

Okrogle miza SEP na Vilenici / CEI Round Table at Vilenica
»BERI ME V ŽIVO« / “READ ME LIVE”

Dobitniki štipendije SEP / CEI Fellowship Winners



26. Mednarodni literarni festival Vilenica /
26th Vilenica International Literary Festival

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Koncept
Concept

Pesniški nastop in njegova vrednost danes

Gregor Podlogar

I. Uvod

V zadnjih letih se katerikoli nastop, povezan z literaturo, največkrat enači s promocijo literature. Seveda gre ta promocija z roko v roki s trenutnim širšim dojemanjem literature, natančneje: knjige in njenega položaja na trgu. Zato je v širši javnosti prav vsak literarni nastop prepoznan kot promocija neke običajno pravkar izdane knjige. Za vsem tem pa prikrito tiči želja po čim večji prodaji neke knjige, po opaznosti avtorja (tudi v medijih) itd. Ta praksa obstaja, mnogo bolj je razširjena recimo v anglosaksonskem svetu kot v Vzhodni Evropi, in je pomembna za založbo, avtorja in navsezadnje tudi (potencialne) bralce. Živ stik z avtorjem je nekaj, kar literaturo umešča med stvari tega sveta, če pustim ob strani razsežnost prej omenjene tržnoekonomske vrednosti knjige.

Pravi pesniški nastop nima s promocijo literature nobene resne zveze. Naj tako takoj na začetku postavim tezo: pravi pesniški nastop je že literatura sama.¹ Ne vedno. Obstajajo odlične pesmi, ki jih lahko beremo tiho in je tako najbolje. Od tega je odvisnih več dejavnikov, od avtorja in besedila do kvalitete in namena nastopa. In na tem mestu naj še izpostavim, da je težje razmišljati o nastopih s proznimi besedili, ker branje iz romana ne predstavlja zaključene celote, kot je to pri nastopanju s poezijo, kjer vsaka pesem predstavlja svet zase. Nekoliko drugače je z branjem kratkih zgodb (tukaj lahko govorimo o sklenjeni celoti literarnega dela), ki je postal precej popularno in razvito na mnogih literarnih scenah povsod po svetu (naj spomnim na razviti hrvaški festival FAK, pa v Sloveniji na *Prozne mnogoboje*, če se omejim le bolj na lokalno okolje). Kakorkoli, ta tekst se bo omejil na pesniške nastope in na njihovo vrednost.

1 Zanimivo je opazovati, kako je glasno branje spreminjalo literaturo: pri pisateljih je npr. povzročilo nastanek poglavij v romanu, pri pesnikih pa je nastopanje vplivalo na delo tudi vsebinsko; velik del zvočne poezije je namreč napisan za nastop, za izvajanje, kar pomeni, da je akt ustvarjanja že usmerjen v misel o izvajanju.

Kot že rečeno, pesniški nastop ali bolje izvajanje pesniškega besedila je, poudarjam, lahko že del poezije same, še več, je njen elementarni del, povezan s samim začetkom njenega nastajanja v zgodovini človeštva, od indijskih *Ved* do antične poezije. Spomnimo, poezija je bila v obliki, kakršno poznamo danes in katere dediči smo, najprej posredovana oralno. Bila je v osnovi, kot se sodobno reče, performativna. Ta postmoderni izraz izhaja iz oznake za poezijo, ki je ustvarjena za izvajanje. *Performativna poezija* ima tendenco po navezovanju na oralno tradicijo, razvila in razširila pa se je predvsem v Ameriki v osemdesetih letih prejšnjega stoletja. V to pesniško smer, katere osnova je naveza na zanosen, mnogokrat pompozen pesniški izraz, spadajo v širšem smislu tudi *slem*, *zvočna poezija*, *spoken word* idr.

V tem tekstu pa se ne bom osredotočil na *performativno poezijo*, temveč na poezijo, ki ni bila pisana z misljivo po nastopanju, živem izvajaju – ali recitiranju ali branju. Skratka, poskušal bom predstaviti, kako je v tako imenovani običajni, tradicionalni poeziji, ki seveda mora biti kvalitetna, že lahko izdelan teren za dobro izvajanje. Ta teren oblikujejo pesniška govorica, ritem pesmi, rima in podobno. Ti se zares realizirajo šele v človeškem glasu, glasu, ki izvaja poezijo. Osebno mislim, da je bolje, da je to glas avtorja. (Obstaja pesniški portal www.lyrikline.org, ki tej moji trditvi pritrjuje.) In zakaj se glas avtorja pri izvajaju poezije izkaže za tako ključen element? Prepričan sem, da šele glas pokaže na dogodek jezika v pesmi, šele glas omogoči pravo izkušnjo jezika. In še, če sledim mislim Martina Heideggerja, šele z glasom se celostno razpre bit pesmi.

II. Aprioriji literarnega nastopa

Glede literarnega nastopa, kot ga razumem, naj najprej razjasnim teren, ključne apriorne predpostavke nekega literarnega nastopa; te so namreč odvisne od zgodovinskih, socioloških, filozofskih in drugih vidikov za razumevanje le-teh. Na kratko se moj način in potek razmišljanja o literarnem nastopu pokažeta v odgovorih na sledeča tri vprašanja:

Kdo?

Kje?

Zakaj?

Pomembno torej je, kdo nastopa, skratka, mene zanima avtor (šele z avtorjevim nastopom vstane, fenomenološko gledano, ontološka vrednost nastopa), kar sicer zoži prostor razpravljanja, predvsem vprašanja interpretacije, pa vendar me tukaj zanima le ta aspekt; potem je pomembno, kje avtor nastopa, kraj namreč določi konotacijo nastopa (ne pozabimo, tudi politično); pomemben pa je tudi namen nastopa: v pravem literarnem nastopu avtor nastopa zgolj za publiko, skratka, zaradi predstavljanja svojega dela brez zunanje intence.

III. Izvajanje poezije danes

Tako razvejan, raznolik svet poezije, kot ga poznamo danes, ni obstajal še nikoli, tako kot še nikoli ni bilo na literarnem prizorišču toliko različnih poetik. Šele zadnje pol stoletja je dobilo izvajanje lastne poezije tako moč in zagon, da so se načini izvajanja razvili v neslutene možnosti, vsekakor tudi po zaslugu razvoja tehnologij, saj so na primer mnogi zvočni pesniki začeli uporabljati tudi magnetofone, s katerimi so manipulirali z zvokom. S tem se je tudi razumevanje poezije kot take predrugačilo, spremenilo. Izvajanje poezije je namreč poezijo poma-knilo v mnogo širše polje pesniškega, kot je bilo kdajkoli prej: prema-knile so se meje poezije. Danes bi težko (po)imenovali vse pesniške žanre, ki so izvajanje vzeli za svoj bistveni del: gre predvsem za poezijo, povezano z urbanim okoljem. Sem lahko prištejemo *dub poezijo*, *zvočno poezijo*, pa seveda v zadnjih desetletjih razviti *pesniški slem* (ki ga je globalizacija ponesla na vse konce zemeljske oble in je tako v 21. stoletju prerasel samega sebe ter postal nedefinirana izvajalska pesniška vaja z nešteto pravili, saj ima danes domala vsaka slem skupnost svoja pravila). Pesniki, ki so se in se ukvarjajo s slemom, niso nikoli bili in še vedno niso zares spoštovani znotraj tradicionalnih pesniških krogov; nepozaben je na primer navedek papeža zahodnega kanona Harolda

Blooma, da je slem smrt umetnosti. Kakorkoli, slem je zagotovo najbolj radikalna oblika pesniškega nastopa v smislu izvedbe in izvajanja lastne poezije. Navsezadnje je pesnik-slemer nagrajen (slem ima kritički prostor postavljen v tekmovanje, kjer običajno publika in žirija izbereta zmagovalca) predvsem zaradi kvalitete nastopa, manj zaradi kvalitete pesmi. Drugi pol radikalnosti izvajanja poezije pa zavzema zvočna poezija, ki je, naj takoj poudarim, nekakšen naravnji podaljšek tradicionalne poezije, katerega končni izdelek (mnogo zvočne poezije nastaja tudi improvizirano)² je pomembnejši od samega nastopanja. Zvočna poezija je zato tisti del tradicionalne poezije, ki z izvajanjem/izvedbo dosega raven v jeziku, ki širi njene meje. To širjenje se dogaja na jezikovni ravni, natančneje bi zvočno poezijo lahko definirali kot *verze brez besed*, kar je nekoč izjavil dadaist Hugo Ball na enem od večerov *Cabaret Voltaira*. Zvočna poezija, podobno kot mnogo gledaliških iger, potrebuje izvedbo, da zares zaživita njej izraz in njena (umetniška) vrednost.³ Tako lahko v zvočno poezijo v najširšem pomenu besede spadata tako Kurt Schwitters z znamenito *Ursonato* na eni kot Gertrude Stein z nekaterimi svojimi ključnimi deli na drugi strani. Ob tem je najpomembnejše, da je zvočna poezija z lastnim razvojem od Velimirja Hlebnikova in Henrika Chopina do Charlesa Amirkhaniana in Johna Cageja, našla mejo – prostor med glasom, besedo in zvokom. Še več, ta poezija je na meji. In ta meja jo, žal, ločuje od tradicionalne poezije. Če je slem radikalnen v aktu izvajanja, je zvočna poezija radicalna v aktu raziskovanja jezika in njegove semantične, sintaktične in fonetične vrednosti.

2 Na tem mestu izpostavljam slovenski projekt *Impro* Primoža Čučnika, Tomaža Groma in Ane Pepelnik, ki je poleg projekta *IT* Irene Tomažin edini sodobni pesniški projekt, ki koketira s tradicijo zvočne poezije in jo na samosvoj način tudi razvija, dopolnjuje in nadgrajuje.

3 Poučevanje sodobne poezije bi zato moralno vključevati tudi zvočne posnetke avtorjev, ki bi nazorno predstavili njeno bistvo in pomen.

IV. Dadaizem in njegov pomen v literarnem nastopu

Dadaizem je avantgardno gibanje, ki je imelo pri širjenju mej znotraj izvajanja nekega literarnega (ne samo pesniškega) dela ključno vlogo tako za formiranje zvočne poezije kot kasneje za razumevanje slem poezije. Gre za pristop k izvajanju, ki se tako, kot je značilno za mnoge avantgardne pristope, formira v opoziciji do obstoječega, teži k spremembam in išče novo. V resnici je šlo za pomembno spremembo: le-ta ni bila le variacija prejšnjih pristopov k izvajanju (kot jih lahko zasledujemo danes), temveč je šlo za spremembo, ki je sprožila dogodek svobode v pesniškem izvajanju. Kostumi, »verzi brez besed«, različne intonacije in naglaševanja, tudi petje. Hugo Ball, nemški pesnik, je leta 1916 ustavnil in potem tudi vodil *Cabaret Voltaire*, nekakšen dadaistični klub, ki je prirejal umetniške dogodke, takšne, kot je na primer prej omenjeni. Hugo Ball je z definicijo *verzi brez besed* postal eden od očetov zvočne poezije, čeprav je v kontekstu izvajanja lastne poezije treba pri njem v ospredje postaviti način izvedbe, njegov pristop k interpretaciji. Njegova interpretacija namreč pomeni popolno razbremenitev, osvoboditev, tudi improvizacijo. Ker se tu ne ukvarjam ne z zvočno poezijo ne s pesniškim slemom, je pomemben le dadaistični element izvajanja, element pristopa k izvajanju lastnega dela. Res je večina tako imenovane tradicionalne poezije namenjena tihemu branju. Ta poezija je, ko gre za izvajanje in glede na prej povedano o zvočni poeziji, notni zapis. Pa vendar je lekcija dadaizma in njegovega pristopa k izvajanju lastnega dela v kontekstu sodobne poezije v tem, da je pesniški nastop dogodek: ne v smislu kostumov, »verzov brez besed« in podobnega, temveč v avtorjevem angažmaju pri interpretaciji, ki je lahko tudi povsem običajna; pomemben je angažma avtorja kot osebe, kot nekoga, ki ustvarja, gre za podoben akt kot pri pisanju ozioroma nastajanju pesmi.

V. Je nastop avtorja/avtorice podaljšek njegovega/njenega dela?

Naj zgoraj zastavljenemu vprašanju pritrdim. Zakaj? Če namreč to vprašanje izhaja iz precej popularnega vprašanja *Kaj je knjiga?*, potem lah-

ko rečemo, da ima danes neko literarno delo avratičen pomen predvsem v nastopu. Najprej in predvsem je vprašanje *kaj je knjiga?* razpeto med kompleksen odnos med knjigo kot predmetom na eni in knjigo kot intelektualnim oziroma estetskim delom na drugi strani. Tako je avratičen pomen manj v ospredju in je morda na prvi pogled manj zanimiv, a je zagotovo edinstven aspekt literature nasploh. Z avratičnim pomenom mislim na znamenito opredelitev avre in njene vrednosti v umetnosti v času reprodukcije Walterja Benjamina. Ta (ne zgolj sociološki) pomen (literature), ki se nanaša na odnos med avtorjem in poslušalcem, lahko (z)raste zgolj v javnem nastopu (avtorja) kot edinstvena in neponovljiva razsežnost nekega literarnega dela, na primer pesmi. (Ne, ne strinjam se s Pazovim razmišljanjem v slovitem eseju *Znaki v kroženju*, ko pravi, da »poezija vstopa v nas skozi oči in ne skozi ušesa«. In še: »Poleg tega beremo samo zase, v tišini.«)⁴ Pesniška zbirka je – danes še, kako bo z njo v prihodnje (kar je sicer precej razširjeno področje diskusije, ki vključuje domala vse vpletene v njen nastanek) – v prej omenjenem kontekstu njenega razumevanja reproducirano delo brez avre. Benjamin v eseju z naslovom *Umetnina v času, ko jo je mogoče tehnično reproducirati* pravi: »Na splošno bi smeli reči, da reproducija tehnika ločuje reproducirano od tradicije. S tem ko množi reproducijo, zamenjuje enkratni pojav umetniškega dela z množičnim.«⁵ Zato sem mnenja, da je pesniški nastop potrebno ugledati ravno v tej edinstvenosti, avratičnosti, ko avtor z branjem, torej s svojim glasom, naglaševanjem, intonacijo, skratka, interpretacijo, izvaja delo v vsej svoji pristnosti. Živimo v času, ko je moderno sestavljalci lestvice *the best of*, ob tem je zanimivo, da so bili tudi nekateri sodobni pesniki odlični interpreti in je njihova interpretacija za vedno ostala. V slovenski pesniški tradiciji so to Dane Zajc, Tomaž Salamun in Jure Detela, od tujih pesnikov mi bo zagotovo stal v spominu nastop pokojne danske pesnice Inger Christensen, pa poljskega pesnika Eugeniusza Tkaczyszyna Dickega in na vileniškem festivalu nastopajoči irski pesnik Gearoid McLaughlin.

4 Octavio Paz: *Izbrane pesmi in izbrani eseji*, izbral in prevedel Ferdinand Miklavc, Cankarjeva založba, Ljubljana 1993 (Nobelovci; 102), str. 199.

5 Walter Benjamin: *Izbrani spisi*, prevod Frane Jerman et al., Studia humanitatis, Ljubljana 1998, str. 151.

VI. Sklep: posredno poznavanje literature vs pesniški nastop – dodana vrednost poezije

Poleg avratičnosti pa ima literarni nastop še eno pomembno razsežnost: nastop avtorja je upor proti posrednjemu srečevanju z literaturo. V svetu informacij (v tem primeru o knjigah in s tem o nekem literarnem delu) in hiperprodukcijske knjig smo obsojeni na posredno poznavanje literature, ki sicer ni nek nov pojav v zgodovini. Roger Chartier v nekem pogovoru omenja, da je bil *Don Kihot* tisto prvo literarno besedilo, ki so ga ljudje poznali, ne da bi ga brali. Danes, nadaljuje Chartier, se je posredno poznavanje okrepilo z razvojem priložnosti za posredovanje.⁶ Nastop avtorja ima zato prav nasproten učinek: je neposredno spoznavanje literature preko primarnega (s tem mislim oralne tradicije poezije) in edinstvenega načina posredovanja in je tako nekakšna borba za obstoj literature kot literature in njenega poslanstva.

Izvajanje lastne poezije je, če sklenem, sporočanje bistva pesništva: v glasnem branju po eni strani bolj pristno zaživijo »tehnične« plati poezije, kot so ritem, rima in podobno, po drugi strani pa avtorjev glas, ki je tudi glas pesmi, govori, govori, da spregovori pesniškost:⁷ bistvo pesmi se podaljšuje.

⁶ Pierre Bourdieu, Roger Chartier, Louis Ginzberg: *Sociologija, zgodovina, književnost*, prevedli Varja Balžalorsky, Ignac Fock, Tomaž Jurca, Studia humanitatis, Ljubljana 2011, str. 122.

⁷ Kdor je poslušal recitale Daneta Zajca, ve, kaj mislim.

Poetry Performance and Its Value Today

Gregor Podlogar

I. Introduction

In recent years, any performance related to literature is most commonly equated with the promotion of literature. This promotion, of course, goes hand in hand with the current broader perception of literature, more precisely, the book and its position in the market. Hence, every single literary performance is seen by the general public as the promotion of a usually recently published book. Behind all this lies a secret aspiration for the highest possible sales of a book, the public notice of the author (including media exposure) etc. This practice exists – it is much more widespread in, for example, the Anglo-Saxon world than in Eastern Europe and is important for the publisher, author and, last but not least, the (potential) readers. Live contact with the author is something which places literature among the things of this world, if we leave the aforementioned market economic value of the book aside.

A real poetry performance has nothing much to do with the promotion of literature. Let me then put forward my thesis: a real poetry performance is itself literature¹. Not always. There are terrific poems which can be read quietly and it is best that way. It depends on several factors – from the author and the text, to the quality and purpose of the performance. I would also like to point out that observing prose performances is more complex, as reading from a novel does not represent a complete whole, unlike performing poetry, where every poem is a world of its own. The case is somewhat different with reading short stories (in this case, we are talking about a literary work as a whole), which has become quite popular and has developed in many literary

1 It is interesting to observe how reading aloud has changed literature; for instance, it has resulted in writers adding new chapters to their novels and, in the poets' case, performing has also influenced the works' content. A substantial part of sound poetry is written to be recited, performed, which means that the act of creating is already oriented towards the performance.

scenes all over the world (such as the notorious Croatian festival FAK and *Prozni mnogoboji* – The Prose Marathon – in Slovenia, if we limit ourselves only to the more local environment). The present text will focus on poetry performances and their value.

As already said, a poetry recital or, better yet, the performance of a poem can already be part of poetry itself. More than that, it is its fundamental part, connected to its very beginnings in the history of mankind, from the Indian *The Vedas* to classic poetry. After all, poetry, in the form we know today and of which we are heirs, was first transmitted orally. It was, if we use the popular contemporary word, performative in its basis. This postmodern term derives from the label for poetry, which is written to be performed. *Performance poetry* tends to draw on oral tradition and had developed and flourished in the 1980's, primarily in the US. This poetry movement, which builds on vehement, often pompous poetic expression, also encompasses, in its wider sense, *slam*, *sound poetry*, *spoken word* etc.

This text will not be focusing on *performance poetry* but rather on poetry which is not written with live performance in mind – or reciting or reading. To sum up, I will attempt to illustrate how, in the so-called standard, traditional poetry, which certainly must be of high quality, foundations can be laid for good performance. These foundations consist of the poetic language, the poem's rhythm, rhyme etc. These can truly be achieved only through the human voice, the voice performing the poetry. Personally, I believe it is better that this is the voice of the author. (There is a poetry portal, www.lyrikline.org, which shares my opinion.) And why is the author's voice such a key element in performing poetry? I am certain that only the voice can reveal the act of language in the poem, only the voice can provide a true experience of the language. And, as Martin Heidegger would put it, only the voice can unfold the complete essence of the poem.

II. A Prioris of Literary Performance

In thinking about literary performance as I see it, let me first define the foundations, the key *a priori* determinants of a literary performance; these depend on historical, sociological, philosophic and other aspects of how we perceive it. In brief, my way and line of thinking on literary performance can be summed up in the answers to the following three questions:

Who?

Where?

Why?

Firstly, it is important to consider who is performing – my interest lies in the author (only the author's performance, from the phenomenological perspective, can express the ontological value of the performance), which narrows the field of discussion, particularly the issues of interpretation, but nevertheless, at this point, I am concerned only with this aspect; secondly, it is important to take into account where the author is performing, as the location determines the connotations that the performance carries (including the political connotation); finally, the purpose of the performance is also relevant: in a true literary performance, the author performs solely for the public – to present his or her work, without any particular objective.

III. Performing Poetry Today

Such a heterogeneous, diverse world of poetry as we know today has never existed before, just like there have never been so many different types of poetics in the literary arena. Only in the last fifty years has poetry performance gained such strength and drive that the ways of performing have gone to unthinkable dimensions, doubtless also owing to technological development, as, for example, many sound poets started using tape recorders to manipulate sound. This also means that the understanding of poetry as such has transformed, changed. The

performance of poetry has moved poetry to a poetic field wider than ever before: the boundaries of poetry have moved. Today, it would be difficult to name all poetry genres which have taken performance as their essential element: they mostly involve poetry associated with the urban environment. This includes *dub poetry*, *sound poetry* and of course, in recent decades, the notorious *slam poetry* (which globalization has brought to all corners of the world and which, in the 21st century, has outgrown itself, becoming an indefinable performing practice of poetry with countless rules, since virtually every slam community has its own set of rules). Poets who do and have done slam, have never been and are still not truly acknowledged within traditional poetry circles; an unforgettable example of this point is the statement of the Pope of Western canon, Harold Bloom, that slam is the death of art. In any case, slam is undoubtedly the most radical form of poetry performance in the sense of performing one's own poetry. Ultimately, the poet-slammer is rewarded (slam sets its judging arena in the context of competition, in which the audience and the jury usually choose the winner), mainly for the quality of the performance, not so much for the quality of the poem. The other radical pole of performing poetry is sound poetry, which is a sort of natural appendage of traditional poetry and the final product of which (a lot of sound poetry is also improvised²) is more important than the performance itself. Sound poetry is therefore that part of traditional poetry which uses performance to reach the level of language, which extends its boundaries. This process of extending takes place at the linguistic level, more precisely, sound poetry could be defined as *verses without words*, as Dadaist Hugo Ball once put it at one of the *Cabaret Voltaire* events. Sound poetry, like many theatre plays, requires performance to make its expression and (artistic) value really come to life³. Sound poetry in its widest sense can thus include Kurt Schwitters and his famous *Ursonata* on the one

2 I would like to refer to the Slovene *Impro* project of Primož Čučnik, Tomaž Grom and Ana Pepelnik, which is, apart from Irena Tomažin's *IT* project, the only contemporary poetry project which flirts with the tradition of sound poetry, cultivating, complementing and developing it in its own particular way.

3 Teaching contemporary poetry should therefore include authors' sound recordings, which would clearly convey the essence and meaning of such poetry.

hand, as well as Gertrude Stein and some of her key works on the other. The most important thing to note is that sound poetry, in the course of its own development, from Velimir Khlebnikov and Henri Chopin to Charles Amirkhanian and John Cage, has discovered its boundary – the space between voice, word and sound. More than that, this type of poetry is on the boundary. And this boundary, sadly, separates it from traditional poetry. If slam is radical in its act of performing, then sound poetry is radical in its act of exploring language and its semantic, syntactic and phonetic value.

IV. Dadaism and Its Impact on Literary Performance

Dadaism is an avant-garde movement, which has played a key role in expanding the boundaries of performing literary works (not only works of poetry), crucial to the conception of sound poetry, as well as to later understanding of slam poetry. It represents an approach to performance that, as is characteristic of many avant-garde approaches, is based on opposition to the existing, calls for change and is in search of the new. It was truly an important change: it was not merely a variation on previous approaches to performance (such as we are seeing nowadays), but a change which produced the act of freedom in poetry performing. Costumes, “verses without words”, various kinds of intonation and stress, as well as singing. In 1916, the German poet Hugo Ball established and also ran *Cabaret Voltaire*, a sort of Dadaist club, which organized art events, such as the one mentioned earlier. With his definition *verses without words*, Hugo Ball became one of the fathers of sound poetry; however, what is central in the context of poetry performance is his style of performing, his approach to interpretation. His interpretation is a complete discharge, liberation, improvisation. As I am not focusing on sound or slam poetry in this text, what matters is only the Dadaist element of performing, the element of approach to performing one’s work. It is true that most of the so-called traditional poetry is meant to be read in silence. This type of poetry is, when it comes to performance and in line with what has

already been said on sound poetry, like a music sheet. But nevertheless, the lesson of Dadaism and its approach to performing one's work is that, in the context of contemporary poetry, a poetry performance is an event: not in the sense of costumes, "verses without words" and the like, but in the sense of the author's engagement in the interpretation, which can be completely ordinary – what is important is the engagement of the author as a person, as someone who creates; it is similar to the act of writing or composing a poem. And that is (or was) the lesson of Dadaism.

V. Is the Author's Performance an Appendage of His/Her Work?

I would answer yes to the question above. Why? If the question is derived from the rather popular question *what is a book?*, then we can say that today, the auratic perception of a literary work lies mainly in the performance. First and above all, the question *what is a book?* is characterised by the complex relationship between the book as an object on the one hand, and the book as an intellectual or aesthetic work on the other. Its auratic perception is thus less central, perhaps less interesting at first glance, but is certainly a unique aspect of literature in general. By "auratic perception" I am referring to Walter Benjamin's famous concept of the aura and its value in art in the time of reproduction. This (not only sociological) perception (of literature), which refers to the relationship between the author and the listener, can only grow in the public performance (of the author) as a unique and unrepeatable dimension of a literary work, a poem, for example. (No, I do not agree with Paz's thinking in his famous essay, *Los signos en rotación* – Signs in Rotation –, where he says that "poetry enters us through the eyes rather than the ears". And: "Besides, we read only for ourselves."⁴) In the context discussed above, a poetry collection is – today, at least, for we do not know what the future will bring

4 Octavio Paz: Izbrane pesmi in izbrani eseji, (selected and translated by Ferdinand Mi-klavc, Cankarjeva založba, Ljubljana 1993 (Nobelovci; 102), p. 199); Slovene translation [Translator's note].

(which is a rather wide field of discussion, concerning virtually everyone involved in its making) – a reproduced work without aura. In his essay, *Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit* (The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction), Benjamin says: “In general, we could say that the reproduction technique detaches the reproduced object from tradition. By making multiple reproductions, it substitutes the unique phenomenon of an artistic work with the common.”⁵ That is why I believe a poetry performance should be viewed in the light of its uniqueness, auratics, when the author, through reading, through his or her voice, stress, intonation, through interpretation, performs the poem in all its authenticity. We live in a time when it is popular to make *the best of charts*; it is interesting to note that some contemporary poets were also excellent interpreters and their interpretations have stayed for good. In Slovene poetry tradition, these poets are Dane Zajc, Tomaž Šalamun and Jure Detela, and among foreign poets, I will definitely always remember the performance of the late Danish poet Inger Christensen, as well as the Polish poet Eugeniusz Tkaczyszyn Dycki and the Irish poet Gearoid McLaughlin, who appeared at the Vilenica Festival.

