mizo; popravil star stol, s čimer mu je v nedogled podaljšal življenjsko dobo; izdeloval police za naše sarajevsko stanovanje; s spretnimi rokami oblikoval in izdelal kdo ve kaj vse, česar njegov nespretni sin ni nikoli znal resnično ceniti. Mama se je po vrnitvi z Jahorine pogosto pritoževala, da se oče konec tedna sploh ni pojavil iz kleti, razen ko je bil čas za kosilo ali spanje. Zdaj razumem, da so se v hribih pa tudi v Sarajevu nepretrgoma posvečali grajenju življenja, nenehnemu opredeljevanju in urejanju prostora, v katerem so bivali. V deželi, v kateri je že več generacij živelo v hudem siromaštvu in je tedaj vladala socialistična ideologija, za razkošje ni bilo veliko denarja niti veliko priložnosti. Kakovostno življenje je bilo treba ustvariti iz nič – z graditvijo namesto s potrošnjo. Starši so si za nejasni, oddaljeni cilj svojega vseživljenjskega projekta izbrali prijetno življenje s skromno pokojnino na Jahorini, tematskem parku svojega garanja, kjer naj bi vse okrog njih pričalo o njihovem času na tem svetu.

Z odselitvijo v Kanado so izgubili vse to in še veliko več. Ob prihodu v Hamilton so si morali poiskati delo in se priučiti osnovnih značilnosti bivanja v Severni Ameriki – brez sorodnikov, brez prijateljev, brez sosedov, pričakala jih je samo nelogična, muhava angleščina pa avtomobili, ogromna nakupovalna središča in dolge, puščobne zime, ki jih niso mogli prebiti v hribih.

Že čez nekaj časa pa so se stvari začele počasi obračati na bolje. Najprej se je priselilo še nekaj sorodnikov, očetova brata z družino in nekaj bratrancev, nato še nekaj prijateljev. Zdaj so se lahko dobivali, se spominjali nekdanjega življenja, si izmenjevali spoznanja in pripombe o tem, kako stvari počnejo »Kanadčani«. Obenem so starši začeli delati kot oskrbniki v bloku s štiridesetimi stanovanji, za kar so prejemale skromno plačilo, poleg tega jim ni bilo treba plačevati najemnine.

Mama je čistila, pobirala najemnino, klepetala s stanovalci kakor nek-
daj s sarajevskimi sosedi, skrbela za red, oče pa je bil zadolžen za hi-
šniška opravila in odvoz smeti, hkrati pa je sprejel še delo v tovarni, ki
je vse prej kot ustrezalo njegovi inženirski stroki, a je nekoliko prese-
galo njegovo znanje angleščine. In kar mu je pomenilo največ, kletni
prostori v bloku so bili tako veliki, da si je izbral nekaj prostora in si
opremil delavnico. Pred nedavnim je znova začel čebelariti (kar je eden
od njegovih vseživljenjskih projektov). Zametek (dva majhna panja)
bodočega čebelnjaka na kmetiji v bližini Hamiltona mu je podaril
sadjar, ki je čebele potreboval za oprasovanje dreves in boljšo letino.
V kletni delavnici si oče ni izdelal le panjev in okvirjev, marveč je tudi
popravljal kose pohištva, ki so jih potratni Kanadčani odvrgli. Začel je
celo eksperimentirati s sušenjem mesa; v bližino okna in ventilatorja je
obesil nekaj kosov svinjine, ki so jo rahlo prekadili že drugje. Svinjina
je resda bila užitna, a še zdaleč ne okusna, kaj šele slastna, čeprav je oče
vtztrajal, da ni nič slabša od drugih suhih mesnin.

Toda polomija s sušenjem mesnin je razkrila eno od najbolj perečih
težav, ki je starše pestila po odselitvi. Kot mnogi priseljenci so se tudi
oni identificirali s hrano, ki jo jedo – hrana je namreč ena redkih pove-
zav med prej in potem. S priseljenimi sorodniki in prijatelji so radi na
dolgo in široko razpravljali o razlikah v načinu prehranjevanja med *nji-
mi* (Kanadčani) in *nami* (prišleki iz Bosne in nekdanje Jugoslavije), pri
čemur so suhe in prekajene mesnine tvorile posebno podskupino razlik:
njihova slanina je premehka; *oni* ne znajo delati klobas; *njihova* kisl
smetana ni dovolj gosta; *oni* ne jedo tega, kar mi, in so debeli in ne znajo
resnično uživati življenja, ker se nenehno bojijo, da se bodo zredili.

Tu in tam se je znalo zgoditi, da je oče šel samo po mleko in se
vrnil z jagnječjima glavama, ki ju je staknil v kakem zakotnem kotu
supermarketa. Mami je naročil, naj ju skuha, česar ni hotela storiti.
Jagnječji glavi sta dobršen del svojega posmrtnega življenja, ko je bilo
že jasno, da ne bosta končali kot hrana za pse, preždeli v hladilniku in
vsakič, ko je mama odprla hladilnik, so se vanjo zastrmele oči, ki sta
jih jagenjčka izbuljila od predsmrtnega presenečenja. Oče je z mami-
nim bojkotom nazadnje opravil tako, da je glavi skuhal sam, izzivalno

sedel za mizo in, ne oziraje se na mamino posmehovanje, z nožem iz njiju bezal jagnječje možgane ter glasno cmokal, ker naj bi bili zelo okusni, pa tudi zato, ker so jagnječje glave glede na to, kako teknejo, v Kanadi prav smešno poceni.

Ker so starši odraščali v revščini in so si morali prigarati vse, kar so nazadnje izgubili, jim je kanadska potratnost vzbujala grozo. Bili so prepričani, še zlasti oče, da bi se stvari, ki jih nihče več noče, dalo uporabiti še za številne druge namene. Nekoč se je nepremičninsko podjetje, pri katerem so bili zaposleni, odločilo, da zamenja številne stare hladilnike v bloku, saj bi jim kmalu potekla zagotovljena življenjska doba. Zato je očetu naročilo, naj jih odnese iz stanovanj in pusti pri smeteh, od koder jih bodo odpeljali. Oče se ni mogel sprijazniti z dejstvom, da bodo vsi ti hladilniki, ki jim nič ne manjka, končali med starim železom – njegova siromaška pamet mu je narekovala, da je taka potratnost nepredstavljava. Vse, ki jih je poznal v Hamiltonu, začenši s sorodniki, je vprašal, ali ne potrebuje kdo dodatnega hladilnika; še mene je poklical v Chicago in nazadnje razočarano ugotovil, da še enega hladilnika pravzaprav ne potrebujem. Mama, katere poštenost meji že na patologijo, je bila vsa iz sebe, ker je oče prijateljem skušal podariti tujo lastnino. Rotila me je, naj posežem vmes, a ji nisem mogel pomagati, saj se, naj kar takoj priznam, nisem znal izmotati iz etične zagate, s katero sem se ubadal v dani situaciji: Ali zavržene stvari še vedno pripadajo osebi, ki jih je zavrгла?

Vendar se je izkazalo, da bi odvečni hladilniki lahko prišli prav pri prekajevanju mesa. Na družinskem srečanju se je očetu v pogovoru z bratoma porodila naslednja zamisel: Kaj ko bi vzeli stara hladilnika, iz njiju odstranili plastično oblogo, postavili enega nad drugega, vmes izvrtali luknjo, nato pa na vrhnjega postavili še enega in nanj namestili še improviziran pločevinasti dimnik, ki bi ga skozi okno speljali iz kleti – in tako bi meso lahko prekajevali kar v kleti! Mama mi je vsa obupana potožila zaradi njihove obsedenosti s prekajevanjem mesa, zaradi katere so pozabili na kanadski način življenja in zakonodajo. Ničesar nisem mogel storiti, jasno. Na srečo so se projektu odpovedali, saj so v bližini Hamiltona odkrili kmetijo v lasti Slovenca, kjer si

si lahko izbral in osebno spoznal svojega prašiča, preden si ga zaklal in prekadil, kot ti srce (in želodec) poželi(ta).

