Giustina Selvelli-Butkovič

„I seek refuge in those small, positive habits, which are productive for my mind.“

Italy, Monfalcone, 26 March – 1 July

Giustina Selvelli-Butkovič, PhD, Assistant Professor and Researcher in the field of Migration and Intercultural Relations, Faculty of Humanities, University of Nova Gorica, Slovenia.

I spent the lockdown in Monfalcone, Italy, close to the Slovene border, temporarily living in a small attic with my husband after we got back from a long trip in the US with no time to organize the new life we were planning in Slovenia.

26 March

I could have slept better, but the wind was blowing so strong that I feared the house would be just swept away by its strength… Recurrent thoughts about the end of the world… and strange, somehow pleasant dreams… I was walking around my home town of Pieris, in the fields surrounding the river Isonzo, and many strange birds were flying above my head, birds I had never seen before directly, colorful pelicans and a couple of black storks… and in the dream I was thinking: well this is another sign of the human world collapsing and nature taking back what belongs to it, no poachers interrupting the flight of this wonderful birds… and in that moment the black storks descended to catch some little fish on a small channel streaming from the Isonzo… I felt paralized by their beauty and feared I might disturb their meal time so I hid behind a tree and stared at them like a child seeing an animal for the first time, and cried out of joy.

This dream pacified me, I still cannot stop thinking about it. Maybe it was partly

caused by the combination of that peculiar lavender tea bought in California and the delicious Slovene home wine we drank yesterday night. After I woke up and turned on the TV to watch the news, what stroke me the most was the headline appearing on Rai News 24, “Closure of frontiers planned by President Mattarella”. I could not understand its sense and immediately felt panic running through my veins. Our borders here in the region of Friuli Venezia Giulia, with our neighbors Austria and Slovenia, are already locked, they have been closed more than two weeks ago, while I was still in the US… So what does this imply, maybe that they will not open again, for a long time?

This is so crazy and I still can’t believe it, especially since I received the news that I got accepted for a new job at University of Nova Gorica. It seems so ironic, just when I think all is going perfectly, when I can finally live my trans-frontier life fully as the “border person” I always dreamed to be, such a disaster happens, something totally unpredictable and unprecedented. My contract there starts on the 1st of April, that is in less than a week, but god knows when will I be able to go to the University, meet my new colleagues and start working in my office. It is also difficult to predict what the Slovene regulations will be like, I am afraid that we as Italians will have be ready to face further restrictions in entering the country. Whatever happens here in Italy, the thought of having a work contract in Slovenia gives me a hint of hope, it could maybe constitute my “Salvation”. If things go really wrong here, I could maybe be allowed to cross the border to go to work there… and I could first rent an apartment, just for the beginning. Maybe I will be put in quarantine first, who knows… Andrea is also hoping this for us, he as my husband would have the right to come with me.

There are very few people infected with the virus in our province of Gorizia, we actually checked the data and we are the least affected province in the whole of Northern Italy, and I feel so lucky about it. But the restrictions that have been imposed on us are the same everywhere in the country, something I do not fully agree with. And we feel suffocating, especially since the newer regulations prohibit

us even to go for a walk alone in our area. I find it so senseless, and my neighbor who left China at the end of January to come here told me some days ago that the situation was much smoother back there, she was allowed much more freedom, because she was not living in Wuhan but somewhere near Hangzhou...

In the afternoon I started reading "The last days of Mankind" by Karl Kraus, I had tried to read it almost 15 years ago but never really went over a few pages. It is not an easy reading, but I find some uncanny elements of reflection about the period we are going through, some similarities with the human, and socio-political conditions he is describing during the First World War... I hope to have more time to read it tomorrow.

27 March

I have been feeling apathetic for the entire day. Could not focus on anything. I wanted to write, read, play the piano, but this sense of constant uncertainty is making everything so difficult. I would like to know something more about my future, our future, because this limbo condition is blocking me in a remote present that I cannot fully grasp, in which all my senses are dumb, silenced, from the taste of wine to the sound of music through which I try to come back to reality.

I was actually thinking about the topic of climate refugees, also because of my prospective job at University of Nova Gorica, where it was suggested this might become an important part of my future research... Anyway, while reading some article about the impact of climate change, deforestation and intensive land exploitation in the spread of new viruses I thought all of a sudden about a possible unforeseen scenario: could I become a "virus refugee"? What if the situation does not get better for a long time here in Italy and we are forced to stay in quarantine for many more months? I would go crazy, but again maybe my only light beyond the

tunnel could be Slovenia, a much smaller country where I hope the situation will get much better soon. There are now more and more studies proving the correlation between the levels of air pollution in the Po Valley and the striking impact of the virus: I wonder when will this element be taken into consideration more seriously, and whether somebody influential will dare questioning the development model that has made Lombardy in particular the wealthiest region in Italy, but also the one with the highest rate of deaths from pollution consequences. It is so tragic and nobody ever addressed this question properly since the beginning of the coronavirus emergency.

The Papal Mass televised at 6pm was something quite impressive, something I will never forget, although I only watched some minutes of it. It was surreal to see St Peter Square completely empty, the rain, and to hear the alarming words of the Pope. I appreciated his reference to the climate crisis, and I wonder whether this desperate calling for deeper respect towards nature will remain again unheard… Then President Mattarella gave a speech to the nation and tried to reassure Italians about the possibility of overcoming this tragedy, united, because "Italians always show their best side during hard times". Unfortunately, I am quite skeptical about this, but let's hope that I am wrong.

28 March

More bad news making my future life during quarantine look even darker. This morning, I read an email from University of Nova Gorica telling me that my contract cannot start on the 1st of April as planned: because of the emergency situation due to the coronavirus, the University cannot proceed with my contract until the moment the conditions will allow it, when this crisis will be finished. So, who knows when… I felt such void in me, the idea of starting already in a few days was one of the few things to keep me sane, with a short-term perspective of "productivity". Now I feel

lost, I definitely need to impose myself a routine, a strict one, consisting of exercises for both the body and the mind. At least the weather was nice today, and we could enjoy some afternoon sun on the terrace, where we spent hours reading and relaxing... But I never, not even for a moment, managed to overcome this sensation of being trapped, or to forget about the condition we are going through. This is why I cannot really enjoy my time reading novels or other serious books. Actually, the only thing that distracts me is playing the game of mahjong on the computer. It reminds me of the trick I was using on the plane with my old game-boy and the Tetris game. Although terrified by the flight and the recurrent turbulences, the pathos of the game managed to keep my mind focused on the goal of surviving to that virtual reality. It is interesting, and something proving once again the power of games on the mind, as Bateson affirms somewhere in his "Towards an Ecology of the Mind". So, the aim would be to use games as much as possible, maybe to play with my husband some table games, the problem is that I don't have them here in this house and we cannot find them in the few shops that are open. We could order some online or I could escape to my parents' home secretly at a certain point and bring them here. Anyway, an important fact is that I managed to continue with the writing of my novel and, after almost 4 months of pause, I wrote one page, it is nothing but it means a lot to me. I hope to be able to maintain some regularity in this. I also thought that the universe has been telling me that I need to finish this book in so many different ways but I never listened, now it even forced the entire world in quarantine and put a pause on my employment contract so I can avoid any further excuse and just focus on that. Sometimes I really believe this, I know it is crazy but at least I feel that there is something I can actually do, there is some power in my hands and the future of the world depends on me: Yes, I will continue with my novel, maybe I can finish it within a month, if I really want to, everything is possible!

29 March

Strange Sunday. At least I am finding more comfort in food, maybe I am a bit exaggerating, also considering the lack of exercise, but what can I do, I need some pleasures. We both woke up so nervous and frustrated, in bad mood. The weather was perfect though, and maybe because of this we felt the gap between our high ideals and the miserable reality of our possibilities. Later in the night I found out that actually so many people violated the restrictive orders about leaving their houses today, and were fined by the police. I guess it happened because of the irresistible Sunday weather, in this crazy end of March... The most touching thing today was the videocall we did with 10 member of my Italo-Mexican-Turkish family all over the world. It felt so great, I was so full of emotions for the beauty of the situation, how we managed to come together in a virtual space and share so many important things and facts that we are experiencing in this moment. It is something so unprecedented, we are going through the same things exactly. Although in all other countries people are still allowed to have a walk and spend at least some time outdoors to do exercise and take some dose of Vitamin D.

I drank so much during the call, I had actually already started during the previous call we did with our couple of friends who are living less than 2 km apart. I needed to let myself go, and the delicious Pinot Grigio of a local wine producer in our region made me finally feel free and relaxed. I love our family, I feel so blessed for having all these wonderful people in my life, it is difficult to be so distant but luckily, we are finding new ways to stay in touch.

30 March

I spent the morning talking to my mom and to my friend N., whose grandmother died yesterday in Naples at the age of 95, but not because of coronavirus. She was desperate because she wanted to reach her dad who lives there, and the rest of the family, to be with them in this tragic time, but the Civic Protection she contacted

told her that she was not allowed to travel anywhere, the only exception would be for a parent's death. So she is mourning this loss all alone, and her pain made me cry, because I think at how many people cannot take part to the burial of their dear ones in this emergency moment. Later, I also called her dad to give him my condolences, he sounded devastated, although he recognized that his mother was so lucky to live until 95 years of age, and he tried to warn me in all possible ways not to go out, and to prepare a home-made mask. Later in the afternoon a miracle happened: I managed to go back to playing the piano (Kachaturian's Sonatina, like 23 years ago!) and I wrote 2 pages of my novel (about the 11th of June 2013), and I also did 20 minutes of yoga. I know that the secret is to unblock myself altogether, on different fronts, and I hope to be able to continue like this, I feel so much better. I decided that from tomorrow on I will start waking up again at "human times", that is around 7:30, not two hours later like it's been happening since weeks, during the trip to the US and then after our return here. I need to give myself a sense of order, a shape in which I can use my time at its best. So yes, I would say the only thing I regret not having done is studying the Chinese language, I count on being able to add that activity too from tomorrow...

31 March

The alarm rang at 7:30 but it felt really too early, so I ended up spending an extra hour in bed, after a not very restorative night. I am not really enjoying sleeping in these last days, because maybe I can never let myself totally go, knowing that it would imply an even harder awakening, realizing the aching discrepancy between my dreams, my desires and the reality. The only things that are keeping me sane are the daily contact with people and this little set of good habits that I managed to establish since yesterday. Today I had to skip yoga (but still did some stretching exercises) but I did study a lot of Chinese in the morning, especially through that

nice website that allows you to recognize the characters and play an exciting game. After many years of not having studied or practiced the language in any way, I was still able to recognize 92 out of 100 Chinese characters in the quiz. That was a nice surprise! During my late morning walk in town, I ended up in a small shop I had never been to, where I bought some good white tea, Pai Mu Tan. I was not expecting this little shop to be open because I did not think it would be included in the "essential" ones that are allowed to keep their business going. Luckily it is, and I had a nice conversation with the young guy running it, who excused himself several times because of the "slowness of the whole process", that is the procedure of transferring the desired amount of tea from the big container to a small plastic bag that was given to me: he had to do it wearing the gloves and a mask and could not give me the possibility of smelling its scent, but that was not a problem, I already knew how it is like, and furthermore, I replied, "I do not really have much to do this morning", so the fact that the operation took so many minutes did not bother me, on the contrary! My increasing desire for good food led me to different grocery shops, where I was able to find the long-awaited wild asparagus, the thin ones that mark the "opening" of the real asparagus season. I paid a lot for them but did not care too much, I was happy to help the small shop in some way in these times of hardship. The government has not yet updated us about the upcoming renewal of the restrictive measures but everyone is sure that these will last at least three more weeks. Most likely, as the newspapers are saying, until the 4th of May. I still cannot accept it, it is so difficult to get accustomed to this new condition, especially now that spring is blooming with its colors and the cyclic calling of a better life, a social one, made of nice encounters and good time spent in nature. The only thing consoling me, as I keep saying, is the awareness that nature will benefit from all this. I just read that the number of flights in Europe has decreased of around 88%. This is something amazing, and I think that I had already decided not to fly for a long time, possibly taking a transatlantic ship next time I will have to travel to the US and Mexico... Besides, I have always been the one loving slow travels, I was the one who

used to go to Istanbul by bus or train, I did it so many times. In this sense I can happily adapt, although the thing bittering my thought is the consciousness that the frontiers might stay closed for quite a long period of time, and this will be so catastrophic for me and my "dromomanic" soul... How will I be able to be an anthropologist, an ethnographer of Southeast Europe if I will not be allowed to go there for months? There were so many things I wanted to do, so many stories to explore and situation to experience, starting from the Danube Delta... What a pity!

1 April

Terrible night, I could not fall asleep for at least an hour and then I woke up around 5am, unexplainably, and never managed to get some serious sleep again, although I did have some very fervid dreams. One of these was so stressful, I was trying to get home after a long trip and was trying to catch my train at Venice station but it was suddenly canceled, so I had to find another one but there was no other stopping in Monfalcone. Luckily a kind officer helped me and even bought me 1st class ticket with his special privilege card, without asking me any money, but told me to hurry as much as possible because it was leaving in a few minutes... but I was so tired that I could barely keep my eyes open and ended up on the wrong track, the way the station was structured was so misleading and confusing... I finally managed to get on the train and found a seat in a (disappointing) 1st class compartment, and I thought that I had to inform my mom about my arrival, although it was still not sure when I would get to Monfalcone: I was first arriving in Trieste and from there I would take another train... even though this didn't make sense... Then I woke up. So much tension in the dream, it probably replicated my state of mind a few weeks ago when I was trying to figure out how to get back to Italy from California after the many flight disruptions. Luckily we made it, just in time. In the morning I had a long phone conversation with my friend Iliyana. She is in Plovdiv with her daughter since the end

of February, she managed to escape from Milan just in time and now they are stuck in Bulgaria, although they seem to enjoy it down there in her native town. Iliana's husband is however stuck in Italy, he is in quarantine after having come back from the US less than a week ago, and he will not be able to reach them. She congratulated me for my prospective job at Nova Gorica and told me she is confident I will be able to give the best in that context, and that we should think about some common research project to develop. She also told me – and reassured me – that she is not able to focus on work in this moment, even though she has so many articles to finish, a book to edit and so on. But her mind is constantly oscillating, with very limited attention on scientific matters, the constant flow of news is disrupting any work plan, but she seems to accept quite peacefully. I went out to do some grocery shopping and withdraw money from the ATM of my bank, and on the road, I became witness to a very unpleasant scene. A police patrol had stopped a man, of Bangladeshi origin, in the middle of the street, in front of a small supermarket, apparently called by an elderly person who was pointing his finger at him, and the policeman was shouting at the Bangladeshi man, with so much violence: "You are not allowed to go to shop every day! You must do your grocery shopping only once a week, isn't this clear? Now you have to pay a fine, it is 400 euros, pay 400 euros! And go back home, GO BACK HOME!". The scene continued for some time, but I decided not to stop because I thought I would not have been able to control myself and would have most likely lost control, ending up creating troubles for myself. The poor man was trying to explain the situation, to excuse himself (for a rule that nobody had ever made clear, the rule of the exclusively once-per week grocery shopping the policeman decided to institute in that moment) but the policeman was just shouting at him, not treating him like a citizen, but like an inferior person. It was so shocking for me, and this bitterness became even bigger when I went home and my husband told me a scene he had just seen at another supermarket, where again a man of Bangladeshi origin was told by the male cashier that the items he had bought were not appropriate, as there was a bottle of wine and a bag of pasta. I had just been to that supermarket and bought some cheese and lettuce but of course as I am (or at

least I look) local, nobody had nothing to complain about the (meager) content of my shopping bag. So two different cases of discrimination towards people of Bangladeshi origin in our town happening at the same time. I wonder how many take place on a daily basis. On social media I then read a news about a man being fined in some town in Piedmont because he had bought a bottle of wine and something else, considered “non essential”. Who ever said alcohol was excluded from our shopping list? Are they going to decide what we are allowed to eat too? What kind of pastry, what kind of pasta or meat? This is becoming more and more crazy. Why are cigarettes still being sold then? By the way, when I was coming back home, I heard a woman screaming from the balcony of a big apartment block: “No f... way that everything will be fine!”. I smiled, but also felt sad in realizing that people are starting to lose their patience, and this is a fact proven by the daily bulletin of people who committed suicide because they lost their job or simply because they were too depressed, the endless femicides, family murders, etc.