VI. Conclusion: Indirect Knowledge of Literature vs Poetry Performance – Poetry's Added Value

Apart from its auratic aspect, a literary performance has another important dimension: the author's performance is a resistance against indirect knowledge of literature. In the world of information (in this case on books and therefore, on a particular literary work) and mass production of books, we are condemned to indirect knowledge of literature, which, however, is not a new phenomenon in history. In one of his interviews, Roger Chartier mentions that *Don Quixote* was the first literary work that people knew without having read it. Today,

5 Walter Benjamin: *Izbrani spisi*, (prevod Frane Jerman ... e tal., SH, Ljubljana 1998, p. 151); Slovene translation [Translator's note].

continues Chartier, indirect knowledge has increased with the development of the means of communication⁶. An author's performance therefore has the exact opposite effect: it provides a first-hand experience of literature through the primary (by which I mean the oral tradition of poetry) and unique means of communication, a type of struggle for the existence of literature and its mission.

To conclude, to perform poetry is to communicate the essence of poetry: with reading aloud on the one hand, the “technical” sides of poetry come more vividly to life, such as its rhythm, rhyme etc., and on the other, the author's voice, the voice of the poem, speaks, speaks, thus making poetry talk⁷: the poem's essence is extended.

Translated by Špela Bibič

6 Bourdieu, Chartier, Ginzberg: Sociologija, zgodovina, književnost, (translated by Varja Balžalorsky, Ignac Fock, Tomaž Jurca, Studia humanitatis, Ljubljana 2011, p. 122); Slovene translation [Translator's note].

7 Anyone who has listened to the recitals of Dane Zajc knows what I mean.

Udeleženci Panellists



Foto © Andrej Hočvar

Gregor Podlogar, Slovenija / Slovenia

Gregor Podlogar se je rodil leta 1974 v Ljubljani. Diplomiral je iz filozofije na Filozofski fakulteti Univerze v Ljubljani. Je pesnik, prevajalec sodobne ameriške poezije (C. Hawkey, L. Solomon, P. Killebrew, A. Berrigan idr.) v slovenščino, urednik literarnih oddaj na Radiu Slovenija ter urednik slovenskih strani mednarodne spletne pesniške baze *lyrikline.org*. Svojo poezijo objavlja v različnih literarnih revijah v Sloveniji in tujini. Njegovi prvi samostojni pesniški zbirki, *Naselitve* (States, 1997) in *Vrtoglavica zanosa* (Joy in Vertigo, 2002), sta izšli pri založbi Aleph Press. S pesnikom Primožem Čučkom in slikarjem Žigo Karižem je sodeloval pri nastanku eksperimentalne knjige o New Yorku z naslovom *Oda na manhatenski aveniji* (2003), ki je izšla pri založbi Sherpa Press, sledila pa ji je njegova naslednja samostojna zbirka *Milijon sekund bliže* (2006). Pri založbi Sherpa Press je izšla tudi njegova trenutno zadnja zbirka *Vesela nova ušesa* (2010). Izbor njegovih del je bil objavljen v dvojezični antologiji *Six Slovenian Poets* (Šest slovenskih pesnikov, 2006). Ob pesniškem udejstvovanju občasno nastopa tudi kot DJ in uživa ob prijetni skodelici zelenega čaja v Ljubljani.

Gregor Podlogar was born in 1974 in Ljubljana, Slovenia. He obtained a degree in philosophy from the Faculty of Arts at the University of Ljubljana. He is a poet, a translator of contemporary American poetry (C. Hawkey, L. Solomon, P. Killebrew, A. Berrigan a.o.), a radio editor at the editorial department for literature at Radio Slovenija, and editor of the Slovenian sites of the international internet poetry platform at lyrikline.org. He publishes his poems in various literary magazines in Slovenia and abroad. The Aleph Press publishing house published his first two collections of poetry, *Naselitve* (States, 1997) and *Vrtoglavica zanosa* (Joy in Vertigo, 2002). Together with poet Primož Čučnik and painter Žiga Kariž he contributed to an experimental book on New York City entitled *Oda na manhatenski aveniji* (Ode on Manhattan Avenue, 2003), which was published by the Sherpa Press publishing house and followed by his next collection *Milijon sekund bliže* (*A Million Seconds Closer*, 2006). His latest book, *Vesela nova ušesa* (*Happy New Ears*, 2010), was also published by Sherpa Press. A selection of his work was published in the bilingual anthology *Six Slovenian Poets* (2006). In addition to his poetic endeavours, he occasionally performs as a DJ and enjoys settling down with a nice cup of green tea in Ljubljana.



Foto ©Jiří Jiroutek

Pavel Brycz, Češka / Czech Republic

Pavel Brycz se je rodil leta 1968 v Roudnici nad Labem na Češkem. Študiral je češki jezik v Ústí nad Labem in dramaturgijo na Akademiji lepih umetnosti (DAMU) v Pragi. Piše prozo za otroke in odrasle, je dramatik, scenarist in tekstopisec. Napisal je več zbirk kratke proze, npr. *Hlava Upanišády* (Glava Upanišade, 1993), in več romanov, kot so *Jsem město* (Sem mesto, 1999), za katerega je prejel nagrado Jiříja Ortena za književnost (1999), *Sloni mlčí* (Sloni molčijo, 2002), ki ga je napisal v Franciji, kjer je bival kot dobitnik UNESCO-ve pisateljske štipendije (2000), *Patriarchátu dávno zašlá sláva* (*Patriarchata davno minula slava*, 2004), za katerega je prejel češko državno nagrado za književnost (2004), leta 2008 pa je delo izšlo tudi v slovenskem prevodu Tatjane Jamnik pri založbi Društvo Apokalipsa, in *Svatý démon* (Sveti demon, 2009). Njegovo najnovejše delo za otroke nosi naslov *Bílá paní na hlídkání* (Bela gospa varuška, 2010).

Pavel Brycz was born in 1968 in Roudnice nad Labem, in the Czech Republic. After studying Czech philology in Ústí nad Labem, he read dramaturgy at the Academy of Performing Arts (DAMU) in Prague. The author of adult and children's literature, playwright, script writer, lyricist and recipient of the UNESCO grant for authors (2000) has written several collections of prose; *Hlava Upanišády* (The Head of the Upanisad, 1993) being his first; and a string of novels such as *Jsem město (I, City*, 1999); for which he won the Jiří Orten Prize for literature (1999); *Sloni mlčí* (The Elephants Are Quiet, 2002), which he wrote while living in France as a recipient of the UNESCO grant for writers (2000); *Patriarchátu dávno zašlá sláva* (The Long Lost Glory of the Patriarchy, 2004), for which he won the Czech State Literature Prize (2004), while the novel was also translated into Slovene by Tatjana Jamnik and published by the Drštvo Apokalipsa publishing house in 2008; and *Svatý démon* (The Holy Demon, 2009). His most recent children's book is titled *Bílá paní na hlídání* (White Lady, Babysitter, 2010).



Foto © Dragutin Savić

Ljiljana Jokić Kaspar, Srbija / Serbia

Ljiljana Jokić Kaspar se je rodila leta 1951 v Novem Sadu v Vojvodini. Diplomirala je iz jugoslovanske in primerjalne književnosti na Filozofski fakulteti Univerze v Novem Sadu. Je pisateljica, književna, televizijska in gledališka kritičarka ter scenaristka in novinarka, ki od leta 1977 redno sodeluje z revijo *Glas omladine* in na Radiu Novi Sad, od leta 1979 pa je tudi stavnica televizijske scene Novega Sada. Med njena dela spadajo tri zbirke proze, med njimi *Liliputanci putuju u XXI vek* (Liliputanci potujejo v XXI. stoletje, 1993), ter romani *Četiri male žene* (Štiri male ženske, 1996), *Ćelavi psi* (Plešasti psi, 1998) in *YUFile* (2000). Leta 2002 je prejela stipendijo za pisatelje Akademije umetnosti v Berlinu. Njena proza je bila objavljena v številnih antologijah srbske književnosti in prevedena v angleščino, bolgarščino, italijanščino, madžarščino, makedonščino, romunščino, ruščino, slovaščino in ukrajinsčino.

Ljiljana Jokić Kaspar was born in 1951 in Novi Sad, Vojvodina. She graduated in Yugoslav and comparative literature at the Faculty of Arts at the University of Novi Sad. She is a novelist, author of prose, a literary, TV and theatre critic, as well as a scriptwriter and journalist, who has been a contributor to the *Glas omladine* (Voice of Youth) magazine and Radio Novi Sad since 1977 and a mainstay on the TV scene of Novi Sad since 1979. Her works include three collections of prose including *Liliputanci putuju u XXI vek* (Lilliputians Travel to the 21st Century, 1993); and the novels *Četiri male žene* (Four Little Women, 1996), *Ćelavi psi* (Bald Dogs, 1998) and *YUFile* (2000). In 2002, she received the literature fellowship of the Berlin Academy of Arts. Her prose is featured in several anthologies of Serbian literature and has also been translated into Bulgarian, English, German, Hungarian, Italian, Macedonian, Romanian, Russian, Slovak, and Ukrainian.



Foto © Gunter Glücklich

Alberto Manguel, Argentina, Kanada / Argentina, Canada

Alberto Manguel se je rodil leta 1948 v Buenos Airesu v Argentini. Odraščal je v Tel Avivu, kjer je njegov oče služboval kot prvi argentinski veleposlanik v Izraelu. Pisatelj, prevajalec in urednik se po narodnosti opredeljuje za Kanadčana, odkar je leta 2000 tudi postal kanadski državljan. Danes redno piše kolumno za *Geist*, najbolj razširjeno kanadsko literarno revijo. Je avtor številnih strokovnih del, kot so *The Dictionary of Imaginary Places* (Slovar domišljijskih krajev, 1980) skupaj z Giannijem Guadalupijem, *A History of Reading* (Zgodovina branja, 1996) in *The Library at Night* (Knjižnica ponoči, 2007), slednji sta izšli pri Cankarjevi založbi v slovenskem prevodu Nade Grošelj, ter *Homer's Iliad and Odyssey: A Biography* (Homerjevi *Iliada* in *Odiseja*: Biografija, 2008). Leta 1992 je prejel nagrado »McKitterick« Združenega kraljestva za najboljši romaneskni prvenec *News from a Foreign Country Came* (Prispele so novice iz tuje dežele, 1991). Med drugim je prejel tudi Guggenheimovo štipendijo (2004), bil imenovan za častnika reda umetnosti in leposlovja francoske republike (2004), podeljen pa mu je bil tudi častni doktorat Univerze v Liègu (2007). Leta 2009 mu je bil podeljen še častni doktorat Univerze Anglia Ruskin v Cambridgeu.

Alberto Manguel was born in 1948 in Buenos Aires, Argentina. He grew up in Tel-Aviv, where his father served as the first Argentinean ambassador to Israel. The writer, translator, and editor, identifies his nationality as Canadian since becoming a Canadian citizen in 2000. Today he writes a regular column for Canada's most widely read literary magazine *Geist*. He is the author of numerous non-fiction books, such as *The Dictionary of Imaginary Places* (1980), co-written with Gianni Guadalupi; *A History of Reading* (1996) and *The Library at Night* (2007) which were also translated into Slovene by Nada Grošelj and published by the Cankarjeva založba Publishing House; and *Homer's Iliad and Odyssey: A Biography* (2008). In 1992, he won the McKittrick Prize of the United Kingdom for his debut novel *News from a Foreign Country Came* (1991). Among others, he also received the Guggenheim Fellowship (2004), was appointed an officer of the French Order of Arts and Letters (2004), and was presented with an honorary doctorate from the University of Liège (2007). In 2009, he was also presented with an honorary doctorate from the Anglia Ruskin University in Cambridge.

Eseji
Essays

Dati ali ne dati svoj glas poeziji (Branje poezije in njegova današnja »vrednšt«)

Pavel Brycz

Gotovo poznate to kruto definicijo poezije, ki jo je že v najinih gimnazijskih časih citiral moj danes 44-letni sodobnik, sošolec in eden najpametnejših ljudi, kar jih poznam. »Poezija je tisto, kar vsi pišejo, pa nihče ne bere.«

Ja, on, letnik 1967, ki se danes ukvarja s fraktali in računalniško animacijo za ameriško Naso, jo je dejansko pisal, enako na skrivaj kot jaz, odkrila pa sva se šele pri 17-ih letih, ko sva, spodbujena z valom čeških popevkarjev iz osemdesetih, poskušala pesmice dopolniti s kitaro, dolgimi prsti na strunah in prekleto visoko zvenečim glasom.

Razkriti dušo in jo pljuvati v svet je bilo nekoliko lažje, če sta katerikoli razkrunjen mladenič ali gospodična postala muzkontarja, ki obvladata tri akorde, s pesmimi, polnimi ukradenih melodij in zdrsov iz ritma, a z besedami, za katere sta sigurno imela copyright.

V tem kratkem eseju se nočem spuščati v nekakšne nostalgične literarizirane spomine, bog ne daj! Pa vendarle bi rad spomnil na kontekst, iz katerega bom jaz – ki sem bil rojen leta 1968 in sem lirična leta doživeljal v 80. letih 20. stoletja ter v svoje trideseto vstopil s spoznanjem, da so bila 90. leta v postsocialistični Češki najbolj hipijevsko obdobje, kajti boljševiki so pobrali šila in kopita, kapitalistični trg in prevlada denarja nad moralom in ideali pa še nista začela vsega uničevati – vrednotil »value« poezije in glas, ki ga ima, če dandanes sploh kakšnega ima, pri poetry reading in javnih predstavivah.

Naj mi angeli varuhi ali drugi Nezemljani stojijo ob strani, da o poeziji ne bi govoril kot vaška opravljkva, ampak kot stari prijatelj, s katerim je najbrž včasih celo šla kam, kamor se ne sme.

Dano mi je bilo, da sem na sredini svojega življenja po letu 2000, natančneje od 2005 do 2008, učil češki jezik in literaturo na srednji šoli.

Moji sedemnajstletni dijaki so nekoliko popravili na začetku izrečeno definicijo poezije.

»Poezija je nekaj, česar vsi ne pišejo, pa nihče ne bere.«

Pustimo ob strani ta nekoliko sofizmatičen izrek in izrazimo to kot smons: »Poezija je nula, zero, nič, en drek ...«

A ker se predrzna poza sedemnajstletnikov ne spreminja, dokler se bo ta naš planet vrtel, pretirana sodba mojega sošolca pri sedemnajstih pravzaprav močno rezonira s sodbo teh sodobnih glasnikov mladostne resnice.

Le intenzivnost sporočenega je večja. In če si ogledamo ta absolutni slogan in premotrimo te mlade eksistencialiste, vržene v svet odralihih, ki z vsemi svojimi kompromisi, ovinki in lezenjem v rit upravičeno ne more biti všeč nikomur z mladim srcem, dojamemo, da nam s to absolutnostjo in opredelitvijo Nekaj sporočajo.

Saj je tudi Hitler, ko je kuril knjige na grmadah, s tem sporočal, da je ta literatura Mannov in Remarquov preklemano pomembna. Tudi gesta je dejanje!

»Bogokletnost je narobna stran hrepenenja po Bogu,« je napisal literarni kritik F. X. Šalda, ki je pomagal do nesmrtnе slave češkim literarnima upornikoma, anarhistu Fránu Šramku in Frantu Gellnerju, enako kot poznejši generaciji Vítězslava Nezvala in Jaroslava Seiferta.

Če se torej mladi v razmerju do poezije tako omejujejo, potem mora biti razlog za tako močan odziv kakšna njena velika akcija, skrivnostna prasila, ki v svetu še razumljive nepotešenosti in čaščenja zlatih telet mobitelov znanih znamk, kavbojk, vsepričujoče popkulture, neresnic in polresnic nicknamov on-line in namernih poneumljanj, marketinskih sleparij in zapletenih ravni virtualne resničnosti še vedno deluje s trdo lobanjo Goethejevega poprsja ali pa z domiselno izbrušenostjo Shakespearjevega blankverza.

To me potem navdaja z upanjem, da poezija ima neko raven dostopnosti, ki jo je sicer mogoče napadati, nikoli pa ne ovreči. Podobno kot klasična glasba, slikarstvo in balet. S tem pa se nazadnje približujem temu, s čimer bi moral začeti. Ko bodo porazili našo naduto civilizacijo in sežgali vse mostove h Kantovi morali in njenemu zvez-

dnemu nebu nad glavo in nrvnim zakonom po sebi – vsi Černobili, Fukušime, ekonomske krize, borzni zlomi, vojne, medijske manipulacije, razpad struktur in tehnološke vojne – potem preživeli ob ognjih ne bodo načrtovali storyboardov potratnih hollywoodskih velefilmov, ampak bodo drug drugemu pripovedovali in peli. Konec koncev nekateri to že počnejo ...

In na občečloveškem referendumu bo beseda znova dobila svoj glas, zaradi katerega jo bo slišati. Naj vam povem, dvakrat zapored sem bil na literarnem festivalu v univerzitetnem mestu Olomoucu. Mesto je v Hani, pokrajini na Moravskem. Moravska je znana po svoji folklori in vedno so se tam rojevali največji češki pesniki. Tam je konec koncev dovolj vina in sonca, da je tam mogoče dobro pesniti. In prav tako je tam v preteklosti, malček pa tudi danes, živilo katolištvo z vsemi tistimi svojimi atributi, ki že iz pogleda na životec mlade ženske naredijo villonovsko balado.

A na tem festivalu nisem doživel nič od tega. Skupaj z drugimi dostenstvenimi literati sem čepel na odru pred publiko, ki je bila akademska in živa približno toliko kot žarno pokopališče. Kot bi mi za hrbotom si-kali vsi tisti mladi trmoglavci, ki sem jih učil, in mi sporočali: »A vidiš, a vidiš, pa imaš ta svoj poetry reading! V resnici je to grandpa sleeping!«

Kakopak, nasmehnil sem se, tudi igra z jezikom je pesniško dejanje.

Neizzivet pa sem bil zelo. Dolgočasni akademski poetry reading se je končal in jaz sem bil obupan: mar ni mogoče vrniti časov, ko sem štopal na filozofsko fakulteto v Prago, da bi videl Ginsberga, kako igra na majčkene orgle in poje svojo poezijo in je živ, če ne že kar nesmrten?! Mar Japonec Nanao Sakaki v nabito polni dvorani praške Lucerne, ki sicer gosti čisto drugačno kulturo, s svojimi budističnimi mantrami ni bil sposoben podžgati ljudi kot džezovska trobenta Louis Armstronga, ki je tukaj igral leta 1969?

Mora biti srečanje literatov z oboževalci res tako malo zabavno kot seja državnega zbora ali televizijske diskusije o politiki?

Na srečo so mi angeli in Nezemljani na pot poslali gostilno, ki ji lokalci pravijo Podmornica. Ja, ima okroglo okno kot pri podmornici in ko vstopiš, greš po stopnicah dol. Ampak če je to podmornica, potem

je tista Rumena, odštekana in psihedelična, od Beatlov. Tukaj imajo nekaj takega, na čemer so začenjali vsi bitniki, kar je definiralo njihovo poezijo, ki je vstopila na ulice, v klube in na pokopališča.

Temu pravijo Noč pesnikov v Podmornici.

Čisto sem bil navdušen. Kdorkoli v nabasani gostilni, polni študentov, njihovih profesorjev, sivih in plešastih dolgolascev iz under-rounda, pa tudi takih nezadovoljenih literatov iz akademskega sveta, kot sem bil jaz, lahko na košček papirja napiše svojo pesem, jo prinese poroti na oder in sodeluje v tekmovanju za Kralja pesnikov.

In lahko vam rečem, da gre tu resnično za situacijo kot na začetku sveta. Tisto besedo, ki zazveni izza mikrofona, pretehta stotine grl, ki so brez dlake na jeziku. Tukaj se skandira, žvižga, če pesnik pritegne, ga nagradijo kot rockovskega glasbenika. Če pa dolgočasi in ne zna podzgati publike, ga brez milosti izžvižga.

Tako preprosto je torej to ... In verjemite mi, niti minuto mi ni bilo dolgčas. In bil sem navdušen. Udeležil sem se tekmovanja. Razumljivo. Ker tu ne rabiš imena niti reklame, tu vsakemu dol visi, ali si dobitnik literarnih nagrad ali se voziš s smetarskim avtom ali pa delaš kot presran tiskovni predstavnik, ki ves čas laže, kot pes teče.

Tu si kot ob tistih ognjih nedaleč stran od Černobila ali Fukušime.

Si tisti, ki pove resnico ali laž, izgovori sanje ali banalnost.

In če ti to uspe, si pesnik. Tisti, ki iz nič ustvari vse. Ima besedo in glas. Oboje pa je pravzaprav taka sila, da se ne čudim, da se v naši družbi uporablja v tako majhni meri.

Pa vendar se uporablja ... Verjemite mi, prisegam na lastne oči, ušesa in kurjo polt. Bil sem tam in zato vem, da lahko poetry reading iz Cesarstva fantazije prikliče takšno prasilo, da ima Wagnerjev *Nibelungov prstan* kaj početi, da ne bi potonil v pozabo in da bi mu pustili njegov zlatarski žig.

Zdaj pa dovolj dolgih vrstic, dajmo raje prednost kratkim ...

Prihodnji dolgi dnevi

Kaj bova počela v teh prihodnjih dolgih dnevih,
bova strastna ali pa iz ledu?

Bodiva strastna, je ledena plošča rekla ledeniku.
In oba sta se stalila.

Kako sta bila srečna ob vesoljnem potopu!

Prevedla Tatjana Jamnik

To Give or Not To Give a Voice to Poetry (Poetry Reading and Its “Value” Today)

Pavel Brycz

You may surely know about the cruel definition of poetry, as quoted by my now 44-year-old contemporary, a classmate during our high school days, and one of the smartest people I know: “Poetry is what everybody writes and nobody reads.”

Yes. He, born in 1967, now engaged in fractals and computer animation for NASA, actually wrote it, as secretly as I did, yet we had discovered each other when we were already 17, when we, inspired by a wave of Czech pop singers from the 1980s, tried to back up our songs with a guitar, long fingers on the strings, and a freakishly high-pitched voice.

To reveal the soul and to blurt it out into the world was a bit easier if any of the aggravated young men or ladies had turned into musos who mastered three chords, with songs, based on ripped off melodies and rhythmic slips, yet accompanied with words to which they definitely owned the copyright.

In this short essay, I do not want to dive into any sort of nostalgic, literarised memories. Oh, God no! But I would still like to take the time to mention the context, from which I – who was born in 1968 – experienced the lyrical years during the 1980s, and entered my 30th with the realisation that the 1990s in the post-socialist Czech Republic had been the “hippiest” of eras, for the Bolsheviks had cut and run, while the capitalist market and the supremacy of money over morals and ideals still had not started to ruin everything – will value the “value” of poetry and its voice, if it still possesses any, at poetry readings and public presentations.

Let the Guardian Angels or other Aliens be my guide, so I won’t speak about poetry like the village gossip, but like an old friend, with which it sometimes went places where one is not supposed to go.

In the middle of my life after the year 2000, between 2005 and 2008 to be more precise, I had the opportunity to teach Czech language and literature at a secondary school.

My seventeen-year-old students had slightly amended the definition of poetry, which I quoted at the beginning.

“Poetry is something that is not written by everybody, and still nobody reads it.”

Let us put this rather sophismatic statement aside and express it in the form of an SMS: “Poetry is zilch, zero, nothing, bullshit...”

Yet, since the insolent prose of seventeen-year-olds won’t change as long as our planet will keep on turning, the exaggerated statement of my classmate at seventeen actually strongly resonates the judgement of these contemporary heralds of youthful truth.

It’s only the intensity of the statement that is greater. And if we take a closer look at this absolute slogan and contemplate these young existentialists, thrust into the adult world – which because of all of the tradeoffs, detours, and ass kissing rightfully can’t be likeable to anyone with a young heart – we realise that this absoluteness and that definition are their means of conveying Something to us.

Well, even Hitler, when he burned books on the pyre, was conveying the message that the literature of the Manns and the Remarques was damn important. A gesture is an act as well!

“Blasphemy is the opposing side to the yearning for God,” as was written by F. X. Šalda, a literary critic who had helped the Czech literary rebels, anarchist Fráňa Šrámek and Franta Gellner, to immortal fame. He managed to do the same for the later generation of Vítězslav Nezval and Jaroslav Seifert.

If the young limit themselves in relation to poetry thusly, then the reason for such a strong reaction must be some monumental action, a mysterious primeval force, which in this world of still comprehensible frustration and worshipping of the Golden Calves – known as designer cell phones, jeans, the all-present pop culture, the lies and half-truths of on-line nicknames, and intentional stultifications, marketing scams and complicated levels of virtual reality – still works with the hard skull of Goethe’s bust, or with the witty refinement of Shakespeare’s blank verse, respectively.

This then fills me with hope that poetry still possesses some level of decency, which admittedly can be attacked, yet never refuted. Similar to classical music, painting, and ballet. And with this, I am finally coming closer to what I should have started with. When they – all of the Chernobyls, Fukushimas, economic crises, stock market crashes, wars, media manipulations, the unravelling of structures and technological wars – will defeat our pompous civilisation and burn all bridges to Kant's moral and its starry sky above the head and the law of nature per se, the ones surviving won't be able to plot storyboards for thrifty Hollywood blockbusters at the fires, but will have to narrate and sing to one another. Ultimately, some are doing so already ...

And at the common human referendum, the word will get its voice once more, for which it will be heard. I would like to mention that I have visited the literary festival in the University city of Olomouc twice in a row. The city is situated in Hana, a region in Moravia. Moravia is known for its folklore, and the greatest Czech poets have always been born there. Well, there is enough wine at disposal, making it good grounds for writing poetry. And in the past, Catholicism has – and slightly still does today – lived with all of its attributes, which turn a mere look at the bodice of a young woman into a Villonic ballad.

Yet this festival did not make me experience anything like that. Together with other literary dignitaries, I crouched on the stage before the crowd, which was roughly as academic and lively as a burial site for urns. As if all of the young obstinate youths whom I once taught would have been saying to me: "You see, do you see? Here's your poetry reading! More a 'grandpa sleeping'!"

Alas, I smiled. Playing with language is an act of poetry too.

But I was highly unsatisfied. The boring academic poetry reading had ended and I was in despair. Isn't it possible to bring back the times when I hitchhiked to the Faculty of Philosophy in Prague to see Ginsberg playing his small hand organ and singing his poetry, being alive, if not even immortal? Wasn't the Japanese Nanao Sakaki able to incite the people with his Buddhist mantras in the packed hall of the Prague Lucerna, which usually plays host to a completely different culture, as did the jazz trumpet of Louis Armstrong, who played there in 1969?

