

Sample translation from

***Inedible Bread* by Floor Haakman (Amsterdam: Prometheus, 2001)**

Translated by Steve Leinbach

Prologue

Osten-Sibel walks down the stairs and out of the door with Nadar. Class is over, and the sun is shining. It's weather for an outdoor café, preferably an outdoor café on the water, maybe with a beer. She would talk him into it. She has discovered that he is a man who doesn't care for laughter, and so she doesn't laugh, in order to oblige him. She looks pensive and says that she has thought of a topic that she would now like to discuss with him.

He looks up.

She says, "I'm going to attempt to prove that the logic under which we all operate or should operate within our accepted and established world view, is unsound. Our world is embedded in language, but language has many shortcomings and tries to subsume everything that there is under a single category: the word.

We can use it to communicate of course, for if I say, 'I'd like to have a beer with you at an outdoor café, preferably on the water,' then it makes no difference to me what beer I actually get. I've said that it doesn't matter which café, only that I'd prefer it to be on the water. Nor is which water of any importance. And I said, 'with you,' so not with anybody else. I've expressed myself completely. But at the moment I'm not making any great demands either."

Nadar looks at her, frowning. Sees a girl who hides her cheerfulness behind caricaturishly deep thought-furrows, which she is barely able to maintain. Was she having him on? He wouldn't know how. Something of the enthusiasm of the novice philosopher comes over him again. He hides his growing smile behind a hand which

holds a hand-rolled cigarette. He takes a deep drag and decides to go along with her. She walks ahead of him down the street. She says nothing; she is focused on finding an outdoor café with a beer. He looks at the way she walks. Not elegant, but comical.

Osten-Sibel and Nadar come to an outdoor café on the water. They both order a glass of beer.

“We just assume that things will continue to go as they’ve always gone. You’re surely familiar with the question: how do we know for certain that today’s bread is edible, like yesterday’s. No one ever worries about that. Bread is made from flour, yeast and water. Sometimes from sunflower or sesame seeds too, but that’s beside the point. And if the dough has risen and it’s baked in an oven always at the same temperature, we take it for granted that it will turn out. Naturally everything else has to be exactly the same too: the flour, the yeast, the water, the oven, the temperature.”

A girl brings the glasses of beer. Nadar pays; Osten-Sibel is happy to let herself be paid for. She rolls a cigarette for him. He looks through his pockets for a light for her.

“Perhaps the bread has thus far always been edible because we took for granted that it would be. There are other things that are not especially true, but which become true because everyone believes them. And if it turns out that they still don’t ring true, we look for a cause by which we can still logically explain why the bread isn’t edible. Or to put it more strongly: we don’t even call it bread anymore; we go and invent a new category: inedible bread. Old news, you know the story.” Nadar nods in agreement.

“But now take something like a state of intoxication, or some other kind of high. In some cases dreams too. In such situations things are not so self-evident. Or rather, they are, but you know why they are.

Example: I’m sleepwalking home and see my cat in a tall tree. The whole neighbourhood has gathered around the tree, something has to happen. The cat’s in

the tree; the cat can no longer get down from the tree.

She can really, but she doesn't dare to.

So all the cell phones come out, and everybody calls the fire department. They don't answer, not even the emergency number; it's the weekend.

People call out other solutions: Put cat food under the tree! Try to coax her down by calling sweetly to her! Go and find a ladder! Climb up yourself!

No, that doesn't work. I go inside. So do the others. I hear them muttering that they think it's pathetic, for the cat and for me too.

At eleven o'clock at night I walk out to the tree again. The cat is still sitting there. And then, very quietly a fire engine comes riding down my street. I wave, and a full crew hops out and gets a ladder. My cat is freed at eleven o'clock at night.

The men weren't called. They told me that they hadn't heard anything about a cat in a tree. That's illogical, but true."