I spent most of the afternoon cleaning the attic like crazy, even washing some old stuffed animals (cats), it gave me such a big satisfaction. Then as usual, Chinese language practice, writing my novel, playing the piano. At least I found some harmony in these fruitful activities that are working positively on my mind. I will try to memorize the entire Kachaturian Sonatina and play it without the musical score, as I used to do when I was 13... I will take advantage of this quarantine time to recover some past skills that I thought would be lost for good, so at least I will have something to be happy of after the end of this nightmare, that apparently will last for at least two more weeks (but we know that they always say only two weeks... it will be most likely one entire month more with the highest level of restrictions).

2 April

I slept so well last night, finally, although I am always having way too many dreams,

so intense, they start as soon as I close my eyes, it is so impressive. In one of them I was watching a friend of Andrea standing in a queue to get some packages of food, surprised to find out that he was among the poorer ones that need assistance in this emergency situation. I guess the dream was linked to my worry about the financial future of many of our friends, who own some small activities and have very little money to survive with. I actually realized that I have no wealthy friends at all here in my region, and in general all the people I know belong to very low economic strata of society... This is why I cannot stop thinking about the situation in the future, and wonder how we will be able to recover properly. My new obsession for cleaning materialized once again in the necessity of putting more order in this house, starting from the bathroom. The satisfaction I get from these household activities is incomparable to anything else. And I can easily admit that I rarely get into such manias, with this intensity I would say only once every year. So this is good, because it's been happening since days, and it will help us improve the condition of this humble attic. Tomorrow afternoon I will try to go to my parents' place, by bus, hoping the authorities will not block me and fine me. Andrea will also join his parents for the weekend. We are planning to be back here on Monday morning. It is so insane that we must feel like criminals only because we go to our place of residence, furthermore I was staying with my parents until ten days ago and all my stuff is there. But I already start feeling anxious about it and I really hope all will proceed smoothly. My parents are totally minimizing the issue and tell me not to worry because there should be no controls on the bus, but who knows... In case they ask me for an explanation I will say that I am going to visit my parents to help them in some of their activities and to bring them some things they need, as they cannot drive that far, pointing out the fact that my dad is almost 78 years old, and my mom has a back pain. That is all true! My Chinese language skills are improving day by day and I managed to memorize almost entirely five pages of Kachaturian's sonatina and play it impeccably.

3 April

I did it! I am at my parents' house, after a whole day lived with anxiety and stomach ache at the thought of "doing something illegal". So unpleasant, I felt like a criminal, a thief, just because I had to take a 10-minute ride on a bus. Luckily, the bus driver (the bus was completely empty) was so nice with me and told me he goes to eat at his mom's place every day, because "he cannot cook also for lunch", he cannot even conceive missing one lunch there. He also said that there had been some controls on board in the last days, but very few ones, and that if my justification for the movement is that I am going to assist my old parents, it is considered a good reason and the authorities would not make a problem, or at least that's how it should be. He was so funny, we talked about many things concerning these crazy times, I said that I cannot imagine a summer without going to the beach and the sea and he replied: "if we will not be allowed by then, I will kill myself, I swear!". I said: "me too, and I guess many other people would feel that impulse, but most likely there will be a revolution instead". At my parents' house I tried to relax and enjoy the cats and the big spaces of the house, finally.

4 April

I spent the morning reading tons of newspapers. From today on, we will have to wear protective masks and gloves to enter the supermarkets of our region of Friuli Venezia Giulia, this is a further restrictive measure taken by our (megalomaniac) governor. If people don't have any (as they have disappeared from the pharmacies already long ago), they can use a scarf or something similar instead... My dad found some old masks he had bought to paint the house and gave me one of them. Later in the afternoon I went for a walk in town and reached the supermarket: I put on the mask and the gloves, for the first time, it felt so uncomfortable! But whatever, I find this to be the least annoying part of all the restrictions... however I would not be able

to wear them for long because I cannot breathe properly in it. In the night, when I was watching a nice old Italian movie with my parents, I felt an unpleasant sensation, somehow reminding me of the prequel of a panic attack. Luckily, I managed to control my breath and get over it. But I was very surprised, this hadn't happened for a long time, and I take it as a very bad sign, I guess I feel so constricted, repressed and frustrated for not being able to exercise properly and breath clean air during my usual long walks along the river or on the hills. I feel my legs are turning into jelly again, after all the efforts done while in the US to exercise and be fit for the warm season!

5 April

We (Friuli Venezia Giulia) are the region with the highest incidence of infections among sanitary workers (doctors, nurses and so on) in the whole of Italy. Most of the infections are actually taking place in residences for old people, hospitals, and everyone knows this, however the government (national/regional) hasn't been capable of providing the necessary protective equipment to these vulnerable categories. And then they blame the solitary runner or walker who goes out to get some dose of vitamin D in the fields or on the hills for the spread of the disease. It is getting more and more paradoxical, and my patience (along with that of many other people) is quickly running out. It all sounds so hypocritical, especially the national rhetoric on the "collective suffering", "self-sacrifice" and so on. I guess this is the result of a threefold tendency in our country: that to "self-flagellation" by virtue of our Catholic/Christian background (we have to suffer too, if others – but just "certain significant others", selectively, surely not people in Syria or refugees arriving here – are suffering, how do we dare to long for the sun or for a walk in these times, aren't we ashamed, it is immoral...), that to "melodrama", and with this I mean the collective hysteria and that sense of "satisfaction" when tragedy happens, emerging from the media (together with an embarrassing paternalism), and then to a sort of

“sadistic obsession” to ensure the control of the population with any means, metaphorically similar to the vision of the “panopticon”. I reject all of them and feel so ashamed because of the silence surrounding me, people are getting afraid of speaking freely, and I have never read or heard a single word of dissent on the media, this is quite astonishing.

A friend of a friend was fined 400 euros this morning, because she was found on the street, practically in front of her house, with no “valid reason”, with no dog, on a Sunday. I am speechless.

6 April

I slept very bad last night, I guess I was too nervous again for the idea of having to take the bus to go back from Pieris to Monfalcone and run the risk of being fined by the authorities. So I did not manage to fall asleep until very late, and then I woke up early with the alarm because the bus was leaving at 9:00. The bus stop is located just in front of my parents’ house, luckily, so I waited until the last moment behind the wall surrounding the property, fearing the police might come and stop to ask me for an explanation. On the bus there were only 3 other people, all very old and wearing masks. We were all sitting very distant from each other, but I kept being very nervous with the sensation of going to be soon struck by a panic attack, a sensation that lasted until the moment I got off the bus and started walking very fast towards my attic apartment. Luckily, it was only a 3 minute walk, but still I felt like an illegal migrant somehow, carrying my backpack and another bag full of spring clothes, Chinese language exercise books and piano scores. If the authorities had stopped me, it would have been difficult to justify the presence of those items, but in the declaration I was carrying with me I had stated that I had been to Pieris to help my old parents (my dad is 77) and to take some personal belongings that I needed, both things being true, although my dad is perfectly fit and still goes to walk (“illegally”!)

along the Isonzo river exiting from the back door of our garden, towards the fields, and I am glad he is still doing that because the main reason he is still so healthy and looks at least 10 years younger is his obsession for exercising. I would be very afraid for him if he stopped keeping such good habits, I guess even only 2 months could affect him very negatively. I am very proud of him, putting his health first and disobeying these stupid, senseless regulations: what harm would he be doing to society by going alone for a walk in a rural area, something he has been doing all his life? Many elderly people now do not have the chance of even getting some vitamin D for their bones and doing any movement for their legs, circulatory system and so on. In a long term perspective it will have many side effects, I am afraid.

Anyway, later in the morning I went to do some grocery shopping and wore the mask for almost half an hour but it was a disaster: today it was the first warm day, with over 20 degrees, and I was sweating so much in the supermarket, it was a nightmare. I wonder how will older people be able to wear such torture tool in the next weeks when the heat will increase intensely. I really couldn't breathe with that on. Later, Andrea went also for a walk and for more grocery shopping in another supermarket, and the police stopped him while on his way home by foot, asking him why he was not wearing the mask. He tried to tell them that in this region we are only forced to wear it inside the shops, and that only in Lombardy this is mandatory in all situations outside home, but they shouted at him that he must wear it all the time. This is another example of abuse of power, and of constant pressure on people. It is becoming more and more common and increasingly unbearable, we have now too many examples. Because of the lack of sleep last night, I was feeling without energies today and didn't manage to do as many things as I hoped. Practiced a lot my Chinese, trying to recognize the characters I studied 3 and a half years ago... I have been visibly progressing. Then I played a bit of Beethoven and read the newspapers. Luckily, it seems that the numbers of infections are going down, especially if you look at the real statistic data (provided by only one website) that relate the number of new infections with the numbers of actual tests that have been conducted in the

country. Considering the graphics, figures now look encouraging, however I do not want to feed any hope inside of me and I try not to think of the future, of when/if I will start working at the University in Slovenia, of when/if I will be able to cross the border... I seek refuge in those small, positive habits, which are productive for my mind to keep myself sane, but I definitely need to focus more on my body, because I feel alarmed by the presence of possible signs of panic attacks coming to me again after so many years...

7 April

What nice dreams I had last night. I was out with my friend Lisa, we were enjoying an evening at a bar, drinking beers and having so much fun... it wouldn't have been such a special dream in itself if I hadn't had it during this time in lockdown, I felt so free and enthusiastic just at the sensation of being out, being free and being able to hug her and to be around partying... That is really strange! I guess the gap between the ideal world appearing in my dreams and the reality was however too marked today, because I felt so terribly depressed, until a couple of hours ago when I finally decided to get over it and do some yoga. But until before, I just felt constantly nervous and frustrated, couldn't focus properly on any activity. I decided that from tomorrow on I will have to stick to some stricter habits and plan special working times for each activity, in order to be sure that I will be able to fulfill all my "positive goals". Otherwise, the result is that I feel I am totally wasting my days in this endless limbo of inactivity and helplessness... The further news today is that we have to wear masks also on public transports, and that there are controls being done by plainclothes policemen on the streets. The latest constituting a further element of pressure on our already fragile psyche. I am reading testimonies of people describing their daily walks to the grocery stores as "anxiogenous paths", during which they are afraid of being stopped by the authorities and questioned about the details of their movements. I heard that policemen have fined a girl in our neighboring town

because she went to a supermarket that was not the closest to her house... So now they are deciding where you can do grocery shopping, what you are allowed to buy (not only have they fenced entire sections of items that "cannot be sold", some of which I consider still essential, such as baby clothes or underwear items among others), but they can also decide on what you are allowed to buy, see the examples of last week of people being fined or reproached for buying a bottle of wine... I wonder what the next step could be. Are they going to decide on what we can read or do in our houses? What music we can listen to? How long we have to sleep? It seems exaggerating maybe, but all this that is already happening would have sounded completely crazy and impossible just a little over one month ago, so god knows... Anyway, the numbers are going down rapidly, it seems there is hope, but as I already said I do not want any illusion in front of me, I prefer to hit the stinging reality and build up a stronger armor for the times that await us, because we will have to fight to reverse the multiple manifestations of pandemictatorships, or coronauthoritarianism...

8 April

The moon was so incredible last night, it was mesmerizing and couldn't stop looking at it from the window before going to sleep. I guess its strength and light were so intense that they affected my sleep too, I kept waking up somehow, I had so many dreams but don't remember much now, just the detail of having lost my phone for many days and surviving without it very naturally. I finally managed to get up at 7:30 with the alarm that I had set. One could ask: why the hell do you need to wake up so early when you don't really have any obligations, you are unemployed and days consist of an endless limbo of frustration and limitations...? Well, I guess precisely because I need to combat so much this sense of uselessness, I must impose myself my own regulations and try to align my will to the multiple possibilities I can make of my privileged, free time. When will I have another chance of devoting time to all

these activities I have kept postponing for years, that are calling me so truly? I have to write that novel, it's been burning inside of me for almost 7 years. It is very difficult to put myself in this project now on the one side, because I feel so detached from the reality of Gezi Park that I want to describe and recall, the one I personally experienced back then in Turkey... I would say that in this moment I am exactly at the antipodes of that mythical moment in my life, when a constantly erupting flow of energy was trespassing me and making me part of a lived, shared collectivity and space, in a real battle for the defense of the park and the values of freedom and coexistence. The only connecting link is that mask... the mask I was wearing back then against the tear gas the police was throwing at us. I kept it for 7 years, as a relic of those unforgettable times. Now I am wearing it again, in a totally different context, in which I hate to hear the abuse that is being made of the word "war", totally inappropriate and disrespectful for those who experienced or experience a real one, I think of my friends in former Yugoslavia or the ones who escaped from Syria. Anyway, yes it is paradoxical, I would never think I could resurrect that mask for the purpose of protecting my face from some invisible disease. And actually I will stop using it, today I managed to pass by the shop where my friend Giulia is working as a volunteer to produce masks, she gave me two of them for me and Andrea, for free, they are very nice ones, better than the ones that have been distributed here by the municipality (Andrea already broke one on the first day of use yesterday). What I miss now, if I think again of my nostalgia for Gezi Park and the consequent conflicting implications for the writing of my novel, is precisely this sense of community, the possibility of feeling part of a same group of people who share the inalienable, fundamental values. I do not feel this now at all and I am even afraid of sharing some of my views and criticism with many friends, because I don't know how they would react, if they would really agree with me. But for me this is essential. Andrea already got into a kind of argument with two of his very good friends because they have differing views on how the situation is being handled in terms of restrictions of movements etc. It is really sad and he says he fears things will never be the same again with them. Since yesterday I have been listening to the song "Mad

World" by Tears for Fears for at least 20 times, it makes me go a bit crazy but I like it. Oh my god the song is just so perfect for today's situation! The only interesting thing that happened today was that I met a neighbor living in an apartment block nearby who told me: "you are the daughter of Pierluigi, I remember when many years ago you used to make such great parties on the balcony, you and your friends, it was amazing!". I said: "Oh, those were the good times, 15 years ago already... I was such a young girl back then!". It made me feel so strange, a nice sensation, thinking that a total stranger to me had memories of my past life, of those great moments I lived in this house when I was only 20 years old... and that he somehow enjoyed it too, while on the contrary I had always thought that people living around me here hated me for those parties!