Starši so na življenje v bloku gledali kot na nerešljiv problem, saj so še vedno živeli v prostoru, ki pripada nekomu drugemu, zato so priložnost, da kupijo hišo v slepi ulici, zgrabili z obema žuljavima rokama. Hiša je bila skromna, za njo je bilo majhno dvorišče, na njem pa stavba, ki jo je nepremičninski posrednik označil za skedenj. V njej je dejansko bila delavnica, ki si jo je uredil eden od prejšnjih lastnikov, v Avstraliji rojen inženir. Ni trajalo dolgo, pa je med sorodniki zaokrožila šala, da si je oče kupil skedenj, zraven pa dobil še hišo. Mama trdi, da oče živi v skednju, v hišo pa prihaja le ob času za kosilo in spanje.

Nekateri priseljenci dojemajo lastnino kot nekaj, kar je v njihovi lasti, nekaj, kar jim resnično daje legimnost – lastni kos tuje zemlje, ki postane dom, ker jim pripada. Moji starši pa so v hiši, skednju in parceli, ki so jih kupili, videli le napol prazno lupino, ki jo lahko napolnijo z lastnimi projekti, prostor, v katerem so lahko dejavni. Sama listina še ni bila dokaz za to, da je prostor njihov – tako kot prvi priseljenci so morali prostor preoblikovati, da je ustrezal temu, kar so.

V petnajstih letih, odkar živijo v novi hiši, so se lotili številnih projektov, s katerimi so prostor preoblikovali v gospostvo (vnovičnega) samouresničevanja. Oče je hiši dozidal dimnik, zaradi česar se je moral z zidaki v rokah po lestvi povzpeti na streho, mama pa je bentila (ko sem jih poklical, da bi vprašal, kako mu gre), da bi lahko padel in si zlomil hrbtenico. Dimnik jim je omogočil, da so si v pritličju postavili peč na drva, in kadar jih zdaj pozimi pokličem, da preverim, kako so, mi pogosto poročajo, da v peči prijetno poklja, medtem ko zunaj pada kanadski sneg. Naročili so si kamion zemlje in jo s stričevo pomočjo nasuli v kot dvorišča, kjer so si uredili zelenjavni vrt, kjer se vsako poletje bohotijo paradižniki, paprike, čebula, kumarice. Seznam novosti in izboljšav, s katerimi so preoblikovali prvotni videz nepremičnine, je dolg in impresiven, vsi gradbeni oziroma obnovitveni projekti pa so bili zasnovani v skednju. Pred tem pravim pravcatim štabom je oče postavil mizo in klopi, tako da poleti lahko posedajo v gosti senci in (poleg nepogrešljivega mesa)

ponosno pojedjo vse, kar so pridelali na vrtu. In najpomembneje, prav v skednju oče izvaja številne čebelarске podvige: v njem izdeluje panje in okvirje, toči med, na posebni polici (ki jo je naredil sam) hrani zaloge propolisa. Za vse to potrebuje steno, prekrito z izvijači; škatlice z žebli in vijaki vseh velikosti; električno orodje, ki ga kupuje za maminim hrbtom ali z darilnimi boni, ki mu jih poklonim za božič; plastična vedrca in steklene kozarce za med; stare puloverje in delovne pajace, ki jih mama ne sme oprati, da ne bi razpadli; hladilnik, v katerem že toliko časa hrani lončke, da so v njih zaživelі skrivnostni ekosistemi; različne predmete, ki jih zbira samo zato, da po nepotrebem ne pristanejo v smeteh – pladenj topih nožev, denimo. V skednju so tudi peč na drva; stacionarni telefon, na katerega ga kličem; zelo star stereo, ob katerem si lahko pobrundava, medtem ko poslušā cedeje z zborovsko glasbo ali pa imigrantske programe v številnih jezikih, ki jih razume (bosanskem, srbskem, hrvaškem, ukrajinskem, poljskem, ruskem), in v številnih, ki jih ne. Z žebļev na prečnih tramovih v grozdih visijo plastične vrečke, obtežene z razno kramo (tečaji, nastavki, vijaki, smirkovim papirjem), ki bi mu lahko prišla prav pri kakem še nedomišljenem prihodnjem projektu.

In potem je v prostoru še stena, ki po naključni, osupljivi kombinaciji šare spominja na umetniško instalacijo: naslovnica revije s sliko Jane Fonda in naslovom *Jaz, Jane*; žebelj, s katerega visi podaljšek, zamotan na najbolj neverjeten način; Louvrov koledar za leto 2007 s podobo Mone Lise v daleč prevelikem okvirju, okoli katerega je še en okvir; avtokarta Evrope, na kateri Skandinavijo prekriva zamazano ogledalo; stenski uri, ki sta se ustavili ob različnem času in od katerih ena delno zakriva obraz Jane Fonda; tik nad ogledalom še zapakirana žarnica; nad njo še neuporabljenā štoparica. Ko sem bil konec decembra nazadnje v skednju, sta me na tleh pričakali zreli buči. Vse, kar se enkrat znajde v skednju, ga nikoli več ne zapusti, z izjemo medu v plastičnih vedrcih in steklenih kozarcih – to je prostor brez smeti. Kakšen v Kanadi rojen neznanec bi ga lahko imel za skladišče, vendar je vse, kar je v njem nakopičeno, popolnoma smiselno, in to ne le za očeta, marveč tudi zame: notranjost skednja razkriva notranjost očetove glave,

nered z izvorom v njegovih mislih, prenaseljeno ozemlje, nad katerim ima osebno suverenost.

A to še ni vse: za steno z naslovnico *Jaz, Jane* se skriva še en prostor, ki ga je oče sezidal, da bi v njem hranil cirkularko, nad njo pa se sušijo mesnine, saj v prekajevalnici tik pod skednjem največkrat ni dovolj prostora. Z izgradnjo prekajevalnice, postavil jo je zidak za zidakom, je dokončno rešil vprašanje, kje sušiti mesnine: v njej visijo kosi slanine, krače, ledja in včasih tudi losos. Zraven stoji opečni kamin, ki ga je, ja, prav tako sezidal sam, da bi na njem pekel meso v *saču* oziroma pod peko (v posodi, pokriti z zvonasto litoželezno pokrovko, posuto s pepelom in žerjavico). In potem je treba omeniti še pokrit prostor za hranjenje drv, ki ga je oče, jasno, sam zimproviziral. Ko tako stopaš pod nadstreškom mimo visoke skladovnice drv, prekajevalnice in opečnega kamina, naletiš na barako, v kateri je še več navlake. Težko bi rekel, kaj je v njej, a kar koli je, mora imeti zelo veliko vrednost – tako kot v zenovskem koanu, v katerem mojster na vprašanje: »Kaj je najvrednejša stvar na svetu?« odgovori z besedami: »Glava mrtve mačke – saj ji ne moreš pripisati nobene vrednosti.«

Če skedenj predstavlja očetovo glavo, potem je čebelnjak njegova duša. Na vzhodnem delu dvorišča stoji tik zraven prostorov, polnih navlake, dvajset do štirideset panjev. Poleti iz njih pribrenčijo čebele in poletijo na delo; tako ljube so očetovim očem in ušesom, da si je v bližini postavil stol (ki ga je pobral med odpadki). Zdaj lahko v miru sedi na prestolu in uživa v svojem gospodstvu. Ob vznožju stola je majhen nagrobnik, na katerem piše *Mak 2006*. Naokoli leži pepel našega prvega in edinega družinskega psa. Če oče že izkuša transcendenco, potem jo tukaj, in sicer hip preden ob brenčanju marljivih čebel zadrema.