Nadar says, "You have a number of thoughts there that you can certainly take further. The example of the cat and the fire department might not be good, but the idea of another, greater logic, which stands above our present one, and next to which ours is either completely untrue or only true in a tiny number of cases – there's something to that. Take the topic more into the area of dreams. In a dream you enter a world with all its own laws, possibilities and impossibilities. You no longer have to contend with the limitations of space and time. No difficulties with gravity, life and death. In a dream you find yourself in a world where everything is possible and where you experience everything as self-evident.

1

Above the fireplace in the middle of the living room hangs an etching of startled black birds. They flap their wings; their feathers are tattered. You can hear them screeching. Nadar is looking at it. He thinks about Emma, who asks him from time to time if he wouldn't rather hang the painting that is in his study, the one with the girl, downstairs, and put the birds upstairs. But Nadar doesn't want his girl taking off her

stockings in front of everyone. And Nadar abhors these birds just as he abhors the solitary heron who stood for hours on the roof of the hotel across the street. Ashen, the colour of penance.

It was windy, his dirty feathers whipped back and forth. Every half-hour he would shake his feet, weary from standing for so long. What was he waiting for? For a pair of birds who were building a nest in the vicinity of his lookout in the spring, thinking that the heron ought to go somewhere else? Even though the heron wasn't doing anything but standing there, and even though it's not in the heron's nature to eat anything but fish, so not eggs or young birds. Yet he still had to go. Out of our neighborhood in any case.

Swooping, biting and screeching, they menaced the solitary heron, who did nothing back! You saw the heron look up, almost crying, at the self-assured pair of birds: "I'm not doing anything! Just let me stand here!" But eventually he gave in. With a downcast head he flew away, his wings flapping like wet sheets. It was raining. He never came back.

That weakness, that way of letting yourself be walked over, that masochistic "beat me, beat me," that ugliness which comes from loneliness, that rotten, scruffy, pathetic quality – Nadar detests it so much that he stood there for hours, watching it. The same was true of this painting of crows which, for the same reason, he would never, ever want to have in his workroom. He thinks, if I had to be an animal, then I would have to choose between aggressive crow or dejected heron.

I would have had wings and still not felt free.

Nadar is still standing sceptically in front of the picture of the crows.

And Emma, he wonders, what sort of bird would Emma have been if I found that she had been one?

An industrious bird. A bird without appreciable problems, a bird who does not devote her time to flying and other metaphysical matters, a vain bird, always on the go, who performs utterly useless work with great efficiency. He smiles; such birds don't exist. He thinks.

He turns away from the etching and walks solemnly through the room, hands behind his back. Exactly like – it now occurs to him – the teacher used to do across the schoolyard. A carefully studied posture of power and control which, later in the

classroom, he at once lost again irretrievably amid the badgering and teasing of his pupils. Hence his constant headache as well.

But now, for a few moments, as if it were break, for half an hour, Nadar feels like a man with authority, a person with position, power, control. And so he walks in measured lines and circles back and forth across the schoolyard; the living room, hands behind his back.

Nadar never wanted to become a professor. He is afraid of his students, although he would never let it show. He keeps his guard up.

Nadar comes to a stop in the back room, in front of closed garden doors. Looks into a dark garden in which there is not much to see. He is really just staring out there for form's sake.

What else is there that doesn't exist? This he wonders while thinking back on the impossibility of an Emma-bird. He ponders this for a time, shakes his head to indicate that he doesn't know and subsequently remembers that he just dreamt that he had discovered a new colour, or not discovered: it was just there, an exceptionally beautiful, clearly elemental colour, which had up to that point gone unobserved. He had never heard of it at any rate.

A colour is almost as difficult to describe as a smell. Certainly if we're talking about a new one. Language is not open to novelty. It doesn't want to accept elements that fall outside the fixed divisions of our world's logic as they are laid out. And especially if there isn't already a word for it. Its very existence is in question.

Thus there are things that don't exist, and there are things that do, Nadar thinks. Interesting that many things that don't exist do manifest themselves and many things that do, prefer not to. He makes a note of this in the margin of a notepad, which is nearly full. He returns the little book to the back pocket of his trousers and slips the pen into the breast pocket of his sportsjacket.