Does a literary gathering with fans really have to be as much fun as a session of the National Assembly or a TV discussion on politics?

Luckily, the Angels and the Aliens adorned my path with a tavern, which the locals call The Submarine. Yes, it has a round window like a submarine and when you enter, you descend the stairs. But if this is a submarine, then it is the Yellow one, spaced out and psychedelic, from the Beatles. Here they have something, where all Beat generation started from, what defined their poetry that made it to the streets, clubs, and cemeteries.

They call it the Night of Poets in The Submarine.

I was overwhelmed. Anyone in the crowded tavern, full of students, their professors, grey and bald long-hairs from the underground, but also such unsatisfied men of letters from the academic world as myself, may write their poem onto a piece of paper, bring it to the jury on the stage and participate in the contest for the King of Poets.

And I can honestly say that this constitutes a real situation like at the beginning of the world. Hundreds of throats without inhibitions judge each word that sounds from the microphone. Here they chant, boo, or, if they like them, reward a poet with an ovation worthy of a rock star. But if one is a bore and can't excite the crowd, they are merciless at giving them the bird.

That's that simple then ... And believe me, it wasn't boring even for a minute. And I was delighted. I took part in the contest. Understandably. Because here you don't need a name or publicity. People don't give a damn if you're a recipient of literary awards, or if you drive a garbage truck, or if you're working as a pusillanimous print media representative who lies right, left and centre.

Here you are like at the fires not far from Chernobyl or Fukushima.

You are the one telling the truth or a lie, uttering dreams or banalities.

And if you succeed, you are a poet. The one creating everything from nothing. The one having a word and a voice. And both actually constitute such a force that I am not surprised that it is so scarcely used in our society.

Yet still, it is used ... Believe me, I swear by my own eyes, ears, and goose bumps. I was there, and therefore I know that a poetry reading can

summon such a primeval force from the Empire of Fantasy that would render Wagner's *Ring of the Nibelung* idle, devoid of the means to save itself from oblivion, and left with nothing but its goldsmith's hallmark.

But enough of the long lines; let us rather focus on the short ...

Long Days Upcoming

What will we do during these long days upcoming,
Will we be passionate or ice?
Let us be passionate, said the ice sheet to the iceberg.
And both melted.

How happy they were, when the Flood commenced!

Translated from the Slovene by Janko Jemec

Pomen branja poezije danes

Ljiljana Jokić Kaspar

NE BODI ZLOBEN DRUG, NAUČI SE LJUB

Preden umr,
preden crk,
noge steg
in vzor bod—
nauči se ljubit—
LJUBIT JE IZGUBIT!
Roke poljub, vse kar rok im,
star dam in gospod star,
nov velikan in mod nov—
nikoli za ljubit
priložnost ne zgubit!

Temo svojega eseja lahko najbolje ponazorim, če besedilo začnem z verzi velikega jugoslovanskega avantgardnega pesnika iz sedemdesetih let prejšnjega stoletja Vujice Rešina Tucića, ki je bil znan po javnem izvajjanju svoje poezije. Kot eden največjih in najboljših pesnikov – izvajalcev je razširil meje branja in včasih tudi fizičnega predstavljanja poezije, pri čemer ni okrnil ničesar od tistega, kar je bil pretvoril v besede in zapisal. Zahvaljujoč sodobni tehnologiji je ta čudna pesem ostala posneta tudi po njegovi smrti, in če si zaželimo, jo lahko slišimo v njegovi interpretaciji. Toda naj se vrнем k zadani temi in vprašanju, kaj naj bi nam danes pomenilo javno branje poezije. Kar takoj lahko tudi odgovorim: enako kot v preteklosti, le da danes še več!

Poetika, ki jo je zasnoval Aristotel, je v vseh obdobjih umetnega plesništva predstavljala delovno orodje. Bistvo pravil te poetike je še danes posnemanje s pomočjo govora, ki se mu pridružita ritem in kvalitativno

tonsko zaporedje v različnih načinih predstavljanja, bi porekli teoretiki poezije, kakršen je bil Wilhelm Dilthey. Biti in funkcije umetnosti ne spoznamo z idealistično estetiko najvišjega ideala tistega, kar smo danes sposobni dojeti. Umetnost je povsod, kjer se bodisi v tonih bodisi v snovnem predstavlja nekaj, kar ni namenjeno spoznanju stvarnega, niti ni mišljeno kot prenos v stvarnost, temveč samo po sebi zadovoljuje interes opazovalca. Od prvih risb po zidovih votlin do vsakovrstne umetnosti dobe, v kateri živimo, se širi vseobsegajoče carstvo predstavitev, ki se izpopolnjujejo in preobražajo in nas kot prav takšne zadovoljujejo. Pesnik je umetnik, ki prikazuje in preslikuje življenje v sosledju besed. Toda poezije od drugih umetnosti nista ločila govor in beseda, temveč njena svojevrstno jedrnata vsebina. Pesnikovo ustvarjanje temelji izključno na doživljajski energiji. V nasprotju z mrtvimi zapismi, na primer nekaterimi opisi dogodkov v časopisu ali suhoparnimi poročili provincialnih kronistov, lahko poezija tudi iz tega gradi tkivo pesmi, toda brez energije to še ne bo poezija. Tako kot naše telo diha, tudi naša duša teži k izpolnitvi in razširitvi svojega obstoja v trepetu družbenega življenja. Družbeno življenje je najpomembnejši dejavnik obstoja in razvoja vsake umetnosti, poezija in njena družbena vloga pa sta lahko zelo ovisni od svobode javno izgovorjenih besed. Ko omenjam svobodo, ne mislim tiste pesniške, ki vodi v sam nastanek pesmi, temveč življenje pesmi po rojstvu izpod »peresa« in pozneje njeno preživetje med bralci, pa naj bo natisnjena v knjigi ali javno brana ali izgovorjena na odru.

Zaznavanje, izkustveno dodajanje in tvorjenje poezije v določenih življenjskih in družbenih okoliščinah, v kakršnih so ustvarjali pesniki kot Josip Brodski, veliko več povedo o vlogi živega branja in pesniške interpretacije poezije. Na vsako pesnikovo zaznavo vpliva razpoloženje, ki to zaznavo izpolni z močnim občutenjem življenja. Pesnikova ustvarjalna domišljija se izkazuje kot pojav, ki presega vsakdanje človeško življenje. Pesnik se razlikuje po intenziteti in natančnosti zaznavanja podob, po njihovi raznolikosti in interesih, ki ga usmerjajo, po moči občutkov, po energiji projekcije in specifičnih prizorov iz spomina, s pomočjo katerih gradi svoje pesmi. Preden sem v živo slišala poezijo Josipa Brodskega, sem verjela, da sem s svojim poznanjem literarne teorije ter z njenimi

instrumenti za analizo in razlaganje spoznala že vso lepoto in vrednost njegove poezije. V tem prepričanju sem živila vse do trenutka, dokler ga nisem slišala, kako v živo recitira svojo poezijo. Prav tisto, ki sem jo poznala in prepoznala, toda takrat je bilo moje doživljanje povsem družačno in bolj večpomensko. Kar se mi je še posebej vtisnilo v spomin, je bil zvok – glasnost in silna moč energije, ki je po moje izvirala iz samega pesnikovega srca. Josip Brodski je bil človek z nenavadno močnim glasom, neverjetnim ustvarjalnim čarom in tistim, čemur rečemo izjemni talent. Ko je sam prebiral svoje verze, jim je vdihoval povsem novo in drugačno energijo; rekla bi celo, da se je med javnim izvajanjem njegove poezije porajalo med navzočimi občudovalci in poslušalci drugačno doživljanje sveta. Tudi sicer globoko verjamem, da je pesnik Josip Brodski svoje srce posvetil izključno ustvarjanju in interpretaciji svoje poezije. Ko je poslušalec doživel interpretacijo (branje) njegove poezije v živo, se je v njem nujno spremenilo doživljanje tako poezije kot sveta, v katerem je živel. Kdor je imel priložnost, da je verze slišal iz pesnikovih ust, je dobil s tem veliko darilo, vredno pozornosti. Brodski ni nikoli omenjal kakšne kozmične magije, vedno je stal trdno na zemlji in sprejemal materialni svet. »Pesnik je sredstvo obstoja jezika ali tisto, s čimer jezik živi,« je govoril. »Pesnik je človek, odvisen od jezika.« Kar doživimo kot oplemeniteno s človeško energijo, ostane zapisano v naši zavesti, ker je osredotočanje na intenzivna čustva del človeške narave. Če lahko mrtvo črko na papirju slišimo, kako oživi, zakaj bi potem pesniške zbirke prebirali v samoti? Kolektivno poslušanje, druženje in skupno doživljanje so svojevrstna družbena razsežnost, ki je prav tako ne smemo zanemariti.

Pesniško ustvarjanje se poraja na materialnih tleh ter določa družbeno funkcijo poezije in pesnika na podlagi njegove biografije in literarnih dejstev. Krog življenja, v katerem se giblje poezija, ima nešteto oblik obstajanja. Tisto, o čemer govorimo, sta pomen in vrednost javnega branja poezije danes, kar pa hkrati predstavlja promocijo književnosti in poezije, ker presega oglaševalske dimenzijske, koristi pa izdajateljem in založbam ter ustvarjanju dobička. V civiliziranih in bogatejših družbah, kjer utegne biti komercialni status poezije prav tako sporen, država pokriva materialni in dobičkovni primanjkljaj, saj poezijo in

pesniške zbirke promovira na literarnih srečanjih in javnih nastopih pesnikov. Toda namen javnega branja poezije ni njen boljši komercialni položaj in razveseljevanje bralskega občinstva, temveč oplemenitevne in nadgradnja same pesmi, ki lahko v avtorjevi interpretaciji dobi popolnoma novo vrednost. Tudi doživljanje bralcev določene pesmi, ki se na javnem branju iz oči v oči srečajo s pesnikom, njenim avtorjem, se neizbežno spremeni, pri čemer ni pomembno, ali v korist boljšega ali slabšega doživljanja konkretno pesmi. Od nekdaj so obstajale razlike med napisanim in izgovorjenim, ko pa govorimo o poeziji, ki je povezana z ritmom, zvokom in – če hočete – tudi melodijo, je povsem odveč razlagati prednosti branja poezije v živo. Če domnevamo, da bralec ali poslušalec ni visoko ali specifično izobražen za razumevanje poezije, bo njegovo doživljanje med drugim odvisno tudi od načina pesniške interpretacije. Kot najstnica sem v mestni knjižnici prvič slišala slavno pesem *Okrenimo se kredencu sirotinjskom* (Obrnimo se h kredenci ubožni) Vujice Rešina Tucića, velikega avantgardnega jugoslovanskega pesnika. Bila je velika gneča in v prenatrpani dvorani nisi mogel videti niti tega, kdo recitira pesem, toda interpretacija je bila takšna, da se je že 40 let spominjajo vse generacije. Prav osupljivo se mi zdi, da sem še do včeraj verjela, da ima pesem naslov *Juriš na kredenco*, ker jo je pesnik interpretiral v slogu budnice. Občinstvo je več let prihajalo pesnika poslušat v živo, čeprav je bila na voljo njegova pesniška zbirka, ki si jo lahko kupil v vsaki knjigarni.

Javno branje poezije lahko vpliva na približevanje umetnosti vsakomur, ki je duhovno občutljiv in čuti željo po vzvišenem ne glede na stopnjo izobrazbe. V poznih sedemdesetih letih prejšnjega stoletja so se zelo razmahnile književne promocije, ki so potekale na vseh mogočih javnih krajih – po ulicah, trgovinah, parkih, knjižnicah in samopostrežnih trgovinah, v socialističnih državah vzhodne Evrope pa po tovarnah, gledališčih, na nogometnih stadionih itd. Razlika med tema dvema svetovoma, preprosto rečeno med kapitalističnim in komunističnim, se je kazala v stopnji svobode in možnostih za svobodno in javno izgovarjanje besed. Javno branje je pomenilo tudi možnost prenašanja političnih sporočil, ki bi jih utegnila pesem vsebovati, zato se je na zlohotni polovici planeta,

kjer so bile človeške svoboščine omejene, zelo pazilo na pesnike, poezija in vse tisto, za kar se je štelo, da bi lahko škodilo totalitarnim režimom, pa se je cenzuriralo. Prava poezija in dobra pesem že sami po sebi vedno vsebujeta vse elemente življenja, zato so si pesniki v totalitarnih režimih izmišljali vse mogoče ustvarjalne rešitve, da bi prikrili neposredno in jasno sliko svojih opažanj. Javno branje poezije in pojavljanje izvajalcev sta prispevala k novim izkušnjam v ustvarjanju.

Danes, ko je družbena stvarnost na globalni ravni zasuta s profanimi, cenjenimi, hitrimi, lahkonimi, slabimi in bednimi medijskimi vsebinami, resničnostnimi šovi in literarnimi uredniki dvomljive kakovosti, je treba storiti vse za čim višjo stopnjo življenjskega dostenjanstva in v vsakdanje življenje vključiti visoke umetniške vsebine. Združena Evropa se lahko združi na podlagi resničnih vrednot, kakršne so umetnost, književnost in poezija. Poezija bi lahko odigrala pomembno vlogo, zvočna poetika pa oplemenitila doživetje individualnega branja v tišini lastne sobe. Vsaka dobra pesem ima potencial za javno branje, pesnik Vujica Rešin Tucić pa je govoril, da »pisanje je branje«. Bil je velik mojster zvočnega, gestikularnega in vokalnega izvajanja svoje poezije.

Pesem kot celota, ki jo ima občinstvo priložnost doživeti, mora imeti, romantično rečeno, dušo in življenje, ki ju je dobila ob samem nastanku, ko je bila zapisana. V smislu objektivnega opazovanja današnjega sveta nam naša znanja ne zagotavljajo nujno različnega doživljjanja poetičnih radosti od različnih spoznanj in naukov do sprejemanja harmonije in ritma izgovorjenega in zapetega. Spomnimo se, kakšno vlogo je imela govorjena poezija v preteklosti. V času ljudske pesniške ustvarjalnosti je razlagala življenje in ohranjala mite ter narodno zgodovino. Skrbela je za kolektivne shode, prenašala in ohranjala tradicijo ter kulturno dediščino naroda. Ne dvomim, da se je že takrat začelo nastopanje, pa čeprav nemara z guslami, ki nam danes ne pomenijo nič več. Iz ljudske poezije se je rodila tista, ki jo poznamo danes, sofisticirana in prefinjena v primerjavi z deseterci, ob katerih se je na vse grlo prepevalo. Od guslarjev in recitatorjev, ki so vsak po svojih umetniških nagnjenjih in zmožnostih dodajali svoj avtorski prispevek, smo prišli do poezije, ki se je s strani knjig preselila na ustnice pesnikov v glasovno in fizično obstojno obliko. Sedemdeseta leta so iz-

vajalcem odprla široko poetično pot, na kateri so se godila najrazličnejša čuda. Nekateri pesniki so med recitiranjem poezije tudi slikali, igrali na različna glasbila, telovadili, skakali s kolebnico, dramsko interpretirali, peli ali kričali na ves glas. Raznolikost poetičnega izraza je dosegla neko raven in nihče ne ve, kakšna bo videti v prihodnosti. Za zdaj velja, da pesniški izraz posnemanja in opazovanja harmonije in ritma še ni presežen. Čeprav sem prozaistka, sem se o obrtniški razsežnosti pisanja največ naučila od pesnikov. Dobra proza mora imeti ritem, stavek pa melodijo. Poezija kot kraljica literature ima oboje, predvsem pa celovitost, ki jo bralec med poslušanjem pesnika tako tudi doživlja. In kadar je sestavljena iz samoglasnikov in soglasnikov, a brez besed, kakršna je pesem Vujice Rešina Tucića *Spavanje na kauču* (Spanje na kavču), dobi v avtorjevi interpretaciji popolnoma drugačen pomen. Ta pesem je v resnici oponašanje smrčanja in občinstvu je bila vedno zelo všeč. Danes lahko zlahka zatrdim, da je javno branje poezije prispevalo k večjemu zanimanju širokega bralnega občinstva za umetnost. To je po moje hkrati tudi ena od pomembnejših nalog javnega branja – plemenitenje in nadgradnja obstoječe pesmi z doajaranjem žive pesniške energije.

Nekje je ostalo zapisano, kako je nekega večera neki pesnik na literarnem srečanju pod jasnim nebom bral svojo pesem in s tem vzne-miril vaške pse, ki so začeli tako zavijati, da so morali prekiniti branje. Ta anekdota še danes ni pozabljena in jo navajamo v zagovor poeziji, omenjenega pesnika pa označujemo kot najslabšega izvajalca lastnih verzov, kar jih je kdaj stopilo na javni oder. Toda šalo na stran – če hočemo poezijo doživeti v njeni celoviti obliki, bi jo morali slišati v interpretaciji avtorja. Če dovolite, bi zdaj želela, da poslušamo živo interpretacijo pesmi *Ne bodi zloben drug, nauči se ljub* z začetka mojega besedila, ki je ostala posneta tudi po pesnikovi smrti.

Prevedla Lili Potpara

Present-day Value of Poetry Reading

Ljiljana Jokić Kaspar

DON'T BE EVIL FRIEND, LEARN TO LOV

Before you exp,
before you drop dea,
legs outstret
and be an examp –
learn to lov –
TO LOV IS TO LOS!
Hand kis, all that hands hol,
Wmn old and gent ol,
Giant new, and new fash –
A chance never los
To lov!

I can best illustrate the topic of my essay by opening the text with the verse of a great Yugoslav avant-garde poet from the 1970's, Vujica Rešin Tucić, who was well-known for public readings of his poetry. As one of the greatest and best poet-performers he extended the boundaries of reading, and sometimes even of physical interpretation of poetry, and yet he curtailed nothing of what he had transformed into words and written down. Thanks to modern technology this unusual poem remained recorded even after the poet's death, and if we want, we can hear it in his interpretation. But let me go back to the topic at hand and the question of what the public reading of poetry means today. I can answer it straight away: It means the same as in the past, only much more!

Aristotle's *Poetics* has remained a working tool in all periods of artistic poetry writing. The essence of his poetics is still imitation with the help

of speech joined by rhythm and qualitative tonal sequences in different interpretation modes – according to poetry theoreticians like Wilhelm Dilthey. Art's essence and function cannot be known through the idealistic aesthetics of the highest ideal of what we are capable of understanding today. Art is everywhere where something – through tones or solid materials – is represented, which is not intended for understanding reality and is not conceived as a translation into reality, but *per se* satisfies the interest of the spectator. From the earliest drawings on cave walls to the varied art of the age we live in we can trace the all-encompassing empire of representations, which are being perfected and transformed, and are as such fulfilling. A poet is an artist painting and reproducing life in sequences of words. But poetry is not distinguished from other kinds of art by speech and words, but by its uniquely concise content. A poet's art is based exclusively on his or her experiential energy. Unlike static records, for instance certain descriptions of events in newspapers or dull reports by provincial chroniclers, poetry can use this material to weave the fibre of a poem, but without the poet's energy this will not be poetry. Just as our body breathes, our soul longs for fulfilment and extension of its existence in the vibration of social life. Social life is the most important factor for the preservation and development of any art, while poetry and its social role can be very dependent on the freedom of publicly uttered words. When I talk about freedom, I don't mean the poetic freedom which leads to the very conception of a poem, but the life of a poem after it is born from under the "pen", and its survival among readers regardless of whether it is printed in a book or publicly read or performed on the stage.

Observations, experiential addition and creation of poetry in certain existential and social circumstances in which poets like Joseph Brodsky were creating poetry tell much more of the role of live reading and poetic interpretation of poetry. Every observation the poet makes is affected by his or her mood, which imbues the observation with strong life energy. A poet's creative imagination is manifested as a phenomenon transcending everyday human life. A poet is distinguished by the intensity and accuracy of his or her perception of images, by their variety

and the interests that guide him or her, by the power of emotions, energy of projection and specific memories with the help of which a poet constructs poetry. Before I heard a live interpretation of Joseph Brodsky's poetry, I believed that – with my knowledge of literary theory and its instruments of analysis and explanation – I had already known all the beauty and value of his poetry. I'd lived in this belief until the moment I heard him recite his own poetry. The very same poetry I knew and recognised, but my experience was completely different, conveying multiple meanings. What was particularly impressed on my memory was the sound – loudness and great power of energy – which, I believe, was coming straight from the poet's heart. Joseph Brodsky was a man endowed with an unusually strong voice, incredible creative magic and something which we call enormous talent. When he was reading his own verse, he inspired it with a new, different energy; I could even say that during the reading the fans and listeners present started experiencing the world differently. I am deeply convinced that the poet Joseph Brodsky dedicated his entire heart to creating and interpreting poetry. Once a listener had experienced a live interpretation (reading) of his poetry, something changed in him or her and altered the experience of poetry as well as of the world. Whoever was lucky enough to have heard the verse from the poet's mouth, received a valuable gift worthy of attention. Brodsky never mentioned any cosmic magic, he always stood firmly on the ground and accepted the material world. "A poet is a means of a language's existence, what a language lives through," he used to say. "A poet is a person dependent on language." What we experience ennobled with human energy remains etched in our consciousness, because focussing on intense emotions is part of human nature. If we can hear a dead letter on paper come alive, why then would we want to read poetry in solitude? Collective listening, socialising and shared experience are unique social dimensions that should not be overlooked.

Poetic creativity is born from the material soil and defines the social function of poetry and poets on the basis of their biographies and literary facts. The life circle in which poetry moves has countless forms of existence. What we are talking about is the meaning and value of

public poetry reading in present time, but this can also be used for the promotion of literature and poetry, because it transcends advertising dimensions and serves to bring benefits to publishers and create profit. In civilised and richer societies, where the commercial status of poetry can be questionable, the state covers the material and profit deficit by promoting poetry and poetry collections at literary gatherings and public appearances of poets. However, the aim of public poetry readings is not to gain a better position of poetry for commercial purposes or to please the reading public, but ennoblement and upgrading of the poem which can acquire completely new value when interpreted by its author. Similarly, readers, who at a public reading come face to face with a poet, inevitably experience his or her poetry differently, regardless of whether this leads to a better or worse experience of a particular poem. There have always existed differences between the written and the spoken, but when we talk of poetry, which is dependent on rhythm, sound and – if you like – melody, it becomes totally unnecessary to explain the advantages of live poetry reading. Assuming that readers or listeners in the audience are not highly or specifically trained for understanding poetry, their experience will, among other things, depend on the manner of poetic interpretation. As a teenager, in the city library I first had an opportunity to hear the famous poem *Okrenimo se kredencu sirotinjskom* (Let's turn to the cupboard of the poor) by Vujica Rešin Tucić, a great avant-garde Yugoslav poet. It was very crowded in the packed hall and I couldn't even see who was reciting the poem, but the interpretation was such that many generations have remembered it for 40 years. It seems fascinating that until yesterday I believed the poem was titled *March on the Cupboard*, because the poet had recited it in the rhythm of a reveille. For many years crowds of people were coming to the poet's live readings, although his published book of poetry was available from every bookshop.

Public poetry reading can help bring art closer to every person who is spiritually sensitive and feels a desire for the elevated, regardless of their academic background. The late 1970's saw the advent of literary promotions which were taking place in all kinds of public places – in

the streets, shops, parks, libraries and supermarkets, and in East European socialist states in factories, theatres, in football stadiums, etc. The difference between the two worlds, the capitalist and the socialist, was evident in the degree of freedom and possibilities of public utterances of words. Public readings also presented an opportunity for transmitting political messages that might have been contained in the poems, and therefore the “evil” half of the planet, where people’s liberties were curtailed, kept a close eye on the poets, while poetry and everything deemed potentially harmful to the totalitarian regime was censored. True poetry and good poems always contain all elements of life, so poets in the totalitarian regimes invented all kinds of creative solutions in order to obscure the direct and clear picture of their observations. Public poetry readings and the advent of performers contributed to new experiences in creativity.

Today when the social reality on the global level is flooded by profane, cheap, fast, low-quality and despicable media contents, reality shows and literary editors of dubious quality, we need to do everything we can to achieve a higher level of life dignity, and introduce high-quality artistic contents into everyday life. A united Europe can unite on the basis of true values like art, literature and poetry. Poetry could have an important role, and sonic poetics could ennable the experience of solitary reading of poetry in the silence of one’s room. Any good poem has the potential for public reading, and the poet Vujica Rešin Tucić used to say that “writing was reading”. He was a great master of the sonic, gesticulative and vocal interpretation of his poetry.

Romantically speaking, the poem as such which the audience can experience must have a soul and a life that it acquired at its conception – when it was written. In terms of objective perception of the present-day world our knowledge does not necessarily lead to differentiated experience of poetic joys ranging from various realisations and lessons to accepting the harmony and rhythm of the spoken and the sung. Let us remember what role spoken poetry had in the past. At the time of popular poetic creativity, poetry explained life and preserved myths and national history. It took care of the collective gatherings,

transmitted and maintained the traditions and cultural heritage of a nation. I believe that even in those days there were performers, who were perhaps accompanying themselves on the *gusle*, a folk instrument which means little to us nowadays. Folk poetry gave rise to the poetry we know today, sophisticated and refined in comparison with the epic verses of old sung out loud. From folk musicians and reciters who – each according to their artistic tendencies and capabilities – provided their authentic contribution, we come to the poetry which moved from the pages of books to the lips of poets in order to enjoy its sonic and physical form of existence. The 1970's opened up to performers a wide road where many strange things were happening; during poetry recitals some poets were simultaneously painting, playing various instruments, exercising, rope skipping, acting, singing or shouting at the top of their voices. Poetic expression has reached a high level of variety and nobody can predict what it will be like in the future. For now it remains that the poetic expression of imitation and observation of harmony and rhythm has not yet been transcended. Although a prose writer, I learned most about the writing trade from poets. Good prose must have rhythm, and a sentence must have a melody. Poetry as queen of literature has both, and above all totality which a reader, when listening to a poet, experiences without any remaining residue. And when a poem consists of vowels and consonants, but not of words, like the poem by Vujica Rešin Tucić *Spavanje na kauču* (Sleeping on the couch), it acquires a completely different meaning in the author's interpretation. This poem in fact imitates snoring and the audience always loved it. Today I can with certainty claim that public poetry readings contributed to greater interest in art among the wide reading audiences. This in my opinion is at the same time one of the most important tasks of public readings – ennoblement and upgrading of the existing poem by adding to it live poetic energy.

It has remained written somewhere that one evening a certain poet at a literary gathering in the open was reading his poem and disturbed the village dogs which started howling so loud that the event had to be cancelled. This anecdote has not been forgotten and is quoted in

advocacy of poetry, while the said poet is labelled the worst performer of one's own verse ever to stand on a public stage. But joking apart – if we want to experience poetry in its entire form of existence, we should hear it from the lips of the poet who wrote it. If you'll allow me – I'd like us to listen to the live interpretation of the poem from the start of my essay, *Don't be evil friend, learn to lov*, which remained recorded even after the poet's death.

