

Anja Røyne

# Life, Death, War and Grain. Stories of Nitrogen

## Livet, døden, krig og korn. Historier om nitrogen

Genre: Non-Fiction  
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This is the story of how nitrogen connects us to nature, for better or worse.

Why is artificial fertilizer used to make bombs? And how can stinking ammonia be part of the solution to the climate problem?

Everything we humans do is connected to air, water, soil and life through actual, physical substances. Nitrogen is one of the most important building blocks of all living things. We breathe nitrogen, but the nitrogen in the air has a form that makes it useless to both us and others. We could never have had a green and lush earth without tiny organisms in the ancient oceans, converting nitrogen gas into useful materials. Later, humans developed machines that could do the same. Today, our factories produce more reactive nitrogen than produced by bacteria. We use it both to grow life-giving food and for amunitions that take lives in war.

This is the story of how nitrogen connects us to nature, for better or worse.



Photo: Sturlason

Anja Røyne is a scientist and lecturer at the Institute of Physics, University of Oslo. She is a physicist with a background in solar energy, but has in the last 15 years researched geological and geo-chemical processes and is now researching how materials can be created with biotechnology. In addition she runs her own science blog, and often contributes in popular science radio programmes on radio and in newspapers.

#### Previous titles

*Hot Planet, Cool Minds: Science's Genial Solutions to the Climate Challenge* (2020)  
*The Elements We Live By* (2018)

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