9 April

Today I realized that I needed to create an extra space for myself, a small "niche" to feel safe in. So after innumerable years I finally managed to tidy up the other table in the living room behind the one we are normally using to do everything (working, eating, playing) and in the afternoon I "occupied" it, mainly with my Chinese language books. I feel much better now, I wonder why I waited so long before making this decision. It is difficult to live together the two of us in this tiny attic, and I really need my space sometimes, but I already started doing things I was never able to do before in presence of people, like playing the piano and writing my novel, so I guess as humans we are quite able to adapt to new circumstances, it just takes some time. And now I can feel more optimistic about my productivity in this period. I actually still have to work on a paper I need to submit in about a week because I wasn't able to concentrate on anything related to research work recently, also because of the uncertainty of my future, one part of me is still doubting the practicability of my future position at University of Nova Gorica due to these crazy circumstances... of course that is the most pessimistic part of me that I try not to

listen too much to. When I was studying Chinese this afternoon all of a sudden I was dazzled by a vision of a desired landscape of inspiration, that of a Taiwanese city. Although I have never been there, I sensed some kind of truth awaiting me, and this beautiful thought became a further element in motivating my study of the language, with the hope of having the chance of going there in a moment not too far in time, possibly next year. I was looking at the trees outside of the house, beside the terrace, and I tried to convince myself that I could be in one of my beloved cities in my favorite season, the spring. It could be Plovdiv, or Tbilisi, or maybe Ljubljana. I tried to get lost in this transfigured vision in order not to succumb to the inner, painful motions of nostalgia. This is the season when I am used to traveling the most, this is when I see dreams with open eyes, when I nourish my poetry and set up the reference points in the emotional maps of my wandering geography. What will I learn this year, without being able to move and explore, how will I be able to silence this dromomaniac thirst? This is why at least I need to recur to activities that take me somewhere else: the study of foreign languages, the writing of my novel about Turkey...

10 April

The only mission I feel is that of keeping my body healthy through yoga and release the compressed emotions inside my heart through the power of writing. I don't live for a future, I am "essentializing myself", including one of the former temporal dimensions I was used to. I tidied up even more our attic apartment, this activity is becoming a bit obsessive probably, I am also looking for the essence, and I feel I still have much more to do in this direction. I practiced yoga outside on the terrace, exposing myself to the gaze of all neighbors from the apartment buildings surrounding this small house... but it felt great, to be doing exercise while looking at the trees. It is unbelievable how fast this cherry tree grew... I was so sure it wasn't there 6 years ago, the last time I lived in this house, but Andrea said it is impossible

that the tree was younger than that. Then we saw Giorgio, the tenant living on the lower floor and I asked him for explanations: he said the cherry tree is at the most 3-4 years old, so I was actually right! It originated spontaneously, most likely thanks to the birds who ate the cherries in the garden nearby. It is such a blessing... I could not imagine the view from the house now in this particular depressive moment without the presence of this wonderful, young tree... tall and proud, full of flowers, being offered to hundreds of bees... And then, when we were looking at the tree, all of a sudden, we saw a strange bird flying over us... and we recognized it: it was an owl! We thought we had heard its call in these nights, but we were not sure about it. Then, the truth materialized through the flight of this wonderful bird... I would have never imagined to see it flying on the skies of Monfalcone... but it makes sense, as the Karst begins only a few dozen meters away from the house...

11 April

I wonder, how will I be able to switch to a new routine, when I will start working at the University of Nova Gorica. Actually, even now that I have so much free time at my disposal, I do not manage to fulfill all the tasks that I impose myself... There would be so many more...! But I am quite satisfied anyway. I talked to my brother in Lesbos, he told me the situation there is luckily still very quiet, only a couple of cases of Covid-19 detected on the island, and miraculously still no one among the refugees. The stability of the island could however be at risk because Turkey is (according to some rumors) about to send many migrants by boat from the other side of the Aegean, similarly to what the country tried to do at the beginning of March. God knows what will happen if that really takes place...

12 April

I had a dream of a journey to Tbilisi, Georgia, through the Black sea, from the Turkish side. It was all so beautiful and exciting that I still feel goosebumps when I think about it… such a vivid dream, magical… at least during my sleep, I manage to travel and have great experiences of what I miss the most: My exotic horizons, my thirst of exploring those landscapes of inspiration… The trip was supposed to continue all the way to Azerbaijan, however I was not sure if I was going to get my luggage back from the office at the bus station in the Georgian capital, as the guy working there had forgotten to give me a receipt and I was fearing they would not believe me when I was going to say that the bag was mine. The best part of the dream anyway was the big swim to arrive to the city (which makes no sense because Tbilisi is not on the sea, I am sure it was supposed to be Batumi but my mind re-elaborated the information)… A long swim in the beautiful waters of the sea… which now that I think about it was the Aegean Sea, not the Black Sea! Another senseless part… How much I would need to swim in this moment. If they were ever going to take away this chance for me during the summer, I swear, I would try to escape somehow somewhere, in a country where this activity would be allowed. The thought of this alone drives me crazy. I read that on the beach in Grado they are setting up the beach umbrellas at a bigger distance than usual, a fact that implies a 60% reduction in their actual number…

It was a strange Easter today, yes. We cooked some nice meal, I even prepared an improvised, experimental tiramisu with strawberries, delicious. We drank amazing wine, but everything had an undertone of nostalgia and melancholy. Nora called from Bulgaria and she told me that everyone is worried for their future there as well, including herself. Her company already fired 30 people and she doesn't know how long she will be still working for them. The only positive thing is that Bulgaria hasn't experienced any real emergency in the numbers of infected or deceased people. If the numbers were higher, god knows how the Bulgarian health system would be able to deal with that. I miss her so much, I wanted to be in Plovdiv in May again, as I have been lucky enough to do every year since 2009 (apart from last year, a lack for which

I compensated in November), my city of inspiration and joy… We will have to wait for that, hopefully in the autumn, but who knows…

13 April

A strange Easter Monday. I woke up with a terrible headache, that didn't go away until the early afternoon. I felt so sick, with a little bit of fever and got scared that I might have gotten the coronavirus, but then I realized that it was just my cyclic iron deficiency. I took a supplement and after a while I felt much better. Also I ate meat for lunch, part of some delicious food my mother in law had prepared for us some weeks ago and we had frozen. In the afternoon I was so inspired to read a wonderful book I had started reading many years ago, a trip to Astrakhan and the Caucasus made by a Polish writer, researcher and ethnologist (Jan Potocki) at the end of the 18th Century. Amazing book, I finished it so quickly… and then started another one by an Azeri author. My feeling of nostalgia for those regions is growing bigger every day! In the house next to ours, the neighbours had invited some people over and organized a barbecue.. I do not really understand how they managed to avoid the controls, but it was obvious that those extra people do not live there. Anyway, I greeted them and smiled. In the evening, a new regional regulation came into force: we will now be forced to wear the masks all the time while outside the house. However, we will be allowed to do some exercise in proximity of our home, it is still not clear if within 200meters or beyond this limit. I hate to wear that mask, I cannot breathe properly, it will be so frustrating to be outside from now on!

14 April

Today it rained a lot, after weeks without a single drop, and the wind was blowing so

strong. I felt cold the entire day, I went out for a walk but I forgot to wear my scarf, so I didn't resist much. Also, I hate to use that mask all the time, I cannot breathe properly and then I have this feeling of short breath for hours after doing that, possibly because I already have my own troubles in breathing in the correct way (I mean with the nose). Frustrating. We watched an amazing movie, Italian one, called "Shun Li and the Poet", set in Chioggia, a place I have never been to, but that right now I would like to explore so much like many other ones. My world is so limited that any place seems exotic or interesting to me. Luckily, I can say that in the 12 months preceding the coronavirus emergency, I have traveled so much: Austria, Slovenia, Netherlands, Croatia, Montenegro, Albania, Kosovo, Macedonia, Greece, Bulgaria, Serbia, United States, maybe somewhere else too that I forgot. Luckily, I was living my life in most of its intensity... I wanted to aim for more but was not so brave, at least in the first months. Now that I look back I feel so proud for having followed so much this dromomaniac calling.

15 April

Dream about a suitcase that I was trying to fill up with the biggest possible number of things... but it was too heavy in the end so I had to give up and leave some things out. I had managed to find a way to fold my things in a special method so to use the minimum amount of space, so unrealistic!

Rumors say that we will not be allowed to travel outside the country until the 31st of March, 2021. This is crazy! I hope it is not true, it would be totally unreal for me, but I guess that I would still be allowed to cross the border if I had to go to work at Nova Gorica... Still, the numbers of infected people are going down, and most of all we have less and less people hospitalized in the intensive care every day...

In the last days, I have been thinking of all the incredible travels I have been doing in

the last 15 years and I would like so much to have some videos of those memories, but not really videos, actually I would love to watch a movie of my life around the world… Me, as an incessant explorer of so many exotic settings, I feel that I am like that person but I cannot visualize myself doing those things, especially now that I am stuck in the house and somehow feel to have gone back to a sort of larval condition… I am trying to finish this very important article I am supposed to submit in these days, but my mind just cannot focus and I feel so sad, because I had such high expectations about it… But I swear, I will work on it tomorrow and try to finish it before the end of the week, I must! I had already asked for a postponement of the deadline some weeks ago and got the permission, now I cannot just throw it all away. To write about my favorite novel, set in my favorite city, Plovdiv, is in a way extremely painful… however, I know it can also be therapeutic, I just need to find the proper key to heal this sense of immobility and alienation, this draining detachment from my dynamic, multifaceted world of endless possibilities, from my "Oriental" social imaginary motivating all mental and physical activities!

16 April

Again, dreams of Plovdiv. They are so vivid and real. I was with Nora, I had just arrived from a long trip and was carrying my suitcase, but before heading home we were supposed to go to a supermarket because she needed something important… I didn't mind because I was so happy to be there again and was looking at the city in all of its splendor, colorful and magic as usual… It is so painful to even think of the dream because it makes me cry… this terrible nostalgia consuming me! Maybe it is also linked to the fact that I am writing again about Plovdiv in the new article. It's almost done… I just need a couple of hours tomorrow morning to polish it and set up the bibliographic references… Not very satisfied but also not so critical anymore, I am sure that there is some value in the text, although I would have liked to devote more attention to its redaction. But my mind keeps wandering around other

thoughts… I am again suffering from hypochondria, or at least I hope it is my imagination, this is what Andrea tells me. He says this attitude of mine always coincides with the moment of more intense stress, when I am under pressure because I have some important deadline etc. He says I invent imaginary illnesses and that I torture him with my obsessive questions about health. I admit that it could be true. Today I am still having some unpleasant feeling in my throat, and I thought of multiple reasons including coronavirus of course and cancer of the throat. I kept trying to look at my throat at the mirror and asked Andrea if I could first look at his and then he could look at mine. He says it looks perfectly normal, most likely the problems I have at my throat and tonsils, cyclically, are caused by the fact that I snore so much at night and still cannot breathe properly even while I am awake, because I always breathe with my mouth. I hope it's true. I would like to find some gentle way of blocking my mouth (not with tape, something else…?) so that I can manage to breathe with my nose exclusively.

The numbers of the coronavirus infections in the country are going down every day, but still too many people are dying, more than 500 a day. I know that this number refers to people who have most likely been infected 2-3 weeks ago, but I wonder when this will end… By the way, Lombardy alone has more than a half of the entire national cases of deaths…over 11,000. We in Friuli Venezia Giulia only have around 200 deceased people. Although our population is 10 times less than theirs, there is really no comparison! Too many people dying there… For what concerns the infections, Lombardy, Piedmont and Emilia Romagna have together over 2 thirds of the entire figures. I hope that we will be among the first regions to re-open, as we are among the least affected ones. But surprisingly, today the Governor of Lombardy came out with the desire of re-open all production activities in the region as soon as possible. I think he is totally crazy and that, if this really happens, most likely the neighboring regions will impose restrictions on entry to people coming from Lombardy… We could witness to an imposition of "inner frontiers" between the regions… at this point after what I have seen I cannot exclude any scenario. But in

this case, I would understand! Lombardy had to be and has to be treated as a totally distinct case, with much stricter limitations to the circulation of its inhabitants!

17 April

I finally managed to finish the article for the Conference Proceedings. In the end it is not that bad I must say. I figured out that if I wake up at my “normal” time, which is 7:30, I feel so much more productive and focused. I must not give up this good habit, even though Andrea does not like to wake up that early and prefers to stay in bed but there is no chance for him to continue having a good sleep if I am awake, due to the fact that this is a studio apartment. And I feel so bad because the bed is small and kind of uncomfortable and I keep snoring every night like a train and he gets no sleep… He told me again that the way I breathe during the night is so inhuman that I should not be surprised that then during the day I keep having problems in my throat… What could I do about it? Surely a better mattress and pillow would help, but we are not in the condition of buying anything now, for this temporary apartment… I hoped that the yoga I was practicing would help but obviously it is not enough. I should start doing some proper breathing exercises. In the morning I went out just to buy the newspaper after I finished writing and I realized that many more people are around in town, some are not even wearing a mask. The atmosphere feels somehow more relaxed. In the afternoon I took the bus (and felt again like a criminal, but slightly less guilty), and while on board I started a conversation with the driver, as I was the only person and I understood he wanted to talk. Again, many complaints and worries, he might lose his job soon, many of his colleagues have already stopped working and are getting the unemployment benefits… Then he insisted on sharing his conspiracy theories, he claimed very soon the authorities will force us to get a vaccine and there will be no way to escape that because otherwise our ID documents will not be renewed… and a long series of nonsenses like this, including details about the nanotechnologies secretly developed in California with the aim of creating a

nano-chip that will be injected in our body through the vaccine, and then the role of "half a million immigrants from Africa" in spreading diseases in our country. I tried not to be too polemic but I could not avoid replying to his last comments on immigrants and told him that if we were to see it from this perspective, it was surely more relevant to think of the role of rich Milanese businessmen who traveled to China and then came back with the disease… and reminded him that Western Europeans brought all possible viruses and diseases to the Americas half a millennium ago, decimating the native populations… But luckily then my stop came and I greeted him kindly. It was so nice to be back at home with my parents and I am now enjoying my time.

20 April

I didn't write anything during the weekend and I guess this is why I had terrible nightmares every night. I need to release the frustration, nervousness, anxiety, etc. in a written form, and since I haven't done this everything that was repressed came back to me at night, haunting my dreams. Terrible, really. I promise I will try to write every single day. Also, I didn't practice any yoga and this is maybe why my mind just could not take it. I had a very relaxed weekend in Pieris at my parents', I mainly spent time in the garden sunbathing and reading a lot of newspapers and magazines, enjoying time with my cats and even with the tortoises, that are now all out. There was so much sun and the temperatures were particularly high, I felt blessed for being able to spend my day in the garden surrounded by trees, animals, and with no noise from traffic on the road. I wish this situation of traffic limitations, so good from an environmental point of view, could last forever. I don't have a car, I always managed to survive without a driver's license even while living in a small town, so if all cars disappeared it would not be a big problem for me. It is actually one of my dreams: cars, plastic, and big industries, those are my main "big environmental enemies". Of course, there are many others, but I blame these three for most of the damages.