In spite of his tendency to keep his back rigid whenever sitting or walking, as if a board was stuck in his shirt, Nadar is an attractive man. He is indifferent about his everyday attire: always the same thing, a white shirt and a faded pair of jeans. With a long grey coat for street wear. But with his tanned arms and face, his blue eyes and stiff, sometimes charming manner, he looks as if he stepped out of an erotic film

from the sixties: an innocent, fairly modest film which still had something of a plot.

His vanity lies in the details. Simple outerwear, but an expensive silk robe, dark blue with a honeycomb pattern. And his house, old and stately, which is always in perfect condition. His need for order doesn't allow him to leave anything lying around. Once Emma even caught him casually fanning out a couple of magazines on the table. He never dared do that again.

His vanity lies not only in fancy details but also in frugality. He has a bicycle and not a car, eats in a cheap restaurant and smokes roll-ups instead of shop-bought cigarettes.

Not having a car is not only a matter of principle, but a necessity, since he never bothered to get a driver's licence. Emma does have a driver's licence and a little green car as well. Ugly but cheery. And necessary for her shop. She regularly has to transport heavy or fragile objects. In her shop, which has a name like a collection of short stories (*The Flying Carpet and Other Objects*), she sells her own hand-made rugs and tapestries as well as ceramics, figurines and paintings. It's a successful shop, in which a number of regular artists exhibit, with a guest-artist every two months. Often the guest-artist joins the regular clique after the two months. The little shop is definitely more a store than a gallery, since you're able to order art there.

"I want a six-part service with a modern version of our family coat-of-arms on it."

"I've painted the whole living room in red, yellow and black stripes and I'd like a painting to match in the same colour scheme."

Emma has just about everything on hand: abstract, realistic, small and large.

"...As a client you may pick an artist, based on examples in the shop. An artist who works with the materials you find beautiful and in a style that you like.

You choose your own style for your own work of art. And we help you, since there are of course as many styles as there are artists. And then it's good to know

where exactly you should be looking...”

A hole in the market, they call it. Not only the public but a lot of the “creators” too are happy with the concept because they don’t have to work completely as freelancers. Nice to have a commission. Everybody’s happy: the artist no longer has to have a house full of unsold creations, and the clients get stuff that matches all their other things.

Emma wants to expand her business further: at the moment she is already in talks with a fashion designer. And a few fabric pattern designers. Also with a girl from the university who can write. She could take down biographies or family histories.

The idea is eventually to expand to a total business in which anyone can order anything to do with beauty and ugliness, a store in which nothing is mass-produced but everything is geared towards someone’s unique wishes. An ideal that Nadar certainly doesn’t support and which he sometimes hates her for.

“Nothing is less individual than the personality. The more something is geared to the individual, the more common, banal and ugly it becomes,” he says. “In addition to that you mustn’t forget all those poor people who now have to decide for themselves what is beautiful. You give them a freedom of choice which they can’t handle and they never asked for. You shouldn’t do that. Creativity for house, garden and kitchen is not pretty.”

That last bit, that part about freedom of choice that people can’t handle, is something that Emma can agree with, at least in part. People don’t know what they want, what’s beautiful and what’s ugly; therefore she provides them with examples. A folder comes out every month in which the clients are not only introduced to the guest-artist but at the same time receive tips and ideas about the variety of decorative objects and creative solutions for in and around the house.

He shakes his head and turns his attention to something else.

Nadar is still standing with his hands behind his back in the room in front of the

windows of the garden doors. Something has to happen, he decides. While putting on his jacket and walking outside he considers what he should do. He still has to buy a new notepad. He has been looking for one for some time: a clean, new notepad, not too big, not too small, something to fit in his back pocket, without pre-printed lines on the paper, thin paper but not the kind that allows the ink to bleed through if you write on it with a fountain pen. And the cover has to be linen, but preferably not hard cover because they aren't so ideal to carry around all day in your pocket. And, take note; without those asinine gold letters saying "Notes" or "Diary".