Suverenost njegovega gospodstva pa je silno negotova in nenehno potrebna zaščite. Starši se sicer vsako leto na koncu (po navadi dolge) zime za dva meseca vrnejo v Sarajevo, vendar svoje ozemlje neradi zapuščajo poleti: skrbi jih, da bi vročina osmodila vrtnine, da bi čebele ostale brez nadzora in ušle iz čebelnjaka, da bi jim vlomili v hišo, skrbi jih zaradi kopice nepredvidljivih stvari – nekoč so namreč že zapustili dom in se niso vanj nikdar vrnili. Varovanje in vzdrževanje prostora, ki ga imajo v Kanadi, je postal njihov temeljni, krovni projekt.

In zanj so se pripravljene boriti. Doslej so najpomembnejšo bitko izbojevali proti rakunom. Nekega poletja nedolgo tega je sladkosti očetovega čebelnjaka odkrila družina rakunov z zaraščenega mestnega obrobja. Naleteli so na nekaj praznih panjev, nato pa jim je uspelo dvigniti pokrove, izvleči okvirje ter z njih postrgati in polizati ostanke medu. Ko je prekucnjene panje, razmetane in kdaj tudi poškodovane okvirje in pokrove zagledal oče, se je spomnil čebelnjaka v Bosni, ki so mu ga v zlobi razdejali pijani srbski vojaki in s tem končali čebelarsko tradicijo Hemonovih v domovini. Poleg tega so rakuni, ki jih je v očetovo gospostvo privabil vonj po medu, pokradli nekaj vrtnin, pregnali divje mačke, ki jih mama rada hrani, in seveda od daleč premerili prekajevalnico. Oče je panje znova postavil na staro mesto in jih opremil z novimi okvirji in pokrovi, toda po nekem vnovičnem, še posebej uničujočem napadu je moral pokrove v enem od vogalov pribiti na panj, tako da je bilo treba pokrov najprej rahlo privzdigniti in ga zasukati v stran, če si želel s (človeškimi) rokami doseči okvirje. Ni trajalo dolgo, pa so nečloveški rakuni odkrili, kako premagati oviro, in boj se je zaostрил. Oče me je pogosto poklical, da mi potarna o rakunih, teh zahrbtnih, zlobnih živalih, in mi oznani svojo odločitev, da enkrat za vselej opravi z njimi in njihovimi vpadi. Zdaj je na družinskih srečanjih z bratoma razglabljal, kako rakune zvabiti v past, nato pa jih likvidirati. Ko sem nekega dne poklical domov, mi je mama takoj potožila: »Oče bo znorel zaradi teh rakunov. Ne vem, kaj naj naredim. Pogovori se z njim.« Po lokalni televiziji je ravno videla prispevek o moškem, ki je s šibrovko ustrelil rakuna, kar je v Hamiltonu prepovedano, saj je za odstrel prostoživečih živali pristojna samo služba za nadzor živali. »Oče se ukvarja samo še s tem, kako naj pobije rakune.« Mama ima ne le zelo rada živali, marveč se tudi pogovarja z vevericami in se vznemiri, kadar divje mačke preskočijo obrok hrane, ki jim ga je nastavila, poleg tega pa jo je razjedala še skrb, da bi očeta zaprli: po televiziji so namreč pokazali pobijalca rakunov, kako v lisicah vstopa v policijski avto. Kadar sem se po telefonu pogovarjal z obema – oče je bil v skednju, mama v kuhinji – se je med njima vnel prepir, ki se je v glavnem vrtel okoli zakonskih pristojnosti: on je trdil, da ima pravico

pobiti rakune, ki motijo njegovo posest, ona je vztrajala, da živijo v Kanadi, kjer je treba zakone spoštovati.

Nazadnje je oče izdelal past, v katero so se ujeli štirje rakunji mladiči. Zaprl jih je v globok sod, ki ga je pokril s težko desko. Prepričan je bil, da mu nikakor ne morejo uiti. Pričakoval je, da jih bo njihova mati prišla iskat in bo padla v isto past. Vestno je patroljiral po svojem gospostvu, da bi ujel mater, še preden bi odkrila, kako rešiti mladiče, nato pa bi vso rakunjo golazen iztrebil. Toda rakunčkom je uspelo pobegniti. Na enem svojih obhodov je ugotovil, da so s soda odrinili leseni pokrov, v sodu pa je ostal samo en rakunček. Očitno so se povzpeli drug na drugega in napravili nekakšno rakunjo lestev, dvignili pokrov in zbežali. Očetovemu besu so prepustili samo prostovoljca, najverjetneje najmlajšega mladiča. Oče je storil taktično napako, ker jih ni pobil takoj, in izgubil bitko. Toda priznati mu je treba, da je priznal poraz in edinega še ujetega rakunčka izpustil. Vendar se je v jezi znesel nad mamu ter njenim mehkim srcem in ljubeznijo do živali – če ne bi bilo nje in njenega nerganja, bi mladičke pobil takoj. Po telefonu sta se tako srdito sporekla, da nista niti slišala, ko sem prekinil zvezo. Ko sta se pomirila in smo se znova lahko pogovarjali, sem rotil očeta, naj pokliče službo za nadzor živali, da poskrbi za rakune, in nazadnje so to res storili. To je bila že od začetka najbolj očitna in diplomatska rešitev, toda očeta je ves čas preganjalo, to razumem šele zdaj, načelo pristojnosti: za svoje gospostvo je odgovoren sam.

Drugače kot rakuni čutim do svojih staršev veliko spoštovanje. Če bi verjeli brezbržnim, odvratnim klišejem, značilnim za severno-ameriško mainstreamovsko kulturo, bi v priseljencih videli nedolžne prišleke. V pokroviteljski domišljiji domačega prebivalstva priseljence pogoltnejo gostiteljska kultura in njene prakse, ki naj bi bile tako težko umljive, da priseljence enačijo z otroki. Takšni plehki nazori spregledajo iznajdljivost in preoblikovalno moč priseljencev, celo tistih, ki so se tako kot moji starši priselili sredi svojih petdesetih let s pičlim znanjem angleščine. Moji starši so ravnali enako kot prvi severno-ameriški priseljenci: preoblikovali so prostor, v katerem so se znašli. Mojim staršem sicer ni bilo treba zdesetkati staroselskega prebivalstva,

morali pa so se spopasti z birokracijo in papirji, z iskanjem službe in odpustitvijo z dela, s pomanjkljivim znanjem jezika, zaradi česar so bili domačini do njih pokroviteljski, ves ta čas pa so si gradili prostor, ki bi bil nezamenljivo njihov.

Gospodstvo, ki so si ga starši zgradili, je povsem suvereno. V njem počnejo in izdelujejo stvari, zaradi katerih so lahko, kar so; v njem so lahko dejavni; to je njihov mehurček, zunaj katerega so obsojeni na pasivnost, ki jim jo je naprtila zgodovina. V hiši, skednju in na dvorišču niso begunci. Časa si niso mogli znova prilastiti, prostor pa so si lahko in si ga tudi so.

