A few days ago, I ended a lecture with a declaration of critical, poetic faith in the word, and in the possibility of finding the truthful word. This was a lecture I had begun by talking about climate change, the danger of extinction of the human species, damage to the environment, and the social and personal unease brought about by present-day capitalism. I described the different ways in which we are now faced with the fact that liveable time is running out or, in other words, time in which we can still act on the conditions of our lives. And I spoke about the new experience of the irreparable, which is one twist in the historic experience of the irreversible. The irreparable time of catastrophe is today—as Svetlana Alexievich writes in her book *Chernobyl Prayer: A Chronicle of the Future*—the catastrophe of time.

In this situation, ending up by invoking poetry may seem ridiculous. I, too, felt ridiculous, using such an apparently innocuous, well-worn word. Poetry. What use is poetry when the world is coming to an end? Experts and technocrats will burst out laughing. Let them laugh. If this situation they call a crisis—which is to say this period of debasement, decay, and destruction of the promises of wellbeing and progress for humanity as a whole—has taught us anything, it is that what we knew is of no use to us when it comes to relating ourselves with our future. Or, even worse, we hide in schemes and categories from the past to justify that fact that those promises only benefitted a few. In *Chernobyl Prayer*, Alexievich writes, “[…] we now find ourselves on a new page of history. The history of disasters has begun. But people do not want to reflect on that, because they have never thought about it before, preferring to take refuge in the familiar. And in the past.”

Poetry is not writing in verse. It is not a trade of poets alone. It is the ability we have to trust in the possibility of finding a truthful word that will break down the confusion between die and kill and, by this means, relocate the sense of what we are living. Poetry as an ornament is the neutralisation of poetry, just as philosophy as theory is the neutralisation of philosophy. Philosophy and poetry—if this and separates anything more than moments and modes of expression—are the necessary combination for radical nonconformity to a single sense of the world, and for expanding the bounds of the human soul. Soul, the animating spirit [ànima in Catalan], is another word that sounds ridiculous when pronounced today unless it is associated with words like anima, animation, animated, animal, and so on. There is nothing superior about it. It is the condition of every living being. What, then, are the confines of our liveable lives? Poetry is the soul of all philosophy, every trade, every sincere gaze, all necessary science, and every brave policy that assaults these bounds, opens them up, speaks them, and shares them.
It’s said ...“No one writes this sentence / who doesn’t sign.” These are the concluding lines of a poem by Ingeborg Bachmann. And this poem is the innermost core around which the thoughts in Ciutat Princesa revolve. Marina Garcés writes about events in the streets of Barcelona between October 1996 and October 2017. The speaker here is a subject who is aware of being just that. In other words, this is an I which sustains everything it says without any further need to be articulated in a conscious voice, and capable of critical observation of its surrounds.

All these events, from the Cine Princesa squatter eviction through to the referendum of 1 October have been sufficiently experienced and documented, so there is no need to focus attention on the events in themselves but, rather, on the way in which Garcés tackles her own experiences and how she situates them in the collective experience of the shared space of a city.

Marina Garcés cites the ancient Taoist philosopher Zhuang Zi who, in a short parable, says that we catch fish with nets and rabbits with traps, but once we have caught the prey, we no longer need the nets and traps. Philosophy represents the opposite pole to poetry because it does not believe that words are important. For classical philosophy, words are traps useful only for catching an idea—the only thing of any weight and that one should know how to see. Ciutat Princesa oscillates between these two principles which, not so long ago, were still regarded as mutually exclusive. But the world has become more complex and we need the analytical scalpel of philosophy, which penetrates behind appearances, and the responsibility of a poetic I rising up as a witness, staking its own integrity if necessary.

Marina Garcés strives to construct for herself a firm poetic subjectivity, and attempts the art of giving form, with what is most immediate, to the obscure depths of the most human truths. It is not as simple as saying “I” and then the poem can be signed. It is necessary to “survive in the ding-dong of words”, and this means in the inescapable abyss of the self.

But, yes, the way can be divined and it is a dizzyingly attractive path. Garcés speaks of a shared need to find another way of linking up with our milieu. She articulates the desire for belonging, for defining, and redefining ourselves, for living with full intellectual faculties, encouraging each other, empowering each other, and experiencing tension and crisis in the belief that we can use them as a springboard for a richer, more intertwined coexistence. For power and the old world, this is an uncomfortable kind of life, one that is definitively out of date. Ciutat Princesa is not a book about a city, but a book about an epoch that is cracking. Without yet drawing the horizon, philosophy is managing to show the way.

Simona Škrabec . ‘Lliurement i sense por’ (Freely and Fearlessly), Ara Llegim (16 June, 2018) [fragment]

A selection of texts

The author

Life

WEB: In Wikipedia
Biography and links about the author in the free encyclopaedia.
Works and translations

- WEB: Marina Garcés' translated works
  In the TRAC database, from Institut Ramon Llull.

- WEB: Works in the Biblioteca de Catalunya
  http://cataleg.bnc.cat/search*eng/?searchtype=a&searcharg=Garc%C3%A9s%2C+Marina&sortdropdown=&searchscope=13&searchscope2=13&SORT=D

- WEB: The author in the Congress Library (US)
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- WEB: The author in the COPAC Catalogue (UK)
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- WEB: Marina Garcés in WorldCat
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  http://www.worldcat.org/search?q=au%3A%22marina+garce%CC%81s%22&qt=results_page

Reviews and interviews

Reviews

- WEB: Marina Garcés' Site
  'A compendium of writings, a map of clues, references, news and links for the practice of philosophy as a commitment to a common world.'
  http://www.marinagarces.com/

- PDF: About Beyond The Classroom
  Information about the essay and its author in the Catalan Literary Nonfiction 2017 booklet, by Institut Ramon Llull.

- WEB: About New Radical Enlightenment
  Information about this book, in Anagrama Editorial site.

- WEB: A review of A Common World review
  By Rubén Díaz. In the Cultural Policy and Management Yearbook 2012/2013, from Istanbul Bilgi University (Turkey).

Interviews
WEB: Beyond the apocalypse: an interview with Marina Garcés
By Leticia Ybarra. In La Grieta (02/02/2018).

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An interview by Pablo Martinez. In Re-visiones, 6 (2016).
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The author 2.0
In the social network

WEB: In Goodreads