The increasing childishness of our prescriptive society: this little book is meant especially for notes. This little book is meant especially for "personal day-to-day messages." In here you're only allowed to record telephone numbers or addresses. Even in a daily planner – these are the days of the week: Monday has five lines, Tuesday too, just like all the other weekdays, but Saturday and Sunday have to share five lines because they're not useful days. Saturday and Sunday have been declared lesser days, by certain arrogant, meddling authorities with a lot of power. Because you're not productive then.

Daily planners have an even more serious tendency to be know-alls. They pretend to have the ability to say where we have arrived in time. Every day they tell you what date it is, what day and what year. They don't take into account that events may sometimes work out a bit less chronologically. They tell you which day is which date, where to record your class schedule, when it's a holiday. They force you to write down your social security number and an address in case of emergency, because otherwise the blanks will remain blank, and that makes rather a lonely impression.

But at the moment a daily planner is not the matter at hand. Nadar is in search of a notebook that he has already looked for before but not found, because he is too critical.

On his way through the city he passes Emma's shop. Her car is parked in front of the door: she's there, and so he goes in.

Emma is carefully unpacking china from boxes. Nadar stands in the doorway and

clears his throat: "I'd like something nice, approximately 6 x 6, for the living room, above the fireplace, where there's now something flapping its wings in quiet aggression."

"Preferably something that matches; the room is fairly dark, wood. There are rugs on the floor in various shades of green. I was thinking of a painting of something green, with a dark wood frame around it. I was thinking something abstract but old-fashioned, maybe with abstract flower petals and plant leaves. A bit in the style of Monet, could you do that?"

Emma doesn't know if she should laugh at this. She rises to her feet and looks at him. Inquisitive and a bit melancholy.

Nadar walks up to her and takes her by the waist. While he presses himself against her, he whispers that he's really in the mood to make love to her, preferably in the shop window, so everybody can see that she's his. And Emma blushes. There's nothing she likes better than his wanting her to be his. They make love quickly in the back room. She sits on the edge of her desk and he pushes her backwards, until she's on her back and a lamp tips over. Her dress pulled up, his jacket still on. He pulls her towards him by her legs and pushes her away. He doesn't know if she's crying or moaning.

He is tidying his clothes again, just as the doorbell rings. He comes out of the little room, says a polite hello to the man waiting in the shop and leaves. Emma walks into the store with a bowed head, her hair dishevelled, her cheeks red. She looks through the window at Nadar, who walks away without turning around. After that she puts on a smile and addresses the customer.

2

Nadar is not a contented man, but when he is sleeping he's not unhappy.

He thinks that if there is something to be discovered, it must be sought in the world of dreams. Dream, in Nadar's view, is a dishonest word. The word dream gives the appearance of illusion. And the contents of a dream have nothing to do with

that. Is something an illusion if it feels more intense than everyday routine? Is it deceptive if you see possibilities you didn't see before? Is it a figment of your imagination that you fly in circles through your own room doing artistic leaps and figures-of-eight? Is it untrue if you can feel and smell that Ducky really exists and is standing in front of you?

Emma doesn't feel that way. Even when she is dreaming, she lives within her daily routine. Ask her what happened, and she says something like, I dreamt I hadn't shut off the gas. I woke up covered in sweat, and I ran to the kitchen, but there was nothing the matter. Just anxiety. (She also dreams that she's late for something if she sleeps through the alarm clock. Or that she is looking for a place to pee when she really needs to go to the lavatory.)

Nadar is lying on his back in bed, wide-awake. Emma is asleep. It is nighttime. He hates this room, the bedroom, white woolly carpet on the floor, iron frame bed with ornamental curls, covered in green mildew, white curtains, white pillows, a new house; everything gives the impression of being clean and spotless and it isn't and for that reason it is false. Nadar has his own workroom. Emma doesn't; she does her work here in the bedroom. Against the right wall of the room she has all her materials piled up. Her baskets with spun and unspun wool. Her loom, her spinning wheel. Here Emma makes her rugs. They are pretty rugs, her tapestries. Emma has a good feel for colours and how they relate to one another.