Prevedla Breda Biščak

Vdekja e poetit

Blerina Rogova Gaxha

Isha 17 vjeç kur aventurën e mendjes e të trupit tim e mblodha në dy fletore shkolle, një ngjyrë të verdhë e një rozë. Mes këtyre kapakëve e vura shpirtin, që deri atëherë kishte marrë frymë vetëm brenda mureve të dhomës. Fletoret me poezi i futa në çantë dhe u nisa rrugës për në bibliotekën e qytetit.

Njeriu që më priste në zyren e madhe quhej Ëngjëll. Ishte shkrimtar dhe botues. Hapësira e zyles më terrorizonte po aq sa frymëmarrja e çrregulltë, në këtë hapje të parë të botës. Ëngjëlli herë dukej se po i zbërthente fjalët, me pamjen e një kritiku serioz, e herë i kalonte shpejt e shpejt faqet e shkronjave të zeza. Në mbarim, sytë e kaltër të thellë i nguli jashtë dritares, nga ku kodra e madhe e qytetit jepte një pamje madhështie. “Në vend që të pretendoje të flasësh për dashurinë, do të duhej të mendoje më shumë të luftosh me fjalë për atdheun tënd”, foli, duke marrë sërish pamjen e dijetarit serioz.

Ishte pasdite e vitit 1999. Pas kodrës po zhvillohej luftë. Alarmi për anën më të keqe të saj në Kosovë, kish nisur të bie edhe në qytet.

Këmbanat e kishave dhe zërat e hoxhallarëve më gërryenin në boshllëkun që më përcillte rrugës për në shtëpi. Shpirtin e shpërndarë në dy fletore e mora dhe mbylla në sirtarin në bodrumin e errët. E gëllita vështirë atëherë, dhe poezitë do të prisnin gjatë për të dalë nga bodrumi në sipërfaqe.

Një simbolikë e formuar pavetëdijsëm, që përbën mbase vetë personalitetin tim. Më ngjante se isha e njëjtë me ato. E fshehur në thellësinë e bodrumit familjar, e përpirë nga vetmia. Mbase akoma jam pikërisht ajo. Duke dalë rrallë prej aty vetëm për të hedhur në faqet e bardha lëmshin e kohës së humbur e të imagjinatës, dhe atëherë kur trajtës vetiake të përfytyrimit letrar, duhet t’i hapësh derë.

Nuk arrita t'i flas atdheut, por qenia e tij me timen mbyllur në sirtar, ngjanin shumë. Të dy të izoluar në kohë dhe hapësirë. E fshehur në thellësinë e bodrumit nisa të kuptoj se poezia është udhëtimi im zbulues, *një aventurë metafizike*, siç do e quante Henry Miller. Një botë e prekshme dhe e paprekshme. E prekshmja dhe e paprekshmja e kohës dhe e vetes, e kaosit, territ, dhe agonisë që merr fund për pak kohë- atëherë kur shkruan.

Kanë kaluar 16 vjet nga takimi në bibliotekë. Jemi rritur, unë dhe jeta, dhe dorëshkrimet e fshehura me vite u kthyen në libër.

Nga atëherë në tash, e mësova të vërtetën time me letërsisë, kur ajo më foli si emocion e si intelekt, dhe më ndihmoi të jetojë edhe atëherë kur jetën nuk e kam dashur. Jo pse është ilaç për shpirtin, por se duke e zbuluar botën, dikur mund të arrijë që ta transformojë çdonjërin nga ne. Qoftë kur të flet në jetë, në libra dhe në shkrim. Letërsia mund të bëjë shumë. Është e aftë të na nxjerrë nga terri e agonja e të na shtrijë dorën atëherë kur asnjë dorë tjetër nuk na prek, dhe kaq të shpifur sa jemi, arrinë të na drejtojë kah qeniet tjera rreth nesh, të na pajtojë e të na shtyjë të kuptojmë më mirë botën, terrin e retë, dramën, pasionin e shpirtin e dyshimit...

Një lojë e aventurë që nis si emocion dhe rritet e rron si pasion, për të zënë vendin esencial në dy format mentale. Dijetarët thonë se shkrimi është shqisë e veçantë humane dhe estetike e perceptimit të botës. Por, atëherë kur nis e zbulon shqisën tënde në të kuptuarit tjetër të botës, pyetja e përhershme që e shoqëron, shton shpirtin e dyshimit- *A ekziston diçka që është me të vërtetë pjesë e imja e të cilën do të mund ta shfaqja?* Për fat të poezisë e për fat tonin, mjeshhtëria e jetës është shumë më e hollë se e Jona. Dhe jeta jonë është më dinake se vetë ne. Letërsia i jep jetë këtyre përvoja të veçanta, na kujton bullgari i kulturës frënge Todorov: ajo e ruan pasurinë dhe llojllojshmërinë e të jetuarit.

Iluzionet e patriotizmit

Gjyshja ime, ndjesë pastë, sa herë më pyeste se çfarë dua të bëhem kur të rritem, i jam përgjigjur: shkrimtare. Ishte rrobaqepëse dhe narratore

e zonja e përrallave, e sa herë qeshte me përkëdheli tek më thoshte se *shkrimtarët rrojnë vetëm nëpër libra*.

Rrëfimtaria e historive të mrekullueshme, kish mbaruar vetëm filloren, për t'u bërë grua 17 vjeçare. Historia e saj nuk ishte e ndryshme nga historia e gjithë gruas shqiptare të kohës. Ndjekja e jetës intelektuale nga sytë e saj dukej pothuaj e pamundshme, aq më e paprekshme ëndrra e një mbeseje shkrimtare.

Nga sytë e gjyshes në sytë e sotëm, çfarë do të thotë të jesh shkrimtar në një vend që rri ngjitur bishtit të Evropës....

Historia e popullit tim ka kaluar për kohë të gjatë nëpër çmimin e gjakut të pallogaritshëm. Duke qenë një popull pakicë në hartën dhe ndikimin evropian, por një 'pakicë' e madhe në zemrën ballkanike, një popull që më shumë se vazhdimësisë së jetës së përditshme dhe besnikërisë së ndjenjave, i është imponuar t'i besojë luftës politike.

Ana tjetër e tij del në shpirtin dhe palcën, në letërsinë e pasur popullore dhe në letërsinë e shkruar vonshëm, që ngjajnë me një peisazh ku janë shumëzuar e shkruar kujtime shekullore, tradita të lashta, mite të hershme, anë të zhdukura, dhembje e njerëzve të fshirë nga dhuna e fatkeqësitë historike, dhe frymë e mallit të përhershëm të njerëzve të ikur e të dëbuar. Fryma e saj i ngjan lumit Drin, që rrjedh vrullshëm në gjithë tokat shqiptare. Pasion, dhimbje e mall i njeriut poetik, që sa herë e harroi veten duke i kënduar atdheut të tij.

Edhe kësaj here është letërsia ajo që të bën të kuptosh thellësisht, me një humanizëm rrënjësor, larg ideologjive dhe moralizimeve, një realitet tronditës.

Në hendeqet e jetës, në luftën dhe varfërinë, në mosekzistencën; në jermin e mendjengushtësisë e në kërkim të identitetit; me ethet evropiane për të zbuluar e shpallur rrënjtë, me politikën e gjithpushtetshme që e ka vrarë realitetin qytetar, artistët, shkrimtarët, janë ndodhur para realiteve të rrezikshme, të cilave duan t'u japin zë. Letërsi e kësaj toke është akoma ajo, në të cilën iluzionet e patriotizmit s'kanë të mbaruar, dhe ku sytë kah individualja e intima kanë shkuar me frikë. Temat e *mëdha e të vërteta* e kanë 'obliguar' njeriun e letrave shqipe, duke e shtyrë të marrë rolin e misionarit e të mësuesit kombëtar.