Yesterday I talked to my aunt Alessandra in San Diego and she told me that the situation in the US is really serious, and that apparently the virus mutated in some way because many people are left with some kind of brain damage or kidney failure, even young people. I wonder if that depends on the way people are treated in the hospital, I guess so, I doubt it is the virus itself to provoke this. Anyway, so many people she knows are sick and she is so worried, my uncle Mike prohibited her to go to the supermarket so they are getting their grocery delivered at home since more than a month, since I left California basically. So crazy! She keeps on working, teaching lessons to her college students through Zoom, she says things have been improving with regards to their participation, but she is so worried for the many people who will lose their job at her College... It is going to be a disaster.

This morning I took the bus at 9 am to come back to Monfalcone, there were a bit more people on board strangely (I mean 5-6 people, usually it is only me or 2 people maximum). I was a bit nervous as usual but not to the point of feeling the threat of a panic attack's arrival. I decided that I need to start caring less about these idiotic restrictions, and that whatever happens on the 4th of May with the next governmental decree, I will allow myself more freedom, and I don't give a damn about possible fines etc. This is just becoming too humiliating. My dad told me he spoke to my aunt in Bologna who told him that on Saturday my cousin Jacopo tried to take his wife and kids for a walk on the hills (isolated from anyone) but police stopped them and forced them to go back, a fact that traumatized the little girls who were so shocked after this. I feel so angry about it. How have we allowed the authorities to take all rights from us? Why do kids have to be traumatized for no reason? Why can't a family that is living under the same roof go out for a walk together after two months of lockdown? I started thinking about the possible long-term consequences of these stupid rules for children, and what will happen to them: they are not able to understand something that just doesn't make sense: I am imagining my little nieces wondering why the police stopped them for just trying to go for an innocent walk together on the hills. My hope is that this generation of

children will grow as a rebellious one, and that we will have another “summer of love” kind of movement soon, after more than half a century!

Anyway, this morning as soon as I arrived to Monfalcone I had a very nice talk on skype with the dean of the Faculty of Humanities at University of Nova Gorica, she told me that the University could maybe resume its activities already in mid-May. I hope so! She encouraged me to start thinking about possible ideas for courses to teach next year, and said that hopefully this moment of crisis will produce many important projects for the future, and a new feeling of solidarity and sharedness even among academics and disciplines. I really hope so!

In the afternoon I followed a great talk by Michael Herzfeld on Google meet, through the network of Anthropologists at Venice University, it was so great to see the faces of my former professors after so many years and for the first time experimented what it means to follow a conference online, it is not as bad as I thought, although there were some kind of comic moments as some people were not aware of having their videos on and for some time I was obsessively checking my settings making sure no microphone or videos were turned on on my computer!

21 April

Again some terrible nightmares last night… Me and Andrea found ourselves in the middle of a terrorist operation organized by an extremist group somewhere in Los Angeles, looked like Westwood…we were on a bus going back to our place but a car with people holding kalashnikovs stopped it and forced us to get off the vehicle and then took the two of us as hostages… we were first brought to our hotel, where I was trying to put my clothes in a suitcase, but the “terrorists” warned me that I would not have much space in the secret refuge where we were going… I tried to become friends with them, especially with a guy who spoke Spanish, looked Peruvian or

Central American so but was actually from some North African country… then there was a tall Serbian girl also part of the group. I wasn't sure whether we had to be worried for our lives or not, but what I feared the most was the intervention of the police, who would have probably killed us too… I woke up in the early morning so agitated, in panic… and that was not even the only nightmare I had, there was another one in which I was trying to help my friend Cristina in Gorizia who had been assaulted by a man, but then some members of her family were not being careful about the health safety measures and her sister sneezed on my face, and I panicked… Oh god! What's wrong with my sleep? I did yoga yesterday, and many other healthy activities. But Andrea is encountering the exact same problem. I really don't know, most likely it is really related to this tension we are constantly feeling, this repressed energy and the bad vibrations constantly surrounding us, the loss of enthusiasm about our short-term future, the constant exposure to news about the limitations to our freedoms, etc… We are trying to avoid watching too many news bulletins, compared to the beginning of the crisis, but still, how can we totally ignore them? I am losing any interest in going out to supermarkets our to buy the newspaper because I hate to wear the mask and the gloves. I just went out for a walk around the neighborhood, I entered a small shop to buy some cheese, that was all. It was such a windy day by the way. In the afternoon I tried to focus on the planning of some important tasks such as the publication of my dissertation, and I even wrote a page of my novel… I intend to be as productive as possible in the next weeks, I know I always say so but I guess the key for me is to do more things at the same time, one feeds the other so I can hopefully be able to write my novel, transform my dissertation into a book, try to contact publishing house that would be interested in my poem collection, write a plan for a course I want to teach next year about borders and migration in a comparative perspective, improve my Chinese, play the piano, improve my Slovene, devote more attention to the link between environmental topics and sociolinguistics, in specific through the relationship between the loss of biodiversity and that of cultural and linguistic diversity… What else? Many many more things.

Giustina Selvelli-Butkovič

22 April

Finally, I got some very good sleep, although I woke up very early as soon as the light arrived, and could not fall asleep again. But still some improvement. I spent the day mainly reading stuff about climate change and the 50th anniversary of the first Earth Day in 1970. I discovered the existence of the term Solastalgia and got very inspired for its possible application in some of my future researches aiming at connecting issues of migration, climate change, cultural and biodiversity loss. I have always focused a lot on nostalgia but never came across this other term, that is so tragically current. Got some good ideas for the exploration of the ways in which this solastalgia preceding a migration is expressed in cultural ways, possibly through the use of one's indigenous/native tongue... We'll see. I passed by the drapery shop where my friend Giulia works to give her some healthy products we get from Andrea's work and had a talk to her, who is producing masks for the civil protection. We were dreaming of a possible trip to do together this summer, Giulia even dared thinking of making it somewhere beyond our region but I said it seems very unlikely. Anyway, we talked for about 10 minutes, without feeling guilty, respecting the distance measures and wearing our masks, it felt so great, she is the only friend I have managed to meet since my return from the US almost a month and a half ago... Within the next days we will be informed by our Prime Minister Conte about the new regulations that will be in force in the so-called "phase 2", that will start on the 4th of May. We are all very optimistic, especially after the last figures that are indicating for the first time a sharp decrease in the number of new infected people. But we cannot hope too much, we would just like to do normal things like going for a walk beyond our municipality limits, with two friends, being free to have people over for dinner. Simple things like these. I am still hoping to be able to go to the beach and swim in the sea this summer, I cannot imagine my life without that honestly, especially because my primary instinct in the summer is to get into the water... it would be a

torture not to be able to do it.

23 April

Again, a nightmare, in the early morning. I was walking along the promenade of a Western coastal city, after having spent some time having lunch with some conference colleagues. I started walking with my feet on the sea shore and went on for a while until, without realizing it, I reached a quicksand and all of a sudden I felt sucked up by it and could not move my feet… I tried to free myself from the grip of the mud and managed to walk away, however I did not manage to go much further because I fell again with my entire body and my head was being sucked up this time… At this point I heard someone afar saying that a woman had died earlier that day in the quicksand, but these people could not see me because I was underneath the mud… I panicked and was drowning but I miraculously managed to release my head and started walking as fast as I could but at this point my contact lenses had fogged up and could not see anything, I was basically blind and could not understand in which direction I was heading… and I feared it was towards even deeper quicksand… so I started screaming "help, help!"… Then I woke up. What the hell! One of the craziest dreams ever. I talked about it with my friend Piera in Amsterdam, she as a medical anthropologist is well aware of these mental health issues during the lockdown and she told me that I am not the only one, that so many people are having nightmares in this period, including her. We also talked a lot about the worrying fact that so many people we know are now falling into conspiracy theories traps and fake news, even people we would never imagine could believe in such idiocies. She is trying to figure out a way to help her friends develop a more critical thinking towards online contents and information, she says we as anthropologists and researchers should play the role of mediators and help others understand what procedure they should follow in order to be able discern between fake news and proper contents. I never thought about the fact that I could have a role or

responsibility in “educating” my friends in doing this, I somehow always gave up and avoided discussions, which is wrong. So maybe we will think together of a short text that we could publish as a facebook post or in some other form to share our “abc of reading”... I spent the afternoon doing some nice readings about solastalgia and getting inspired for new possible connections to my future work. Now I am going to talk to my brother to hear the updates from the island of Lesbos.

25 April

Today is the day of Liberation from Nazifascism in Italy, but unfortunately, we are not able to celebrate it properly with the usual public commemorations and gathering, and I am so sad about it! Anyway, yesterday night Andrea and I decided to release some of our repressed energy and we improvised a party on the balcony, only the two of us of course, we played some very good music really loud and drank a lot of good white wine... I must admit I wasn’t used at drinking anymore (it’s been some months now) and I got quite drunk but I felt extremely happy, and could finally express so many emotions... We expected people living in the apartment blocks around our house to react in some way, even with anger, because we played the music so loud until 11pm, and I was singing and dancing and screaming like crazy, at the beginning and for a couple of hours on the balcony which is visible to everyone, it is like a stage, an arena just at the center of the area... but no, nothing. What were people doing on a Friday evening of a beautiful, warm, late April day? Are they still alive? It was so surreal. Anyway, I totally lost control and felt the energy of the house, the same one I was sensing 15 years ago when I was living here as a young university student, pretty nice. This morning luckily the hangover wasn’t that bad, I just had to drink plenty of water to re-hydrate my body from the inside! In the late morning me and Andrea decided to go out together for the first time since the beginning of the restrictions. We were walking one meter apart from each other, we were wearing

our red shirts for the occasion of the 25th of April. We did a long walk in the town center first, then on the outskirts, tried to reach the Karst hills but it was too risky because of the drones monitoring our movements. We saw a lot of other couples doing the same, walking together around, finally some bits of normal life. I still cannot believe we could be fined for doing it. On our way back home we met an acquaintance, a bit younger than us, who still lives with his parents and has had some serious problems with them, I think even of domestic violence. He told us that once, a couple of weeks ago, he had to go out because otherwise he would have gone totally crazy, he went for a walk on the Karst, in the paths on the hills just above the square, but the police saw him on the video (there is a webcam somewhere there) and arrived quickly to punish him with a 300 euro fine. He said he is not willing to pay it, and that most likely all Italians will act like this, because such limitation to basic freedom of movement is simply unconstitutional.

I spent the afternoon reading Jonathan Franzen's book "The end of the end of the earth" that I had bought in the States. Excellent reading, just so meaningful for the times we are living. Then I started Jared Diamond's "Crisis", which also looks quite promising. We did a videocall with our friend Cris & Cris who are planning to leave their apartment in Gradisca and turn their lives upside down to settle in a remote village one hour far from here, in the middle of nowhere, because they are wisely considering the possibility of second waves of this pandemic, and they don't want to spend again their time locked in a tiny apartment without a garden. They found a beautiful house on sale for a very cheap price so they hope to be able organize a visit in May and then figure out if it will be realistic to move there. But I understand them totally, we are also very impatient to start our new life in Slovenia and to find a new place to stay in the middle of nature, we all have to re-prioritize our goals and essential, inalienable pillars for a better future. We want a better life, a real life, in which we can grow our own vegetable and feel no limitations in our contacts with nature. I am sure that no Slovenian government would ever prevent its citizens from having a walk, to stay healthy with good habits outdoors, it is simply impossible

because this fact is too rooted in Slovene culture and tradition. It is as if they prohibited us in Italy to eat pasta or pizza… I mean! But I don't care about pasta and pizza, I follow a mostly gluten-free diet, the thing I could never renounce is my freedom of moving my body in nature. I prefer to be Slovene than Italian. I don't trust the Italian government anymore after this dangerous precedent. So in a way or the other we will need to have moved to Slovenia already before the autumn, before the risk of a new outbreak of this damned virus.

27 April

Yesterday afternoon our governor published a new rule allowing us to go out beyond the previous limit of 500meter distance from your house (but still within the municipality) and even accompanied by a person we live with or we are married with… incredible! (I am being ironic). We had already done a walk around in the morning, although we kept the distance because you never know… Many couples around, finally. Then in the evening, our prime minister was live to inform us about the details of the so-called phase 2 that will start on the 4th of May. We were looking forward to that so much, we had just talked on video with our dear friends Marco and Giulia, thinking of what we could do on the 9th of May, the first weekend without tough restrictions… we had imagined a walk on the hills, and some kind of picnic. We were so looking forward to that… but unfortunately our illusions and positive thinking collapsed just an hour later when we listened to Conte's speech. There will be no freedom to see friends after the 4th of April, most likely until the 1st of June, or god knows when. We will only be allowed to visit close relatives, within the limits of the region, and we will have to wear masks during the visit. This is totally crazy! But at least I will be able to go home at my parents' without fearing to be fined. Although I will do it once more illegally this Thursday, for the last time. Anyway, bars and

restaurants will be MAYBE allowed to re-open only on the 1st of June. We were just speechless. This is absolutely no "phase-2", as people were commenting today, at the most it is a phase 1,2. This morning my friend N. called me, she was so desperate and out of her mind, screaming that this is a dictatorship and that she cannot stand it any longer, that we need to protest, that Americans are right in buying weapons and protesting, because their president fears their reaction and as a consequence gives them more freedom (she cited the images of Californians enjoying the beach), while here in Italy we are just repressed and powerless, and the government doesn't fear our reaction... I didn't know what to say, but she really sounded so out of control to me for the first time, she was begging me to do something, to write something, and to tell her where she could go to live in the future, abroad. That she had never thought of leaving this country, and her town where she has always lived, but that this is too much, that this is a dictatorship and she wants to escape, she is very worried for the future. Oh my god! I felt so bad for her because I know she doesn't have many friends or her family here, she is not working because she was doing private assistance to people in their houses, and most likely she will not be able to work again for months and her boyfriend is so worried because he has a restaurant and many employees he needs to pay... There was no way to reassure her, I told her that I am also thorn between moments of anger and nervousness and others of depression. Today was one of those days. I kept looking at Facebook and Twitter, I was analyzing the behavior of Italians on social media, the reactions to this new decree, and saw that on the group of "United entrepreneurs" many people were saying that because of the huge financial losses they are not going to be able to open their activity on the 1st of June, that they will be forced to close them. And many are talking about leaving the country. Are we going to be witnessing new migration trends, flows of Italians leaving for Northern European destinations? There were some protests too today, even in this region, some flash-mobs of entrepreneurs who were protesting against the decree and the maintenance of strict limitations for their activities. No, I am not 'beginning to see the light'... as I was singing, drunk, on Friday

night, on the tune of that amazing Velvet Underground's song. I see no light at the end of the tunnel, I have no idea about our future, and I am again very worried, today I feel paralyzed though, I guess the anger will soon come out in some irrational form.

28 April

Strange day, again the mood was not at its best. I figured out that in general I fall into some kind of crisis in temporal correspondence of the emanation of a new decree on the emergency situation. I spend the next days trying to realize what is actually allowed, how are people reacting, whether there will be some kind of protests, etc... Today it turned out that more people are protesting, a big sit-in event took place, organized by various categories of entrepreneurs in Rome in front of the parliament (and "appropriated" by a far-right party though...). I went out and saw more people around, just walking. I met Liviana, a lady in her late 60s, an left-wing activist, she told me that the only fact of being finally able to cycle all the way to the sea, to the beach of Marina Julia (some 5 kms from here) made her extremely happy, she had missed the sea so much in almost 2 months... So I decided to change the route of my walk and reached the small harbor where fishermen sell their fish, then explored an area of the town I didn't know much, filled with beautiful villas, dating from the beginning of the past century. At a certain point as I was walking, I felt the amazing scent of some blooming flowers from a tree and got so emotional all of a sudden... I removed my mask in order to be able to smell it with a full breath. I don't know what triggered that sensation, it was a form of nostalgia for sure... the feeling of a different spring that was calling me, maybe the blooming trees from Plovdiv, Novi Sad, Nova Gorica, Gorizia or somewhere else from my past... I almost cried. I can't wait to experience things again with my full senses, now everything is wrapped in a layer of cellophane and is unfortunately deprived of its true meaning.