Translated by Lili Potpara

Beri me v živo

Alberto Manguel

»Mi sploh ni treba poskušati,« je rekla, »nemogočih reči kratko malo ne verjamem.«

»Jaz pa mislim, da še nimaš dovolj vaje,« je menila Kraljica. »Jaz sem v tvojih letih to vadila pol ure na dan. Si moreš misliti: meni se je že zgodilo, da sem še pred zajtrkom verjela kar šest nemogočih reči.«

Alica v ogledalu, V. poglavje
MK, 1978, prev. Gitica Jakopin

»Čemu potrebujemo knjižnice, natrpane s knjigami?« je na nedavnom strokovnem srečanju knjižnic smehljaje se vprašal mlad futurolog (za tiste, ki ne prebirate znanstvene fantastike: futurologija je veja elektronike, ki napoveduje tehnologije prihodnosti in možnosti njihove uporabe). »Zakaj bi razsipavali z dragocenim prostorom za skladiščenje množice tiskanih besedil, če jih zlahka shranimo na majhnem, praktičnem čipu? Zakaj bi silili bralce k romanju v knjižnice, kjer je treba najprej čakati na podatek, ali je knjiga sploh na voljo, in če je, jo je treba pretovoriti domov, pa še to le za omejeno obdobje? Zakaj bi bralcem ovirali dostop do tisočev knjig, ki jih najblžja knjižnica ne hrani? Zakaj bi si morali razbijati glavo zaradi porumenelosti papirja, slabe vezave, obledelega črnila, moljev, miši in črvov, kraje, požara in poplave, če je lahko vsa Aleksandrija samo nekaj tipk stran, in to od koderkoli pač želimo? Dejstvo je, da branje, kakršno smo poznali doslej, ni več splošna nujnost, knjižnice pa bi se morale odpovedati svojemu plemenitemu, a prezivetemu načinu hrambe tekstov v obliku, ki ji rečemo knjiga, in se enkrat za vselej preusmeriti v elektronska besedila, podobno kot so se ljudje v preteklosti odrekli glinenim tablicam in pergamentnim zvitkom ter se oprijeli kodeksov. Sprejmite, kar je neizbežno: Gutenbergova doba se je iztekla.«

Žal (ali na srečo) pa ta parafraza temelji na zmoti. Iz predstave o kaotični knjižnici, prerojeni v vsem svojem blišču, kjerkoli se bralec pač nahaja, žari nekakšna binkoštna milina – kakor je iz nebes na apostole deževal ogenj, tako vsak bralec prejme dar neštetih jezikov. A prav tako kot besedilo v različnih jezikih, knjigah in elektronskih spominih nikoli ne more biti podano na identičen način, tako se tudi elektronski spomini in spomini, ki jih nosimo v sebi, med sabo razlikujejo in so različne narave, čeprav posredujejo vsebinsko enako sporočilo. Kakor sem omenil v razpravi *St Augustine's Computer*, so to specifični inštrumenti, ki v naši želji po spoznanju sveta služijo različnim namenom. Zato je vsakršno nasprotovanje, ki nas sili v zanikanje enega od njih, slabše kot napačno: nesmiselno je. Po zaslugi elektronske tehnologije lahko danes skoraj vsakdo v nekaj sekundah izbrska Stacijev citat, ki si ga je samo približno zapomnil, ali v trenutku razvozla zapleteno Platonovo pismo, ne da bi bil učenjak kot sveti Hieronim. Toda glede na trdoživost kodeksa bi še vedno moral vsakdo imeti možnost, da se lahko z zguljeno knjigo, polno oslovskega ušesa, umakne v tišino in se zatopi v dobro znane odlomke ter k starim zabeležkam ob robu strani s črnilom pomirjujoče dodaja nove zaznamke. Vsaka tehnologija prinaša določene koristi, zato je najbrž bolj smiselno, da si namesto razpravljanja o križarskem pohodu elektronske besede, ki bo porazila tiskano, ogledamo prednosti vsake od njiju.

Morda je že narava tradicionalnih knjižnic takšna, da je za razliko od človeških možganov vsebnik manj ambiciozen od vsebine. Vemo, da so možganski nevroni sposobni predelati veliko več informacij, kot jih vanje shranimo, in da v blodnjaku naših možganskih polovic številne police, ki tečejo po skrivnih hodnikih, vse življenje ostajajo prazne – zaradi česar bi lahko vsak knjižničar izgubil svojo pregovorno potrpežljivost in se začel upravičeno peniti od zavisti. Od rojstva do smrti kopijamo besede in podobe, čustva in občutja, spoznave in zamisli, sestavljam spominsko sliko sveta in se ne glede na to, kako silno se nam dozdeva, da je naš um natrpan z izkušnjami, vselej najde prostor za nove; podobno kot so na stare pergamente, znane kot palimpsesti, čez stara besedila vseskozi zapisovali nova. »Kaj so človeški možgani drugega,« se je leta 1869 vprašal Charles Baudelaire, »kot

mogočen naravni palimpsest?« Podobno kot Baudelairov neskončni palimpsest tudi knjižnica uma nima jasno razločljivih meja. V knjižnicah iz kamna in stekla, v teh hrambah družbenega spomina, pa vselej primanjkuje prostora in kljub birokratskim omejitvam, premišljeni izbiri, pomanjkanju sredstev in namerinem ali nenamerinem uničenju posameznih izvodov ni nikoli dovolj prostora za vse knjige, ki bi jih želeli hrani. Da bi odpravili to omejitev, smo zahvaljujoč tehničnemu napredku vzpostavili virtualne knjižnice, kjer je prostor praktično neomejen. Vendar se tudi na teh elektronskih arkah zanamcem lahko ohranijo samo nekatere oblike besedila. V teh pošastnih knjižnicah namreč umanjka utelešenje besedila, besede izgubijo otpljivost.

Virtualne knjižnice prinašajo določene prednosti, kar pa ne pomeni, da snovnih knjižnic ne potrebujemo več, ne glede na to, kako zelo nas o tem skuša prepričati elektronska industrija, ne glede na to, kako močno si Google in bratovščina prizadevajo ustvariti vtis, da jih vodijo filantropska nagnjenja in ne izkoriščanje intelektualne dediščine. Svetovna digitalna knjižnica, mednarodna knjižnica, ki jo podpirajo tako Unesco kot Knjižnica ameriškega Kongresa, Bibliothèque de France in druge nacionalne knjižnice, je ogromen in pomemben projekt, in čeprav jo deloma financira Google, (zaenkrat še) ni komercialno usmerjena. Ne glede na gradnjo tako izjemnih virtualnih knjižnic pa so tradicionalne knjižnice še zmeraj zelo pomembne. Elektronsko besedilo je eno, identično besedilo v tiskani obliki pa nekaj drugega in nista izmenljiva, podobno kot posneta vrstica ne more nadomestiti tiste, ki se je vpletla v naš spomin. Kontekst, materialna opora, fizična zgodovina in izkustvo besedila, vse to poleg besedišča in muzikalnosti tvori posamezno besedilo. V najbolj dobesednem smislu zato predmetnost pravzaprav ni nepredmetna.

Težave tradicionalnih knjižnic – pristranska izbira in subjektivno označevanje, hierarhično katalogiziranje in v njem implicirana cenzura, arhiviranje in izposoja gradiva – so ključne težave vsake družbe, ki se ima za pismeno. Knjižnico uma preganja védenje, da obstajajo knjige, ki jih nikoli ne bomo prebrali in jih s tem nikdar ne bomo mogli resnično oklicati za svoje; knjižnice kolektivnega spomina preganjajo

vse knjige, ki se jim nikoli ni uspelo prebiti v najožji krog knjižničarjeve izbire: knjige, ki so bile zavrnjene, opuščene, umaknjene, zasmehovane, prepovedane, nepriljubljene, prezrte.

Vsi ti vidiki kakor nihalo usmerjajo naše intelektualno življenje in tiktakajo v ritmu ključnega vprašanja, ki se nanaša tako na posameznega bralca, ki tarna zaradi časovne stiske, kakor na občestvo bralcev, ki tarna zaradi prostorske stiske: Zakaj sploh beremo? Od kod izhaja želja po novem znanju, po doseganju vselej odmikajočih se meja intelektualnega raziskovanja? Zakaj shranjevali plen tovrstnih dogodivščin v trezorje kamnitih knjižnic in elektronskih spominov? Čemu se tega sploh lotevati? Vprašanje, ki si ga zastavlja zavzet futurolog, bi lahko poglobili, in namesto da se sprašujemo, zakaj branje doživlja svoj konec (samouresničujoča domneva), bi se lahko vprašali: »Kaj pomeni konec branja?«

Morda se bomo tega lažje lotili na osebnem primeru.

Leta 2008, dva tedna pred božičem, sem moral na nujno operacijo; tako nujna je bila, da nisem imel niti časa za pakiranje. Po hitrem postopku sem se znašel v neudobni in zdelani ordinaciji na urgenci, bil sem vznemirjen, s sabo pa nisem imel drugega čtiva kot knjigo, ki sem jo tisto jutro vzel v roke – angleški prevod očarljivega romana Ceesa Nootebooma *In Nederland*, ki sem ga prebral že v nekaj urah. Da bi naslednjih štirinajst dni okreval v bolnišnici brez vsakršnega čtiva, se mi je zdelo najhujše možno trpljenje, zato sem z veseljem sprejel prijateljev predlog, da mi iz knjižnice prinese nekaj knjig. Toda katere knjige bi želel?

Avtor *Pridigarja (Koheleta)* in Pete Seeger sta nas naučila, da ima vse svoj čas; podobno bi mogel reči, da ima tudi vsaka knjiga svoj čas. Bralci vedo, da ni vsaka knjiga primerna za vsako priložnost. Uboga tista duša, ki se znajde z napačno knjigo na napačnem mestu, kot na primer Roald Amundsen, odkritelj Južnega pola, čigar torba s knjigami je potonila pod ledene ploskve, zaradi česar je moral noč za ledeno nočjo prebirati edino knjigo, ki mu jo je uspelo rešiti: težko prebavljivo delo dr. Johna Gaudna *Portraiture of His Sacred Majesty in His Solitudes and Sufferings*. Bralci vedo, da obstajajo knjige, primerne za branje po ljubljenju, in knjige, primerne za čakanje v letališki avli, knjige za

ob zajtrku in knjige za v kopalnico, knjige za nespečne noči doma in knjige za nespečne dni v bolnišnici. Nihče, niti najbolj izurjeni bralci, ne more natanko pojasniti, zakaj so nekatere knjige primerne za dočeno priložnost, druge pa ne. Na nedoumljiv način, podobno kot ljudje, se priložnosti in knjige med sabo skrivnostno ujemajo ali si nasprotujejo.

Zakaj v nekem trenutku življenja izberemo družbo ene knjige in ne neke druge? Na seznamu knjig, ki si jih je Oscar Wilde zaželet v ječi v Readingu, sta bila tudi Stevensonov *Otok zakladov* in piročnik za francosko-italijansko konverzacijo. Aleksander Veliki je na svoje pohode vselej jemal Homerjevo *Iliado*. Morilcu Johna Lennona se je med naklepanjem zločina zazdel primeren *Varuh v rži* J. D. Salingerja. Ali astronauti na pot jemljejo *Marsovske kronike* Raya Bradburyja ali jim je ljubša *Zemeljska hrana* Andréja Gida? Ali bo Bernard Madoff v zaporu prosil za Dickensovo *Malo Dorritovo*, kjer bo lahko prebral, kako si poneverjalec Merdle, ki ne prenese sramote, ker so ga razkrili, z izposojeno britvico prereže goltanec? Se bo papež Benedikt XVI. umaknil v svoj *studiolo* v Castellu Sant'Angelo z izvodom romana *Bubu de Montparnasse* Charlesa-Louisa Philippa, da preuči, kako je zaradi neuporabe kondomov v Parizu v devetnajstem stoletju izbruhnila epidemija sifilisa? Praktični G. K. Chesterton je razmišljjal, da bi v primeru, če bi obtičal na samotnem otoku, s sabo najraje vzel preprost piročnik za gradnjo čolnov; v enakih okoliščinah bi bila manj praktičnemu Julesu Renardu ljubša Voltairov *Kandid* in Schillerjevi *Razbojniki*.

In katere knjige bi za družbo v bolnišnični celici izbral jaz?

Četudi verjamem v nedvomno koristnost virtualnih knjižnic, ni sem uporabnik e-knjig, teh sodobnih inkarnacij asirskih ploščic, niti liliputanskih i-podov ali nostalgičnih gameboyev. Strinjam se z Rayem Bradburyjem, ko pravi, da nam »internet samo odvrača pozornost«. Navajen sem na velikost strani in otpljivost papirja in črnila. V mislih sem torej preletel knjige, ki se kopijo ob moji domači postelji. Izločil sem sodobno leposlovje (preveč tvegano, saj še ni prestalo preizkušnje), biografije (za okoliščine, v katerih sem se znašel, prenatrpane: privezanemu na cevke bi se mi zdela navzočnost tujih ljudi v sobi moteča),

znanstvene eseje in detektivke (terjale bi preveč razmišljanja: čeprav sem zadnje čase užival v Darwinovem preporodu in ponovnem prebiranju klasičnih kriminalk, sem slutil, da podrobni opisi sebičnih genov in zločinskih umov ne bi bili pravo zdravilo zame). Poigraval sem se z zamislio, da bi malce prestrašil sestre s Kierkegaardom: *Bolezen za smrt*. Toda ne – hrepenel sem po hrani za dušo, po nečem, v čemer sem nekoč že užival in kar bi z veseljem spet vzel v roke, nekaj, kar bi lahko prebiral že iz samega užitka, kar bi sproščalo in hkrati vzpodbujalo moje možganske celice. Prijatelja sem prosil, naj mi prinese dvodelno izdajo *Veleumnega plemiča don Kihota iz Manče*.

Lars Gustafsson v ganljivem romanu *Čebelarjeva smrt* oblikuje lik Lrsa Lennarta Westina, umirajočega za rakom, ki sestavlja seznam panog umetnosti glede na njihovo težavnostno stopnjo. Na prvo mesto uvrsti umetnost erotike, sledijo ji glasba, pesništvo, dramatika in umetnost ognjemeta, seznam pa se zaključi z umetnostjo gradnje vodometov, z mečevanjem in artilerijo. Samo ene nikakor ne zna uvrstiti na seznam: umetnosti prenašanja bolečine. »Opravka imamo torej s tako edinstveno vejo umetnosti, pri kateri je stopnja težavnosti tako visoka, da v praksi ne obstaja noben izvajalec.«¹ Westin najbrž ni bral *Don Kihota*. Z olajšanjem sem ugotovil, da je prav *Don Kihot* idealna knjiga za prenašanje bolečin. Kjerkoli sem jo odprl, čakajoč na novo zbadanje in ščipanje in omamljanje, me je prijazni glas učenega španskega vojščaka tolažil z zagotavljanjem, da bo na koncu vse dobro. Vse od adolescence sem se vedno znova vračal k *Don Kihotu*, zato sem vedel, da se ne bom spotaknil ob kakšnem presenetljivem obratu v zgodbi. In ker je *Don Kihot* roman, ki ga lahko z veseljem prebirаш že preprosto zato, ker obstaja, preprosto zaradi vsebine, ne da bi se moral poglabljati v temeljito analizo besednih iger in retoričnih digresij, sem se lahko mirno prepustil pripovednemu toku in sledil prigodom dobrega plemiča in njegovega zvestega oprode Sanče. Mojemu prvemu branju *Don Kihota*, ki je potekalo pod vodstvom profesorja Isaia-sa Lernerja, je sledilo še mnogo prebiranj na različnih mestih ter ob različnih priložnostih. *Don Kihota* sem bral prva leta v Evropi, ko je

1 Lars Gustafsson: *Čebelarjeva smrt*. CZ, 2000, prev. Helena Bauman.

kazalo, da bo maj 1968 temeljito pregnetel nekaj, kar se še ni dalo ujeti v besede in definicije; bil je kot prispodoba idealiziranega viteškega sveta, ki ga na svojem popotovanju išče pošteni plemič. *Don Kihota* sem bral na južnem Pacifiku, ko sem se trudil z nemogoče nizkim proračunom preživljati družino, v nenavadni polineziski kulturi pa sem se počutil tako tuje kot ubogi vitez med aristokrati. *Don Kihota* sem bral v Kanadi, ki mi je s svojo multikulturalnostjo že sama vzbujala privlačen vtis donkihotstva. K vsem tem prebiranjem in še k mnogim drugim lahko zdaj dodam tudi zdravilnega *Don Kihota*, ki je name deloval kot balzam in tolažba.

Seveda nobeden teh *Don Kihotov* ni na voljo v knjižnicah, razen v knjižnici mojega pešajočega spomina. Karel Čapek v svojih čudovitih knjigah o vrtovih pravi, da lahko umetnost vrtnarjenja skrčimo na eno samo pravilo: vanj je treba vložiti več kot iz njega vzeti. Enako velja za umetnost ustvarjanja knjižnic. Res pa je, da lahko knjižnice materialnega sveta ne glede na svojo nepotešljivo lakoto zbirajo samo obstoječe izdaje. Vemo, da vsaka knjiga v sebi nosi tudi vsa morebitna branja, pretekla, sedanja in prihodnja, a njenih pitagorejskih reinkarnacij, vseh teh čudovitih oblik, ki se bodo še izoblikovale s prihodnjimi bralci, na policah ne bomo našli. Paul Masson, priatelj znamenite Colette, je bil zaposlen v pariški Bibliothèque Nationale. Masson je opazil, da je knjižnica precej slabo založena z latinskimi in italijanskimi knjigami iz petnajstega stoletja, zato je začel na kataložnih listkih kar sam dodajati umišljene naslove, da bi, kot je dejal, ohranil »ugled kataloga«. Ko ga je Colette naivno vprašala, v čem je smisel knjig, če ne obstajajo, je Masson nonšalantno odvrnil, da »vsega pa res ne more narediti sam!« V resni instituciji pa je žal prostor le za dejansko knjižničarsko delo, ne tudi za zidanje gradov v oblakih.

Na policah knjižnice uma se po drugi strani vseskozi kopičijo knjige brez vsakršne materialne eksistence: knjige, ki se zlijejo iz vseh knjig, ki smo jih nekoč prebrali in se jih samo še približno spominjamo, knjige, ki se v opombah, razlagah in komentarjih do te mere sklicujejo na druge vire, da same zase sploh ne obstajajo več, knjige, nastale v sanjah ali nočnih morah, ki še zmeraj poustvarjajo vzdušje teh nebuloznih svetov,

knjige, za katere vemo, da bi morale obstajati, a jih nihče ni napisal, avtobiografije o neizrekljivih izkustvih, knjige o neopisljivih strasteh, knjige o nekdaj očitnih in danes pozabljenih resnicah, čudovite in nepopisne knjige. Zberemo lahko vse izdaje *Don Kihota* do danes v vseh jezikih – so že zbrane, pravzaprav, v madridski knjižnici Instituta Cervantes. Moji lastni *Don Kihoti*, ki so se izoblikovali ob vsakem prej opisanih prebiranj, ki jih je iznašel moj spomin in jih je uredila moja pozabljivost, pa imajo prostor samo v knjižnici mojega uma.

Včasih se obe knjižnici stikata. V šestem poglavju prvega dela *Don Kihota* se vitezova knjižnica tiskanih knjig deloma prekriva s spominsko knjižnico župnika in brivca, ki jo temeljito prerešetata; vsako knjigo, ki jo vzameta s police, pospremita z obujanjem spominov na cenzuro in jo ocenita glede na to, koliko koristi je prinesla. Ali bodo knjige obsojene na grmado ali jim bo oproščeno, torej ni odvisno od besed, črno na belem natisnjениh na listih, ampak od besed, shranjenih v spominu brivca in župnika, ko sta knjigo prvkrat prebrala. Včasih na njuno odločitev vplivajo govorice, kot takrat, ko župnik reče, da je slišal praviti, da je *Amadis Galski* prva viteška knjiga, ki so jo natisnili na Španskem, zaradi česar je izvor krive vere in jo je treba obsoditi na grmado – brivec pa odgovori, da je prav tako slišal praviti, da je najboljša od vseh knjig v tej zvrsti, zato ji je treba prizanesti. Včasih je začetni vtis tako močan, da obsodi ne le knjigo, ampak tudi njene spremiščevalke; včasih je na uničenje obsojen prevod, izvirniku pa je prizaneseno; tu in tam kakšna knjiga ne konča takoj v plamenih, ampak jo samo umaknejo, da ne bi kvarno vplivala na bodoče bralce. Duhovnik in brivec, ki se spravita k čistki don Kihotove knjižnice, jo v resnici prilagajata lastnemu pojmovanju knjižnice, kakršno ohranjata v spominu, pri čemer si prisvajata knjige in jih sprevračata v skladu z lastnimi izkušnjami. Zato ne preseneča, da je navsezadnje celo knjižnična soba zazidana in se zdi, da sploh ni obstajala; ko se stari vitez prebudi in jo želi videti, izve, da je preprosto izginila. Res je izginila, a ne zaradi coprnije hudobnega čarownika (kot si to razlaga don Kihot), ampak zaradi moči bralcev, ki tujim knjigam pripisujejo lastno razumevanje vsebine. Vsaka knjižnica snovnega sveta je odvisna od načina branja naših predhodnikov.

Ta kreativna hermenevtika pravzaprav kaže na bralčevu premoč: knjigo lahko poljubno oblikuje glede na svoje izkušnje, okus, intuicijo in znanje. Že res, da ji ne more pripisati čisto vsega – na primer izmišljij blodnjavega uma – četudi psihoanalitiki in surrealisti menijo, da imajo tudi te svojo veljavnost in logiko. Gre prej za inteligentno in navdahnjeno rekonstrukcijo besedila, pri čemer po najboljših močeh uporabimo razum in domišljijo, da tekst prenesemo na drugačno platno in pri tem razširimo obzorje domnevnega pomena onstran vidnih meja ter avtorjevih deklariranih namenov. Meje bralčeve moči pa so boleče nejasne: Umberto Eco je menil, da najbrž sovpadajo z mejami zdravega razuma. Takšna rešitev bo morda že kar dovolj.

Naj bo brezmejna ali ne, bralčeve moči ne moremo podedovati, treba se ji je priučiti. Čeprav pridemo na svet kot bitja, ki iščejo pomen v vsem, kar jih obdaja, ki razbirajo pomen iz gest, zvokov, barv in oblik, je razvozlavanje skupnega družbenega koda spremnost, ki jo moramo šele usvojiti. Besednjak in skladnja, pomenske ravni, povzemanje in primerjanje besedil, vseh teh tehnik se mora nekdo, ki postaja del družbe, najprej naučiti – šele potem lahko v celoti razvije bralsko moč. Toda zadnji korak v procesu mora napraviti sam: v knjigi mora odkriti zaznamke lastnih izkušenj.

Priučitev te spremnosti se le redko spodbuja. Vse od elitnih pisarskih šol v Mezopotamiji do samostanov in univerz v srednjem veku in pozneje, z lažjo distribucijo besedil po Gutenbergu pa do časa omrežja ostaja branje v svoji najbolj dovršeni obliki privilegij redkih. Res je: danes je večina ljudi po svetu le napol pismena, prebrati znajo oglas in se podpisati na pogodbo, kar jih še ne naredi bralce. Resnično branje je sposobnost prodreti v besedilo in ga raziskati do skrajnih zmožnosti, si ga v postopku reinvenции ponovno prilastiti. Na poti do njegove izpopolnitve pa stojijo številne ovire (kakor sem omenil v eseju o *Ostržku*). Zaradi moči, ki jo branje prinaša bralcu, se številni vladajoči politični, ekonomski in religiozni sistemi boje tovrstne miselne slobode. Branje v najboljšem primeru vodi v refleksijo in izpraševanje, refleksija in izpraševanje pa lahko zganeta ugovarjanje in spremembe. To pa je v vsaki družbi nevarno početje.

Knjižničarji se danes vse pogosteje soočajo s presenetljivo težavo: uporabniki knjižnic, še posebej mlajši, ne znajo več kompetentno brati. Znajo sicer najti in pregledati elektronsko besedilo, iz različnih spletnih virov znajo izrezati odstavke in jih sestaviti v novo besedilo, zdi pa se, da niso sposobni komentirati, kritizirati, izluščiti bistvo in si zapomniti smisel tiskane strani. Elektronsko besedilo zaradi lahke dostopnosti uporabnikom vzbuja vtis, da so besedilo usvojili, ne da bi se pri tem pojavljale posebne težave. Temeljni smisel branja se jim izmazne; kar ostane, je skupek informacij, ki jih lahko bralec po potrebi uporabi. Branje pa se ne zgodi samo z dejstvom, da je na voljo razpoložljivo besedilo, ampak od bralca terja, da se poda v blodnjak besed, odkriva obstoječe poti in zarisuje lastne zemljevide, ki segajo čez rob strani. Elektronsko besedilo to seveda dopušča, a je zaradi te odprtosti, s katero se ponaša, težko dognati konkreten pomen in se poglobiti v posamične strani. Besedilo na zaslonu ne izpostavi bralčeve naloge tako očitno kot besedilo v snovni knjigi, ki je zamejena s stranjo in vezavo. »Get anything,« pravi reklama za mobilni telefon, s katerim lahko fotografiramo, snemamo zvoke, brskamo po spletu, prenašamo besede in slike, prejemamo in pošiljamo sporočila in seveda telefoniramo. »Vse« pa je v tem primeru nevarno blizu »ničemur«. Pridobivanje nečesa (raje kot vsega) vselej zahteva selekcijo in se ne more opreti na brezmejno ponudbo. Opazovanje, presojanje, izbiranje pa zahtevajo izurjenost in čut za odgovornost, etično držo. Kot popotniki, ki so se naučili voziti samo avtomobile z avtomatskimi prestavami, mladi bralci ne znajo več po lastni presoji menjavati prestav, ampak se raje zanesejo na vozilo, ki obljublja, da jih bo odpeljalo vsepovsod.

V določenem trenutku v preteklosti, po iznajdbi koda, ki ga lahko piše in bere širša skupnost, so ugotovili, da besede, ki jih je v času in prostoru oddaljeni avtor zapisal na glinene tablice ali papirus, ne pove- do samo tega, kar izraža skupni kod, na primer števila koz za prodajo ali vojne napovedi. Odkrili so, da te koze, nezaznavne čutom bralcev, postanejo koze bralčevega izkustva, koze, ki so jih morda nekoč videli na družinski kmetiji, ali demonske koze, ki so jih za hip ugledali v morastih sanjah. Vojna napoved pa se ne bere samo kot poziv k orozju,

ampak morda kot opozorilo, kot poziv k pogajalski mizi ali kot provokacija. Zapisani tekst odraža določen namen in razumevanje realnosti, branje pa si mu ne prizadeva samo pohlevno slediti oziroma se včasih sploh ne sprašuje, kakšna sta izvorno razumevanje in namen besedila.

