

Interview by Zen Petan (2016)

Your novels have been translated into many languages. How do you think they translate into different cultural milieux?

This is one question I would like to find out next April in Slovenia. My first book translated to Slovenian, *Happiness is not complete*, includes plenty of Catalan stuff like streets, habits, politicians, games, songs... Veronika Rot, the translator, had to add 46 footnotes to bring context to Slovenian readers and to help them to understand the book. It's the same when we read Russian or French novels: we enjoy and we learn them at the same time, and maybe we can enjoy it even if we don't understand every detail. In spite of these unavoidable signs of time and space, I hope my characters are believable to every reader, or at least to every contemporary Western reader. I think this aim is easier to reach in *Letter to the Queen of England*, because the main character travels around the world for ten centuries, so there are not so many details (annoying or not).

In *Letter to the Queen of England* the main character Joan Ferrer travels the world for ten centuries, but then he finds himself in the prison in England where he writes a letter to the English Queen, which is the novel. How does this relate to the process of writing? Does the writer need to isolate himself in order to write?

Joan Ferrer writes to be understood, and therefore to survive, as some writers do. I think that writers need the perfect degree of isolation: low isolation is not enough, but too much isolation doesn't work, either.

An immortality brings to Joan Ferrer amongst other things a horrible boredom. Do you think the idea of mortality saves someone from the feeling of boredom because of the knowledge of a limited time in which someone can make an impact? Do you think that an artists immortality can be an extension of their mortality?

We conceive ourselves as mortal beings, and most of the things we do would make no sense if we were immortal. In fact, everybody knows some people that get bored in spite of their (knowledge of) mortality, and I feel very sorry for them. The sons we have, the trees we plant and the books –or art- we create are human forms to gain immortality: if we were mortal beings we wouldn't need to do anything, which I think it would be unbearable.

In your book *From Robinson Crusoe to Peter Pan* you say that an imagination is not important only in the literature, but also in scientific and technological formations: the whole culture is a product of imagination, that is why its depreciation or non-activation could bring catastrophic consequences. What are your sources of your imagination? Could you elaborate on the power and strength of imagination?

Gods create, but we human beings only combine. We combine experiences, information, fears, hopes, dreams, fictions, gossip, and from time to time we (or so we believe) create something new: a space, a dialogue, but not so much. Imagination makes changes possible. Power of

imagination may lead us to a better life -or to a worse life, too-, or may comfort us because it's easy to imagine that our life could be worse.

In your book *Happiness is not complete*, we follow the main character and the society through different stages of growing up. In Slovenia we think a lot about the last 25 years of our independence as 'growing up'. Where is Catalonia in terms of 'growing up'?

Now in Catalonia half of population would prefer not to belong to Spain anymore. It's not a big majority, but the main parties in Spain don't want even to talk about it, so I'm afraid that it's not Catalonia who doesn't know how to grow up. If millions of people don't feel like Spaniards, as you can see in the Catalan Parliament, it seems better to ask them what the problem is, but the majority of Spanish politicians prefer consider them as a problem, and not as a consequence of a problem. From a rational approach, this attitude is difficult to understand because what it is growing now in Catalonia, and in Spain also, is discomfort and frustration.

There seems to be a stalemate regarding Catalonia's status, despite a large majority desiring independence in the 2014 referendum. People outside Spain are wondering what will happen. If you had to guess, do you think Catalonia be a nation separate from Spain a decade from now, or will there still be a standoff going on between Madrid and Barcelona?

Nobody knows what will happen next month, so only a witch could guess what will happen in ten years. I'm afraid that people mix up hopes –or fear- and future, and this is a severe error. I think that in the future, Catalonia will change its political status, but I don't know when nor how. Until now, government of Spain hasn't dealt with the possible independence of Catalonia as a political problem, but rather as an illegal aspiration or as a crazy desire or as a result of perverse manipulation. I hope that it will change, but I'm not sure that it will happen.

As a literary father of Joan Ferrer, what would you wish for if you had three wishes at your disposal?

Big wishes are very dangerous, because they can destroy you if they are granted. Only a very wise man could manage money and immortality, and if you are a wise man maybe you don't want it at all. I feel lucky as I am: as Marcel Duchamp said, I've eaten every day of my life and I've never had too much money. I only wish to avoid severe losses.