I spent the afternoon talking with my friend Giulia C. who is stuck in Rome in an

Airbnb apartment, all alone, her things still in another flat in Naples, including all her notebooks she needs for her PhD thesis, but there is no way she can have access to them because the former landlady doesn't want to help her and send them to her. We hope to be able to see each other again in the summer, when she plans to go to Venice and settle there for some months... Who knows if we will be allowed to leave the region by then... Some days I just try to find comfort in the idea of a holiday here in our region, something I have never done in my life, not even as a child. But I cannot imagine a realistic destination where we could do something special. Maybe a lake? I don't even know what lakes do we have here! I figured out I need to re-learn so many things, including the basic geography of this country and of this region, and of this town...or maybe to learn them for the first time...!

29 April

A bit depressing day, some tension in the air, also because of a big storm that arrived in the afternoon after weeks of drought. I hope to feel better tomorrow. The only positive thing is that I went to the work place of my friend Giulia to get some news masks and had a nice conversation with her, of course keeping distance and maintaining the protection on my face. She works 13 hours a day to make those masks for the civil protection and she didn't have the time to even read or hear the news in these last days, so she thought we were going to be able to see each other normally from next week, but I had to inform her that it will not be so! So sad, she couldn't believe it. I said that at least we should keep the illusion intact, about a possible holiday together in the region this summer. I actually checked what are the most beautiful lakes and Lago di Cavazzo appears to be a nice option... of course it is all completely abstract for now, but I need to nourish at least that last hope! I am devouring Jared Diamond's book "Crisis", it is so interesting and it is such a blessing now, unfortunately I can tell that Italy doesn't present the features that make (according to the author's view) a country capable of using the best out of a crisis

situation, especially the flexibility and the willingness of finding a potential in moments of vulnerability. What is lacking here is the prerequisite of any possible change: the self-consciousness, awareness, that allows a process of self-criticism. I mean, psychologically, in a collective sense (because this is one of the main points of his book, the possibility of applying micro-structures of psychological interpretation to wider, collective phenomena in a national perspective), Italy is not capable of considering essential aspects of its existence from a distance, in order to find improvements. All seems still to be rooted so much in the dimension of the "unconscious"... Italy hasn't even started its first session of psychoanalysis, how fast can we go? I see a very dark future ahead of us here. We will hopefully be able to escape to Slovenia, nevertheless, our dear ones live here and I am getting more and more worried every day for everyone, from an economic, psychological and even psychiatric point of view.

30 April

I felt happier than yesterday this morning, it was a fantastic day, although of course we had only limited chances of enjoying it outdoors. I took the bus in the afternoon to go to my parents' place and for the first time I felt almost no anxiety in doing it, but I did see many police patrols on the streets... Here in my small town, life flows more normal and I always feel this rejection for all technologies, that is why I don't like to spend time on the computer and write much every time I am here.

1 May

What a strange day, the first time Labour Day cannot be publicly celebrated in so many decades. But I found my own way of making it an unforgettable day. In the early morning I went out for my usual walk in town, to buy the newspapers and have

a look around, I saw many people and enjoyed the view of the lush countryside in this first day of my favorite month. I guess I hadn't been in Italy for the 1st of May since 2012: in 2013, I was in Istanbul, in 2014 in Belgrade, in 2015 in Istanbul, in 2016 in Novi Sad, in 2017 in Plovdiv, in 2018 again in Novi Sad, in 2019 in Klagenfurt. I spent the rest of the morning enjoying the garden, the cats, the tortoises, and reading the newspapers. Then in the early afternoon I went walking in town and reached for the first time after 25 years (!) my friend Caterina at her parents' house. She has been living abroad for so many years just like me, and our friendship restarted some years ago, but of course I will never forget that she has been my absolute best friend during all the years of primary school. So, I went to her house and it was like a time travel. I saw her mom and grandmother, they were taking care of the big vegetable garden they are cultivating, they looked so healthy and happy. We talked for hours about so many things, and it was crazy to be there, "illegally", but her house is at the end of a dead-end street in the middle of the fields, in the middle of nowhere, no police forces have ever passed by, they told me. Caterina came back from Chile a month ago, after a repatriation procedure that cost her a fortune. She told me all the details about it and it is unbelievable all she went through, especially the fact that they forced her to rent a car from Milan airport to drive all the way to here (5-6 hours) after having spent 28 hours on the plane... without having the possibility to rest one night in a hotel in Milan. And many other unacceptable things. Then we watched together a live video coming from a square in Trieste, where some anti-fascist activists had gathered protesting with some banners that were torn by police forces. I felt proud of them and once again felt frustrated for the impossibility of taking some action in the small town where I am living.

3 May

I spent the morning of Saturday and Sunday eradicating ivy in the garden. The effort

was so big, devastating, I think I had never done such a physical effort in my entire life. It lasted hours, and gave me the biggest satisfaction I have felt in months. It is something new and unprecedented. I want to take care of that big garden, it is the garden of my life, the only one I have ever had, but my mom is too lazy to do anything, my dad is too busy in doing other things and he seems to deny the problem of these infesting plants. I want to save the trees, I am convinced that they are all dying because of that ivy. I am reading a book called "Living well at the others' expense" that I found in a box that was sent to my brother here in Pieris. It is a sharp criticism of our western lifestyle, especially in those countries that appear to be so environmentally friendly, but are so just within their territories, as (and precisely because) they are "externalizing" the economic-environmental damages somewhere else, in the global south. There are so many examples for this, but not much we can do, and I feel so depressed and hopeless for the future of our world.

4 May

Today would be the first day of the so-called "phase 2". I took the bus in the morning to go back to Monfalcone and for the first time I did it "legally", and almost felt a sense of disappointment for not being able to break the law. These stupid rules are driving me mad anyway. We are allowed to jump in the water, but not to swim. This means that we are basically forced to let ourselves drown in the sea, according to law. The cat woke me up in the morning at 6am and I could not fall asleep again so I was so tired the entire day. The problem is that I keep having nightmares every single night, the craziest dreams ever, so vivid, but too intense, too "cinematographic". Maybe I am watching too many movies? But they are the opposite of "action movies", I wonder why I keep having these sleep problems. Andrea says it is the coronavirus, our minds are constantly on an "alert mode", reassembling the information, worries and anxieties of our awake life. But I really don't know what else I should do, I keep being paranoid at night, I think the cause of

these nightmares could lie in the tea I am drinking, the yoga I am not practicing, the novel I am not writing, the cell-phone I am over-using (30-60 minutes per day is definitely unusual for me, this was the amount of time I would usually spend talking at the phone in a month), causing me some brain damage or god knows why, the cbd oil I am taking/not taking... Really, sometimes I think I am going crazy. What else should I do? Maybe tomorrow I will look for some herbal remedy to ease the mind, to calm it down. I guess I am reading too much of everything (not only coronavirus I mean), stimulating my mind too much, also in a good sense, but I am overdoing it... I don't know.

5 May

I slept a bit better, but still I was so nervous and anxious. Yesterday night I found myself yelling at the TV and realized that I have a problem. I decided that we are not going to watch Italian TV anymore and that I am not buying any Italian newspaper because these media are just driving me crazy, stating everything and the contrary of everything, total nonsense, everyday changing the details of the rules that we are supposed to follow, it is something unbearable, and furthermore most of the people I know are not following the media because they want to preserve what is left of their mental health. I will just watch the Slovene channels that I manage to get on the tv and buy the local Slovene newspaper. Their media are much better luckily, not that ridiculous mixture of paternalism and sensationalism that we have here. Yesterday I read that people in Alto Adige have organized an action during the weekend with some fire writings that appeared in some areas there, asking Kurz to "save them", basically calling for an annexation. I also read that people there do not follow the stupid Italian media but only the Austrian ones, that are not so obsessively, exclusively focused on the coronavirus emergency... but only dedicate around 68% of the space to that topic. Here in Italy it is 100%. I am really fed up, as everyone else. So, this morning I went out and didn't wear the mask while walking around, or

rather, I had it on but on my chin, just in case the police arrived. I am sick of being taken for fool. I also stopped at a bar, because I saw it open, and asked if it was possible to have a coffee (haven't had one in almost two months!), of course only to take away, as this is the only legal way since yesterday... the guy told me that technically no because I had to "reserve it in advance" but of course that is some idiocy so I could have it. I had to wait outside to get it, although the place is huge, but only one person could be inside. I could not consume it in front of the bar though, technically I was supposed to drink it only at home, which is ridiculous because if I had to walk all the way home it would have become cold and I would have probably spilled it on me. So I moved some meters to the square and drank it there. It gave me a sense of power but also more nervousness, due to the way in which I was forced to drink it, a gesture deprived of its spontaneity, and its social meaning of sharedness. Anyway, after that I felt the urgency to smoke a cigarette. I haven't smoked any since almost a year, since the times I was about to leave my last job, and that was the first time in my life since 2005 that I actually smoked more than a cigarette per day. I resisted the temptation of buying a package and smoke one. But I took it as another alarming sign. What else do I have to do, to overcome this nervousness and frustration? I just hate this country, what can I say, I wish we were invaded by Austria too, the same thing Alto Adige is hoping for. There is no future for this country the way it is. I do not believe in nation-states, I have never believed in them, but now even less. It would make so much more sense for our region of Friuli Venezia Giulia to form a kind of "Alps-Adriatic Republic", with Austria and Slovenia, to share our local resources and be a genuine European example of a super-national entity, truly connected to the territory and its history, a multilingual and multicultural state, rather than this artificial country that makes no sense and is falling to pieces... What can I say, I guess there is no way back after having realized that I feel even less Italian than before, when it amounted to a maximum of 10%. Now it is below zero.

6 May

I finally got a good sleep, although I had many strange dreams, however, almost none of them was a nightmare. This morning I remembered a dream from some days ago: I was in my parents' garden, at the back part, an area that had been "confiscated" by the municipality to allow a local festivity to take place, it would happen every year during the summer, this was the rule. The problem was that many people who were sitting on the ground, drinking beer and wine, would then leave trash on the grass, and I had to go to tell them not to do it... but I totally lost control with some former peers from middle school, and I started screaming and insulting them like crazy... so much aggressiveness my god... so much that my husband who was also there got so worried and looked at me in a very different way for the first time.. afraid of me! What a dream... I guess I have too many repressed, negative emotions, and a lack of sense of belonging for these places... Anyway, this morning me and Andrea went out to do some shopping together finally, although it was not exactly allowed to enter as a couple in the shops but we did it anyway... Strange but true these little things made me happy. We also had a coffee together outside of the same cafè where I bought it yesterday... But the best part of the day was the long walk that we did in the late afternoon...enjoying the wonderful weather and the lush landscape of the Karst. I had really missed it, and my body felt so blessed, I hope I managed to release the many toxins inhabiting my entire self, all of its parts... we'll see. Anyway, today the dean of the Faculty of Nova Gorica wrote me saying that she will try in all possible ways to get me hired by the end of the month, I guess even before the university will physically re-open. I have ambivalent feelings because I feel so lost sometimes and I am not even sure whether my mind will be actually able to re-start in its proper functioning, fulfilling some important tasks that will be required in my future work! And, most of all, I still haven't finished my novel... I am not even at one third... But ok, of course it is not a problem of a lack of time but something else. Maybe I will even be more inspired to write when I will also officially work again, who knows. The only thing I am sure of is that I will not give up this time, I need to find a way to combine

my intellectual work and my creative writing, as I have been doing for so many years of my life in the past... I need to reconnect myself to that special dimension where the borders of my activities are blurred and fertile.

7 May

We had a beautiful walk in the afternoon, along the sea, in a wild area we hadn't visited for months due to these restrictions. It was full of people, I had never seen so many people there at the same time, I guess this lockdown has contributed in changing the habits, everyone who used to go to the mall cannot do it anymore because it is closed and so this is the positive consequence. I hope it will never open again actually. Anyway, I hadn't been here in this season for at least 8 years so for the first time I saw it under a different light, really. The landscape was so green and beautiful, and the sea, the birds... it is a protected area for birds so it is actually a special place but as I said, it looked just different today, I felt so blessed for not being in a big city, I actually wonder how my life would be now if I had decided to stay and live in Novi Sad, Belgrade, Istanbul, Rome or Toronto...places where I have lived in the past. But I am just getting stressed at the idea of the future, also of work, I don't know why... I am afraid that if I will really start working already in June, I will not be able to do it properly... because I will need so much to be outdoors, I will need to feel free and just go to the beach... but I guess I am exaggerating as usual...!

9 May

Wow, between yesterday and today so many things happened, or better said, we saw friends and felt almost normal, finally! Yesterday afternoon our friend Matteo reached us here and we then went walking on the Karst together (he initially walked separated from us, we waited for each other under the railway tunnel), it was

something “illegal” to do but felt so right… I hadn’t seen him in almost four months… and he is our best friend! So we walked all the way to a specific point where him and Andrea would spend time as teenagers, under a big tree. As soon as we reached that isolated point of the hill, we realized we were not alone: a dozen of young teenagers were enjoying their day there too, having their “aperitif time” and they looked at us with worry, but we immediately reassured them that we were not there to report them, but we were rather “accomplices” in the crime… So we had our aperitif too, some good white wine and some crisps, and enjoyed so much the late afternoon, then we moved to another point where we could watch the sunset, and finally went home, Matteo was with us and we celebrated even further the moment together, played some loud music, Matteo was improvising at the piano, we partied wildly, as we would do during “normal times”. Later, it was almost midnight, Matteo wanted to go back home cycling but he realized the lights on the bike were not working, so he decided it was safer to stay here and slept on the sofa. He was making strange sounds all night so we didn’t manage to sleep so well (I was snoring too, so Andrea was even more desperate, we tortured him!). This morning we had breakfast together, then Matteo left and we went out for a walk, we finally went to our favorite café to buy a take-away coffee (it had opened on Thursday but we didn’t know it) and some desserts to bring to my parents. So we went to Pieris to have lunch at my parents’, enjoyed some time in the garden with the cats and then went for a very long walk along the river Isonzo… so many people there, we had the mask but I wasn’t really wearing it, it was so hot and I am just fed up with these unnecessary, ridiculous restrictions… I had agreed with Caterina and Alex to meet at a certain point and they reached us there, but the civic protection was there too, they had arrived just in that moment, so we discretely proceeded and avoided too much enthusiasm or any physical sign of affection… We walked for some twenty minutes on a hidden path until we reached an amazing area of the river none of us had ever seen before, we descended there and saw people jumping in the crystal clear waters of the river, which had formed some wonderful puddles… We were so tempted to just jump in, the water was not as cold as we expected it to be actually… But we’ll be

back another time!