Na tej točki so bralci odkrili, da je moč instrumenta, s pomočjo katerega se je družba odločila komunicirati, jezika besed – negotovega in neoprijemljivega in dvoumnega, kakor je – prav v tej dvoumnosti in neoprijemljivosti in nepreciznosti, v čudežni sposobnosti, da nekaj poimenuje, ne da bi pri tem na besedo navezal določen predmet. Če je avtor napisal »koze« ali »vojna«, je nedvomno imel v mislih nekaj specifičnega, bralec pa tej specifičnosti lahko doda podobo orjaške črede ali glasove naznanjajočega se miru. Vsako besedilo nosi določeno sporočilo; sestavljeni je namreč iz določenih besed, hkrati pa obsega še mnogo več, česar si avtor ne bi mogel niti zamisliti – vsebino, ki jo bodo prihodnji bralci sestavljeni in zbirali v obliki oprijemljivih tekstov, ki bodo po drugi strani znova spodbudili nastanek novih besedil, napisanih v napol budnem ali napol spečem stanju, fluidnih besedil, spreminjajočih se besedil, shranjenih v knjižnici uma.

V dvaintridesetem poglavju prvega dela *Don Kibota* krčmar, ki izčrpanemu junaku nudi prenočišče, razpravlja z župnikom o zaslugah viteških romanov in pravi, da ne vidi vzroka, zakaj bi takšne knjige kogarkoli obnorele.

»Ne vem, kako je to mogoče: saj prav zares, kot se mi zdi, ni boljše-
ga branja na svetu in tudi sam imam tu dve taki knjigi ali tri in nekaj
drugi papirjev, ki so dejansko vrnili življenje ne le meni, temveč še
mnogim drugim. Kadar je namreč čas žetve, se na praznične dni zbere
tule precej žanjcev in med njimi je vselej kdo, ki zna brati, in ta vzame
v roko eno od teh knjig, nas več kot trideset pa ga obstopi in ga poslu-
šamo s tolikšnim užitkom, da nam nobena skrb več ne beli glav.«²

Krčmar se navdušuje nad opisi bojev, prostitutki so najljubše zgodbe o romantičnem dvorjenju, krčmarjevi hčeri pa tožbe vitezov, kadar so daleč od svojih oboževank. Vsak poslušalec (bralec) prevede besedilo v svet lastnih izkušenj in hrepenenj, s čimer se polasti posamezne

2 Miguel de Cervantes: *Veleumni plemič don Kibot iz Manče*. CZ, 1977, prev. Niko Košir.

zgodbe, iz česar cenzorski župnik izpelje zaključek, da bralci kot don Kihot izgubijo pamet. Don Kihot sam pa je mnenja, da so to sijajni primeri iskrenega in korektnega vedenja v realnem svetu. Eno samo besedilo, mnogoterost načinov branja, na polici dolga vrsta knjig, izvirajočih iz tega naglas prebranega besedila, ki z vsakim obrnjenim listom hrani naše lačne knjižnice, če že ne tistih na papirju, pa vsekakor knjižnice uma: tudi to je ena mojih radostnih izkušenj.

Svojemu *Don Kihotu* sem globoko hvaležen. Dva bolnišnična tedna je dvodelna izdaja bdela nad mano: nagovarjala me je, kadar sem potreboval razvedriло, ali pa je tihotno in pozorno čakala ob moji postelji. Z mano ni bila nikoli nepotrpežljiva, ni modrovala ali bila pretirano uslužna. Nadaljevala sva pogovor, ki sva ga načela pred dolgimi leti, ko sem bil še nekdo drug, kot bi ji ne bilo mar za minuli čas, kot bi se ji zdelo povsem samoumevno, da bo tudi ta trenutek minil, z njim pa vsi bralčevi strahovi in nelagodje; na policah bodo ostale samo zapomnjene strani, zaznamajoče nekaj svojstvenega, intimnega in temačnega, za kar doslej še nisem našel pravih besed.

Prevedla Ana Jasmina Oseban

Read Me Live

Alberto Manguel

“There’s no use trying,” she said: “one can’t believe impossible things.”

“I daresay you haven’t had much practice,” said the Queen. “When I was your age, I always did it for half-an-hour a day. Why, sometimes I’ve believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast.”

Through the Looking-Glass, Chapter V

“Why should we have libraries filled with books?” asked a smiling young futurologist at a recent library convention. Futurology, for those who don’t read science-fiction, is a branch of electronics that forecasts future technologies and their prospective uses.) “Why waste valuable space to store endless masses of printed text that can be easily enclosed in a minuscule and resilient chip? Why force readers to travel all the way to a library, wait to find out if the book they want is there and, if it is, lug it back to keep for a limited time only? Why deny readers access to thousands of titles that their nearest library doesn’t hold? Why yield to the threats of acid corrosion, brittle bindings, fading ink, moths, mice and worms, theft, fire and water, when all of Alexandria can be had at your fingertips from the comfort of any place you choose? The truth is that reading as we knew it is no longer a universal necessity, and libraries should relinquish those noble but antiquated receptacles of text we call books and adopt once and for all the electronic text, as they once relinquished clay tablets and parchment scrolls in favour of the codex. Accept the inevitable: the age of Gutenberg has come to an end.”

Unfortunately, or fortunately, the paraphrase I’ve given is based on a misconception. The notion of a scattered library reborn in all its richness wherever a reader might find himself has a certain Pentecostal lowness, each reader receiving, like the fire that rained on the apostles from

heaven, the gift of numberless tongues. But just as a certain text is never expressed identically in different tongues, books and electronic memories, like electronic memories and the memories we hold in our mind, are different creatures and possess different natures, even when the text they carry is the same. As I argued in “*St Augustine’s Computer*,” they are instruments of particular kinds and their qualities serve diverse purposes in our attempt to know the world. Therefore, any opposition that forces us to eliminate one of them is worse than false: it is useless. To be able to find, in seconds, a half-remembered quotation from Statius or to be able to read at a moment’s notice a recondite letter from Plato, is something almost anyone can do today, without the erudition of St Jerome, thanks to the electronic technology. But to be able to retire with a dog-eared book, revisiting familiar haunts and scribbling on the margins over previous annotations, comforted by paper and ink, is something almost anyone should still be able to do, thanks to the persistence of the codex. Each technology has its own merits, and therefore, it may be more useful to leave aside this crusading view of the electronic word vanquishing the printed one, and explore instead each technology according to its particular merits.

Perhaps it is in the nature of traditional libraries that, unlike the human brain, the container is less ambitious than the contents. We are told that the cerebral neurons are capable of much more knowledge than however much information we store in them, and that, in the maze of our lobes, many of the immeasurable shelves running along our secret corridors remain empty for the whole of our lives – causing librarians to lose their proverbial composure and seethe with righteous envy. From birth to death, we accumulate words and images, emotions and sensations, intuitions and ideas, compiling our memory of the world, and however much we believe that we cram our minds with experience, there will always be space for more, as in one of those ancient parchments known as palimpsests, on which new texts were written over the old ones, again and again. “What is the human brain,” asked Charles Baudelaire in 1869, “but an immense and natural palimpsest?” Like Baudelaire’s almost infinite palimpsest, the library of

the mind has no discernable limits. In the libraries of stone and glass, however, in those storerooms of the memory of society, space is always lacking, and in spite of bureaucratic restraint, reasoned selection, lack of funds and willful or accidental destruction, there is never enough room for the books we wish to keep. To remedy this constraint, thanks to our technical skills, we have set up virtual libraries for whom space approaches infinity. But even these electronic arks cannot rescue for posterity more than certain forms of the text itself. In those ghostly libraries, the concrete incarnation of the text is left behind, and the flesh of the word has no existence.

Virtual libraries have their advantages, but that does not mean that solid libraries are no longer needed, however hard the electronic industry may try to convince us of the contrary, however hard Google and its brethren may present themselves as philanthropical entities and not as exploiters of our intellectual patrimony. The World Digital Library, an international library supported both by Unesco and by the U.S. Library of Congress, the Bibliothèque de France, and other national libraries, is a colossal and important undertaking, and even though part of the funding comes from Google, it is (for the time being) free from commercial concerns. However, even when such remarkable virtual libraries are being built, traditional libraries are still of the essence. An electronic text is one thing, the identical text in a printed book is another, and they are not interchangeable, any more than a recorded line can replace a line embedded in an individual memory. Context, material support, the physical history and experience of a text are part of the text, as much as its vocabulary and its music. In the most literal sense, matter is not immaterial.

And the problems of traditional libraries – biased selection and subjective labeling, hierarchical cataloguing and its implied censorship, archival and circulating duties – continue to be, in any society that deems itself literate, essential problems. The library of the mind is haunted by the knowledge of all the books we'll never read and will therefore never rightfully call ours; the collective memorial libraries are haunted by all the books that never made it into the circle of the librarians' elect: books rejected, abandoned, restricted, despised, forbidden, unloved, ignored.

Following this pendular motion that rules our intellectual life, one same question seems to tick away repeatedly, addressed both to the reader who despairs at the lack of time and to the society of readers who despair at the lack of space: to what purpose do we read? What is the reason for wanting to know more, for reaching towards the ever-retreating horizon of our intellectual exploring? Why collect the booty of such adventures in the vaults of our stone libraries and in our electronic memories? Why do it at all? The question asked by the keen futurologist can be deepened and, rather than wonder why is reading coming to an end? (a self-fulfilling assumption) we might ask instead: “What is the end of reading?”

Perhaps a personal example may help examine the question.

Two weeks before Christmas 2008, I was told that I needed an urgent operation, so urgent in fact that I had no time to pack. I found myself lying in a pristine emergency room, uncomfortable and anxious, with no books except for the one I had been reading that morning, Cees Nooteboom’s delightful *In the Dutch Mountains*, which I finished in the next few hours. To spend the following fourteen days convalescing in hospital without any reading material seemed to me a torture too great to bear, so when my partner suggested getting from my library a few books, I seized the opportunity gratefully. But which books did I want?

The author of Ecclesiastes and Pete Seeger have taught us that for everything there is a season; likewise, I might add, for every season there is a book. But readers have learned that not just any book is suited to any occasion. Pity the soul who finds itself with the wrong book in the wrong place, like poor Roald Amundsen, discoverer of the South Pole, whose book-bag sank under the ice, so that he was constrained to read, night after freezing night, the only surviving volume: Dr John Gauden’s indigestible *Portraiture of His Sacred Majesty in His Solitudes and Sufferings*. Readers know that there are books for reading after love-making and books for waiting in the airport lounge, books for the breakfast table and books for the bathroom, books for sleepless nights at home and books for sleepless days in the hospital. No one,

not even the best of readers, can fully explain why certain books are right for certain occasions and why others are not. In some ineffable way, like human beings, occasions and books mysteriously agree or clash with one another.

Why, at certain moments in our life, do we choose the companionship of one book over another? The list of titles Oscar Wilde requested in Reading Gaol included Stevenson's *Treasure Island* and a French-Italian conversation primer. Alexander the Great went on his campaigns with a copy of Homer's *Iliad*. John Lennon's murderer thought it fit to carry J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* when planning to commit his crime. Do astronauts take Ray Bradbury's *Martian Chronicles* on their journeys or, on the contrary, do they prefer André Gide's *Les nourritures terrestres*? During Mr. Bernard Madoff's prison sentence, will he demand Dickens' *Little Dorrit* to read how the embezzler Mr. Merdle, unable to bear the shame of being found out, cuts his throat with a borrowed razor? Pope Benedict XVI, will he retire to his *studio* in the Castello Sant'Angelo with a copy of *Bubu de Montparnasse* by Charles-Louis Philippe, to study how the lack of condoms provoked a syphilis epidemic in nineteenth-century Paris? The practical G. K. Chesterton imagined that, if stranded on a desert island, he'd want to have with him a simple shipbuilding manual; under the same circumstances, the less practical Jules Renard preferred Voltaire's *Candide* and Schiller's *Die Räuber*.

And I, what books would I choose best to keep me company in my hospital cell?

Though I believe in the obvious usefulness of a virtual library, I'm not a user of e-books, those modern incarnations of the Assyrian tablets, nor of the Lilliputian i-pods, nor the nostalgic game-boys. I believe, as Ray Bradbury put it, that "the Internet is a big distraction." I'm accustomed to the space of a page and the solid flesh of paper and ink. I made therefore a mental inventory of the books piled by my bed at home. I discarded recent fiction (too risky because yet unproven), biographies (too crowded under my circumstances: hooked to a tangle of drips, I found other people's presence in my room annoying), scientific essays

and detective novels (too cerebral: much as I'd recently been enjoying the Darwinian renaissance and re-reading classic crime stories, I felt that a detailed account of selfish genes and the criminal mind would not be the right medicine.) I toyed with the idea of startling the nurses with Kierkegaard's *Pain and Suffering: The Sickness Unto Death*. But no: what I wanted was the equivalent of comfort food, something I'd once enjoyed and could repeatedly and effortlessly revisit, something that could be read for pleasure alone but that would, at the same time, keep my brain alight and humming. I asked my partner to bring me my two volumes of *Don Quixote de la Mancha*.

Lars Gustafsson, in his moving novel *Death of a Beekeeper*, has his narrator, Lars Lennart Westin, who is dying of cancer, make a list of art forms according to their level of difficulty. Foremost are the erotic arts, followed by music, poetry, drama and pyrotechnics, and ending with the arts of building fountains, fencing and artillery. But one art form cannot be fitted in: the art of bearing pain. "We are therefore dealing with a unique art form whose level of difficulty is so high," says Westin, "that no one exists who can practise it." Westin, perhaps, had not read *Don Quixote*. *Don Quixote* is, I discovered with relief, the perfect choice for bearing pain. Opening it almost anywhere, while waiting to be prodded and pinched and drugged, the friendly voice of the erudite Spanish soldier comforted me with its reassurance that all would be well in the end. Because ever since my adolescence, I've kept going back to *Don Quixote*, I knew I wasn't going to be tripped up by the prodigious surprises of its plot. And, since *Don Quixote* is a book that can be read just for the pleasure of its invention, simply for the sake of the story, without any obligation of studiously analysing its conundrums and rhetorical digressions, I could allow myself to drift peacefully away in the narrative flow, following the noble knight and his faithful Sancho. To my first high school reading of *Don Quixote*, guided by professor Isaias Lerner, I have, over the years, added many other readings, in all sorts of places and all sorts of moods. I read *Don Quixote* during my early years in Europe, when the echoes of May 68 seemed to announce huge changes into something still unnamed and

undefined, like the idealized world of chivalry that the honest knight seeks on his quest. I read *Don Quixote* in the South Pacific, trying to raise a family on an impossibly small budget, feeling a little mad in the alien Polynesian culture, like the poor knight among the aristocrats. I read *Don Quixote* in Canada, where the country's multicultural society seemed to me appealingly quixotic in tone and style. To these readings, and many others, I can now add a medicinal *Don Quixote*, both as a balm and a consolation.

None of these *Don Quixotes* can be found, of course, in any library, except in the one kept by my diminishing memory. Karel Čapek, in his wonderful book on gardens, says that the art of gardening can be reduced to one rule: you put into it more than you take out. The same can be said of the art of libraries. But the libraries of the material world, however great their hunger, can only hoard existing volumes. We know that every book holds within it all its possible readings, past, present and future, but its Pythagorean reincarnations, those wonderful forms which depend on readers to come, will not be found on our shelves. Paul Masson, a friend of Colette who worked at the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, noticed that the vast stocks of the library were defective in Latin and Italian books of the fifteenth century, and so began adding invented titles on the official index cards to save, he said, "the catalogue's prestige." When Colette naïvely asked him what was the use of books that didn't exist, Masson responded nonchalantly that he couldn't be expected "to do everything!" But librarians must, and wishful thinking cannot, unfortunately, be granted room in a seriously run institution.

In the library of the mind, however, books that have no material existence constantly cram the shelves: books that are the amalgamation of other books once read and now only imperfectly remembered, books that annotate, gloss and comment others too rich to stand on their own, books written in dreams or in nightmares and that now preserve the tone of those nebulous realms, books that we know should exist but which have never been written, autobiographical books of unspeakable experiences, books of unutterable desires, books of once

obvious and now forgotten truths, books of magnificent and inexpressible invention. All editions of *Don Quixote* published to date in every language can be collected – are collected, for instance, in the library of the Instituto Cervantes in Madrid. But my own *Don Quixotes*, the ones that correspond to each of my several readings, the ones invented by my memory and edited by my oblivion, can only find a place in the library of my mind.

At times both libraries coincide. In chapter six of the First Part of *Don Quixote*, the knight's library of solid books overlaps with the remembered library of the priest and the barber who purge it; every volume taken off the shelves is echoed in the recalled reading of its censors and is judged according to its past merits. Both the books condemned to the flames and the books that are spared depend not on the words printed black on white in their pages, but on the words stored in the minds of the barber and the priest, placed there when they first became the books' readers. Sometimes their judgment depends on hearsay, as when the priest explains that he has heard that the *Amadís de Gaula* was the first novel of chivalry printed in Spain and therefore, as fountainhead of such evil, it must burn – to which the barber retorts that he has heard that it's also the best, and that for that reason it must be forgiven. Sometimes the prior impression is so strong that it damns not only the book itself but also its companions; sometimes the translation is condemned but the original is spared; sometimes a few are not sent to the fire but merely removed, so as not to affect their future readers. The priest and the barber, attempting to cleanse Don Quixote's library, are in fact molding it to the image of the library they themselves bear in mind, appropriating the books and turning them into whatever their own experience made them up to be. It is not surprising that, in the end, the room in which the library is lodged is itself walled up, so that it appears never to have existed, and when the old knight wakes and asks to see it, he's told that it has simply vanished. Vanished it has, but not through the magic of an evil wizard (as Don Quixote suggests) but through the power granted other readers of superimposing their own versions of a book onto the

books owned by someone else. Every library of the solid world depends on the readings of those who came before us.

Ultimately, this creative hermeneutics defines the reader's supreme power: to make of a book whatever one's experience, taste, intuition and knowledge dictate. Not just anything, of course, not the concoctions of a raving mind – even though psychoanalysts and surrealists suggest that these too have their validity and logic. But rather the intelligent and inspired reconstruction of the text, using reason and imagination as best we can to translate it onto a different canvas, extending the horizon of its apparent meaning beyond its visible borders and the declared intentions of the author. The limits of this power are painfully vague: Umberto Eco suggested that they must coincide with the limits of common sense. Perhaps this arbitration is enough.

Limitless or not, the power of the reader cannot be inherited; it must be learned. Even though we come into the world as creatures intent on seeking meaning in everything, in reading meanings in gestures, sounds, colours and shapes, the deciphering of society's common code of communication is a skill that must be acquired. Vocabulary and syntax, levels of meaning, summary and comparison of texts, all these are techniques that must be taught to those who enter society's commonwealth in order to grant them the full power of reading. And yet, the last step in the process must be learnt all alone: discovering in a book the record of one's own experience.

Rarely, however, is the acquisition of this power encouraged. From the elite schools of scribes in Mesopotamia to the monasteries and universities of the Middle Ages, and later, with the wider distribution of texts after Gutenberg and in the age of the Web, reading at its fullest has always been the privilege of a few. True: in our time, most people in the world are superficially literate, able to read an ad and sign their name on a contract, but that alone does not make them readers. Reading is the ability to enter a text and explore it to one's fullest individual capacities, repossessing it in the act of reinvention. But a myriad obstacles (as I mentioned in my essay on *Pinocchio*) are placed in the way of its accomplishment. Precisely because of the

power that reading grants the reader, the various political, economic and religious systems that govern us fear such imaginative freedom. Reading, at its best, may lead to reflection and questioning, and reflection and questioning may lead to objection and change. That, in any society, is a dangerous enterprise.

Librarians today are increasingly faced with a bewildering problem: users of the library, especially the younger ones, no longer know how to read competently. They can find and follow an electronic text, they can cut paragraphs from different Internet sources and recombine them into a single piece, but they seem unable to comment and criticize and gloss and memorize the sense of a printed page. The electronic text, in its very accessibility, lends users the illusion of appropriation without the attendant difficulty of learning. The essential purpose of reading becomes lost to them, and all that remains is the collecting of information, to be used when required. But reading is not achieved merely by having a text made available: it demands that its readers enter the maze of words, cut open their own tracks and draw their own charts beyond the margins of the page. Of course, an electronic text allows this, but its very vaunted inclusiveness makes it difficult to fathom a specific meaning and thoroughly explore specific pages. The text on the screen doesn't render the reader's task as obvious as the text in a material book, limited by its borders and binding. "Get anything," reads the ad for a mobile phone able to photograph, record voices, search the Web, transmit words and images, receive and send messages and, of course, phone. But "anything" in this case stands dangerously near "nothing." The acquisition of something (rather than anything) always requires selection, and cannot rely on a limitless offer. To observe, to judge, to choose requires training, as well as a sense of responsibility, even an ethical stance. And young readers, like travellers who have only learned to drive automatic cars, no longer seem able to shift gears at will, relying instead on a vehicle that promises to take them everywhere.

At some point in our history, after the invention of a code that could be communally written and read, it was discovered that the

words, set down in clay or papyrus by an author perhaps distant both in time and in space, could be not only whatever the common code proclaimed, say a number of goats for sale or a proclamation of war. It was discovered that those goats, invisible to the senses of those who now read them, became the goats of the reader's experience, goats perhaps once seen on the family farm, or demon goats glimpsed in a haunting dream. And that the proclamation of war could be read not merely as a call to arms, but perhaps as a warning, or as an appeal for negotiation, or as bravado. The text inscribed was the product of a particular will and intelligence, but the reading of that text did not need subserviently to follow, or even attempt to guess, the originating intelligence and will.

At that point, what readers discovered was that the instrument in which their society chose to communicate, the language of words, uncertain and vague and ambiguous, found its strength precisely in that ambiguity and vagueness and imprecision, in its miraculous ability to name without confining the object to the word. In writing "goats" or "war," the author meant no doubt something absolutely specific, but the reader was now able to add to that specificity the reflections of vast herds and the echoes of a possible peace. Every text, because it is made out of words, says what it has to say and also volumes more than its author could never have conceived, volumes that future readers will compile and collect, sometimes as solid texts that in turn will breed others, sometimes as texts written half awake and half asleep, fluid texts, shifting texts hoarded in the library of the mind.

In the thirty-second chapter of the First Part of *Don Quixote*, the innkeeper, who has given the exhausted hero a bed for the night, argues with the priest about the merits of novels of chivalry, saying that he's unable to see how such books could make anyone lose his mind.

"I don't know how that can be," explains the innkeeper, "since, as I understand it, there's no better reading in the world, and over there I have two or three of these novels, together with some other papers, which, I truly believe, have preserved not only my life but also that of many others; for, in harvest time, a great number of reapers come

here, and there's always one who can read, and who takes one of these books in his hands, and more than thirty of us gather around him, and we sit there listening to him with such pleasure that it makes us all grow young again."

The innkeeper himself favours battle scenes; a local whore prefers stories of romantic courtship; the innkeeper's daughter likes best of all the lamentations of the knights when absent from their ladies. Each listener (each reader) translates the text into his or her own experience and desire, effectively taking possession of the story which, for the censoring priest causes readers like Don Quixote to go mad, but which, according to Don Quixote himself, provides glowing examples of honest and just behaviour in the real world. One text, a multiplicity of readings, a shelf full of books derived from that one text read out loud, increasing at each turned page our hungry libraries, if not always those of paper, certainly those of the mind: that too has been my happy experience.

I'm deeply grateful to my *Don Quixote*. Over the two hospital weeks, the twin volumes kept vigil with me: they talked to me when I wanted entertainment, or waited quietly, attentively, by my bed. They never became impatient with me, neither sententious nor condescending. They continued a conversation begun ages ago, when I was someone else, as if they were indifferent to time, as if taking for granted that this moment too would pass, and their reader's discomfort and anxiety, and that only their remembered pages would remain on my shelves, describing something of my own, intimate and dark, for which as yet I had no words.

Dobitnici štipendije SEP CEI Fellowship Winners



Maja Hrgović, Hrvaška / Croatia

Maja Hrgović se je rodila leta 1980 v Splitu na Hrvaškem. Diplomirala je iz hrvaškega jezika in književnosti na Filozofski fakulteti v Zagrebu. Novinarka in pisateljica od leta 2003 piše za hrvaški dnevnik *Novi list*, kjer se posveča predvsem kulturnim in družbenim temam ter problematiki enakosti spolov. Njeni članki so objavljeni v mnogih mednarodnih novinarskih publikacijah, tudi v monografiji Balkanske raziskovalne poročevalske mreže (BIRN) z naslovom *Identity: The Search for Belonging in a Changing Europe* (Identiteta: Iskanje pripadnosti v spreminjači se Evropi), ki je njen članek *Families Pay the Price as Women Go West* (Družine trpijo, ko ženske odhajajo na Zahod) odlikovala s prvo nagrado za novinarsko odličnost (2009). Njena prozna dela so bila objavljena v številnih antologijah, med drugim tudi v antologijah *Najbolje hrvatske priče 2007* (Najboljše hrvaške kratke zgodbe 2007) in *Best European Fiction 2012* (Antologija najboljše evropske kratke proze 2012) ameriške založbe Dalkey Archive Press, kakor tudi v britanski reviji *Granta*. Dobitnica pisateljske štipendije SEP (2010) se trenutno posveča pisanju romana *Ostatak svijeta* (Preostanek sveta).

Maja Hrgović was born in 1980 in Split, Croatia. She graduated in Croatian and English language and literature at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Zagreb. The journalist and author has been writing for the Croatian daily newspaper *Novi list* since 2003, focusing mainly on cultural, social, and gender issues. Her work has been featured in many international journalistic publications, including the monograph *Identity: The Search for Belonging in a Changing Europe* issued by the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN), to which she contributed the article *Families Pay the Price as Women Go West*, subsequently winning the first prize for journalistic excellence (2009). Her works of fiction have been featured in several anthologies, including the anthologies *Najbolje hrvatske priče 2007* (The Best Croatian Short Stories of 2007), and *Best European Fiction 2012* by the American Dalkey Archive Press, as well as in the British *Granta* magazine. The recipient of the CEI Fellowship for Writers in Residence in 2010 is currently working on the novel *Ostatak svijeta* (The Rest of the World).

Pranje

Maja Hrgović

Nije bilo lako tražiti od majke da brigu za jednu bolesnu staricu, onu o kojoj je skrbila zadnjih pet godina u Deruti, zamijeni brigom za drugu, još bolesniju staricu, onu koja joj je, njezinim riječima, učinila od mladosti ono što klinci rade s kondomima; napune ih vodom i njima s balkona gađaju prolaznike. Mogla sam zamisliti majčine tanko iščupane obrve kako se izvijaju u dramatičan luk, kao arkade nekog suludo modernističkog viadukta, kad čuje da je, jupi!, naposljetku upravo njoj dopalo da se brine za ženu koju je, kad je bila dobro raspoložena, zvala sotoninim mladunčetom.

