

Immediately after receiving the invitation to become a writer for *Future Library*, I imagined the world one hundred years from now. The world a long time after I myself have died, when my child, however long they manage to hold on to life, will likely no longer exist, and neither will any of the ones I love, any of the human beings who are living and breathing together with me on the earth in this moment. It was a frighteningly lonely image to conjure. But, cutting across that desolateness, I kept on imagining. Imagining the world one hundred years from now which, since even in this moment time is flowing without fail, will arrive as an inevitable reality. The trees of the forests around Oslo, that will grow thick and dense in those hundred years. The leaves and branches of spring, the afternoon sunlight that will shine down on them. The evenings and cold, still nights that will come without fail.

It was then that I knew the kind of power this project has. That, in order to write something for this project, I would have to think deeply about time. Before anything else I would have to think about my own life and death, about the fleeting span allotted to mortal humans, and reflect on who it is I have so far written for. ‘Language,’ my insufficient and at times impossible instrument – ultimately, I would have to become newly conscious of the fact that it is a passageway lying open for those who will read what I write.

And the moment I eventually write the first sentence, I have to believe in the world one hundred years from now. In the uncertain possibility that there will still be human beings who have survived, and who will read what I write. I have to hope that human history will not yet have vanished as a phantom, that this planet will not have become a huge ruin or grave of humans. It is a hope whose foundation is shaky, like the assumption that the people who run this project, and the writers of the present and future, who will die and be born in the course of the next hundred years, will continue this work as though carrying embers forward. Yet I have to believe, even in the tenuous possibility that a paper book’s fate will be to survive long enough to reach the world one hundred years from now.

If it is possible to call prayer the moment when, in spite of all the uncertainty, we have to take just one step towards the light, in this moment I feel that perhaps this project is something close to a century-long prayer.

Text for *Future Library* booklet by Han Kang