10 May

Another amazing day, relaxing and liberating, in close contact with nature. We went up to the village where Andrea's parents live in San Martino and had lunch with them, then we met with Giulia, Marco and Matteo in the Karst and had a nice walk, before enjoying some "illegal aperitif" in a hidden area with an extraordinary view on the Isonzo valley. We didn't want the day to end so we continued drinking more wine in front of the cars where we had parked, nobody was passing by and I never wore the mask in the entire day because it was totally pointless, in the middle of nowhere. Now it's 22:30 and we just got back home...I am exhausted but so happy.

11 May

We had an incredible experience this morning, during our usual walk along the channel where we go to see the ducks with their ducklings... We noticed a roe deer was there, and at first we were so excited, then we realized that the poor animal was actually in danger because he was looking for a way out, he was trapped inside a fenced area (I don't understand how he had managed to arrive there, most likely from the Karst but not sure exactly how or when)... There were already some people, mostly Bengalis, standing on the little bridge observing the scene, not knowing what to do. We called the forest service, they said it was something quite normal, roe deers descend on the town very often, it was not a problem unless the animal fell into the water, most times they manage to go back to the Karst alone... But just a minute after the call, we were trying to figure out where the deer was, and we noticed people kind of panicking, he had fallen into the water... So, we called again the Forest service (also other people were trying to do it), they said they were going

to come but it took so long, almost 40 minutes. In the meanwhile I was trying to tell people not to stand too close to the channel, as the forest service had instructed us to do by phone, but everyone was so worried, the roe deer was repeatedly trying to come out of the water but there was no easy way out and the concrete slide was too slippery so the animal kept on falling back down in the water... we were all so sad and I started talking to this old lady who said she was ready to jump into the water to save him...I had also thought I would do that, but still there would be no certainty of saving him... Luckily after some 15 minutes the roe deer managed to find a spot where he could just rest after the long swim... otherwise he would have died. We were at least some 15 people following the events... others were passing by and taking videos...everyone so worried... The old lady said that the thing she misses the most during this lockdown is the contact with nature and the animals, that she has definitely lost any sense of empathy towards human beings but that she suffers even more for animals and needs to be closer to them... Finally, the forest service arrived and they managed to rescue the poor roe deer and to put him in some box in order to set him free later, somewhere else. We thanked them and finally went home... I cried because it was such a big relief to know the animal was finally safe.

I spent part of the afternoon trying to figure out what to do with my PhD Dissertation, how to turn it into a book. I guess the time has come, after 3 years, it is now or never, otherwise it will become too late... I am trying to write up a summary and synopsis so I can send them to this publishing house I recently found out about... At the same time, I feel some anxiety for not knowing yet the details of my future employment in Nova Gorica. On the one side I would still like to continue with this kind of unlimited freedom, on the other most likely I would benefit a lot from some stronger engagement with academic life at the moment. But we will see... Tonight our local government finally got the permission to re-open all shops, restaurants, bars etc from next Monday, although the conditions for carrying out such plan are still not clear, for example we still don't know if we will be allowed to eat at the restaurants only among family members (living under the same roof) or if we will

have the chance of meeting friends, and many other questions of course.

13 May

Yesterday I was in a bad mood the entire day because I hadn't been able to sleep properly... I am so fed up with the news about the coronavirus that I can't even be bothered to listen to them... The most significant thing is that we have been recording only 8-10 new cases of contagions in the region on average, so extremely low figures. The governor is pushing to open everything, although with caution and applying some restricting measures. Bars, restaurants, gyms, swimming pools, everything will open from next Monday, but not cinemas, theatres and stadiums. The problem is that so many people complain they will not be able to resume their regular work activity, as the limitations will not allow them to serve the amount of people they expect to (on average, every restaurant/bar will lose at least half of their sitting places because of the need to respect the 2-meters security distance ...), and many of them have already decided that it is more convenient not to open. Most likely, at least 20/30% will close their business for good. Yesterday afternoon I became obsessed with the idea of putting some order in the folders of this computer and I ended up spending hours, until night, just cleaning up so much stuff I had accumulated, many files I do not need any more etc... it gave me a good sensation of being "organized". I am not! The same is valid for the drawers here, I had promised myself to tiny them up too but almost 2 months have passed and they are still a total mess. I slept alone last night because Andrea decided to stay at his parents' house as he was meeting a friend to play some music. I could not fall asleep for hours because all of a sudden I was so terribly cold... I added an extra blanket, more socks, a jumper, but still... I was trembling the entire night. I got alarmed, I thought it was a symptom of the virus (of course!) as I had recently read that this is one of the latest symptoms that has been recorded. But I guess it was just my imagination... or better said it was actually cold outside, the temperatures had lowered significantly and I just hadn't

realized it, and the isolation in this attic is just so bad that any change in the external temperature is quickly perceived…

Today I spent some time trying to figure out some new ideas for some research projects involving as usual the link between biodiversity and linguistic/cultural diversity… we watched this amazing documentary some days ago, on the website of the organization Balkan Rivers Defense, about the terrible consequences of Hydroeletric power plants in the Balkans on the environment… and an interesting fact was mentioned that I didn't know about, a town that was submerged in Montenegro during Yugoslav times because of a damned dam (!) and it inspired me even more to investigate the topic of "submerged civilizations" in the last Century, following the example of Ada Kaleh and the most recent, tragic developments of Hasankeyf in Turkish Kurdistan. Those are people who became refugees, forcedly expelled from their land, in all cases most of them stayed in the same country (even very close to their home town), but no studies have really assessed the conditions of life in the aftermath, the psychological, anthropological consequences of having been exposed to the loss of one's home, of the landscape, of biological diversity: that is a clear case of solastalgia. I hope to be able to put the pieces together, to fill the gap between my anthropological/human sciences approach and a new one, a "relational" one, based on the coexistence of culture and nature, that seems such a necessary question to develop nowadays.

14 May

We had a wonderful sleep last night, finally! Maybe because I had cried so much for the movie "Born Free" that we watched last night… such a sad story… I set the alarm at 7:30 but turned it off, we woke up when it was past 9:00! In the morning I kept reading lots of information about the latest political developments in Slovenia, and got so desperate because of a new law that was passed on Tuesday, that dictates the

exclusion of NGOs in the process of environmental impact assessment of new construction projects in the country…I am so mad! So I decided to start writing an article for the Italian audience, most likely I will publish it on the portal EastJournal. We then had our usual walk in town, we went to see the ducks on the channel and found many more little ones who were born in these days… We stayed there almost 20 minutes contemplating their beauty and wondering about their life, so different from ours. In the afternoon I started writing the article and then around 5pm we went out for another walk on the Karst, a long and challenging one. It was so warm, but nothing compared to the weather in Lesbos where, my brother wrote me, there are already over 30 degrees! We reached a place where there is a very nice cat shelter ran by some very kind old women and saw some beautiful cats, we decided that next time we will buy some food for them and leave it there in a box for donations. Not so much apart from this, but I have been in a very good mood all day, and didn't feel any pressure or sense of guilt because of the many things I am not doing… I somehow felt this certainty in me, for the first time, that everything will be possible, that there are so many projects awaiting me and that I will be able to find the compromise and carry on with all my passions on different levels, integrating them all into an active life of opportunities… let's hope this feeling will not abandon me in the forthcoming days and weeks…

16 May

Yesterday afternoon I went back to my parents', and again I felt somehow disappointed during the trip on the bus because there was no more game to play, of me being a criminal fugitive going to visit my family… Just kidding, or almost! I spent the afternoon with my parents enjoying the cats, reading newspapers and magazines, then I was so tired in the evening that I read a bit of the book "Crisis" by Jared Diamond and went straight to sleep. Today I woke up quite early and went to buy the newspapers by foot in town…enjoyed the early day atmosphere and the walk

in the back street surrounded by fields. Then again, I indulged in my new, favorite activity: removing the ivy from the trees in the garden! It took me so much effort, it was somehow more tiring than the last time... I got obsessed and uprooted so much of it, I declared a total war! I said to myself: there is no way I can proclaim myself an environmentalist if I am not able to safeguard the health of my own garden, if I let my trees die, choked by the insidious presence of that damned ivy! So that was the motivation prompting me to proceed and get rid of it all! There is not much left now. In the afternoon Andrea came to pick me up and for the first time since the start of the emergency we crossed the "borders" of our province, which means that we just passed the river Isonzo towards the province of Udine, two minutes from my home, and went to have a nice walk close to Grado, in the village called Belvedere. We enjoyed it a lot although at a certain point I fell into a rock and cut my hand very badly, it looks like I have a stigma now...

18 May

It was such a nice day yesterday, it started with a long talk at the phone with my brother, who told me that he had to change his ticket from Lesbos in June, he will come to visit us in July instead, because he doesn't want to be a guinea pig at the beginning of the opening of the borders and the resuming of the flights. The big news indeed is that apparently all Schengen borders will open from the 3rd of June onwards... hopefully...! It is still not sure when will Nagehan be able to visit her family in Turkey, she hasn't seen her mom and sister since December actually, and now that the sister is pregnant she would like to reach them so much but there is no chance to do that now. Maybe the extra-Shengen borders will open on the 15th of June... I hope! Later in the afternoon me and Andrea walked all the way to the river Isonzo to meet our friends: it was Giulia's birthday so we gathered to spend some time together, although it was still prohibited. As soon as we arrived there in the point on

the river we had designed as the meeting place, the police joined us too, but luckily they ignored us... furthermore, Marco was not wearing the mask and was talking to the owner of a bar that was setting up the facilities in order to be able to open today. The police didn't seem to care: nobody was wearing a mask. But when we were passing by some lady told us: "the mask guys...". And we got so nervous about it. We were walking in the middle of nature close to a river, in a natural park, what is the point of wearing the mask there? I really don't understand. And there were almost 30 degrees, for god's grace! So, then we proceeded all of us, also with Alex, Matteo, and then Giulia's sister Elisa and her boyfriend. We reached that nice beach we had discovered last week and found some other friends there. There was much more water, and it looked so beautiful, but as the level of the water was higher and the stream stronger, nobody was swimming apart from Giulia and Marco's dog! We spent some good time there and then walked all the way back and reached the center of the town of Turriaco to do a toast for Giulia's birthday: we were allowed to buy drinks and drink them far from the bar, and sat on a bench in the square. I felt very happy, grateful for that moment of commonality and freedom after a long time of frustration.

This morning I took the bus to come back to Monfalcone and we went out soon to see how the situation was evolving: it is the first day that bars, cafés, restaurants and shops are allowed to open. We saw so many people enjoying their coffee and drinks, the bars are allowed to occupy more space in order to keep the safety distance between the tables and the clients. So the city looks kind of different and in any case we weren't used to see that amount of people around, ever, or at least since 20 years... It looked like a big party, although distances were always respected. But it seemed to us that people were already getting drunk and losing control easily, I understand them well. We met our friend Massimo who was riding his bike, he told us that he thinks this emergency has taken the worst out of the local population: racism, right wing extremism, idiocy, etc. I couldn't deny how much I agree with him. We were talking about the summer, about the festivals and concerts, and local feasts,

and all the events that will not take place, we still cannot believe it honestly. I still have that fragment of hope in me… that somehow, we won't have to give up to that imaginary of proximity and freedom… Then we went to have a walk and see our beloved ducks and ducklings… I spent the afternoon talking to my friend Piera in Amsterdam and Mavì in Gorizia. Every time I talk to them I feel so good, I miss them so much! Piera is stuck in Holland, maybe she will manage to come back in June and I hope to see her then. Mavì still doesn't really want to meet people, she is a bit afraid because she wants to protect her mother in law who doesn't have very good health, but also her mother. I totally understand that. Piera told me that I need to react more, not to waste this time, that I need to use my creativity and imagination to write my book and not depress myself too much because of my impossibility of traveling and imagining a future of mobility. She is so right! So then I finally went back to my novel and wrote a page of it… at least one. I tried to put myself in the main character's shoes (who is basically me anyway) and remember that amazing spring of 2014 in Turkish Kurdistan… I cannot travel right now but I can bring some incredible experiences back to life through the power of my writing. That must be my mission anyway, and as long as I don't fulfill such aim I will always feel incomplete, pathologically nostalgic, guilty and untrue.

19 May

I am so happy because I just came back from a meeting organized by the circle of libertarians, there were only eight people, me included, but I finally felt so useful and enthusiastic about the perspective of my participation to local issues… Due to the lack of continuity in my life here in Monfalcone in the last 7-8 years, or better said, 12 years, I was never in the position of feeling part of something bigger, which is the main question governing all my inner struggles about belonging and community… Today I somehow perceived that something had changed. Alex invited me to join them and I said: "yes, this is the time, finally!" So, we sat on the big balcony at the last

floor of a building only 4 minutes far from here by foot… drinking red wine and commenting on many important things, regulations about our future freedoms, the possible activities we can organize, and the important reading that must be done. So strange that just yesterday when I was writing that page of my novel I had done some research and discovered the influence Murray Bookchin exerted on Öcalan, and figured out that I had one of Bookchin's book standing less than one meter far from me, Andrea had bought it last year and we never read it… So today before going to the meeting we had talked about the book… and then there at the meeting Alex all of a sudden took it out and said that this was the most important book he had read in years, a "Manifesto" for people like us… Wow. Synchronicity? I take it as a very powerful and encouraging sign! Anyway, good perspectives open up for the future, necessary initiatives of resistance and action, and I finally feel all the pieces fit! We still don't know how our summer will go, but the fact of having that huge balcony at our disposal can make the difference…at least we could throw some nice parties with good music… or we can imagine some alternatives together, like the possible march to Fiume (Rijeka) in the autumn, by foot! As a symbolic reappropriation of that imaginary that is now exclusively linked to the historical event led by D'Annunzio…

21 May

Yesterday we went to have our usual walk, then I went to the bookshop to buy a gift for Giulia, then I spent part of the afternoon reading and then as Andrea went out Caterina came here to visit. We talked for two hours about so many things, of course mainly about coronavirus and its consequences from many points of view. She had just been to the mall and told me that it was totally insane, and she will avoid going for months, I told her I stopped going to supermarkets already one month ago when the rules came into force about wearing mask and gloves because I just cannot stand it physically. We actually only do our grocery shopping at the market, or we buy stuff

in small shops where we find everything we need. It feels so liberating, and also, we have adopted an almost vegetarian nutrition since then. I spent the evening listening to some old tape I had recorded 17 years ago as a teenager, during a night out with friends, partying at a seaside bar, it was so incredibly overwhelming that I have no words to describe it. It was recorded on the 10th of May 2003, and back then I was kind of addressing my "future self", trying to impress those moments as a testimony for the future, although I was mainly uttering strange philosophical phrases. In these times of social distancing and erosion of our possibilities of gathering together, it was like a magical gift from the past, actually from a dimension of "eternity" that allowed me to taste life in its fullest sense. I laughed and cried, and then I stopped it because it was too much, too much contrast to my life of today, the gap was just unbearable.