Mogla sam zamisliti njezin grohot, kao kotrljanje odronjenog kame-nja niz padinu, i njezin glas, promukao od cigareta, kako rezolutno veli »nema hebene šanse!« - to je mogao biti njezin jedini odgovor na ponudu da postane bejbisiterica očeve lude majke, sad kad je skoro okončala svoj gastarbajterski staž. Starica koju je čuvala umirala je od raka. Majka je planirala zauvijek se vratiti iz Italije nakon njezine smrti.

– Ajde ipak je ti pitaj. Platit će ti – pokušao me nagovoriti otac. Nazvao me samo nekoliko dana nakon što smo zajedno doveli babu doma i smjestili je u moju bivšu sobu. - Ti joj, onako usput, spomeni da ja nisam dobar u tome...

– Tata, znaš što će mama reći: nitko nije dobar u pranju govana dementne, neugodne starice. Nema se tu što biti dobar ili loš.

– Grozno zvuči kad to tako kažeš.

Moj brak s Vjeranom: u posljednje vrijeme izgledao je kao vodena bomba napravljena od kondoma, spremna da nam padne na glavu dok prolazimo ispod nekog balkona. Ili, kao utrka s jajetom na žlici – prije ili kasnije, netko od nas će se spotaknuti, jaje će visoko odletjeti pa pa-

sti na travu; žumanjac će se cijediti po vlatima; to će biti naš kraj. Da je brak kompjuterska igrica, oboje bismo već davno napravili pauzu i otišli na zrak protegnuti noge. Ovako, čamili smo jedno uz drugo u tom novozagrebačkom stanu koji nije uspijevaо biti dom, u koji se uvukla sparina i malodušnost - dodiri su bili kao hladne opeklne od dušika, zubi su nam se sudarali u neusklađenim poljupcima.

Zato, kad sam mu rekla da će otići u Split, pomoći ocu da se brine oko babe jer majka to odbija, gotovo da mi je bio zahvalan.

Baba više nije bila sposobna za samostalan život. Nagrizla su je sjećanja na opsadu, uvukao joj se u nosnice smrad trulog ljudskog mesa koji se širio ulicama kad je nakon tri mjeseca izašla iz podruma, ona i nekoliko obitelji iz njene zgrade. U prognaništvu se držala dobro, djelovala je čvrsto, (»kao sotonino kopito«, govorila je majka)

Prva dva tjedna išla sam na kupanje svaki dan, našla sam zabačenu uvalu, nazubljen komadić obale na dnu padine obrasle lovorum i agavama: tu su se kupali nudisti. Došla bih rano, odmah poslije ručka, prkirala gore na cesti, u hladovini ispod čempresa, i skotrljala se strmim puteljkom, pridržavajući se o sparušene busenove trave i japankama ruleći grumenje suhe zemlje.

Dolje me čekala moja stijena, valovima uglačan kameni ležaj koji se dizao iz plićaka. Legla bih i nožnim prstima praćkala po površini vode. Čitala sam ljubiće iz očeve biblioteke, čitav komplet Daphne du Maurier, romane čiji su naslovi djelovali erotično - kao „Francuzova dražica“ – ali koji su ustvari bili romantičarska bljuzga.

Oko Velike gospe zaredalo je nekoliko razgoropadenih ljetnih oluja; pljuskovi su rashladili more i ja sam prestala odlaziti na plažu, prepustila sam svoje mjesto nekome od onih penzionera s trbušićem, kojima bi se spolovilo uvuklo u sebe kao sramežljiva gusjenica kad bi izašli iz mora. Pitala sam se nedostajem li im.

Baba je vukla po kući svoj smrad, vadila iz džepića na kecelji mali češalj pa njime prolazila kroz masnu kosu, radila od nje slap rezanaca posutih perutom kao parmezanom. Kad bih joj spomenula da bi se

trebala okupati, nervozno je odmahivala rukom, kao da pokušava tu ideju otresti sa sebe.

Očeva reakcija bila je slična babinoj.

– Joj, nemoj me sad s tim!, rekao bi, namrštilo se, i naponsljetu vratio svojim časopisima za uređenje interijera. Bila je to njegova terapija, gledanje prekrasno uređenih dnevnih soba s pogledom na Pacifik, adaptirane njujorške stanove sa strateški raspoređenim antikvitetima. Mogla sam to razumjeti; otac je bježao u tuđe, daleke, ukusno uređene živote onako kako sam ja bježala u sladunjave svjetove Daphne du Maurier.

– Jednoga od ovih dana morat ćemo je oprati. Kuća smrdi ko noćni tramvaj u kojem se voze beskućnici, rekla sam ocu. On je dohvatio novi časopis, broj posvećen rustikalnim vikendicama.

Imali smo teških noći. Jednu posebno gadnu proveli smo slušajući babu kako panično kriči, skupljena u krevetu kao tarantula, pokrivena plahtom preko glave. »Spojili su mi žice na srce«, ponavljala je. Zglavci su joj bili bijeli, toliko je grčevito držala rub plahte. Svaki pokušaj da je otac i ja smirimo samo je pojačavao njezino drečanje. Ujutro je, onako blijeda i smrdljiva, bezizražajno gledala kviz i tiho izgovarala točne odgovore prije nego što bi voditelj uspio dovršiti pitanje. Znala je koje je godine Marie Curie dobila Nobelovu nagradu i koje je bilo Madonnino krsno ime.

Neki su dani bili teži od drugih.

– Operi je kao da pereš auto; posjedni je na rub kade, skinu glavu tuša i polijevaj. Daj joj spužvu i neka se dolje nasapuna sama – rekla mi je majka kad sam je zamolila za savjet.

Tijelo joj je bilo kao meso uginulog tuljana, gdje bih čvršće pritisnula spužvom nastala bi modrica, koža na nogama bila joj je suha i prekrivena krljušti – ustvari listićima skorene prljavštine i odumrlog epitelia; taj je dio trebalo prvo dobro namočiti. Baba se isprva otimala i urlala, (»Prokleta bila! Prokleta gamadi!«, vikala je) kao gigantski gremlin koji se boji da će ga voda pretvoriti u čudovište - kao da ta

smiješna metamorfoza već nije dovršena. U jednom trenutku se umirila, uhvatila me za ruku i rekla »Obećaj mi, obećaj da ćeš me zaštititi«, kimnula sam glavom, oči su joj bile presvučene magličastom bijelom mrenom koja je izgledala kao kožica s toplog mlijeka. Nisam je prala kao da perem auto; prala sam je kao da perem dijete, poljevala sam joj kosu mlakom vodom koja joj se cijedila po grudima, tužno raskuštranim stidnim dlakama, i nožnim prstima na kojima su nokti nalikovali na kandže. Voda je u slivnik otjecala kao blatnjav potočić, gledala sam ga i mislila na majku kojoj samo još jedna smrt nedostaje do umirovljenja, mislila sam na Vjerana i sebe, i na budućnost – koga će imati uz sebe da kroti moje podivljalo ludilo, koje mi kao predskazanje čuči u genima, tko će mene tada prati, i hoće li me prati kao što se pere auto ili kao što se pere dijete.

Umivanje

Maja Hrgović

Ni bilo lahko zahtevati od matere, naj skrb za eno bolno starko, tisto, za katero je skrbela zadnjih pet let v Deruti, zamenja s skrbjo za drugo, še bolj bolno starko, tisto, ki ji je, po njenih besedah, iz mladosti naredila tisto, kar mulci počnejo s kondomi; napolnijo jih z vodo in z njimi z balkona ciljajo mimoidoče. Lahko sem si predstavljalata materine tenko populjene obrvi, kako se zvijejo v dramatični lok kot arkade nekakšnega blazno modernističnega viadukta, ko sliši, da je, jupi!, na koncu prav njej pripadlo, da bo skrbela za žensko, ki jo je, kadar je bila dobro razpoložena, klicala satanovo seme.

Lahko sem si predstavljalata njen krohot, kot kotaljenje odkrušenega kamenja po pobočju, in njen glas, hripav od cigaret, kako odločno pravi »ni šanse, pišuka!« – to je bil lahko njen edini odgovor na ponudbo, da postane babysitterka očetove nore matere, zdaj, ko je skoraj končala svoj gastarbajterski staž. Starka, za katero je skrbela, je umirala za rakom. Mati se je po njeni smrti nameravala za vedno vrniti iz Italije.

»Daj, vseeno jo ti vprašaj. Plačal ti bom,« me je poskušal nagovoriti oče. Poklical me je samo nekaj dni po tem, ko sva skupaj pripeljala babico domov in jo nastanila v moji bivši sobi. »Ti ji, tako mimogrede, omeni, da mi to ne gre preveč dobro od rok ...«

»Oče, veš, kaj bo mama rekla: nikomur ne gre dobro od rok umivanje blata z dementne neprijetne starke. Tukaj ti nima kaj iti dobro ali slabo od rok.«

»Grozno je slišati, ko to tako rečeš.«

Moj zakon z Vjeranom: zadnje čase je izgledal kot vodna bomba, narejena iz kondoma, pripravljena, da nam pade na glavo, ko gremo pod kakšnim balkonom. Ali kot dirka z jajcem na žlici – prej ali slej se

bo kdo od nas spotaknil, jajce bo visoko odletelo in padlo na travo; rumenjak se bo cedil po travnih bilkah; to bo naš konec. Če bi bil zakon računalniška igrica, bi že oba naredila pavzo in si šla na zrak pretegnit noge. Tako pa sva ždela drug poleg drugega v tistem novozagrebškem stanovanju, ki mu ni uspelo biti dom, kamor sta se zavlekli soparica in malodušnost – dotiki so bili kot hladne opeklne od dušika, najini zobje so se zaletavali v neuskajenih poljubibh.

Zato mi je bil, ko sem mu rekla, da grem v Split pomagat očetu skrbet za babico, ker mama tega noče, skoraj hvaležen.

Babica ni bila več sposobna za samostojno življenje. Načeli so jo spomini na obleganje, v nosnice se ji je zažrl smrad gnilega človeškega mesa, ki se je širil po ulicah, ko je po treh mesecih prišla iz kleti, ona in nekaj družin iz njenega bloka. V izgnanstvu se je dobro držala, delovala je trdno (»kot satanovo kopito,« je znala reči mama).

Prva dva tedna sem se hodila kopat vsak dan, našla sem samoten zaliv, nazobčan košček obale na koncu doline, obrasle z lovorjem in agavami: tukaj so se kopali nudisti. Prihajala sem zgodaj, takoj po ksilu, parkirala zgoraj na cesti, v hladu pod cipresami, in se skotalila pa strmi potki, držeč se za posušene travnate bilke, in z japonkami drobila grude suhe zemlje.

Spodaj me je čakala moja skala, kamnito ležišče, ki so ga zgladili valovi, se je dvigalo iz plitvine. Legla sem in z nožnimi prsti čofotala po površini vode. Brala sem ljubezenske romane iz očetove knjižnice, celoten komplet Daphne du Maurier, romane, katerih naslovi so delovali erotično – kot *Francozova dolinica* –, pravzaprav pa so bili romantično blebetanje.

Okrog velikega šmarca se je zvrstilo nekaj razdivjanih poletnih neviht; nalivi so ohladili morje in nehala sem hoditi na plažo, svoje mesto sem prepustila kateremu od tistih penzionerjev s trebuščkom, ki se jim je spolovilo povleklo vase kot sramežljiva gosenica, ko so prišli iz morja. Spraševala sem se, ali me pogrešajo.

Babica je po hiši vlekla svoj smrad, iz žepka na predpasniku jemala majhen glavnik in si z njim vlekla po mastnih laseh, iz njih je delala slap rezancev, posutih s prhljajem kot s parmezonom. Kadar sem ji omenila, da bi se morala okopati, je živčno odmahnila z roko, kot da bi poskušala to idejo otresti s sebe.

Očetova reakcija je bila podobna babičini.

»Joj, ne me zdaj s tem!« je rekel, se namrščil in se naposled vrnil k svojim revijam za notranjo ureditev. To je bila njegova terapija, gledanje prekrasno urejenih dnevnih sob s pogledom na Tiki ocean, adaptiranih newyorških stanovanj s strateško razporejenimi starinami. To sem lahko razumela; oče je bežal v tuja, daljna, okusno urejena življenga, tako kot sem sama bežala v osladne svetove Daphne du Maurier.

»Enkrat te dni jo bova morala umiti. Hiša smrdi kot nočni tramvaj, v katerem se vozijo brezdomci,« sem rekla očetu. Segel je po novi reviji, številki, posvečeni rustikalnim počitniškim hišicam.

Imela sva tudi težke noči. Neko posebej neprijetno sva preživila tako, da sva poslušala babico, ki je panično kričala, zvita v postelji kot tarantela, pokrita z rjuho čez glavo. »Na srce so mi priključili žice,« je ponavljala. Členke je imela čisto bele, tako krčevito je držala rob rjuhe. Vsak poskus, da bi jo z očetom pomirila, je samo še okrepil njen vreščanje. Zjutraj je, tako bleda in smrdljiva, brezizrazno gledala kviz in tiho izgovarjala pravilne odgovore, še preden je voditelju uspelo dokončati vprašanje. Vedela je, katerega leta je Marie Curie dobila Nobelovo nagrado in katero je Madonnino krstno ime.

Nekateri dnevi so bili težji od drugih.

»Umij jo, kot da pereš avto; posedi jo na rob kadi, odstrani glavo tuša in polivaj. Daj ji gobo in naj se spodaj namili sama,« mi je rekla mama, ko sem jo prosila za nasvet.

Njeno telo je bilo kot meso peginulega tjulnja, kjerkoli sem močneje pritisnila z gobo, je nastala modrica, koža na nogah je bila suha in prekrita z luskami – pravzaprav lističi skorjaste umazanije in odmrle povrhnjice; ta del je bilo treba najprej dobro namočiti. Babica se

je najprej branila in tulila (»Prekleta! Prekleta golazen,« je vpila.) kot gigantski gremlin, ki se boji, da ga bo voda spremenila v pošast – kot da ta smešna metamorfoza ne bi bila že dokončana. Naenkrat se je pomirila, me prijela za roko in rekla: »Obljubi mi, obljubi mi, da me boš zaščitila.« Pokimala sem, njene oči so bile prevlečene z meglečasto belo mreno, ki je izgledala kot kožica na toplem mleku. Nisem je umivala, kakor da bi prala avto; umivala sem jo, kot da bi umivala otroka, polivala sem ji lase z mlačno vodo, ki se ji je cedila po prsih, žalostno skuštranih sramnih dlakah in nožnih prstih, na katerih so bili nohti podobni krempljem. Voda se je v odtok zlivala kot blaten potoček, gledala sem ga in mislila na mater, ki ji samo še ena smrt manjka do upokojitve, mislila sem na Vjerana in sebe in na prihodnost – koga bom imela ob sebi, da bo krotil mojo podivljano norost, ki mi kot prerokba čepi v genih, kdo bo mene takrat umival, in ali me bo umival, kakor se pere avto ali kakor se umiva otrok.

Prevedla Sonja Dolžan

The Bathing

Maja Hrgović

It was not easy to ask mother to trade in the care for one sickly old woman, the one whom she had been nursing for the past five years in Deruta, in exchange for the care for another, even sicker old woman, the one who, as she put it, had done with her youth what kids do with condoms; they fill them with water and throw them from the balcony at passers-by. I could see my mother's thinly plucked eyebrows curving into a dramatic arch, like the arcades of some very modern viaduct, when she hears that, yippee!, in the end, she is the one who gets to take care of the woman whom, in her cheerful moods, she called the seed of Satan.

I could imagine her guffaw, like the sound of crumbled rocks rolling down the mountainside, and her resolute voice, hoarse from smoking, saying "no bloody way!" – the only possible answer to the offer of becoming a babysitter to dad's crazy mother, now that her service as a *gastarbeiter*¹ was nearing its term. The old woman she was nursing was dying of cancer. After her death, mum was planning to leave Italy for good.

"Come on, ask her anyway. I'll pay you," said my father, trying to talk me into it. He called me only days after we had brought grandma home together and put her up in my old room. "Just try hinting, in a by-the-by sort of way, that I'm no good at this sort of thing ..."

"Dad, you know what mum's going to say: no one's good at wiping the faeces off an unpleasant, senile old woman. It's not something you can be good or bad at."

"It sounds awful when you say it."

1 From German: guest worker in another country, usually, but not necessarily in Germany [Translator's note].

My marriage to Vjeran: lately, it was like a condom water bomb, ready to drop on our heads when we pass under some balcony. Or like an egg-and-spoon race – sooner or later, one of us would trip, the egg would go flying in the air and fall on the grass; the egg-yolk oozing down the blades of grass; this would be the end of us. If marriage was a computer game, both of us would have pressed pause by now and gone out to get some fresh air and stretch our legs. And so we just sat around that apartment in Novi Zagreb, which failed to become a home, where stuffiness and despondency settled in – our touches were like cold nitrogen burns, our teeth knocked together in clumsy kisses.

Therefore, when I told him I was going to Split to help my dad take care of grandma because mum refused to, he was almost grateful to me.

Grandma was no longer able to take care of herself. She was tormented by her memories of the siege, the stench of rotten human flesh permeated her nostrils, the stench pervading the streets when she had left the basement after three months, she and a few families from her apartment building. She was doing rather well in exile, she seemed strong (“like Satan’s hoof,” mum had the habit of saying).

In the first couple of weeks, I went swimming every day; I found a secluded bay, a jagged stretch of coast at the end of a valley, overgrown with laurel and agaves: that was where the nudists bathed. I would come early, right after lunch, park up on the road, in the cool shadow of cypress trees, and tumble down the steep path, clutching at dry tufts of grass, crushing clumps of dry soil with my flip-flops.

Down there awaited my rock – a stone bed, polished smooth by the waves, rising from the shoal. I lay there, my toes splashing about, rippling the surface of the water. I read romantic novels from my father’s library, the entire Daphne du Maurier collection, novels which bore suggestive titles – as, for instance, *Frenchman’s Creek* – but were in fact nothing more than romantic babble.

Around the time of the Assumption, a number of violent summer storms struck; rain showers had cooled the sea and I stopped going to the beach, surrendering my place to one of the beer-bellied pensioners whose penises shrank like bashful caterpillars when they came out of the water. I wondered if they missed me.

The stench trailed behind grandma as she moved about the house, taking out a small comb from her little apron pocket and running it through her greasy hair; she would make a waterfall of noodles, coated with dandruff like grated Parmesan. When I told her she should take a bath, she waved her hand in nervous dismissal, as if trying to shake off the idea.

Dad's reaction was not much different.

"Oh, come on, don't start with that now!" he said, frowning, and eventually went back to reading his interior design magazines. That was his therapy: looking at splendidly decorated living rooms with a view of the Pacific, renovated New York apartments with strategically arranged antiques. I could relate to that; faraway, tastefully decorated lives of other people were dad's form of escapism, like mine were the cheesy worlds of Daphne du Maurier.

"One of these days we'll have to bathe her. The house stinks like a night tram full of homeless people," I told dad. He reached for another magazine, an issue dedicated to rustic summer houses.

Our nights were also rough. We spent one particularly unpleasant one listening grandma scream in panic, curled up in her bed like a tarantula, with the sheet over her head. "They attached wires to my heart," she kept saying. Her knuckles were completely white from clutching the edge of the sheet so tightly. Our every attempt to calm her down only resulted in louder cries. In the morning, all pale and smelly, she watched the quiz show with a blank expression on her face, quietly muttering the right answers, before the host managed to finish the question. She knew when Marie Curie won the Nobel Prize and what Madonna's Christian name was.

Some days were harder than others.

“Bathe her like you wash a car; sit her on the edge of the bathtub, remove the shower head and pour. Give her a sponge and let her soap up her privates by herself,” said mum, when I asked her advice.

Her body was like the meat of a dead seal; wherever I pressed the sponge harder, it left a bruise, the skin on her feet was dry and covered with scales – crusts of dirt and dead epidermis in fact; that part needed a good soaking to start with. Grandma resisted and screamed at first (“Damn you! You damn scumbag,” she yelled.) like a giant gremlin, afraid that the water would turn it into a monster – as if that ridiculous metamorphosis had not already taken place. All of a sudden, she settled down, took my hand and said: “Promise me, promise me that you’ll protect me.” I nodded; her eyes were veiled by misty white cataracts, which looked like the cream that accumulates on the surface of warm milk. I did not wash her like a car; I bathed her as if I was bathing a child. I poured warm water over her hair which trickled down her breasts, her sadly tousled pubic hair, down her toes with claw-like nails. Water flowed into the drain in a muddy stream, I watched it, thinking about my mother, who was only one death away from retirement, thinking about Vjeran and me and the future – who will be beside me to tame my raging madness, lurking in my genes like a prophesy, who will bathe me then and if that someone will wash me like a car or like a child.

Translated by Špela Bibič



Dragan Radovančević, Srbija / Serbia

Dragan Radovančević se je rodil leta 1979 v Sremski Mitrovici v Srbiji. Leta 2006 je objavil pesniško zbirko *Klatno se boji letenja* (Nihalo se boji letenja), za katero je prejel Brankovo nagrado za pesniški prvenec leta v srbskem jeziku in nagrado »Mladi Dis« Mestne knjižnice Vladislava Petkovića Disa v Čačku. Leta 2009 je objavil drugo pesniško zbirko *Glagol intimnosti*. Bil je prejemnik avstrijske štipendije Mila Dora, pisateljske štipendije SEP (2009) in nemške štipendije berlinske kulturne ustanove Literarisches Colloquium Berlin (2010). Je urednik spletnega literarnega portala www.knjizevnost.org. Piše za številne srbške in tujje revije, med njimi za dunajsko revijo *Buchkultur* in londonski *The Wolf Poetry Magazine*. Živi in ustvarja na Dunaju.

Dragan Radovančević was born in 1979 in Sremska Mitrovica, Serbia. In 2006, he published the book of poetry *Klatno se boji letenja* (The Pendulum Is Afraid of Flying), which won him the “Brankova nagrada” award for best debut book of poetry in Serbian and the “Mladi Dis” award of the Čačak City Library Vladislav Petković Dis. In 2009, he published his second book of poetry entitled *Glagol intimnosti* (The Verb of Intimacy). He was the recipient of the Austrian “Milo Dor” scholarship (2009), the CEI Fellowship for Writers in Residence (2009), and the fellowship of the Berlin-based cultural institute Literarisches Colloquium Berlin (2010). He is acting editor of the literary internet portal www.knjizevnost.org and publishes his poetry and prose in magazines in Serbia and abroad, among them in the Viennese *Buchkultur* and London-based *The Wolf Poetry Magazine*. He lives and works in Vienna.

Iz Nase s ljubavlju

Dragan Radovančević

I.

Ozan nije samo uklonio svoje ime sa ulaznih vrata. Uklonio se i on sam. Otključao mi je, otškrinuo i utrčao u svoju sobu.

„Ozan“. Zatičem ga na krevetu, u zagrljaju sa sopstvenim kolenima. Tišina. „Ozan“, ponavljam, stojeći uz vrata sobe. Ćuti. Gleda u sopstvena stopala.

Shvatam ono što sam još juče kroz telefonski razgovor naslutio – postali smo iznenadni stranci. Ne usuđujuem se da mu pridem.

„Šta ima novo u svemiru?“, ironično mi se smeje kroz suze. U prvi mah nisam spazio da plaeče. „Jesi li proverio od jutros na „NASA tačka gov“?“

„Ozan“, prilazim mu polako. Na obostranu neprijatnost, reklo bi se. Sedam na čošak kreveta. Zaista ga je iritirala moja navika da pratim Nasine vesti. Vesti sa zvezda, kako ih je nazivao. „Bolje se pazi *ovih dole!*“ Ali kojih?

„Ozan je bio lep i vragolast“, progovara uz ironičan osmeh. „Bio ti je super dok se igrao štofovima i dugmićima. Dok je bio foto-model velike italijanske firme“. Odmahuje rukom ka svojoj glavi kao da ispraća samoga sebe.

Ne pojašnjavam mu svoja osećanja. Ona su sada od sporednog značaja. Izgovaram blago „ne, ne“. Ali šta ne i kome ne?

„Šta su ti rekli u Magistratu? Kako stoji sa tvojom vizom?“, pitam.

„Jedan veeliki čika mi je prišao sa vodenim pištoljem u ruci“, pričoveda glasom iz crtanih filmova propraćenim mađioničarskim pokretima. Onespokojava me njegov ton. „I rekao je: ti si mali, nemaš ni osamnaest godina, a želiš da se seksaš. Bua-ha-ha“, oponaša strašan smeh. Njegov stan mu odgovara: Bua-ha-ha. Njegov stan koji i nije

više njegov. Šibica kojom pripalih cigaretu kaže: iššš, Ozan. „Onda sam ja pokazao pasoš i rekao: - Čiko, čiko, ali ja imam dvadesetšest godina. Na to će On: „Da, ali pre osam godina nisi imao, a zločini takve vrste ne zastarevaju“.

Ponovo je prigrlio svoja kolena i učutao. Bi mi jasno i bi mi žao što u tom zagrljaju za mene više nema mesta. Ali gde je moja krivica?

„Tebi stvarno nije bilo jasno?“ Naglo skoči i sede na ivicu kreveta s namerom da mi pojasni. Odmahivao sam, ohrabrujući ga da nastavi s pričom. „Ti si stvarno mislio da sam ja foto-model, modni agent, kreator, Gucci, šta li...? Hoćeš da ti kažem?“, progovori agresivno i ogorčeno. „Znaš li onu prodavnicu krpica na uglu, u Thaliastraße?“. Nisam znao ni za kakvu prodavnicu krpica u Thaliastraße. „Tu sam ja dan i noć prodavao turske krpice. Tj. danju prodavao, a noću vršio istovar robe“.

„A modni magazini, košulje iz Italije...?“

„Kupovao ih na trafici i na Netu“, trže rukama kao da rasteruje iluzije uz (be)sramno-slatki osmeh.

Prigrlih ga oberučke. Ostao je nem i hladan. Obojica na momenat pogledasmo u hrpu iseljeničkih dokumenata na njegovom radnom stolu. Položeni tamo kao nekakve besmislene fotografije, koliko da kažu: ovo je bio Ozanov život. Svedočanstvo sa uviđaja o nepočinjenom zločinu.

„Da, to sam ja radio. Unosio i iznosio prašnjavi veš po magacinu, prepravljao etikete, zavodio dnevne obraćune. Za to vreme, ti si pisao o onom Disneylandu!“, dreknu drsko, osvrćući se na moj rad o arhitektonskim rešenjima fasade bećkog „Rathausa“ koji je on nazivao Disneylandom.

Ruke vratih sebi u krilo.

„Šta je, nisam ti simpatičan?“. I nije mi bio simpatičan, pored sve moje saosećajnosti.

„Kupio sam nam mafine“. Nakratko nađoh izlaz iz neprijatnosti.

„Možeš li da nam doneseš dva tanjira?“, molećivo će.

Stočić i tanjire nesvesno postavih tako da sedosmo jedan naspram drugog. Smrknuto je gledao u pod grickajući nepostojeće zanoktice.