The dream from this afternoon pops into his head again. He considers telling it to Emma, the dream about the colour. Nadar turns over towards Emma. Looks at her. She is turned away from him, in the foetal position. She is in a deep sleep. He whispers her name a few times, a little louder each time, but she doesn't respond. He sits up and tugs at her shoulders until she turns over onto her back, moaning.

"Are you awake?" he whispers hopefully. Emma answers sleepily in the affirmative. He begins to tell her in an enthusiastic whisper about the dream with that colour, about knowing that colour, a quite elemental colour, which she may be able to do something with, in her rugs.

"I was walking somewhere; I don't know where. I had come there by train, but that's not important. It was dark, and I was lost. There was no one at all, and I was no longer able to go back. I was searching for a place to spend the night. I walked

past a deserted shopping street, quite modern and yet run-down at the same time. A café was still open. You saw the steamed-up windows, heard the bluster inside, but I was looking for some kind of hotel. I quickly forgot that, because all sorts of interesting things were in the shop windows. So I stopped in front of every window in order to see what everything was all about. A lot of nonsensical things. Something with clocks on springs. That sort of I-don't-know-what-kind-of-gift-I-should-buy stuff. Plastic, brightly-coloured, designer knockoffs: that popular-dummy-for-cutesy-twentysomethings-with-the-taste-of-toddlers feel. Postcards with pictures on them that disappear every so often, not especially interesting: predictable birds or butterflies, a rubber duck, things that are of no use whatsoever, thought up by simple people who are trying to drive away boredom.

“More people came to stand around me. That always happens if you stop in front of a shop window, even if it's the middle of the night. People think that they're missing something if they don't look too. Occasionally I've done experiments. You start looking at a certain point in the sky, surprised, fascinated, and then you take a peek out of the corner of your eye to see if people are stopping to look at what you're staring at. It never fails. From time to time I used to think about making that my job: strolling down the street and arranging with shopkeepers to stop and look at their display window at some length a few times every day, in order to lure other people. Must be a good job if the weather's nice. Anyway, I was standing in front of that shop window with those silly gifts, when I saw a box of markers which would stick to the air, markers with which you could draw in space. It's quite a good invention as a matter of fact – just think what all could do with those, markers that can make three-dimensional drawings, and it occurred to me that I might be able to use a couple of them; it was a fine, extensive assortment. All the colours a person could think of. More than that. At first I didn't pick up on it, and then it struck me that something else was going on, that the markers were even more unusual. And more extensive. And then I saw it: there was another colour there. A special kind of colour. One I'd never seen before. I'm totally unable to describe how it looked; it was too different for that. With existing colours you say: it's a little bit of this, a little bit of that. But this colour was clearly elemental and defied comparison with other, existing colours. Can you imagine that?”

Emma doesn't say anything. Nadar asks her if she's heard him. He shakes her by her shoulder. Emma moans in her sleep and answers a vague "mwyeah."

Nadar regains his enthusiasm and asks, "I mean, can you imagine that?"

Emma has learned to agree with everything when she is sleeping. She has got so good at it that she has even learned to put the same emotion in her voice as the person asking the questions. Sad, serious, enthusiastic. At this particular moment enthusiastic. She doesn't have to be awake for that. He gets annoyed and considers what else she would agree with if he asked her.

"I could ask her if she loves someone else. But of course that doesn't mean anything. Although, if I get a tape recorder and record it, I'll have proof."

Emma has rolled over on her side again, in a deep sleep, none the wiser.

Nadar stands up, puts on his fine robe and goes to his study. The study is separated from the bedroom by a narrow hallway. He partitioned off the study from the bedroom himself with two improvised walls because he doesn't want Emma to have to pass through his room to go up and down the stairs. They do nothing to block out noise. Nadar always hears everything. He is thinking about putting up an extra sound-damping wall in his own room but can never find the nerve to come out with the fact that he is saving egg cartons to make a wall.

When he is out Emma crushes the egg cartons and puts them with the old paper.

He lies down on the bed, hands folded behind his head. To ponder. He looks at his room. He has done everything to make it look like a student's room. Dark, small, austere and dusty. Self-mounted planks that serve as a bookshelf above a single bed with brown covers. Notes on the wall about notable things, and practical items such as dates, schedules and expenses.