This morning as I opened my email I found a message from the Dean of the Faculty of Humanities at University of Nova Gorica telling me that my contract with them will start on the 15th of June, it is official this time! I felt some ambivalent sensations, but then figured out that it is really the best thing that could happen, this will save my mental health and project me into my future, which is not Italian but Slovene. And if something happens again, I mean if a second wave of infections starts in the country or whatever, me and Andrea will finally have all rights to migrate, to move to Slovenia, something we intend to do anyway towards the end of the summer. It makes no point to look for a house now, we have to consider many factors, most likely in late August we will settle somewhere, between Gorizia and Nova Gorica (or beyond in the Vipavska Dolina, Vipava Valley). I doubt that I will need to go physically to the University during the summer every day, I mean especially considering the times we are facing, the restrictions and paranoias because of the virus etc... And here we are also closer to the sea. Anyway, I became enthusiastic about my next future and already started having creative ideas, including the project of spending some 2 weeks in Lesbos in September in order to do some fieldwork and gather

material that I will need for my course. Wow I still cannot believe that I will finally fulfill the dream of "Slovenizing myself". I spent the afternoon talking with Igor, my most important "Slovene connection" and friend, he is stuck in Trieste and doesn't know what will happen with his work as a theatre director in the Alps-Adriatic region. The situation in Italy is just so deceiving, no regulations have been adopted yet for his sector, and nobody is taking the chance to problematize the issue of the theatre crisis, and to include topics related to the coronavirus in future projects... I told him about my ideas on solastalgia and Ada Kaleh, Hasankeyf, Aral Sea, etc and he was really excited and curious about all those exotic stories. Then I did some yoga and after that I went again to the Libertarians' meeting, we had an extra meeting this week. We talked about the serious problems our health system is facing because of the privatizations and the "managerial" mentality that has become prevalent in our country that used to have one of the best health systems in the world and is now moving towards very dangerous directions, as this emergency has shown. I heard some terrible details about the lack of protections and precautions in hospitals and hospices, as two people from the circle work there... I am so happy to have become part of this group and it really means a lot to me, because even when I will be living in Slovenia I intend to take part to these meetings somehow, and never give up my engagement and activism.

25 May

What a weekend we had! Finally, we celebrated properly our freedom... On Friday, Matteo reached us at around 5 pm and we started drinking in a bar, for the first time after so many months. Luckily, we are not supposed to wear the mask while sitting at the tables... We went to another bar, then another one... I felt drunk after one glass basically... it was the excitement of being out and seeing people around me doing the same, I guess. Then Giulia and Marco reached us and we went to our friends' restaurant here in Monfalcone to enjoy a really special, gourmet dinner. It was

amazing to see the work they had done to renovate the outdoor area in the back garden that allows them to have more clients than before, in these times of distancing of the tables everywhere (that are affecting the amount of people that can actually fit in a place). Furthermore, during the lockdown they took advantage of the situation to improve their menu and create a new atmosphere from all points of view. It was really breathtaking, every single detail, from the food to the staff and the decorations, simply impeccable. So, we went out of there in a sort of altered state of consciousness, feeling inspired and blessed by the perfection of food and wine. On Saturday morning me and Andrea reached our friends Francesco and Miriam in Ronchi to buy some wine from him, and visited the place for the first time, I actually really liked that area of Ronchi because it is still so rural and it is one of the most important places for the Slovene community in the region. So, I said: “if we ever found a beautiful house here… that wouldn’t be so bad!”. And it is where part of my family comes from anyway. Then we went to have lunch at Andrea’s parents and in the afternoon, we reached Cristina and her brother in Gorizia, at the Transalpina square, because I wanted to see that place with my own eyes, I just still could not believe that the net is there, dividing the city… There were some people who were exchanging goods through a hole in the net, and we were looking at the lucky Slovenes who could enjoy their drinks on the other side of the border at the bar of the Transalpina Train Station where we used to go, a place we always felt ours… because the city is basically the same city, we saw no divisions there since 2007. And later the most incredible thing happened there, something that in my opinion made history. I had spoken with a Secretary from the University of Nova Gorica on Friday who had asked me to send her the contract signed by regular mail, because she needed it urgently. So I told her that it would have been better to meet and give it to her directly on the square, so I could pass her the documents with my hands, from a hole some artists created on the net (that is called “okno”, window in Slovene). So at around 5 pm she arrived with her husband, and we talked for almost one hour there, divided by the net/fence. They were not wearing the mask because it is not obligatory there…lucky them… It was amazing to meet them and share such a

historic gesture, some people were taking pictures of us. I wondered if anybody had ever experienced something similar: to be passing a work contract through a net, instead of using the INTERNET (she needed the original ones) because of a border, a wall preventing people from fulfilling this task properly in an office... I don't know honestly! I guess I will have to write something important about this experience. In the meanwhile, while we were talking I mean, police forces came to the square at least 4 times and it really felt so inappropriate, intimidating...

In the evening we went to our friend Davide's house, other friends were there too, and we stayed up until very late, enjoying some good dinner he had prepared and amazing wines he had selected for us. And then yesterday we met with Giulia and Marco and went out for a nice ride on the Western hills of the Collio, outside of Cormons, then to Ramandolo where we enjoyed one of the most amazing views I have ever seen. Of course we drank the entire day, and then at around 6pm we went to the Plessiva Woods to burn at least some calories and do a nice walk... So it was a very intense weekend, I drank more in 3 days than in the last 3 months, and ate without much limits. We really needed it. Luckily, as we live in a small region and mainly go out in small places and towns, we are not witnessing so much repression or imposition of the strictest rules. One restaurant asked us explicitly what our relationship was, so each couple had to sit on a side of the table, making sure that a distance of more than 1 meter was respected, but that was all. Furthermore, I got drunk so fast that every time I was standing up to go to the toilet I kept forgetting wearing the mask... but nobody noticed that or reproached me, luckily! Today I didn't do much, I just couldn't focus on anything and took advantage to relax a bit more and do some things in the house...

28 May

On Tuesday evening, I walked 40 minutes to reach Ronchi and get my bicycle, it had

remained in the basement at my uncle's house since the summer of 2018. I met him and my father and we talked for half an hour, we hadn't met all together since Christmas and it felt so strange to be reunited. He didn't want me to hug him or get close to him, at first I thought he was just pretending but then I realized he was serious, he is afraid of catching the virus. Then I went back to Monfalcone by bike, what a great sensation of freedom. Luckily most of the path was on the bike lane, because the traffic has become again a burden since the lifting of the restrictions. Nobody is using public transports (apart from me!), people prefer even more to just drive individually on their car. Of course, I imagined this would have happened, but still, a tiny part of me was hoping things would change for the better. We already forgot what it felt like "before", with no noise from the cars... The thing that made me so mad on Tuesday was this stupid idea that some minister launched, about the "civic guards" that would have to patrol our streets, in the districts where people go out and party. Basically these "guards" would be recruited among the unemployed population, and among people already receiving state benefits. It is one of the craziest ideas I have ever heard: to legitimize some "sheriff behavior" and give power to random people that would be supposed to monitor the situation and tell others what to do. I just can't believe it. Luckily, I was not the only one to feel indignant, many politicians rejected this option. We still haven't understood what will happen... Yesterday we went out very early in the morning to go to the market and enjoy a coffee. It was nice to be out and to do our grocery shopping with a guy growing organic produce less than 20kms from here. Then I did a long video-call with my brother and his wife, it was her birthday. They updated me about the situation in Lesbos, the strange thing is that there are very few restrictions active right now but they still haven't been really outside to cafés, bars or restaurants, they just feel they lost that habit and are worried about it because they would have never imagined it and wonder how many other people are reacting just like them. Nagehan still doesn't know when she will be able to visit her sister and family in Turkey because apparently the two countries are still having many problems in their geopolitical relationship and god knows when the borders will open...most likely late summer,

with a huge impact on tourism from Turkey to Lesbos. The Greeks are hoping to be able to intercept the tourists that will be avoiding both Italy and Spain this summer…presenting Greece as a safe destination due to the very limited number of cases in the country. We will see. For now, the border between Italy and Slovenia is closed, and it seems that Austria is pressuring Slovenia not to open the border with Italy, fearing that Italians might then reach Austria without any controls. Although it seems that Carinthia would want to open the border with Friuli Venezia Giulia, as well as the region of Nova Gorica. It is all so crazy and there is just no certainty about any movement in the near future. We cannot plan any trip abroad, even if it is just 10 kms from here… I hate this fact, that states are just so focused on their national perspectives, from the center, without any consideration on the delicate, inter-dependent reality of the border regions, whose economies and daily lives have been completely devastated in these last months… So frustrating, I consider myself a border person, borders areas are so important and yet so terribly neglected. Rome doesn't care or know about the trans-border lives we carry on, and the same proves valid for Ljubljana and Vienna. It is so unjust. I don't want to sound like a "secessionist" but as I have already written in these weeks, I just feel it would make so much more sense to establish a real "EUROREGION" of the Alps-Adriatic area, as well as many others in this continent, to protect our interests and a truly ecologic, "cybernetic" vision of our future development.

Yesterday night I listened again to old audio-tapes from the early 2000s that I had recorded… oh my god it was just so powerful and the crazy thing is that even though I was recording so many extreme utterances, I really feel still like that same person, and I still have those thoughts and existential doubts, dilemmas in my head, as if nothing ever changed for me. I never really managed to find the proper way to express myself, I am still so blocked on my writing and on the act of sharing what I create… I hope this diary will help me at least a little bit. Actually, I think all the worst problems in my mind started precisely when I stopped with that amazing healthy habit of keeping a diary… It was when I was 17-18. I tried to find a remedy,

temporarily, with that set of audiotapes I recorded, but it didn't last long. And then the rest was just so fragmentary. I feel so guilty, it is a terrible sensation. Canetti was writing his "Book against death", every single day. On the contrary, I feel to have already failed, irreparably, giving in to oblivion, having forgotten my true self too many times. So today I started investigating more on this, and I think an ayurvedic vision can actually help me, and I think I have identified my main block, residing in the block on the 2nd chakra, that of creativity, of expression, etc. I want to find a balance, I am afraid I will just keep forgetting and neglecting my truest side of creativity once I will start working again in a little more than 2 weeks. I am so terribly scared, afraid of going crazy, self-repressing myself to obey the orders of rationality. No, I cannot allow myself to go through this again, it is really my last chance to find a balance- I found what looks like the perfect job, but it doesn't mean I will have to devote myself to that entirely and exclusively... It will rather need to nourish all my other sides, so that I will be able to write again, my poems, my novel (I was supposed to finish it during this lockdown and instead I only wrote 15 pages, what a shame!), my nonacademic articles... Today I went to the libertarians' meeting and it felt great, that is also another essential front I don't intend to abandon. I need to diversify myself further, I despise the idea of becoming again a "one-dimensional person", I could never forgive myself for torturing me yet another time.

1 June

I can't believe June has already arrived... I feel stuck in an "in-between evasive season" and feel that we celebrated Christmas not so long ago. On Friday I went back to my parents' home and was just happy to be there and enjoy the usual simple things, garden, cats and sofa. Saturday was a great day, I spent the morning reading the newspapers outside in the garden, then in the afternoon me and Andrea went to Gorizia to enjoy our future city and did some nice walks around, then Marco and

Giulia reached us and we went to walk together to a nice area of the city very close to the Slovene border, that I had never seen before. We even crossed the border illegally, I mean the path just continued and somebody had removed the tape that was supposed to mark the frontier, we went beyond some meters then came back. I still find it so crazy, this situation at the border. Luckily, it seems that these events have really contributed in creating a new atmosphere, in which Italians and Slovenes are communicating more across the fence, organizing events, playing volleyball, singing, coming together, missing their formerly cross-border life, that was however taken for granted. The Transalpina Square has finally become a point of encounter, and is not as marginal as before. People have realized its deepest meaning and importance, better later then never! We spent the rest of the day at a great place where our friend Cristina works as a waitress, with also Mavì and Cristian (who were going out for the first time since the beginning of the emergency), and Giulia F (the same). It felt so good to come together after 4 months. It was just unbelievable that time has passed so fast. Yesterday I relaxed a lot in the morning, did also a nice walk in the fields and talked to Roxana after almost 1 year, I guess the lockdown really helped her in understanding what her priorities in life are and she apologized for the way she treated me and Mavì one year ago during a very bad period she was going through, I was really happy so hear all that and told her I forgive her of course. In the afternoon I met Caterina and we went for a walk along the Isonzo, we put our feet in the river, I really needed that! She is stuck here after the repatriation from Chile and she is really suffering so much for not being able to travel, so she found a new job here, working in the maintenance of a grapevine, very hard work and very little paid unfortunately. Today I came back to Monfalcone and in the afternoon I cycled all the way to Marina Julia to the beach! Hadn't been there in years, it is actually nice, although it is considered one of the ugliest beaches in Italy. Giulia R and Giulia F came too, we spent a wonderful afternoon sunbathing, we just put our feet in the water, it was too cold to swim although I had dreamed about it. I enjoyed so much coming back by bike too. It all felt so normal to the point that I later realized we never wore the mask in over 3 hours, we just completely forgot about the virus and

for the first time in months we didn't even mention it...

4 June

Very intense days, I guess this is how my life will look like from now on... as I will have less and less free time and an increasing amount of work and social events to keep up to. Anyway, the 2nd of June, festivity day here in Italy I spent with two very nice young people, Martina from Pordenone, the chief redactor of the Portal "East Journal" I am collaborating with, and Daniele from Gorizia, a young law graduate who has recently started writing for East Journal. Martina wanted to gather the group of us coming from the same region of Friuli Venezia Giulia and take the opportunity to think of other possible cooperation for the future. So we met in Gorizia (I went there by train and it was the first time by train since the 13th of March when I took the train from Mestre to Monfalcone after having come back from California) and then drove with two different cars (because of the restrictions, I was with Martina) to San Martino del Carso where we went to eat to the restaurant "Al Poeta", my favorite place, where I saw again the little kittens who were born in the old mulberry tree. It was also one day after the 50th anniversary of Giuseppe Ungaretti's death, the great poet who had fought during First World War on the Karst and devoted some unforgettable verses precisely to the small village of San Martino... So we ended up spending almost 4 hours together there, eating and drinking and talking about our lives and interests, I truly believe it could be the beginning of some new adventure, as Martina proposed that we organize some event in the future in Gorizia, "sponsored" by East Journal, as experts in the wide Eastern European area. Of course during those hours, we totally forgot about the fact that we were supposed to wear the masks once we left the tables, and about the other limitations... So that was a good sign! Yesterday I spent the afternoon with Cristiana and Andrea Q in Gradisca, we enjoyed our time by the shore of the Isonzo river, sunbathing, the sun was strong

but luckily there was also some nice fresh wind blowing, I didn't put any sunblock on my body and I got almost burned, I noticed once I got home. Anyway, Andrea Q is very worried about his future, he stopped working at the bar of a high school in February as soon as the schools closed, and sees no chance of doing the same work again, as most likely no bar will be allowed to operate within schools for a long time. He is still waiting for compensation money from the government for the months he hasn't worked, but not a since cent has arrived yet, so he is spending his days looking for job opportunities, desperately. I am honestly quite worried for him, because he was so satisfied with this job and it took him so many years to get a stable position (although a humble one, working as a bartender), and I am worried it will be very difficult for him to find a new one in this crisis situation. Cristiana told me she and her boyfriend are not considering buying a house anymore, as the uncertainty of the moment doesn't really encourage them to invest their little savings in a property, for which anyway they would also need to start a mortgage. I totally understand them and I honestly feel relieved for me too, because we had nourished this idea for a long time, of buying a house (notwithstanding the very precarious perspectives about work we had), and now that we decided to focus on a rent first it all sounds much more relaxing. We took some amazing picture with Cristiana's polaroid camera, and remembered the good old times of when we used to go to high school together, especially some moments of our last year. I felt we are still the same people, exactly the same, we still look so young and beautiful I would say. Cristiano reached us at a certain point and then I took the bus to go back to Monfalcone, where I went to an extraordinary meeting with of the libertarians to discuss a sit-in we will organize on the occasion of some public commemoration of the liberation of the city from the Yugoslav troops next week, which is the outcome of a right-wing manipulation of memory and of the delicate historical events of that time.