Prasnu u dugo prostačko kikotanje. „Kakva sam budala bio“. Naglo preseče smeh uz mahnit pogled: „Nikad se više neću osmehivati ljudima. Kad to radim, misle da mi nešto od njih treba. Budala!“, ponovi.

Bi mu svejedno šta će reći o sebi, jer se jedina magija koju je oko sebe oduvek rasipao, magija šarma i bezbrižnosti, bespovratno rasula među sumornim pečatiranim papirima. Ustade, nadnese se nad dokumenta, pređe rukom preko hrstice, par papira pomače levo-desno, gore-dole, kao da slaže slagalicu. Pažljivo ih odmeri, pa se vrati nazad. Na moja usta navirivala su pitanja koja sam učutkivao mafinom. Bojažljivo, i on dograbi slatkiš. „Samo pogledaj“, reče sugestivno, upućujući me na sto.

U bilans njegove tri „ura, wow“ godine života u Beču, pored selidbi, ugovora o zakupu i raskidu zakupa stanova, nekoliko krivičnih prijava za koješta, mnoštva šljaštečih fotografija (mirrored disco balls – „I Love Them, oh I Love!“), ušunjao se kobni dokument: „*Illegale Arbeit*“. „*Arbeitgeber mit Sitz in Österreich...*“ – spazih nekoliko zahtetnih gusto kucanih strana ištraftanih sivim senkama kopir mašine. Pri dnu, tekst beše bled, gotovo nečitak, uz indigo-plavi pečat i oštar potez perom državnog službenika.

„Neko te prijavio?“

„Urugu se nije dopalo naše lajanje na zvezde“.

„Urugu?“, zbumjeno ču. Urug beše oniži brkati starčić koji ga je često odvozio na *photo sessions*. Jer je Ozanova „ah“ modna agencija imala i svog vozača. Tako mi je bar govorio. „Kakve veze Urug ima sa svim ovim?“

„Ti si gluplji od mene“, u smehotresnim uvredama i mojoj očiglednoj naivnosti nalazio je svoj odušak. „Matori je vlasnik prodavnice u kojoj sam robijao. Tj. vlasnik mnogo prodavnica“, rukama je opisivao talasaste krugove, talase strašnih Urugovih prodavnica s dubokim podrumskim lagerima u koje je sada tonuo Ozanov život. „Jedne večeri je stajao ispod tvog prozora. U stvari, ko zna koliko puta je stajao. Da, da!“, dreknu na mene, pljuckajući komade mafina. „Video nas je dok smo se ljubili pored prozora. Ti i tvoje zavese. *I zvezde!*“ Zagrcnuo se. Od besa, i od talasa. Od vode, i od bespomoćnosti.

¹ Ilegalno zaposlenje

„Ozan, doći će kad se smiriš“.

Na momenat zastadoh, iz hodnika osluškujući Ozanove nerazbirljive povike.

II.

Duboko u noći, Ozanov telefonski poziv. Nasuprot mojim strahovanjima da bi u ovo doba mogao da bude još konfuzniji, ogorčeniji, agresivniji, njegov glas je bio priyatno miran. Samo se u pozadini čulo škriputanje parketa – njegovi nervozni koraci.

Razgovor nulte dramatike. Kao da su juče i danas izbrisani iz kalendara. Iza usiljenosti koju smo obuzdavali, Ozan će ravnodušno: „Ne zaboravi svoju peglju. Ostala je kod mene“. Izustih neki zvuk kao: sve-jedno, ili: može da sačeka dok se ti ne vratiš.

„Čuo sam se sa majkom“, reče.

prisetih se jedne priče iz detinjstva: igra žmurke, i dečak koji se toliko dobro sakrio da nikо nikad nije umeo da ga pronađe. a on, ponosan na svoju veština, nije želeo sam da se vрати

„Ona kaže: враćаš сe kući. A где се ja to zapravo враćам?“

tako je ležao u travi. već je pala i kiša, on se opružio na leđa

„Ja više ne znam ni taj grad, ni te ljude. A i one koje znam, kako da im se sad javim?“

onda je voda podigla glave maslačima, zajapurila modre perunike, uskovitlala detelinu i dečak se pridigao na laktove i mirisao šarene latice.

„Da kažem: ej čao, ovde Ozan. Znaš, onaj što si ga sreo pre pet godina dok si muvao onu malu. Kako se ne sećaš te male? Je l' se ona udala?“

i žedan, pio je kapi sa latica, i kijao od mećave prolećnog polena. i smejavao se, grohotom se smejavao što kija.

„Razumeš li me? Moje bivše društvo тамо то види као izdaju, prevaru. To су seoski momci. За njih је neoprostivo то што sam napustio наše selo, a kamoli našu zemlju. O ovom *našem* да и не говорим.“

i dete je od gladi stalo da guta maslačke. bili su gorki i lepili su se za nepce. i dete je stalo da kašlje.

„Kaže mama – sto kilometara od našeg mesta sve je više turista. Mogu leti da radim na plaži“.

dečak je stao da pljuje latice, prstićem je kopao sve dublje po svojim ustima. duboko, duboko, duboko, svuda je otkrivao samo cveće. i zvezde. i gušio se

„Ali ja neću kratke gej avanture, neću da budem turista u sopstvenom životu!“, dreknu odsečno.

III.

Sutradan oko podne, pozvonih na Ozanova vrata. Osim mog usisivača, reče mi da ponesem i mikro-talasnu pećnicu i nekoliko omanjih tepiha koje je sam kupio. „Čuvaću ih, Ozan, dok se ne vratiš“. *Znaš ti čemu služe laži.*

Pozvonih dva puta bez odgovora. Tek sa trećim, brava škljocnu i začuh korake.

„Stop!“, ciknu ženski glas, upirući prstom u kofu sa vodom iza vratia. „Ja ne, ja čisti. Ja ništa nemački“. Dade mi omanju cedulju.

Ozan zaista nije voleo moje navike. Pored malecnog naškrabananog probodenog srca, ispisao je: „Neka tvoji iz Nase kažu vanzemaljcima: ako su zaljubljeni, prema našoj zvezdi neka NIKAD ne gledaju“.

Stisnuh papir. Prsti mi topli. Kao glava bebe.

Iz Nase z ljubeznijo

Dragan Radovančević

I.

Ozan ni samo odstranil svojega imena z vhodnih vrat. Odstranil se je tudi sam. Odklenil mi je, odškrnil in stekel v svojo sobo.

»Ozan.« Našel sem ga v postelji, v objemu z lastnimi koleni. Tišina. »Ozan,« sem ponovil ob vratih sobe. Molčal je. Gledal v lastna stopala.

Dojel sem, kar sem že včeraj v telefonskem pogovoru zaslutil. Postala sva nenačna tujca. Nisem si upal stopiti bližje k njemu.

»Kaj je novega v vesolju?« se mi je ironično smejal skozi solze. Najprej nisem opazil, da joče. »Si zjutraj preveril na 'NASA pika gov'?«

»Ozan,« sem se mu počasi približal. V obojestransko nelagodje, je bilo videti. Usedel sem se na vogal postelje. Resnično ga je iritirala moja navada spremļjanja Nasinih novic. Novice z zvezd, kot jim je rekel. »Pazi se raje *teh spodaj!*« Ampak katerih?

»Ozan je bil lep in nagajiv,« je spregovoril z ironičnim nasmehom. »Zdel se ti je super, ko se je igral z blagom in gumbki. Ko je bil fotomodel velikega italijanskega podjetja.« Odmahoval je z roko proti glavi, kakor da bi se poslavljal od samega sebe.

Nisem mu pojasnil svojih občutkov. Zdaj so bili postranska zadeva. Blago sem rekel: »Ne, ne.« Ampak kaj ne in komu ne?

»Kaj so ti rekli na magistratu? Kako kaže s twojo vizo?« sem vprašal.

»En veeelik stric je stopil k meni z vodno pištole v roki,« je rekel z glasom iz risank in ga pospremil s čarovniškimi kretnjami. Njegov ton me je vzinemiril. »In rekel: 'Majhen si, še osemnajst let nisi star, pa bi rad seksal. Bua-ha-ha,'« je posnemal strašen smeh. Njegovo stanovanje je odgovorilo: Bua-ha-ha. Njegovo stanovanje, ki niti ni bilo več njegovo. Vžigalica, s katero sem si prižgal cigaret, je rekla: ššš, Ozan. »Potem sem pokazal potni list in rekel: 'Stric, stric, ampak jaz sem star šestindvajset let.' On pa: 'Ja, ampak pred osmimi leti nisi bil, tovrstni zločini pa ne zastarajo.'«

Spet si je objel kolena in obmolknil. Jasno mi je bilo in žal mi je bilo, ker v tem objemu zame ni bilo več prostora. Ampak kje je moja krivda?

»Ti res ni bilo jasno?« Naglo je skočil in se usedel na rob postelje, da bi mi pojasnil. Odmahoval sem in ga opogumljal, naj nadaljuje zgodbo. »Si res mislil, da sem fotomodel, modni agent, oblikovalec, Gucci, že kaj ...? A ti povem?« je agresivno in ogorčeno spregovoril. »Poznaš tisto trgovino s cunjami na vogalu, na Thaliastraße?« Nobene trgovine s cunjami na Thaliastraße nisem poznal. »Tam sem dan in noč prodajal turške cunje. Tj. podnevi sem prodajal, ponoči pa sem iztovarjal robo.«

»Kaj pa modne revije, srajce iz Italije ...?«

»Kupoval sem jih v trafiki in po internetu,« je zakrilil, kakor da bi preganjal iluzije z (brez)sramno-sladkim nasmehom.

Z obema rokama sem ga objel. Ostal je nem in hladen. Oba sva za hip pogledala kup izseljenskih dokumentov na njegovi pisalni mizi. Tja so bili položeni kot kakšne nesmiselne fotografije, samo da bi rekli: to je bilo Ozanovo življenje. Poročilo o preiskavi nestorjenega zločina.

»Ja, to sem delal. Prinašal in odnašal sem zaprašene cunje iz skla-dišča, popravljal etikete, sestavljal dnevne obračune. Ti si medtem pisal o tistem Disneylandu!« je predrzno zavpil, misleč na moje delo o arhitektturnih rešitvah fasade dunajskega Rathausa, ki mu je rekел Disneyland.

Roke sem dal nazaj na kolena.

»Kaj je, ti nisem simpatičen?« Res mi ni bil simpatičen, kljub vsej moji sočutnosti.

»Kupil sem nama kolačke.« Za kratek čas sem našel izhod iz nela-godja.

»Nama lahko prineseš dva krožnika?« je poprosil.

Mizico in krožnika sem nezavedno postavil tako, da sva si sedela naproti. Mračno je gledal v tla in si grizel neobstoječo obnohtno ko-žico. Prasnil je v dolgo prostaško hihitanje. »Kakšen bedak sem bil.« Naglo je presekal smeh in divje pogledal: »Nikoli več se ne bom na-smihal ljudem. Kadar se, mislijo, da potrebujem kaj od njih. Bedak!« je ponovil.

Vseeno mu je bilo, kaj bo rekел o sebi, ker se je edina magija, ki jo je od nekdaj sejal okrog sebe, magija šarma in brezbržnosti, nepovratno

osula med temačnimi požigosanimi listi. Vstal je, se sklonil nad dokumente, z roko šel po kupu, nekaj listov premaknil levo-desno, gor-dol, kakor da bi zlagal sestavlanko. Pozorno jih je premeril in prišel nazaj. V usta so mi silila vprašanja, ki sem jih utišal s kolačkom. Bojazljivo je tudi sam vzel slaščico. »Kar poglej,« je sugestivno rekel in aludiral na mizo.

V bilanco njegovih treh »hura, wow« let življenja na Dunaju se je poleg selitev, pogodb o najemu in odpovedi stanovanj, nekaj kazenskih prijav za kar nekaj, množice bleščečih fotografij (mirrored disco balls – »I Love Them, oh I Love!«) prikradel tudi usodni dokument *Illegale Arbeit*¹. »Arbeitgeber mit Sitz in Österreich ...« – sem opazil nekaj spetih gosto tipkanih strani s sencami, ki jih naredi fotokopirni stroj. Besedilo proti koncu strani je bilo bledo, skoraj neberljivo, zraven indigo moder žig in ostra poteza s peresom državnega uslužbenca.

»Te je kdo prijavil?«

»Urugu ni bilo všeč najino lajanje v zvezde.«

»Urugu?« sem bil zmeden. Urug je bil majhen brkat starček, ki ga je pogosto vozil na *photo sessions*. Kajti Ozanova »ah« modna agencija je imela tudi svojega voznika. Tako mi je vsaj rekel. »Kakšno zvezo ima Urug z vsem tem?«

»Še neumnejsi si od mene,« si je s krohotavimi žalitvami in mojo očitno naivnostjo dal duška. »Stari je lastnik trgovine, v kateri sem garal. Tj. lastnik veeeliko trgovin,« je z rokami delal valovite kroge, valove strašnih Urugovih trgovin z globokimi podzemnimi skladišči, kamor je zdaj tonilo Ozanovo življenje. »Nekega večera je stal pred tvojim oknom. Pravzaprav, kdove kolikokrat je stal. Ja, ja!« je zavpil name in pljuval koščke kolačka. »Videl naju je, ko sva se poljubljala ob oknu. Ti pa tvoje zavese. In zvezdel« se mu je zaletelo. Od besa, in od valov. Od vode, in od nemoči.

»Ozan, prišel bom, ko se pomiriš.«

Za hip sem obstal in s hodnika poslušal Ozanove nerazumljive klice.

1 Delo na črno.

II.

Pozno ponoči Ozanov telefonski klic. Kljub moji bojazni, da bo ob tej uri še bolj zmeden, ogorčen, agresiven, je bil njegov glas prijetno miren. Samo v ozadju je bilo slišati škripanje parketa – njegovi živčni koraki. Pogovor ničte dramatike. Kakor da bi bila včeraj in danes zbrisana s koledarja. Ozan je izza prisiljenosti, ki sva jo krotila, ravnodušno rekel: »Ne pozabi svojega likalnika. Pri meni je ostal.« Izustil sem neki zvok, kot: ni pomembno, ali: lahko počaka, dokler se ne vrneš.

»Govoril sem z mamo,« je rekел.

spomnil sem se zgodbe iz otroštva: igra skrivalnice in fant, ki se je tako dobro skril, da ga ni nihče nikoli znal najti, on pa se, ponosen na svojo večino, ni hotel sam vrniti.

»Rekla je: Domov se boš vrnili. Ampak kam se pravzaprav vračam?« tako je ležal na travi. začelo je tudi deževati, ulegel se je.

»Ne poznam več ne tistega mesta ne tistih ljudi. Pa tudi tisti, ki jih poznam – kako naj jih zdaj pokličem?«

nato je voda dvignila regratove cvetove, obarvala modre perunike, vzvalovila deteljo in fant se je naslonil na komolce in vonjal pisane cvetne liste.

»Naj rečem: ej, živjo, tukaj Ozan? A veš, tisti, ki si ga srečal pred petimi leti, ko si se motal okrog tiste punce. Kako se ne spomniš te punce? A se je poročila?«

in žejen je pil kapljice s cvetnih listov in kihal zaradi meteža spomladanskega cvetnega prahu. in se smejal, se krohotal, ker je kihal.

»Me razumeš? Moja bivša družba tam vidi to kot izdajo, prevaro. To so vaški fantje. Zanje je neopravičljivo, da sem odšel iz naše vasi, kaj šele iz naše države. Da o tem, kar imava midva, niti ne govorim.«

in otrok je zaradi lakote začel goltati regratove cvetove. bili so grenki in lepili so se mu na nebo. in otrok je začel kašljati.

»Mama pravi – sto kilometrov od našega kraja je vse več turistov. Poleti lahko delam na plaži.«

fant je začel pljuvati cvetne liste, s prstkom si je šel vse globlje in globlje v usta. globoko, globoko, globoko, povsod je odkrival samo cvetje. in zvezde. in se davil.

»Ampak jaz nočem kratkih gejevskih avantur, nočem biti turist v lastnem življenju!« je odsekano zavpil.

III.

Naslednji dan sem okrog poldneva pozvonil na Ozanovih vratih. Rekel mi je, naj poleg svojega sesalnika odnesem še mikrovalovno pečico in nekaj manjših preprog, ki jih je kupil. »Hranil jih bom, Ozan, dokler se ne vrneš.« *Veš, čemu so namenjene laži.*

Dvakrat sem pozvonil brez odgovora. Šele ob tretjem je ključavnica škrtnila in zaslišal sem korake.

»Stop!« je vzkliknil ženski glas, prst pa je bil uperjen v vedro z vodo za vrati. »Jaz ne, jaz čisti. Jaz nič nemško.« Dala mi je listek.

Ozan resnično ni maral mojih navad. Zraven majhnega načečkanega prebodenega srca je pisalo: »Naj tvoji iz Nase rečejo vesoljcem: če so zaljubljeni, naj NIKOLI ne gledajo k naši zvezdi.«

Stisnil sem papir. Prste sem imel tople. Kot glava dojenčka.

Prevedla Đurđa Strsoglavec

From “NASA” with Love

Dragan Radovančević

I

Ozan had not only taken his name off his front door, he'd also erased himself. He unlocked the door, left it slightly ajar, let me in and then ran into his room.

“Ozan?” I find him curled up on a pink blanket in bed, hugging his knees to his chest. There’s no reply. “Ozan!”, I repeat his name, still standing near the door. He doesn’t answer. He’s staring at his own feet.

Yesterday when we talked on the phone I got the feeling that we’d suddenly become strangers. I don’t dare to come close to him.

“What’s going on with the universe?” he smiles ironically at me in tears. At first, I didn’t even notice he had been crying. “Didn’t you check that out this morning on NASA dot gov?”

“Ozan.” I approach him hesitantly. It could be said that both of us felt the inappropriateness of it. I sit on the corner of his bed. My habit of checking NASA news was really irritating to him. News from the stars, as he would put it. “You better beware *the Beings* that are here!” But who are *the Beings*?

“Ozan was pretty and mischievous”, he utters with another ironic smile. “He was good when he was playing with some fabric and buttons. Back when he was a fashion model who worked for a big Italian agency.” He waves his hand at the level of his head as if he were saying goodbye to himself.

I don’t explain my feelings. They don’t matter much now. I say softly “No, no”. But what am I denying, and for whom?

“What did they tell you at the visa office?” I ask.

“One impoooortant fella came to me with a water gun in his hand”, Ozan is telling me the story in a cartoon voice while making

some magician-like gestures. The tone of his voice is intimidating. “And he said, ‘Hey, little boy, you’re not even eighteen, and you want to screw. Buahaha!’ He imitates the man’s awful laugh. His flat echoes in reply: *Buahaha*. The flat that is no longer his. I light a cigarette and my burning match says: *shoo Ozan*. “Then I showed him my passport and told him: “Hey, man, I’m twenty-six.” And he said: “Yes, but eight years ago you weren’t twenty-six, and this sort of treason doesn’t have an expiration date.”

He hugged his knees to his chest again and grew silent. I became aware that there was no room for me in his arms anymore. But where did I go wrong?

“You really don’t get it, do you?” I waved my hand, encouraging him to proceed. “You really thought that I was a photo-model, agent, fashion designer, Gucci, whatever...?” I listened to him. “You want me to tell you?” he says aggressively and bitterly. “You know the clothing shop in Thaliastraße?” I wasn’t familiar with the clothing shop in Thaliastraße. “That’s where I was selling clothes made in Turkey every single day and night. Or – to be precise – I was selling rags and bling every day, and during the night I was doing the transporting and storing.”

“What about all those fashion magazines, your Italian designer shirts...?”

“Oh, I bought them at newsstands and online”, he waved his hands in the air as if he were dispelling illusions but with an embarrassed smile on his face.

I grabbed him with both hands. He remained silent and distant. At one moment, we both glanced at the pile of emigration documents scattered on his desk. Like useless photographs, they only said: This was Ozan’s life. A testimony and investigation of some crime that had never been committed.

“Yes, I was carrying the dusty underwear in and out of the storehouse, changing labels, doing daily accounts. Back then, you wrote about that Disneyland!”, he shouted arrogantly, alluding to my work on the architectural design solution for Vienna’s City Hall façade, which he referred to as “Disneyland”.

I put my hands back in my lap.

“What’s the matter? So now you don’t like me?” No, I didn’t like him, even though I felt very sorry for him.

“I’ve bought us some muffins”. I tried to lighten the uncomfortable mood for a moment.

“Could you bring us two plates?” He relaxed into a seductive pose.

I mechanically placed the small table and the plates so that we had to sit across from one another. He was staring grimly at the floor, chewing non-existent hangnails. He burst into a long, rude giggle. “What a fool I was.” Suddenly he stopped giggling: “I’ll never smile at anyone again. Because when I do it, people think that I want something from them. What an idiot I am!”

He was at ease when talking about himself, because the magic that used to surround him, a magic compounded of charisma and nonchalance, was now forever scattered among the depressing sealed papers. He stood up, bent over the documents, touched the pile of papers with his hands, moved some papers left and right, up and down, as if fitting together pieces of a puzzle. He watched the papers carefully and then moved back. Questions wanted to escape from my mouth. I kept blocking them with my chocolate muffin. He grasped his muffin with embarrassment too. He pointed to the desk. “Just look at all this”, he said ominously:

The summary of his three “hurray and wow” years spent in Vienna, along with numerous displacements, tenancy agreements and breaches of them, a few parking penalties, lots of glam photos (mirrored disco ball – “I Love Them, oh How I Love”) included the document “*Illegal Arbeit.¹ Arbeitgeber mit Sitz in Österreich...*” – then I saw a few densely typed pages with grey shadowy stripes made by a copy machine. At the bottom of one page, the text was pale, almost illegible, with an indigo-blue seal and the writing of some civil servant on it.

“Somebody reported you to the police?”

“Urug did it after we barked at the stars”.

“Urug?”, I asked anxiously. Urug was a shortish old man with a

¹ Illegal Employee

mustache. He often drove Ozan to photo-sessions. It seemed Ozan's "Oh" fashion agency had its drivers. At least Ozan told me so. "What's Urug got to do with this?"

"You're even dumber than me", he ventilated his feelings in hilarious insults aimed at my obvious naivety. "That old guy is the owner of the shop where I had been slaving away. Actually, he's the owner of maaaany shops", he waved his hands in the air making invisible circles to suggest the whirlpools of shops and huge storehouses belonging to the dreadful Urug, workplaces that had swallowed up Ozan's life. "One night, he was standing under your window. Actually, it's anybody's guess how many times he stood there. Yes, that's right!", he shouted at me, spitting small crumbs of muffin, "He saw us while we were kissing in front of the window. You and your bloody curtains. And *stars!*" he was choking. Choking with anger, with waves, water, helplessness.

"Ozan, I'll come back when you've had time to calm down."

I paused for a moment in the corridor, listening to Ozan's meaningless shouting.

II

Ozan's phone call late at night. Despite my dread that it would be even more confused, bitter and aggressive, his voice was tranquil and pleasant. I could hear the parquet floor creaking somewhere in the background – it was Ozan's restless pace.

The dramatic elements in our conversation equated zero. As if today and yesterday were erased from the calendar. Ozan said indifferently: "Don't forget your iron. You've left it at my place." I gave out a sound intending to express: it doesn't matter, or: it can wait until you come back.

"I heard from my mother", he said.

i remember a childhood story: the game of hide and seek, and a boy who hid himself so well that nobody could ever find him. proud of his skill, he did not want to go back on his own.

“They say: you go back to your home. But to where do I go back?”

the boy was lying in the grass. it was raining, he was sprawled on his back

“I do not remember that town, those people. And how can I say *hello* to those who I do remember?”

and then the rain raised the dandelion heads, made the deep blue irises blush, eddied the clover and the boy propped up on his elbows smelling the colourful petals

“Should I say: hey, it’s me, Ozan. Remember? The guy you met five years ago when you were dating that girl. Don’t you remember that girl? Has she married?”

being thirsty, he drank some water from the petals and started sneezing because of the spring pollen storm. he was laughing. he was roaring with laughter because he was sneezing

“Don’t you see? My former friends who live there would deem it a betrayal, a deceit. Those village guys. They think it’s unforgivable that I left our village, not to mention leaving our country. I can’t even imagine what would they think about our *issue*.”

the boy was hungry and he started devouring the dandelions. they were bitter. they stuck to the palate. the boy started coughing

“Mum says there are plenty of tourists only a hundred kilometres far from our town. I could work on the beach during the summer.”

the boy started spitting the petals, he was digging with his finger deep in his mouth and throat. deep, deep, deep, he found only flowers everywhere. flowers and *stars*. he was choking

“But I don’t want short-term gay adventures, I don’t want to be a tourist in my own life!”, Ozan gave out a peremptory cry.

III

The next day, I ring at Ozan’s door around noon. He told me to bring my vacuum cleaner, microwave oven and a few small rugs he had bought. “I’ll keep them until you return, Ozan.” *You know what lies are for.*

I rang at his door two times, but nobody answered. After the third ringing, the lock snapped, and I heard somebody's steps.

"Stop!", a female voice squeaked, pointing her finger at the bucket of water behind the door. I cleaning. I not nothing German". She gave me a small piece of paper.

Ozan really didn't like my habits. Beside a small scribbled arrow-pierced heart, he has written: "Tell your NASA people to send a message to aliens: if they're in love NEVER to watch our star."

I grabbed the paper and held it tightly in my hands. My fingers were warm. Just like the baby's head.

Translated by Ivana Maksić



Goce Smilevski, Makedonija / Macedonia

Goce Smilevski se je rodil leta 1975 v Skopju v Makedoniji, diplomiral iz primerjalne književnosti na Univerzi Sv. Cirila in Metoda v Skopju, študiral češki jezik s književnostjo na Karlovi univerzi v Pragi in magistriral na Oddelku za študije spolov na Srednjeevropski univerzi v Budimpešti. Njegov roman *Разговор со Спиноза* (*Pogovor s Spinozo*, 2002) je v slovenskem prevodu Aleša Mustarja leta 2005 izšel pri Založbi Škuc. Delo je bilo objavljeno tudi v ZDA, Srbiji, Bolgariji na Poljskem in na Hrvaškem, kmalu pa bo izšlo še v Španiji, Izraelu, Nemčiji, na Finskem in na Nizozemskem. Osnutek romana *Cecmpama на Сигмунд Фројд* (Sestra Sigmunda Freuda) mu je leta 2006 prinesel pisateljsko štipendijo SEP. Roman je izšel leta 2010 in isto leto prejel nagrado Evropske unije za književnost.

Goce Smilevski was born in 1975 in Skopje, Macedonia. He received his BA in comparative literature from the Ss. Cyril and Methodius University of Skopje, studied Czech philology at the Charles University in Prague, and obtained his MA from the Department of Gender Studies at the Central European University in Budapest. His novel *Разговор со Спиноза* (*Conversation with Spinoza*, 2002) was translated into Slovene as *Pogovor s Spinozo* by Aleš Mustar and published by the Založba Škuc publishing house in 2005. The novel was also published in the USA, Serbia, Bulgaria, Poland, and Croatia and is soon to be published in Spain, the Netherlands, Finland, Israel, and Germany. The synopsis of the novel *Сестрата на Сигмунд Фројд* (*Sigmund Freud's Sister*) won him the CEI Fellowship for Writers in Residence in 2006. The completed novel was published in 2010 and won the European Union Prize for Literature.