Thoughts and ideas.

A title: "Two prisoners in bed." With a line under it to round things off.

Underneath that a question: "Why is a pig called 'pig' und nicht viel mehr Schwein?"

A piece of knowledge: Nadar is the used man.

He adds another one: Emma always says "yes" when she's dreaming.

The habit of hanging every bright idea on the wall is embarrassing if someone

else sees it. Unless you're proud of all your thoughts. Emma once told him about one of her guest-artists, a composer who goes to work as follows: in his study he hangs up sheets of paper all around, and by filling these with lines, stripes, and sometimes words and various colours, he sets up a proto-composition. By staring at it for some time he can inspire himself into writing the notes that make it possible to play what was originally just scribbling. Is Nadar jealous of this man? He's not proud of his own wall inspiration at any rate; he forbids Emma to enter his room at any time, something she generally doesn't do either.

Calculations. Also receipts, some for tax purposes, some from a strange desire to continue to remember a situation by recalling what he consumed:

2:06	6928.1
Spirits	33.99
J. Daniels	37.99
Subtotal	71.98
Thank you and come again	

White light bulb, hanging from the ceiling by its wires without a shade, indifferently throwing light around the room. An old table in front of the window, his desk, a chair from the series Chairs for the Dinner Table, and another desk chair. Old English, he could have got from home, just like the brown, wool covers on his bed and the green desk lamp.

One thing is not student-like: a small painting which hangs next to the door on the improvised wall. He looks at it. A girl on a chair in a short, yellow-green skirt and a white slip bends over and takes off her stockings. She sits unhappily on a chair in a white-beige room and feels lonely.

“Hi Ducky,” he says to the girl. She takes her stockings off.

A real student doesn't possess paintings; a real student possesses illusions.

An interview with Floor Haakman

WRITING ON THE VERGE OF MADNESS

*by Wiggele Wouda (12 May 2001, Hervormd Nederland)
translated by Steve Leinbach*

*“Language makes things banal. Once you’ve given something a name you think you know it.” The writer Floor Haakman experiments with reality and with dreams in her book *Inedible Bread*.*

*By the age of seven she had already written a seventy-two page novel. At the time her father – the writer Anton Haakman – would give her the choice: either clean up the mess in her room or fill up a page for a quarter. Twenty years later Floor Haakman is making her debut with her novel *Inedible Bread*, which has been well-received by critics. The novel deals with the fascinating world of the dream that creates its own reality.*

I trained myself to dream, in order to get to know that reality as well. I used to have the feeling that nobody knew me. And that disturbed me tremendously. Because of that people had also a one-sided image of me. I wanted to correct that image by making something through which I also could show other aspects of myself.

Nobody knew me because as a young person, as an adolescent I probably wasn’t alert enough. After a conversation I used to have, and still do have, different thoughts than while it was going on. When I was at the Montessori Lyceum in Amsterdam, that feeling of not being known was a painful experience for me. I did an experiment, together with a girlfriend who suffered from that same thing. We wanted to free ourselves completely from the rest of the world, to create a reality of our own. We agreed not to speak with other people any more unless it was necessary. We communicated in riddles or crazy sentences that people couldn’t make any sense of. ‘What pretty kitchen cabinets!’ for example. Sentences that also come back in *Inedible Bread*, like: ‘Why is a pig called “pig” und nicht viel mehr Schwein?’ This last sentence I thought up much later by the way, over a glass of wine.

Those sentences came about during audio plays. We would make up interviews with characters from the real world and have those characters give answers to our own questions. We’d observe people from our own circle and give those people an interpretation, an identity, a character, all of our own devising. As if they were characters whom you could still provide with a personality.

Sometimes we checked our personality against the actual personality and then that resulted in other realities. And then it would turn out that nothing is what you think it is. For example we would give someone a bad character, while

in everyday reality he was very friendly.