Edhe gjyshja, në mënyrë e saj, kishte pasur të drejtë. Ndonëse lexonte me vështirësi, vjershat e mësuesve kombëtar i dinte përmendësh.

Epoka e dyshimit

Shekulli 20 është jetuar në përplasje të mëdha mes politikave, ideologjive e poetikave në mbarë Evropën. Pasojat e luftrave botërore e të regjimeve totalitare do të ushtronin një ndikim të fortë mbi praktikat artistike. Në gjeografinë e rajonit ndërkaq, po kaq ndikuese u bënë luftrat e fundit në ish-Jugosllavi, mbetjet e të cilave do të vinin dorën e egër mbi autonominë e individit e të artit.

Rënia e komunizmit shqiptar kësisoj, dhe mbarimi i luftës në Kosovë, ka bërë që roli i shkrimtarit të jetë konfuz, shpesh pa përcaktim, pa adresë dhe pa funksion relevant shoqëror. Rënia e industrisë kulturore, botimet masive, banalizimi i letërsisë nga të vetëquajturit “shkrimtarë”, e ka ulur tmerrësisht statusin shoqëror të letrarit.

Shkrimtarët që përkasin në Evropë Juglindore, për t’i ikur termit *shkrimtar ballkanik*, në këtë mes ata shqiptarë, sot nuk rrezikojnë të përfaqësojnë ideologjinë apo poetikën e ndonjë regjimi, siç bëri Gorki dikur e të tjerët pas tij, por disa nga ata, edhe më rëndë, rrezikojnë të bëjnë folësin me orar të plotë të institucionit letrar që riprodhon në mënyrë bajate vetveten, folësin e grupit që ia rren krahët, folësin e tavolinës së zgjedhur të shoqërisë, ekspertin e politikës, jetës dhe mbi të gjitha ekspertin e realitetit. Disa preokupohen shumë për sjelljet diplomatike, tek harrojnë ta kundrojnë jetën, të vërtetën e tyre dhe ta interpretojnë botën sipas shqisës së vet. Por, ne jetojmë në një shoqëri empirike, materialiste. Gjithçka duhet të shërbejë, të jetë e dobishme, ani pse letërsia nuk shërben për kurrgjë, dhe kjo nuk përbën as objektin, as natyrën e saj.

Ballkani, ky *Sfinks* që vazhdon të buzëqesh me ironi, ka lënë në këto dekadat e vonshme që të triumfojë një kulturë e mbrapshtë e cila i thurr lavde përmbysjes së vlerave. Ka lënë të triumfojë një mekanizëm automatik social, që në mungesë të jetës, qenies e qetësisë,

prodhon papushim karikaturën e jetës moderne. Aty ku njeriu në përditshmërinë, në tryezën e kafesë e të bukës së tij, është ngulfatur nga politikat pushtetit e ligjërimi politik, aq sa çdo rol tjetër pos atij në politikë, është reduktuar në minimum. Njeriu politik përfundimisht e ka shkelur njeriun poetik.

Mohimi i vlerës njerëzore dhe mohimi i vlerës kulturore, është ligësia më e madhe që brenda këtyre kufijve është bërë në emër të demokracisë.

Po sigurisht e për fat tonin, arti është shumë më i fortë se politika dhe shija në modë.

Sot, më shumë se kurrë, shkrimtari, poeti në veçanti, duhet të jetë po aq i lirë e vetmitar siç e dëshironte Pushkini e Bodleri, kohë më parë. Artistët jo rrallë ngacmohen për të thënë fjalën e vet, atëherë kur klithma e shekullit a piskamat e njerëzve të vrarë mbërrijnë në zemër e palcë të tij. Por ajo që është histori, është vetëm një kipc që e nxit ontopoiesisin njerëzor, në botën e frymën e tij, sepse shkrimtari nuk mishëron e nuk përfaqëson asgjë. A mund ta imagjinojmë që *Lulet e së keqes* të Bodlerit të ishin përfaqësuese zyrtare të diçkaje, rrëfimet e Kafkës e të Buzzatit, a poezitë e Symborskas... Shkrimtari nuk është pasqyrim i një shoqërie, ai nuk i shërben kohës së tij, por e përdorë atë. Ai është ligjërues i dëshpërimit si përvojë jetësore e gjinisë njerëzore. Nuk imponon, më parë i propozon lexuesit ta tumirë tezën e ofruar, duke i kërkuar lexuesit propozime të mëdha për dyshime, të krijuara në laboratorin e “kullës së tij të fildishtë”.

Sepse të shkruash do të thotë të mos kesh frikë për asgjë! Të flasësh pa frikë me poezinë, si shenjë e lirisë individuale, një qasje e jashtëzakonshme drejt mendjes vetanake, në zbulimin e rrëfimin e saj.

Çlirimi

Të shkruash në një ambient kulturor me diferenca të mëdha, ku nivelet e njohurive e të mentaliteteve përplasen fort dhe e kundërshtojnë po aq njëri-tjetrin, në një shoqëri me erë të madhe maskilizmi, e kam parë

veten shpesh me shpatulla pas murit, para pyetjeve e pikëpyetjeve që lindin në gjykimet e paragjykimet e ndryshme, herë më rëndë e herë më lehtë se takimi i parë në bibliotekë.

Shpesh më kujtohet gjyshja e fjalët e saj... Jam e bindur se do të kish qenë një prozatore e shkëlqyer. Ajo dëgjoji poezinë e zërave rrëfimtar të një oraliteti të largët, unë, poezinë e jetës, emocionin, mendimin dhe njohjen e botës që më rrethon. Vetëm kësaj dhe askujt tjetër s'kam dashur t'i japë llogari.

Jeta jonë, pra edhe poezia jonë, sot vuan prej intesitetit të madh, shpesh të tmerrshëm, i cili e lëndon në mënyrën e vet poetikën e jetës, duke mos e lënë të pushojë, të reflektojë, të dashurojë qetësinë dhe pushimin. Stërngarkesa që vjen nga informacionet e shumta, mediet, komunikimet, e rrjetet sociale, sa e rrit *efikasitetin* e jetës po aq e lëndon dimensionin poetik të saj. Mungesa e ndjenjës poetike në jetë, si rrjedhim imagjinar dhe fiksional, si ndjeshmëri po edhe si praktikë, është ndër storjet më të brishta të njeriut të sotëm. Jetojmë në një terror unik të diskursit të zhurmës e të reklamës, që vazhdimisht e lëndon poetikën e jetës. Qenia njerëzore ka pësuar në kohë të fundit ngopje kimike me diskurse sociopolitike, pavarësisht prej lojës që ofrojnë këto diskurse.

Megjithatë, intelegjenca e jetës, intelegjenca e poezisë për t'u shfaqur siç di ajo, e zhvilluar njëkohësisht përballë zhurmës, është rikonfirmim i fuqisë poetike të jetës. Reagens emotiv dhe intelektual i *zonave të qeta* të njeriut.

Shkrimtari mund të përdorë pena të ndryshme për të shprehur gjithë çfarë e lidh me përgjegjësit dhe detyrimet e pashmangshme në jetë, që i ka ose do që t'i ketë si qenie e gjallë e realitetit njerëzor. Po si njeri që e dashuron poezinë, kam të drejtën të them se, vetëm në momentin kur poeti e shpallë veten të vdekur nga realiteti e shoqëria, i ikën terrorit të zhurmës dhe heq dorë nga detyrimet e kompromiset njerëzore, poezia fluturon e lirë, e painteresuar, e pakompromis dhe pa i dhënë llogari askujt tjetër pos poezisë.

