

Róbert GÁL

## A Short Meditation on Language and Love

“The imagination is not a state,” said William Blake. “It is the human existence itself.” If we were to replace the word "imagination" by the word “language,” we wouldn’t be far from the same truth.

Yes, it’s obvious that language is more than just a tool, and not only for writers: because it’s not only writers who need to communicate.

Language is the building material of what we are building—and the building itself. How the building looks is dependent not only on its content (or what we are saying while using it), but also on its form (or *how* we are saying it).

Writing is to me a way of thinking—as I mentioned in one of the earlier panels here—and thinking is not only about ideas, but also about forming and formulating them. Our language, of course, is an inevitable part of it.

Another interesting thing is that language is simultaneously a coding and decoding of reality. And as it is a permanent process, we might call it learning. Learning by experiencing and thinking. Learning by writing, listening to sounds and listening to silence. Learning by listening to the inner rhythm of each sentence and each word in it.

My writing was always about experimenting, about different ways of getting from one point to another. A point was something of value, and I have always tried to make my language connect to that. And very soon I realized how important to me is to keep my writing brief, terse.

After I started to write, I started to enjoy being trapped in words, in the language I was creating from the language I knew. Or, better, thought I knew. Because how can one “know” any language?

In one sentence of my book *Naked Thoughts* published in English translation this year is written: “Know one's language, but only ever as far as the next sentence.” What does that mean? One interpretation could be that as we use our language we are so deeply immersed in it that we can’t see anything around us—exactly like when we are in love. We are blind. And we are blind partly intentionally, because we prefer to be blind before seeing what we do not want to see.

When we write—and it doesn’t matter what language we are using—we need to be

---

ICPL and the International Writing Program Panel Series, October 11, 2019

Róbert Gál (Czech Republic), Samuel Mengheteab Zeughe (Eritrea),

Chan Lai-kuen (Hong Kong), Amira-Géhanne Khalfallah (Algeria)

For electronic texts, please visit: <http://iwp.uiowa.edu/archives/iowa-city-public-library-presentations>

For video archives, please visit: <https://www.icpl.org/video/series/international-writing-program>

blind, simply because we need to be in love. That is our only one language that matters, everything else is secondary.

On another page of the book I just quoted from it says: “Writing is like artificially supplying what is already given (if that is what we take life to be)—a system of structured infusions of this or that language where content only comes second: What is primary is the desire to quench the hankering after one's own thing, which keeps refracting into myriads of new possibilities and manifestations of them in reality. It is like dipping a hand into an infinite aquarium of swimming fish-diamonds that have been since time immemorial a fundamental part of each and every one of us, except we haven't seen them—until this occasion. Awareness of the fellowship between the fisherman and the catch affords us the certainty that anything that we seize upon is ours *a priori*, and that is what rescues us from a sense of loss. But then how can we conceive of gains, since we're swimming in an aquarium that is ours anyway?”

Thank you for your attention.

---

ICPL and the International Writing Program Panel Series, October 11, 2019

Róbert Gál (Czech Republic), Samuel Mengheseab Zeughe (Eritrea),

Chan Lai-kuen (Hong Kong), Amira-Géhanne Khalfallah (Algeria)

For electronic texts, please visit: <http://iwp.uiowa.edu/archives/iowa-city-public-library-presentations>

For video archives, please visit: <https://www.icpl.org/video/series/international-writing-program>