

I am inclined towards long novels with elaborate structures and short and simple acceptance speeches and this one is going to be exactly that. I am happy to be honored on German soil again. Books—or should I say almost all books—just like all people, minus those proven without a doubt to hurt others, should freely travel abroad. My novel's journey began several years ago thanks to my excellent translator Esther Kinsky, and I can only hope that journey, which I appreciate so much, will never end.

The Hermann Hesse Award has a very personal meaning for me. A few days before I received the happy news, I was having dinner in a restaurant in Krakow with the head of my publishing house, Znak. Being a group of three people who have devoted their lives to literature, we were talking about the current difficult times, complaining a little about politics with the typically Polish dark sense of humor, but the more wine we drank, the more nostalgic the conversation became. About the books we liked when we were young, about the stories that have changed our lives. And this is how Hermann Hesse's name came up, connecting the experiences of Jerzy Illg, the seventy year old publisher and poet, a powerful figure in the

Polish cultural scene who refers to himself an old Hippie, a twenty-something year old woman who takes care of the promotion of my books, and me, the writer. We all agreed we should read Hesse again one day. That night in the Krakow restaurant, I told my friends about the reading habits of my youth when I was a teenager in Piaskowa Góra, Sandberg in German, a postwar district of Wałbrzych, my LowerSilesian hometown featured in my novels. I was a rebel, a misfit who didn't like school's unifying pressure, so I skipped class with the other misfits as much as I could without getting myself expelled. Our reading club met on the roof of the biggest and tallest apartment building in Sandberg. From there I could see beyond the horizon, beyond the hills enclosing my town in a way I felt to be claustrophobic. On this roof, 18 year old me read Hesse's "The Glass Bead Game". Even though, in that time, my ability to understand all the philosophical subtleties was limited, it was one of the books whose lifechanging power implanted in my young mind things that have stayed and developed – one of them being my affinity for Zen Buddhism and meditation. And also an admiration for Hesse's intimate way of addressing the reader, as if his words were written

especially for me, an 18 year old Polish girl reading them on the roof of an apartment building in a coal mining town.

When I first met Hesse and his “Glass Bead Game,” I was living in a communist country with closed borders, which were crossed by books a little more freely than by people, although not all of them were able to make it over. As a recipient of the 2018 Hermann Hesse International Award with Esther Kinsky, I hope that in the dark times when new walls are being built between nations, writers and translators will work together to reinforce the border crossing power of literature.