Pesnikova smrt

Blerina Rogova Gaxha

Bilo mi je sedemnajst let, ko sem pustolovščine svojih misli in telesa zbrala v dva šolska zvezka, v rumenega in vijoličastega. Med platnice sem ujela dušo, ki je dotlej dihala le med stenami sobe. Zvezka s pesmimi sem porinila v torbico in odšla do mestne knjižnice.

Človeku, ki me je čakal v svoji pisarni, je bilo ime Ęngjell. Bil je pisatelj in založnik. Notranjščina pisarne me je vznemirila kot nenakomerno dihanje ob prvem odpiranju sveta. Včasih se je zdelo, da Ęngjell razčlenjuje besede kot resen kritik, kdaj pa kdaj je le preletel črne črke. Na koncu je pogled svojih temno modrih oči usmeril skozi okno, od koder se je z mestne vzpetine odpiral veličasten pogled. »Namesto da govoriš o ljubezni, bi morala razmišljati o vojni za domovino,« je rekel in si zopet nadel videz resnega razumnika.

Nekega popoldneva leta 1999. Za hribom je divjala vojna. Alarm, ki je naznanjal najhujše dogodke na Kosovu, se je razlegal po mestu.

Cerkveni zvonovi in glasovi hodž so polnili praznino, ki me je spremljala do doma. Svojo dušo, razmetano v dveh zvezkih, sem zaprla v predal v mračni kleti. S tem sem se takrat težko sprijaznila, pesmi pa so dolgo čakale, da so prišle iz kleti spet na svetlo.

To je nezavedna simbolika, ki me najbrž v celoti določa. Lahko se poistovetim z njo. Komaj kdaj sem pokukala ven, da bi na bel papir ujela klobčič izgubljenega časa in domišljije, ko je bilo treba odpreti vrata svojemu avtorskemu glasu v književnosti.

Ni mi uspelo upesniti domovine, pa vendar sva si bili, zaprti v predalu, zelo podobni. Skrita na dnu kleti sem odkrila, da je poezija moj raziskovalni pohod, *metafizična pustolovščina*, kakor jo imenuje Henry Miller. Otipljiv in neotipljiv svet. Otipljivost in neotipljivost časa in jaza, kaosa, teme, agonije, ki se konča, ko začneš pisati.

Minilo je šestnajst let od srečanja v knjižnici. Zrasla sva, jaz in življenje, dolgo skriti rokopisi pa so se spremenili v knjigo.

Od takrat poznam svojo resnico o književnosti, ki me je čustveno in razumsko nagovarjala in mi pomagala živeti tudi takrat, ko življenja nisem marala. Ne zato, ker bi bila zdravilo za dušo, temveč zato, ker lahko spremeni slehernega od nas. Pa naj spregovori v življenju, v knjigi ali v pisanju. Književnost lahko marsikaj spremeni. Lahko nas izvleče iz teme in agonije in nam poda roko takrat, ko nas nobena druga roka ne drži; tudi če smo še tako slabi, nas vodi do soljudi, da nas z njimi pobota, in od nas zahteva, da bolje razumemo svet, temo in oblake, dramatiko življenja, strast in duh dvoma ...

To sta igra in pustolovščina, ki vzklijeta kot čustvo, se razvijeta in zažvita v strasti, da bi se na koncu transformirali v dve mentalni obliki. Razumniki pravijo, da je pisanje poseben ljudski in estetski čut za zaznavanje sveta. Ko pa začneš spoznavati svoj čut za drugačno razumevanje sveta, se zmeraj pojavi vprašanje, ki povečuje dvom: *Ali res obstaja del mene, ki ga lahko izrazim?* Na srečo poezije in na našo srečo je mojstrovina življenja žlahtnejša od nas samih. Življenje je tudi bolj prebrisano od nas. Literatura je posebno doživetje, pravi bolgarsko-francoski filozof in sociolog Cvetan Todorov: ohranja namreč bogastvo in raznovrstnost življenja.

Iluzije domoljubja

Vsakič, ko me je stara mama (naj počiva v miru!) vprašala, kaj bom, ko bom velika, sem odgovorila: Pisateljica. Bila je šivilja in znana pripovedovalka zgodb. Vsakič se je ob tem zasmejala, me pobožala in mi rekla, da *pisatelji živijo le v knjigah*.

Pripovedovalka čudovitih zgodb je imela le osnovno šolo in se je že pri sedemnajstih omožila. Njena zgodba se ni razlikovala od zgodb drugih albanskih žensk iz tistega časa. Intelektualno življenje je bilo v njenih očeh povsem nedosegljivo, še bolj nemogoč pa se ji je zdel sen njene vnukinje, da bi postala pisateljica.

Kaj pa pravzaprav pomeni biti pisatelj v deželi na repu Evrope ...?

Zgodovina mojega naroda se je dolgo pisala po preliti krvi. To je po eni strani manjšinski narod na evropskem zemljevidu pa tudi glede

na vpliv, po drugi strani pa velika »manjšina« v srcu Balkana, narod, ki mu je naloženo, da bolj kot vsakdanjemu življenju in čustvom zaupa političnemu boju.

Njegova druga plat se razkriva v duši in razumu, v bogati ljudski in poznejši napisani književnosti, ki je podobna pejzažu, kjer se stoletni spomini zlivajo s pradavno tradicijo, zgodnjo mitologijo ter uničenjem in bolečino ljudstva, ki so jo povzročili nasilje in zgodovinske nesreče kot tudi stalno domotožje pregnanih in izgnanih. Ta duh je podoben reki Drim, ki divje teče po vseh albanskih krajih. To so strast, bolečina in hrepenenje poeta, ki ob opevanju svoje domovine tolikokrat pozabi nase.

Tudi tukaj je književnost tista, ki z globokim humanizmom, daleč stran od ideologij in moraliziranj, pripelje človeka do razumevanja pretresljive resničnosti.

V prepadih življenja, v vojni in siromaštvu, v neobstoju; v jarmu razumske omejenosti ter v iskanju identitete; z evropsko vročico iskanja in razkazovanja svojih korenin, z vsemogočno politiko, ki je ubila meščansko resničnost, so se pisatelji, umetniki znašli pred nevarnimi resničnostmi, na katere se je treba odzivati. V tej književnosti še vedno vztrajajo iluzije o domoljubju, tudi če oči boječe pogledujejo k individualnosti in intimnosti. Velike in resnične teme so »obvezale« albanskega književnika in terjale od njega, da prevzame vlogo misijonarja in narodnega učitelja.

Moja stara mama je imela na nek način prav. Čeprav je brala le s težavo, je pesmi narodnih učiteljev znala na pamet.

Čas dvoma

20. stoletje smo v Evropi preživeli ob velikih trkih med politikami, ideologijami in poetikami. Posledice svetovnih vojn in totalitarnih režimov so močno odmevale v umetniških praksah. V regionalni geografiji so bile enako vplivne tudi zadnje vojne v bivši Jugoslaviji; njihove posledice so skorajda uničile avtonomnost posameznika in umetnosti.

Propad albanskega komunizma in konec vojne na Kosovu sta vplivala na to, da je vloga pisatelja postala nejasna, pogosto brez kompasa, naslovnika in relevantne družbene funkcije. Padec kulturne industrije, hiperprodukcija in banalizacija književnosti vse do samoooklicanih »pisateljev« so močno znižali družbeni status književnikov.