We started doing it in the ninth grade and in the eleventh grade it came to a dead-end. It led to our becoming alienated from the world. The two realities diverged, and they used to say we were crazy. With reason. There were times that we were truly on the verge of madness. To be honest I was also scared that it would go too far. Especially when I was really teetering on the edge. I recently met a professor who said he was happy to see me because he had expected that I would come to a bad end. But nevertheless things turned out fairly well. We also knew that people thought we were a little crazy. But naturally we couldn't tell them that we were doing it on purpose.

Social isolation – we weren't invited to parties anymore, for example – was the result of this experiment for two pubescent girls. That was awful of course because we still wanted to belong. But that wasn't easy for us; apparently we just didn't have it. The weird thing was, when I abandoned that experiment after a couple years, I heard from people that I had always been so unusual. But I was so different because I was missing something. I couldn't be what they, the popular group, expected of me. At school it wasn't accepted, and at home they really didn't notice it, I don't think.

That experiment has been the basis for my personality. Thus for my book as well. I think that without that period I would have been another person and written another book. But I have always been interested in experiments with the mind. And naturally that experiment stemmed from loneliness too. I think that if you'd had a happy social environment you never would've started that. I thought it was a rotten period. I didn't care too much for either of my parents – father being a writer, mother a sculptor and painter –, as befits a healthy adolescent. I wanted to change reality to make it more interesting. It was often very dull with long, empty stretches between things.

When I went off to college, I was more interested in building up a social life than really studying. I succeeded in that too. But I've never been a serious student. I never did finish any course of study – and I tried quite a few. Didn't even finish enough required courses to officially enter a major, actually. I did more strolling around and hanging out than studying at college.

Inedible Bread makes frequent nods in the direction of philosophy. In continuation of Plato the dream is an important reality for the main character in my book. He tries to fit the elements of the everyday reality of his wife Emma into his version of reality: he's a dreamer in the real world and experiences that dream-world as real. Echoes of my experiment when I was an adolescent.

When you dream, you generally also believe in the situation that you find yourself in. The moment you dream you're going to the baker's, just to chose something banal, then you are at the baker's. And Nadar puts everyday reality into his dream reality.

Dreams are often so original. So many unexpected things happen and so much is possible. That interests me. In addition to that it's like another world.

With its own towns, houses, buildings, squares, you name it.

For a time I consciously learned how to dream. I did that by sleeping in the afternoon, because you sleep less deeply then than during the night. And if you sleep less deeply, you dream more; you hallucinate more; you're closer to it all. I did that during and for the writing of this book too. Training to dream so that you're conscious every moment that you're dreaming. Then you can also decide to do something in that dream. Then everyday reality begins to get useful. In that dream-reality situations and conflicts get put into perspective.

Situations in dreams often don't occur in reality. In dreams people are suddenly no longer polite. They aren't bothered by all those things that you're bothered by in reality. You don't have to go from A to B, but you're already there, so to speak. You don't need any story line.

If you train yourself to remember dreams, you can remember a lot more too. Using the kind of methods where you have to make up your mind to remember it or train yourself to tell someone in your dream what you're dreaming.

Even so, you mostly forget the dreams the next morning if you have to encompass them in words. That comes about because language is incapable of saying several things at once. You can't utter six words at the same time. In dreams you can. You experience much more than you could ever capture in language.

Language immediately makes things banal. If you try to imagine a world without language, it's completely full. The moment you've given something a name, you think you know it and no longer have to pay any attention to it. And in this way language sometimes makes the world quite empty. What we call 'known.'

Now that we've already given form to the world, it's difficult to see a variation. Because that doesn't fit into the image that we've already created. I find that to be the greatest shortcoming of language.

It could be that all sorts of things are going on now that we don't notice because they're unknown. There are a lot of things we talk about, like molecules. But we've never seen them. There is an almost Buddhist-like, perhaps even religious quality to that. Possibly a form of pure, invisible truth.

When I see how happy my daughter is and the uninhibited way in which she looks at the world, I often feel guilty. Language hems her in more and more, and as a mother I know that the real world along with language will confine her joy, since what is said also exists, and thus it will become less interesting for her too.