Then I spent the rest of the evening listening to some other audiotapes from 2003 (and felt so embarrassed for how stupid I was sometimes, for the logorrhea I was obsessing people with), and then confronted some memories of that period with

some poems I had written in the same days… and I wondered whether I will ever have that same impulse again, of writing so much, and so "unconsciously"… Then a huge storm arrived, I was alone in the house because Andrea was with his band, and it really seemed like the end of the world had arrived. But then I slept very well. Today I met Giulia F in the morning to go to buy some gift for Mavì who is having her birthday tomorrow. Then I spent the afternoon reading some articles about Taiwan and imagining some future research directions. My dad called me to tell me that the documents from University of Nova Gorica arrived, so I now have the right to cross the border, which is a very good for me. Then I went to the libertarians' meeting and we talked so much about things such as the cuts on the health system (we finished writing a leaflet we will distribute soon) and planned some future actions… I am very glad of being part of such an active group of people I can share so many important thoughts with…

8 June

Wow, so much to tell about these last days, although I think I have already forgotten a lot, because of the intensity and the lack of time… Anyway, on Friday me and Andrea went out with Matteo to have an aperitif and Alex reached us, again we felt so free and forgot about the restrictions, the masks, etc… However, I was in a kind of bad mood for some reasons, maybe the full moon, or maybe more likely this feeling of being about to lose my freedom again, by starting the new job. Maybe my nervousness was also a kind of side-effect of the lockdown, I mean, it was somehow easier to just stay at home on the sofa, not having anything to do, while now all of a sudden everyone is calling me trying to set up a meeting, Andrea is expecting me to have fun and stay out until late, my job at the university is about to begin and I have to preserve so many mental energies, that I feel I don't have because of the larval status I ended up in during the lockdown… I mean I feel like I will need so much time to just recover from the lockdown, to enjoy time outdoors without any thought. I

wish I could have started working later, in September, honestly. But this will not be the case, I will have to handle a very dense summer with very few perspectives of freedom and relaxation. It will be the first time in my entire life I guess, and it feels so terrible sometimes, honestly. Anyway, on Friday evening we stayed out for dinner too, we ate at a restaurant on the main square in Monfalcone, the prices were exorbitantly high though, I guess the owners increased the prices because of the crisis, but it seemed quite inappropriate and I don't think we will be back ever for a dinner (just for a glass of wine). Then also Gerry reached us, I really wanted to go home to sleep at that point but Andrea told me it was a shame, that I am giving up so easily, that it seems my best days are already behind me because I never want to party or anything. I replied that maybe it is somehow true, but that I need some specific elements to have fun and find the energy to be up late: good music, some dancing, or being abroad... That otherwise I just get bored without any stimuli... however I acknowledged he was right I was acting like a depressed person and I don't want to end up reproducing that dangerous mechanism of "renouncing", so I accepted to stay outside longer and the five of us ended up hiking on the hill of the city in the dark to admire the full moon... although when we finally reached the peak it got covered by a cloud... It was a little bit hard to walk in the dark, but I found the strength and I am glad I did, because it was a wonderful moment, I just wasn't able to appreciate it to its fullest, there is some huge block on me and I know it derives from my feeling of not having devoted the proper time to my sacred things when I had the chance, in all these months: writing the novel, writing all the other things I wanted to, play the piano more often, etc... It is so tragic. I hope I will be able not to give up to all this once I start working again, I hope this responsibility of work will actually balance me more and make me feel "unburdened", because the truth is that I don't function too well when I am totally free, so maybe I will valorize my free time better once I will have lost its unlimitedness... If not, I will be over, I cannot postpone my inner needs any longer. I physiologically need to finish writing that novel, it is a matter of self-survival, and of self-evolution. This is the biggest challenge in my life now: to be able to combine all parts of me. I have always given up, becoming so "one-

dimensional", but life has taught me that I can actually be multiple, and that precisely such modalities constitute my truest realization. I am mature enough to find the necessary "Aufhebung", I hope.

On Saturday I woke up in a bad mood again, and my temptation was that of just lying on the sofa and forget about the world, but then I found the strength to stand up and fight against this state of apathy. What gave me the power was the idea of going to the beach in Grado, so we first went out to have a coffee (I also needed that!) then we stopped at my parents' home to pick up the documents for Nova Gorica, and then went straight to Grado. We walked for more than 2 hours on the beach and then at a certain point I just couldn't resist and I jumped into the water... Wow, what a liberation! Maybe I managed to unblock my second chakra... The water element was definitely missing in my life, and I felt so happy after that, stronger and more self-aware. After the beach we indulged in a huge ice cream, then reached Marco and Giulia at the Staranzano lido, we drank and ate out and commented on the latest developments. We got the news that apparently our Minister for Foreign Affairs managed to receive the confirmation from the Slovenes that the borders will open on the 15th... I really hope that it will be true! On Sunday Andrea went out and I spent some time by myself. I even tried to do some shopping but a very rude girl working at the shop told me I was not allowed to try the clothes in the dressing rooms because "you people do not respect any security distance and allow all your family members inside". I told her it was not really fair to use the plural form of "you", she said it was just a "generalist you", but I got offended and went away, frustrated for not being able to try those clothes. Then not much in the rest of the day. Today I went to Gorizia and then to Nova Gorica, I walked 4 kms from the station to reach the crossing point and was so nervous when I was the Slovene border police patrolling the border... so I approached them but they were ignoring me, they were going to let me in without any problem; still I insisted in speaking Slovene and told them I was going to the university, that I had the contract if they needed it. They just said in Slovene "it's ok, it's ok". So I crossed. And it felt like magic. Honestly! Like a

different world, so lush and peaceful. I walked 2 more kms along the bike lane that runs parallel to the railway line, it looked like paradise to me, I was admiring the landscape as if I was seeing that foreign country for the first time, with so much enthusiasm. I reached the University of Nova Gorica and met with the Dean, amazing lady. We discussed about the tasks that await us, difficult and challenging ones. I felt a bit stressed by the idea that I have to start to work, and that I will have to change my daily schedules, because it takes some time from Monfalcone to get there with public transports. I really pray that they will open all the borders from Monday, because otherwise I will have to lose so much time to get there: instead of walking 20 minutes from the train station, crossing the (until 3 months ago nonexistent because totally free) border of Casa Rossa (Red House), I now have to walk more than 50 minutes, as I did today: all the way to the border of San Gabriele (the only one that is currently open for the crossing of Italian pedestrians who have specific permits like me, while all Slovenes can now come to Italy without restrictions) and then come back from the Slovene side, and the same thing for the return. Totally insane. I hope I will not be forced to work from the University every single day, I hope to have at least one day of two of freedom to work from home, especially in this still crazy period of post covid restrictions when there are less trains and buses and everything is kind of complicated... I will have to be there at 8, so I guess I will have to wake up at 6 and if all goes well (if the borders will be open) take the train at 7:22, be in Gorizia at 7:44 and at the University at around 8:05-8:10 (I walk so fast!). If the borders will not be open, it will be a nightmare. I know, it would be so much easier if I had a car (and a driver's license), but the only idea of using the car makes me sick, I am not exaggerating, it makes me want to vomit...

14 June

I lost track of time. I can't believe summer has almost arrived, already. These past days were great, I spent time planning future researches and wrote the syllabus for

one course I will be teaching next semester, about borders and semiotic landscapes. So many great ideas come to my mind and prepared a very nice outline of the course and imagined possible positive outcomes that would finally connect all “my borders”: Gorizia/Nova Gorica, Tijuana/San Diego, Mytilini/Ayvalik. I am very excited at the thought of being able to conduct new fieldwork in all of these places (of course the first is the easiest, I will be working just at the border!). The entire week was still characterized by a total uncertainty about the official re-opening of the border with Slovenia. Then on Friday evening we heard the final announce: from Saturday we were going to be able to cross again as residents of the Friuli Venezia Giulia region, and from Monday, tomorrow, all Italians are going to have the right to cross. The most incredible thing is that actually the “Casa Rossa” (Red House) checkpoint is going to re-open only tomorrow, and that is the one I have to cross to go to work, as my university is located only about 100 meters from that point. We will see what is going to happen tomorrow, a part of me is still afraid that I will go there and find myself in front of those blocks… In that case I guess I will ask to cross anyway! On Friday evening I met Janine after almost 6 months, the last time was in Klagenfurt in December. I had missed her so much. And we imagined future research project to carry out together, so that we can keep alive the great collaborations we had in Klagenfurt, with me now in Nova Gorica, at another side of the “Alps-Adriatics area”. She stayed a bit longer to witness this “counter-event” that was organized by Luca from our circle and other activists here in Monfalcone (I actually also took part in designing it), as a protest to the erection of a commemorative stone that remembers the departure of the Yugoslav troops from here 75 years ago after 40 days of “dark, barbarian occupation”… We were just speechless for the initiative that this Northern League, right wing municipality organized, so it was extremely important to be there and protest at the manipulation of history. Almost none of us was wearing a mask, we are almost forgetting about the virus luckily, anyway we kept distance, but it was in a public place, a small square, so it was safe to be there all together, many people actually participated and it was a great success. After that we went to the headquarters of the libertarians to prepare some dinner and enjoy a wonderful

evening, almost 12 of us, planning future events for the summer. Yesterday morning Andrea and Matteo left early for a weekend holiday in Venice and I rode my bike all the way to my parents' house, it was amazing to cycle at that time of the day, I left at around 8:30, not many people on the streets, even less in those minor roads I took, that passed through the middle of the countryside. I relaxed for the morning, reading newspapers, and then in the afternoon me, Giulia R and Giulia F went to Grado for the afternoon at the beach. Unfortunately, when we arrived, we figured out that the process of entering the beach was much slower and more complicated than we thought. It took us some time in the queue and then we realized that there was no possibility of entering the beach paying the entrance fee and just lie on the seashore, because apparently the anti-COVID restrictions do not allow it. So we were forced to buy a place under the beach umbrella, that came with two beach longers, the prices was ok for 3 people, but I am very disappointed because first of all the beach was almost deserted, with kilometers of space where people could put their towel and lie down, and then because if I want to go alone sometimes (I even thought I could take a bus directly from Gorizia to Grado, it is 1 hour but it would be worth it for me), I would have to pay so much: instead of the 3 euros of last year, it would be at least 10 euros, for an afternoon entry. Totally crazy. So with my friends we agreed that the most obvious alternative is to go to the beach to Marina Julia here in Monfalcone, and go to Grado only once a week or so, unfortunately. Anyway, we enjoyed so much there and even met my friend Christian B with his children, he recently separated from his wife, I hadn't seen them for almost 4 years and we walked all together a lot, then I also swam but the water level was too low. After that the three of us girls drank an aperitif, and then we want back home. In the evening I watched the football match Inter-Naples with my dad, the first match I am watching in over 4 and a half months, incredible!

Then today in the morning I talked to my brother who could come here and stay longer than expected (if his flight will be confirmed, after they canceled it many times), because he might cancel a trip he had booked on different Greek islands, as

they changed the schedule of many of the ferries... Then I just spent the rest of the day preparing things (clothes) to bring here in Monfalcone, I cycled here in the late afternoon and my dad took all my things by car, very kindly. Now I will try to read a bit and go to sleep very early because tomorrow I have to wake up at 6am to go to work, on the first day at least I want to be there at the University at 8:00!

15 June

I made it! Crossed the border this morning and went to work! I was so exhausted because I couldn't really sleep so well last night, too many thoughts and excitement about the new beginning. I woke up at 5:50 and did everything very fast, nervously, also because it was again raining, like almost every day this month (with only a couple of exceptions!). In the morning I had some very nice meetings with the dean and with a new colleague and then devoted lots of attention to the development of a potential research direction, that of environmental humanities in general, because tomorrow I will be meeting with the Vice Rector to discuss about possible connections between the humanities and environmental studies. On the bus back from Gorizia to Monfalcone, I was shocked to witness the total madness of the driver, who was shouting at people from the microphone, prompting them to wear the mask covering both mouth and nose, telling people where to seat (unnecessary, stupid rules) and really looking like a psycho-sheriff in search for trouble, enjoying his power. I wanted to tell him something as I was getting off but I was just too tired and gave up. I have been having this headache since noon, still not gone now. I came back home and could just lie on the sofa, and fell asleep. I hope I will be able to be physically stronger in the future, otherwise my entire life will only consist of work, and this is exactly the opposite of what I wanted and want! I almost miss the times of the lockdown when I was able to sleep so much...

Giustina Selvelli-Butkovič

1 July

The last two weeks have been very dense and hectic, lots of rewarding intellectual work and social satisfactions, but still underlying is the feeling that something is gravely missing. We spent a beautiful evening with friends on Saturday night and all of a sudden somebody said: “it’s summer but is doesn’t feel like it, do you all sense it?”, referring not only to the strange weather characterizing these last weeks, but to our blocked emotions, to the wasted chances of the summer and most of all to the spring that we didn’t really experience. So maybe I realized that there is no summer without spring, that we must flow in a process of harmonious seasonal successions, that this is like a summer that will never arrive (like the one Mary Shelley experienced in 1816), that we are again trying to bite reality as intensely as possible but the cellophane is still covering its edges and we never get to the point of inebriating ourselves in the ecstatic climax of a Dionysian summer, as we used to ritually do since we were born (I am using a collective “we” just because I perceive myself so multiple in the summer and I try to persuade myself that I am not the only one experiencing this).

It will be the first year without travels since summer of 2002, and I feel so depressed about it, sometimes I fear my entire creative spring has already dried up, how can I be the same without feeling free to plan and dream the activity I love and identifies me the most, being a “zig-zag wanderer”, an incessant explorer, a devoted ethnographer? And how much will I be able to carry on this passion and lifestyle in the future?

My aunt Alessandra wrote me that the situation in California is worsening and that she envies our freedom, she would have preferred to be forced to undergo the strictest lockdown already in March so to contain the damages of the contagion, she now fears the critical situation there could go on for one more year and both she and my cousin have bought a machine to check their levels of oxygen in order to monitor their health. I still haven’t exactly understood what this machine is but I somehow

feel blessed, notwithstanding all, for being able to go out and enjoy almost all activities quite normally, I can't imagine what it would mean to be still in lockdown. And I am so glad that we could enjoy those 6 weeks in the US between February and March, just before the disaster and spend so much time with the family there and do our travels also in San Francisco, Seattle and Astoria. It seems like a different historical period already.

It is important for me to address some of the fundamental problems that emerged during the lockdown in a proactive/activist way, so I proposed to our circle to organize something, firstly by writing a leaflet criticizing the absurd, intolerable, exaggerated restrictions and violations to our basic freedoms that emerged especially in our region, and then maybe think of a possible sit-in. I am very scared of the possible return of an outbreak in the autumn, and hope that my "cross-border" status of worker will save us somehow in the worst case scenario that we will be again caged in without being free to have a walk or breathe some fresh air in the green.

Preview-Image: Copyright: Giustina Selvelli-Butkovič