Pisateljem, ki pripadajo Jugovzhodni Evropi – če se izognem poimenovanju *balkanski pisatelji* – med njimi tudi albanskim, danes ni mar, če predstavljajo ideologijo ali politiko režima, kot ni bilo mar Gorkemu in njegovim sledilcem, vendar nekateri med njimi, še huje, postajajo glas institucije *Literatura s polnim delovnim časom*, ki reproducira samo sebe; so glasniki skupine, ki se treplja po ramenih, govorci izbranih družbenih omizij, strokovnjaki za politiko in življenje ter izumitelji resničnosti. Nekateri se izurijo v diplomatskem vedenju, ob čemer pozabljajo, da prikazujejo svojo lastno resnico in kažejo svet v skladu s svojimi čustvi. Živimo v empirični, materialistični družbi. Vse mora biti v službi nečesa, vse mora biti uporabno, književnost pa naj ne služi ničemur, kar ni njen predmet ali njena narava.

Balkan – ta *sfinga*, ki se kar naprej ironično smehlja – je v zadnjih desetletjih dopustil, da zmaga nepravda kultura, ki poje hvalospeve rušenju vrednot. Zmago je prepustil samodejnemu socialnemu mehanizmu, ki v odsotnosti življenja, obstoja in miru nenehno karikira moderno življenje. Tukaj, kjer človeka v njegovem vsakdanu, ob domači mizi dušita politična oblast in njeno govoričenje, se vsaka druga vloga razen politične skrči na minimum. Politični človek je dokončno premagal poetičnega.

Odklanjanje človeških in kulturnih vrednot je največja napaka, ki se je v imenu demokracije zgodila znotraj naših meja.

A umetnost je na srečo močnejša od politike in modnega okusa.

Bolj kot kdaj koli prej mora biti pisatelj, še posebej pesnik vsaj tako svoboden in samotni, kot sta si to pred mnogimi leti želela Puškin in Baudelaire. Umetnik se pogosto priglasi k besedi, ko se vik stoletja ali krik ubitih ljudi dotakne njegovega srca ali razuma. A zgodovina je le dvojnik, ki spodbuja človeka k *ontopoiesis* v svetu in duhu, ker se pisatelj v njem ne utelesi in nikogar ne zastopa. Ni si mogoče zamisliti, da bi lahko bile Baudelairove *Rože zla* ali Kafkove in Buzzatijeve zgodbe

ali pa pesmi Wisławe Szymborske del kakšnega političnega gibanja. Pisatelj ni odsev neke skupnosti in ne služi svojemu času, temveč ga živi. Govori o obupu kot o življenjski izkušnji ljudi. Ne vsiljuje, ampak bolj predlaga bralcu, da sprejme ponujeno tezo, in od njega zahteva dvom, ki se poraja v laboratoriju »slonokoščene stolpa«.

Kajti pisati pomeni, ničesar se bati! S poezijo spregovoriti brez strahu je znamenje individualne svobode, je osebna miselna pot, ki odkriva lastno zgodbo.

Osvobajanje

Ko sem premišljevala o tem, da pišem v kulturnem okolju, v katerem vladajo velike razlike, kjer med sabo treskajo spoznavne in mentalitete ravni in se merijo druga z drugo, da pišem v družbi z vonjem po mačizmu, sem se pogosto videla stisnjeno ob zid, pred vprašanji in vprašaji, ki jih porajajo različne sodbe in predsodki, včasih lažje, drugič težje, vse od mojega prvega srečanja v knjižnici.

Velikokrat se spomnim babice in njenih besed ... Prepričana sem, da bi bila odlična prozaistka. Sama je poslušala poezijo pripovedovalcev nekega daljnega ustnega izročila, jaz pa poezijo življenja, čustva, mišljenja in spoznavanja sveta, ki me obkroža. Samo njemu in nikomur drugemu nočem polagati računov.

Naše življenje in poezija danes trpita zaradi močne, velikokrat grozeče intenzivnosti, ki niti poetiki življenja ne dovoli, da bi se ustavila, da bi razmislila, da bi obmirovala in si odpočila. Po eni strani preobloženost z informacijami, številni mediji, nenehna komunikacija in različna družbena omrežja povečujejo *učinkovitost* življenja, po drugi pa umanjka poetični občutek zanj. Med največje šibkosti sodobnega človeka spada pomanjkanje čuta za poetično, ki je posledica imaginarnega ali fiktivnega in se kaže tako v duhu kot v življenjski praksi. Živimo v obdobju s prevladujočim diskurzom hrupa in reklame, ki uničuje poetično v življenju. Človek pa se je v zadnjem času preobjedel socialno-političnih diskurzov, ne glede na igro, ki mu jo ponujajo.

Intelligentnost življenja, intelligentnost poezije se kaže v tem, da se zna razvijati po svoje, proti hrupu, s čimer ponovno potrjuje moč poetike življenja. To je čustveni in intelektualni reagent *v mirnih prostorih* človeka.

Pisatelj lahko uporabi različne prijeme, da izrazi to, kar ga veže z neizogibnimi odgovornostmi in obveznostmi v življenju, ki jih ima ali jih bo imel kot živo bitje v svoji človeški resničnosti. Kot človek, ki ljubi poezijo, pa lahko rečem, da se pesnik osvobodi terorja hrupa zgolj takrat, ko sebe razglasi za mrtvega v resničnosti in družbi, in da poezija lahko šele takrat, ko se odpove človeškim obveznostim in kompromisom, svobodno zaduha, postane brezinteresna in brezkompromisna ter nikomur več ne polaga računov – razen sama sebi.

Prevedla Nikollë Berishaj in Tanja Petrič

The Poet's Death

Blerina Rogova Gaxha

I was 17 years old when I collected the adventures of my thoughts and body into two school notebooks, a yellow one and a violet one. Between the covers I caught a soul that up until then had breathed only between the walls of a room. I crammed the notebooks with the poems into my bag and left for the city library.

The man waiting for me in his office was named Ëngjëll. He was a writer and a publisher. The inside of his office excited me like erratic breathing in a first opening of the world. Sometimes it seemed that Ëngjëll was dissecting the words like a serious critic, but now and then he would just skim over the black letters. Finally he directed his gaze, with those dark-blue eyes, out the window which from the city hill offered a magnificent view. "Instead of talking about love," he said, "you should think about the war for the homeland." And then he re-assumed the appearance of a serious thinker.

An afternoon in 1999. War was raging behind the hill. The alarm heralding the worst events in Kosovo echoed over the city.

Church bells and the voices of hodjas filled the emptiness that walked me home. I locked away my soul, which was strewn within the two notebooks, into a drawer in the darkness of the basement. I had struggled to come to terms with things, and the poems had to wait a long time before emerging from the basement and coming back into the light.

This unconscious symbolism probably completely defines me. I can identify with it. Hardly had I peeked out, to catch on the paper's whiteness the tangles of lost time and imagination, when it was necessary to open the door to my author's voice in literature.

I did not succeed in putting the homeland into verse, and yet the two of us, locked away in a drawer, were very much alike. Hidden at the bottom of the basement, I discovered that poetry was my re-

search expedition, my *metaphysical adventure*, as Henry Miller called it. A tangible and intangible world. The tangibility and intangibility of time and the self, of the chaos, darkness and agony that ceases when you start to write.

Sixteen years have passed since that meeting in the library. We grew up, life and I, and the long-hidden manuscripts have transformed themselves into books.

Since then I have realized the truth about literature, which emotionally and rationally addressed me and helped me to live even when I did not like life. Not because it was medicine for the soul, but because it can change each and every one of us. But should it speak of life, the book, or of writing? Literature can change much. It can pull us from darkness and agony and offer us a hand when no other hand holds us; no matter how weak we may be, it leads us to other beings around us, so that we are reconciled with them, and it demands from us a better understanding of the world, darkness and clouds, the drama of life, passion and the spirit of doubt...

That is the game and the adventure that sprouts as an emotion, develops and lives in passion so that it ultimately transforms itself into two mental forms. The intellectuals say that writing is a special popular and aesthetic sense of perceiving the world. But when you start to recognize your sense for a different understanding of the world, the doubt-increasing question constantly arises: *Is there really a part of me that I can portray?* Fortunately for poetry and fortunately for us the masterpiece that is life is nobler than we are. Life is also cleverer than we are. Literature, says the Bulgarian-French philosopher and sociologist Tzvetan Todorov, is a special experience: it preserves the richness and variety of life.

Illusions of Patriotism

Whenever my grandmother (may she rest in peace!) asked what I was going to be when I grew up, I would reply: a writer. She was a seamstress and well-known as a teller of tales. Each time she would laugh, caress me, and say, *writers only live in books*.

This teller of wonderful tales had only a primary school education and had married when she was barely 17 years old. Her story is no different than the stories of other Albanian women of the time. In her eyes, an intellectual life was completely beyond reach, and for her a granddaughter's dream of becoming a writer was even more impossible.

What does it actually mean to be a writer in a country on the tail of Europe...?

The history of my nation has long been written in terms of bloodshed. It is, on the one hand, a minority nation on the European map and in terms of influence, but on the other hand it is a large "minority" in the heart of the Balkans, a nation which trusts in political struggle more than in everyday life and fidelity to emotions.

Its other side is revealed in the soul and mind, in the rich folk literature and later literature, which is similar to the landscape where centuries-old memories merge with ancient tradition, with the early mythology and destruction and the people's pain caused by violence and historical disasters, and also by the constant homesickness of a persecuted and exiled people. This spirit is similar to the Drin River, which rushes by all Albanian towns. These are the passion, pain and longing of a poetic man who, while singing to the homeland, often forgets himself.

Here, too, it is literature that leads man, with profound humanism, far away from ideologies and moralizing, to understanding staggering reality.

In the abysses of life, in war and poverty, in non-existence; in the yoke of intellectual limitations and the search for identity; through European feverish seeking for and exhibiting roots, through almighty politics that killed bourgeois reality, writers, artists, found themselves before dangerous truths to which they had to respond. In this literature of the illusion of patriotism they persist, even if they look with a nervous eye at individuality and intimacy. Large and true themes have "bound" the Albanian writer and demanded of him that he assume the role of a missionary and of the nation's teacher.

In a sense, my grandmother was right. Although she struggled when reading, she knew the songs of the nation's teachers by heart.

A Period of Doubt

In the Europe of the 20th century we have experienced major collisions between politics, ideologies and poetics. The consequences of the World Wars and of totalitarian regimes have echoed strongly in artistic practices. The latest war in the former Yugoslavia has had an equally strong impact on the regional geography, and its consequences have almost destroyed the autonomy of the individual and of the arts.

The collapse of Albanian communism and the end of the war in Kosovo influenced the role of the writer, who became confused, often without a compass, an address, and a relevant social function. The decline in the cultural industry, the hyper-production and the trivialisation of literature, and not least those self-proclaimed "writers," have significantly lowered the social status of writers.

Today, writers belonging to South-Eastern Europe – I refrain from calling them *Balkan writers* – among them, Albanian writers, don't care whether they represent an ideology or a political regime in the way that Gorky and his followers did, and yet some of them, which is something even worse, are becoming a full-time voice of the Literature institution which merely reproduces itself; they are messengers of a group that pats each other on the back, spokespeople for a select social crowd, experts in politics and life as well as inventors of reality. Some are trained in diplomatic behaviour, though they have forgotten that they show their own truth and depict the world in accordance with their own feelings. We live in an empirical, materialistic society. Everything must be in the service of something, everything must be useful, and yet literature should not serve anything which is not its topic or nature.

The Balkans – that *Sphinx that keeps on smiling ironically* – has in recent decades allowed an incorrect culture to win, one which sings praises to demolished values. Victory has been left to the automatic

social mechanism that, in the absence of life, of existence and of peace, constantly caricaturises modern life. Here, where man in his daily life, at home by his desk, is stifled by political power and its yapping, every role but the political is reduced to a minimum. Political man has decimated poetic man.

Refusing human and cultural values is the greatest mistake that has been made within our borders in the name of democracy.

And yet art, fortunately, is stronger than politics and fashion.

Now more than ever the writer, especially the poet, must be as free and lonely as Pushkin and Baudelaire wished to be so many years ago. The artist is often summoned to the word when the crying out of the century or the shouting of murdered people touches his heart or mind. But history is only a double that spurs man to *ontopoiesis* in the world and the soul, because in it the poet is neither incarnated nor represented. It is impossible to imagine Baudelaire's "Flowers of Evil" or Kafka's and Buzzati's stories or the poems of Wisława Szymborska being part of any political movement. The writer is not a reflection of a community, and he does not serve his time but lives it. He speaks of despair as of the life experience of people. He does not force the reader but suggests to him that he accept the thesis offered, and he demands doubt from the reader who originates in the laboratory of the "ivory tower."

For to write means to be afraid of nothing! To speak out fearlessly through poetry is a sign of individual freedom; it is a personal mental path that reveals one's own story.

Liberating

When I was reflecting on the fact that I write in a cultural community in which great differences prevail, where the cognitive and mental levels collide and, with equal strength, measure up against each other, that I write in a society that smacks of machismo, I often see myself as being pressed up against the wall, before the questions and question marks which spring from various judgements and prejudices, which is sometimes easier, sometimes harder, than my first meeting in the library.

I often remember my grandmother and her words... I am convinced that she would have been a great writer of stories. She heard the poetry of story-tellers from a distant oral tradition, while I heard the poetry of life, of emotions, of thinking about and recognising the world that surrounds me. Only to it, and to no other, do I want to be accountable.

Today our lives and our poetry are suffering from a strong, often menacing, intensity that allows not even the poetics of life to stop, to reflect, to rest and to repose. On the one hand, the saturation of information, forms of media, constant communication and various social networks increase the *efficiency* of life, but on the other, they lead to an absence of poetic feeling in life. One of the weakest characteristics of modern man is the lacking sense of the poetical, which is a consequence of the imaginary or the fictive and which reveals itself in both the spirit and in life practice. We are living in a period where the discourse of noise and advertising dominates, and that destroys that which is poetic in life. In recent times man has overindulged on socio-political discourses, regardless of the game that they are offering him.

But the intelligence of life, the intelligence of poetry, manifests itself through being able to develop, in the face of the noise, thereby reaffirming the power of the poetics of life. This is the emotional and intellectual reagent of man's *peaceful spaces*.

The writer may use different types of writing to express that which binds him to the unavoidable responsibilities and obligations in life, which he has or which he will have as a living being in his human reality. As a person who loves poetry, I can say that only when the poet declares himself dead in reality and in society does he free himself from the terror of noise, and only when it renounces human obligations and compromises can poetry breathe freely, being disinterested and uncompromising and not being accountable for anything – except for itself.

Translated from the Slovenian by Jason Blake

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»ODZVEN PROSTORA« / «*REFLECTIONS OF PLACE*»

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