СЕСТРАТА НА ЗИГМУНД ФРОЈД

Гоце Смилевски

Една старица лежеше во мракот на собата и со склопени очи пребаруваше по своите најрани сеќавања. Таму најде три спомени: во времето кога за неа многу нешта на светот сè уште немаа име, едно момче ѝ подаде оistar предмет и рече: “Нож”; во времето кога сè уште веруваше во бајките, еден глас ѝ шепотеше за птицата која со клунот си ги раскинува градите и од нив си го откорнува срцето; во времето кога допирите ѝ кажуваа повеќе од зборовите, една рака се приближи до нејзиното лице и со јаболко го погали нејзиниот образ. Тоа момче од нејзините спомени кое ја гали со јаболко, кое ѝ шепоти бајка, кое ѝ подава нож, е брат ѝ Зигмунд. Старицата која се сеќава сум јас, Адолфина Фројд.

“Адолфина,” се слушна во мракот на собата. “Спиеш?”

“Будна сум,” реков. До мене на креветот лежеше сестра ми Паулина.

“Колку е часот?”

“Веројатно околу полноќ.”

Сестра ми се будеше секоја ноќ и секогаш со исти зборови ја започнуваше истата приказна:

“Ова е крајот на Европа.”

“На Европа многупати ѝ доаѓал крајот.”

“Ќе нè испоубијат како кучиња.”

“Знам,” реков.

“И не ти е страв?”

Молчев.

“Вака беше и во Берлин 1933 година,” продолжи Паулина. Јас веќе не се обидував да ја прекинам во она кое ми го имаше раскажано многупати пред тоа: “Штом Националсоцијалистичката партија и Адолф Хитлер дојдоа на

власт, младината почна да маршира по улиците по тактот на воената музика. Како што сега маршира овде. На зградите се развеаја знамињата со кукаст крст. Како што сега овде се веат. Од радио-апаратите и од разгласите поставени на плоштадите и во парковите, се слушаше гласот на Фирерот. Како што сега овде се слуша. Ветуваше една нова Германија, една подобра Германија, една чиста Германија.”

Беше 1938 година, а три години пред тоа моите сестри Паулина и Марие го напуштија Берлин, и дојдоа да живеат во домот од кој заминаа кога се омажија. Паулина беше скоро сосема слепа, и некој постојано требаше да биде покрај неа, па спиеше на креветот на кој некогаш спиеја нашите родители, а на местото до неа се менувавме Марие и јас. Се менувавме, затоа што Паулина секоја ноќ се будеше, и Марие или јас, според тоа која од нас беше со неа во собата, останувавме без сон.

“Исто ќе биде и овде,” продолжуваше сестра ми. “А знаеш како беше таму?”

“Знам,” реков поспано. “Ми имаш кажувано.”

“Ти имам кажувано. Униформирани лица упаѓаа навечер во еврејските домови, кршеа сè околу себе и маваа по нас, и ни велеа да си одиме. Сите кои не размислуваа како Фирерот, а јавно се осмелуваа да ги кажат своите ставови, веднаш исчезнуваа без трага. Се зборуваше дека противниците на идеалите на кои требаше да биде изградена новата Германија, ги носат во логори, и ги принудуваат на тешка физичка работа. Таму биле измачувани и убивани. Така ќе биде и овде, верувај ми.”

Јас ѝ верував, а сепак молчев, затоа што секој мој збор ќе ја потислеше да раскажува уште повеќе. Неколку недели пред тоа германските воени трупи вмаршираа во Австроја и воспоставија нова власт. Насетувајќи ја опасноста, нашиот брат Александар побегна со своето семејство во Швајцарија. Ден потоа беа затворени границите, а секој кој сакаше да ја напушти Австроја, мораше да се обрати до тукушто отворениот Центар за издавање на излезни визи. Илјадници

луѓе поднесуваа барања, а само по некој од нив добиваше дозвола да ја напушти земјата.

“Штом не нè пуштаат слободно да заминеме од земјава, тоа значи дека имаат план за нас,” рече Паулина. Јас молчев. “Најпрвин сè ќе ни одземат, а потоа со нас ќе полнат дупки.”

Неколку дена пред тоа во станот на нашата сестра Роза беа влегле униформирани лица, и ѝ покажале документ на кој пишувало дека станот и сите предмети во него ѝ се одземаат. “Сега на креветите на кои спиеја моите деца, спијат некои офицери,” рече Роза она попладне кога се досели во домот во кој живеевме Паулина, Марије и јас. Дојде со неколку фотографии и малку алишта. И така сега ние четирите сестри живеевме заедно, како некогаш, во ист дом.

“Ме слушаш? Со нас ќе полнат дупки,” рече Паулина погласно.

“Секоја ноќ ми го кажуваш истото,” ѝ реков.

“И сепак не правиш ништо.”

“А што би можела да направам?”

“Можеш да одиш кај Зигмунд и да го убедиш да побара излезни визи за нас четирите.”

“И каде ќе одиме потоа?”

“Во Њујорк,” рече Паулина. Во Њујорк живееше нејзината ќерка. “Знаеш дека Беатриса ќе се грижи за нас.”

Кога се разбудивме идниот ден, веќе беше пладне; ја зедов Паулина под рака и излеговме од дома за да прошетаме. Додека чекоревме по тротоарот, видов како по улицата минуваат неколку камиони. Запреа, од нив изрипаа војници, и нè напикаа во едно од возилата. Камионот беше преполн со преплашени луѓе.

“Нè водат во смрт,” рече сестра ми.

“Не, ве водиме во парк, за да си поиграме со вас,” се смееше еден од војниците кои нè чуваа во камионот. Возилата кружеа по еврејскиот кварт во кој живеевме и само одвреме навреме застануваа за во нив да бидат натоварени уште луѓе. Потоа навистина нè однесоа во парк, во Пратер. Нè истуркаа од

камционите и нè тераа да трчаме, да клекнуваме и стануваме, да скокаме, а скоро сите бевме стари и изнемоштени. Кога паѓавме од изнемоштеност, војниците нè удираа со клоци по слабините. Сето време ја држев Паулина за рака.

“Поштедете ја барем сестра ми. Слепа е,” им реков на војниците.

“Слепа?!” се смееја тие. “Па тоа е убава можност за уште поголема забава.”

Ја натераа да чекори сама, со рацете врзани одзади, за да не може да напипува пред себе, и Паулина одеше, сè додека не удри во едно дрво и се сруши на земјата. Стигнав до неа, клекнав, го чистев нејзиното лице од земјата и од крвта што ѝ течеше од челото. Војниците се смееја со слаткиот звук на безгрижноста, со киселиот звук на уживањето во туѓата болка. Потоа нè однесоа на крајот од паркот, нè построија, и ги вперија пушките кон нас.

“Свртете се!,” ни рекоа.

Ние се свртивме со грбовите кон пушките.

“А сега – трчајте дома ако сакате да си го спасите животот!,” извика некој од војниците, и стотици старечки нозе се затрчаа; трчавме, паѓавме, станувавме и пак трчавме, а зад себе го слушавме смеенето на војниците, исполнето со слаткиот звук на безгрижноста, со киселиот звук на уживањето во туѓата болка.

Таа вечер Роза, Паулина, Марие и јас ја минавме во молчење. Паулина трепереше – можеби не толку од стравот за сопствениот живот, колку од помислата дека она најблиско суштество, она кое излегло од нејзината утроба, никогаш повторно нема да го види. Децата на Роза и Марие беа мртви, а единствениот остаток од семејството кое не го создадов беше една избледена крвава трага на сидот до мојот кревет. Велат дека од овој свет потешко заминуваат оние кои на него оставаат потомци – смртта им го раздвојува животот кој го добиле и животот кој го дале. Паулина седеше во аголот од собата и трепереше, претчувствувајќи го тоа раздвојување.

Идниот ден отидов кај Зигмунд. Беше петок попладне, време кое тој го минуваше во ритуално чистење на антиквитетите во својот кабинет. Сакав да му раскажам што преживеавме Паулина и јас претходното попладне, а тој ми покажа исечок од весник.

“Погледни каков текст напишал Томас Ман,” рече.

“Марие и Паулина сè повеќе се плашат,” реков.

“Се плашат... Од што?,” праша, оставајќи го новинскиот исечок на масата.

“Велат дека и овде ќе се случи она што го виделе во Берлин.”

“Она што го виделе во Берлин...” Потоа од масата зеде еден од антиквитетните предмети, мајмун од камен, и започна да ја зачиствува малечката фигура со четчето. “Ништо од тоа нема да се случува овде.”

“Веќе се случува. Крвници влегуваат во становите од нашиот кварт, тепаат кого ќе стигнат. Стотици луѓе се имаат самоубиено минатата недела, не можејќи да ги издржат притисоците. Разулавени луѓе влегле во домот за еврејски сирачиња, ги искршиле прозорците, и ги терале децата да трчаат по раздробеното стакло.”

“Ги терале децата да трчаат по раздробеното стакло...” Зигмунд минуваше со четчето по каменото тело на мајмунчето. “Сето тоа овде нема да трае долго.”

“Ако не трае долго, тогаш зошто секој кој може да добие излезна виза бега од земјава? Си ги сретнал ли на улица оние кои бегаат? Заминуваат од своите домови, заминуваат засекогаш - си ги прибрале најнужните нешта во една или две торби, и заминуваат за да си го спасат животот. Се зборува дека и овде ќе бидат отворани логори на смртта. Имаш влијателни пријатели и овде и во светот, можат да ти издејствуваат да добиеш излезни визи за онолку луѓе за колку што ќе побарааш. Побарај за целото семејство. Половина од жителите на Виена бараат такви визи, но не можат да ги добијат. Искористи ги своите пријатели за да заминеме одовде.” Зигмунд го оставил

мајмунчето на масата, а од таму позеда фигурина на Божицата Мајка, и почна да ѝ го забришува голото тело. “Ме слушаш ли?,” го прашав со сув и уморен глас.

Брат ми ме погледна и праша:

“И, каде би отишле потоа?”

“Кај ќерка ѝ на Паулина.”

“Што ќе прави ќерка ѝ на Паулина со вас четири старици во Њујорк?”

“Тогаш обиди се да измолиш излезна виза само за Паулина.”

Тој гледаше во голата Божица Мајка, не бев сигурна дека ги слуша моите зборови. “Ме слушаш? Роза, Марије и мене никој нема потреба да нè види. Ама Паулина има потреба да биде со ќерка си. И ќерка ѝ има потреба да биде со мајка си. Сака мајка ѝ да биде на сигурно. Се јавува секој ден, нè моли да те молиме тебе да побараши излезна виза за мајка ѝ. Ме слушаш ли, Зигмунд?”

Тој ја оставил Божицата Мајка на масата.

Sestra Sigmunda Freuda

Goce Smilevski

Starka je ležala v temi sobe in z zaprtimi očmi brskala po svojih najzgodnejših spominih.

Tam je našla tri spomine: v času, ko zanjo veliko stvari na svetu še ni imelo imen, ji je neki deček podal oster predmet in rekel: »Nož«; v času, ko je še vedno verjela v bajke, ji je neki glas šepetal o ptici, ki si je s kljunom raztrgala prsi in si iz njih iztrgala srce; v času, ko so ji dotiki govorili več od besed, se je neka roka približala njenemu obrazu in z jabolkom pobožala njeno lice. Ta deček iz njenih spominov, ki jo boža z jabolkom, ki ji šepeta bajko, ki ji ponuja nož, je njen brat Sigmund. Starka, ki se spominja, sem jaz, Adolfine Freud.

»Adolfine,« se je zaslišalo v temi sobe. »Spiš?«

»Budna sem,« sem rekla. Poleg mene je na postelji ležala sestra Pauline.

»Koliko je ura?«

»Verjetno okrog polnoči.«

Sestra se je zbujala vsako noč in vedno z istimi besedami začenjala isto zgodbo: »To je konec Evrope.«

»Evropi se je velikokrat bližal konec.«

»Pobili nas bodo kot pse.«

»Vem,« sem rekla.

»In te ni strah?«

Molčala sem.

»Tako je bilo tudi v Berlinu leta 1933,« je nadaljevala Pauline. Nisem je več poskušala prekiniti v tistem, kar mi je bila povedala že velikokrat pred tem: »Takoj ko sta Nacionalsocialistična stranka in Adolf Hitler prišla na oblast, je mladina po ulicah začela korakati v taktu vojaške godbe. Kakor zdaj koraka tukaj. Na stavbah so plapolale zastave s kljukastim križem. Kakor zdaj plapolajo tukaj. Iz radijskih aparatov in

zvočnikov, postavljenih po trgih in parkih, se je slišal Führerjev glas. Kakor se zdaj sliši tukaj. Obljubljal je neko novo Nemčijo, neko boljšo Nemčijo, neko čisto Nemčijo.«

To je bilo leta 1938, tri leta prej pa sta moji sestri Pauline in Marie zapustili Berlin in prišli živet v dom, od koder sta odšli, ko sta se poročili. Pauline je bila skoraj čisto slepa in vedno je nekdo moral biti ob njej, zato je spala na postelji, kjer sta nekoč spala naša starša, ob njej pa sva se menjavali Marie in jaz. Menjavali sva se zato, ker se je Pauline vsako noč zbujala, in Marie ali jaz, pač tista od naju, ki je bila z njo v sobi, je ostala brez spanca.

»Enako bo tudi tukaj,« je nadaljevala sestra. »Pa veš, kako je bilo tam?«

»Vem,« sem zaspano rekla. »Pripovedovala si mi.«

»Pripovedovala sem ti. Uniformiranci so zvečer vdirali v židovske domove, razbijali vse okrog sebe in nas pretepali ter nam govorili, naj odidemo. Vsi, ki niso razmišljali kot Führer in so si upali javno priznati svoja stališča, so takoj izginili brez sledu. Govorilo se je, da nasprotnike idealov, na katerih naj bi zgradili novo Nemčijo, pošiljajo v taborišča, kjer so prisiljeni opravljati težko fizično delo. Tam so jih mučili in ubijali. Tako bo tudi tukaj, verjemi mi.«

Verjela sem ji, vendar sem kljub temu molčala, kajti vsaka moja beseda jo je samo podžigala k nadaljnemu govorjenju. Nekaj tednov prej so nemške vojaške čete vkorakale v Avstrijo in vzpostavile novo oblast. Naš brat Aleksander je zaslutil nevarnost in s svojo družino pobegnil v Švico. Naslednji dan so zaprli meje in vsakdo, ki je hotel zapustiti Avstrijo, se je moral obrniti na pravkar odprti Center za izdajo izhodnih viz. Na tisoče ljudi je poslalo prošnje, samo kakšen od njih pa je dobil dovoljenje, da zapusti državo.

»Čim nam ne pustijo svobodno oditi iz države, pomeni, da imajo načrt za nas,« je rekla Pauline.

Molčala sem. »Najprej nam bodo vse vzeli, potem pa bodo z nami polnili lame.«

Nekaj dni pred tem so v stanovanje najine sestre Rose prišli uniformiranci in ji pokazali dokument, kjer je pisalo, da se ji odvzema sta-

novanje in vsi predmeti v njem. »Zdaj na posteljah, kjer so spali moji otroci, spijo neki oficirji,« je rekla Rose tisto popoldne, ko se je vselila v dom, kjer smo živele Pauline, Marie in jaz. Prišla je z nekaj fotografijami in malo perila. In tako smo zdaj me štiri sestre živele skupaj, kot nekoč, v istem domu.

»Me slišiš? Z nami bodo polnili lame,« je rekla Pauline glasneje.

»Vsako noč mi pripoveduješ isto,« sem ji rekla.

»Pa vseeno nič ne narediš.«

»Kaj pa bi lahko naredila?«

»Lahko greš k Sigmundu in ga prepričaš, da bi priskrbel izhodne vize za nas štiri.«

»In kam bomo šle potem?«

»V New York,« je rekla Pauline. V New Yorku je živila njena hčerka. »Veš, da bo Beatrise poskrbela za nas.«

Ko sva se naslednji dan prebudili, je bilo že poldne; prijela sem Paulino pod roko in od doma sva šli na sprehod. Ko sva hodili po pločniku, sem videla, da se mimo po ulici pelje nekaj tovornjakov. Ustavili so se, z njih so poskakali vojaki in naju naložili na eno od vozil. Tovornjak je bil prepoln prestrašenih ljudi.

»Peljejo nas v smrt,« je rekla sestra.

»Ne, peljemo vas v park, da se bomo igrali z vami,« se je smejal eden od vojakov, ki so nas stražili na tovornjaku. Vozila so krožila po židovski četrti, kjer smo živelii, in samo od časa do časa so se ustavila, da bi nanje naložili še več ljudi. Potem so nas res odpeljali v park, v Prater. Porinili so nas s tovornjakov in nas prisilili, da smo tekli, poklekovali in vstajali, skakali, skoraj vsi pa smo bili stari in onemogli. Kadar je kdo od onemoglosti padel, so ga vojaki brcali v rebra. Ves čas sem držala Paulino za roko.

»Usmilite se vsaj moje sestre. Slepa je,« sem rekla vojakom.

»Slepa?!« so se smejali. »To je vendar lepa priložnost za še večjo zabavo.«

Prisilili so jo, da je hodila sama, z rokami zavezanimi na hrbtnu, da ni mogla tipati pred seboj, in Pauline je hodila, dokler se ni zaletela v drevo in padla na tla.

Prišla sem do nje, pokleknila, z obraza sem ji očistila zemljo in kri, ki ji je tekla iz čela. Vojaki so se smeiali s sladkim zvenom brezskrbnosti, s kislim zvenom uživanja v tuji bolečini. Potem so nas odpeljali na konec parka, nas postavili v vrsto in namerili puške proti nam.

»Obrnite se!« so nam rekli.

Obrnili smo se s hrbiti proti puškam.

»Zdaj pa – tecite domov, če si hočete rešiti življenje!« je zavpil eden od vojakov in več sto starčevskih nog je steklo; tekli smo, padali, vstajali in spet tekli, za seboj pa smo slišali smeh vojakov, poln sladkega zvena brezskrbnosti, kislega zvena uživanja v tuji bolečini.

Tisti večer smo Rose, Pauline, Marie in jaz prebile v molku. Pauline je trepetala – mogoče ne toliko zaradi strahu za lastno življenje, kolikor ob misli, da tistega najbližjega bitja, tistega, ki je prišlo iz njenega telesa, ne bo videla nikoli več. Rosini in Mariejini otroci so bili mrtvi, edini ostanek družine, ki si je sama nisem ustvarila, pa je bila zbledela krvava sled na zidu poleg moje postelje. Pravijo, da s tega sveta težje odidejo tisti, ki na njem zapuščajo potomce – smrt loči življenje, ki so ga dobili, in življenje, ki so ga dali. Pauline je sedela v kotu sobe in trepetala, kajti čutila je to ločitev.

Naslednji dan sem odšla k Sigmundu. Bilo je v petek popoldne, čas, ki ga je preziviljal v ritualnem čiščenju starin v svojem kabinetu. Hotela sem mu povedati, kaj sva prezivali s Paulino prejšnje popoldne, on pa mi je pokazal izrezek iz časopisa.

»Poglej, kakšno besedilo je napisal Thomas Mann,« je rekел.

»Marie in Pauline se vedno bolj bojita,« sem rekla.

»Bojita se ... Česa?« je vprašal in pustil časopisni izrezek na mizi.

»Pravita, da se bo tudi tukaj zgodilo to, kar sta videli v Berlinu.«

»To, kar sta videli v Berlinu ...« Potem je z mize vzel eno od starin, majhno kamnito opico, in začel figurico čistiti s krtačko.

»Nič od tega se ne bo zgodilo tukaj.«

»Se že dogaja. Krvniki prihajajo v stanovanja v naši četrtni, pretepajo vse, ki jih dobijo. Prejšnji teden je na stotine ljudi naredilo samomor, ker niso mogli prenesti pritiskov. Pobesneli ljudje so vdrli v židovsko sirotišnico, razbili so okna in prisilili otroke, da so tekli po razbitem steklu.«

»Prisilili so otroke, da so tekli po razbitem steklu ...«

Sigmund je s krtačko vlekel po kamnitem telescu opice. »Vse to tukaj ne bo dolgo trajalo.«

»Če ne bo dolgo trajalo, zakaj potem vsak, ki lahko dobi izhodno vizo, zbeži iz države? Si na ulici srečal tiste, ki bežijo? Odhajajo s svojih domov, odhajajo za vedno – najnujnejše so spravili v eno ali dve torbi in odhajajo, da bi si rešili življenje. Govori se, da bodo tudi tukaj odprli taborišča smrti. Imaš vplivne prijatelje, tukaj in v svetu, lahko dosežejo, da dobiš izhodne vize za toliko ljudi, za kolikor boš prosil. Zaprosi za celo družino. Polovica prebivalcev Dunaja prosi za takšne vize, vendar jih ne morejo dobiti. Izkoristi svoje prijatelje, da bomo odšli od tod.« Sigmund je položil opico na mizo, od tam pa je vzel figurico boginje matere in začel brisati njeno golo telo. »Ali me poslušaš?« sem ga vprašala s suhim in utrujenim glasom. Brat me je pogledal in vprašal:

»In kam bi potem odšle?«

»K Paulinini hčeri.«

»Kaj pa bo počela Paulinina hči z vami štirimi starkami v New Yorku?«

»Potem poskusiti izprositi izhodno vizo samo za Pauline.« Gledal je v golo boginjo mater, nisem bila prepričana, da sliši moje besede. »Me slišiš? Nihče si ne želi videti Rose, Marie in mene. Ampak Pauline bi bila rada s svojo hčerko. In hčerka bi bila rada s svojo materjo. Rada bi, da je mati na varnem. Vsak dan kliče in nas prosi, naj te prosimo, da posreduješ za izhodno vizo za njeno mater. Me slišiš, Sigmund?«

Boginjo mater je položil na mizo.

Prevedla Sonja Dolžan

Sigmund Freud's Sister

Goce Smilevski

An old woman is lying in the darkness of the room. Eyes closed, she sifts through her earliest memories. Three drifted into her mind: at a time when many things in the world still had no name, a boy gave her something sharp and said, "Knife"; at a time when she still believed in fairytales, a voice whispered in her ear the tale of the bird that pierced its breast with a branch and tore out its heart; at a time when touch still told her more than words, a hand approached her face and touched an apple to her cheek. That boy in her memories who stroked her with the apple, who whispered to her the fairytale, who gave her the knife, was her brother Sigmund. I am the old woman dredging up memories, I, Adolfine Freud.

"Adolfine," said a voice in the darkness of the room, "are you sleeping?"

"I am awake," I said. My sister Pauline was lying beside me in bed.

"What time is it?"

"Probably around midnight."

My sister woke up every night, beginning the same story with the same words:

"This is the end of Europe."

"The end has come to Europe many times."

"They are going to kill us like dogs."

"I know," I said.

"Aren't you afraid?"

I did not say a word.

"It was like this in Berlin in 1933," continued Pauline. I no longer tried to stop her from telling me what she had told me many times before: "As soon as the National Socialists and Adolf Hitler came to power, young people took to marching down the streets to the beat

of martial music – just as they are marching here now. Banners with swastikas flew from buildings – just as they are flapping in the wind here. From radios and from the public address systems that had been set up in the squares and parks you could hear the *Führer*'s voice – just as we hear it here now. He promised a new Germany, a better Germany, a pure Germany.”

It was 1938. Three years earlier, my sisters Pauline and Marie had left Berlin and come to live in the house they had left behind when they married. Pauline was nearly blind, and someone always had to be at her side; she slept in the bed where our parents had slept, and Marie and I took turns in the place beside her. We took turns, because Pauline woke up every night, and either Marie or I, depending on which one of us was with her in the bed, would be kept up all night.

“It will be the same here,” continued my sister. “Do you know how it was there?”

“I know,” I answered sleepily. “You have told me.”

“I have told you. Men in uniform burst into Jewish homes at night; they broke everything; they beat us and told us to leave. Anyone who didn't support the *Führer* and who was brave enough to express his views publicly, disappeared suddenly without a trace. It was said that those opposed to the ideals that were to be the foundation of the new Germany were taken to camps and forced to do heavy labour. There they were tortured and killed. That is what will happen here. Believe me.”

I believed her, yet I kept silent, because every word I said would compel her to say more. Several weeks ago, the German army had marched into Austria and set up a new government. Sensing danger, our brother Alexander fled with his family to Switzerland. The following day, the borders were closed, and anyone wishing to leave Austria had to report to the new emigration office. Thousands applied for exit visas, but only a few were granted permission to leave the country.

“If they are forbidding us to leave the country, that means they have a plan for us,” said Pauline. I did not say a word. “First they will take us away, and then they will fill up trenches with our bodies.”

A few days before, men in uniform had entered our sister Rosa's

apartment and shown her a document stating that the apartment and everything in it was to be taken from her. "Now there are officers sleeping in the beds where my children slept," said Rosa on the afternoon when she moved into the house where Pauline, Marie, and I lived. She brought nothing but a few photographs and some clothing. So now we four sisters were living together in the same house, just as we had long ago.

"Are you listening to me? They are going to fill trenches with our bodies," said Pauline more emphatically.

"You tell me the same thing every night," I said to her.

"But still you do nothing."

"What should I do?"

"You could go see Sigmund and make him request exit visas for the four of us."

"And then where would we go?"

"To New York," Pauline replied. Her daughter lived in New York.

"You know that Beatrice will take care of us."

When we awoke the following day, it was already noon; I took Pauline by the hand, and we went out for a walk. While we were walking along the sidewalk, I saw several trucks roll past us. They pulled to a stop, and some soldiers jumped out and shoved us into one of them. It was filled with people, all of them terrified.

"They are driving us to our deaths," said my sister.

"No, we're taking you to the park, to play with you," laughed one of the soldiers guarding us. The trucks circled around the Jewish quarter in which we lived and stopped from time to time to pack even more people in. Then they indeed took us to a park, to the Prater. They pushed us out of the trucks and forced us to run, to squat, to stand, to jump; almost all of us were old and weak. When we fell down from exhaustion, the soldiers kicked us in the groin. I held Pauline by the hand the whole time.

"Spare my sister at least. She's blind," I told the soldiers.

"Blind!" they laughed. "Wonderful! That'll be even more fun."

They forced her to walk alone, with her hands tied behind her back

so she couldn't reach out and touch things in front of her; Pauline walked until she bumped into a tree and collapsed on the ground. I caught up with her and bent down and wiped her face clean of dirt and the blood that ran down her forehead. The soldiers laughed with the sweet sound of carelessness, with the acid sound of enjoying someone else's pain. Then they led us to the edge of the park, lined us up, and aimed their rifles at us.

"Turn around," they told us.

We turned our backs to the rifles.

"Now run home if you want to save your lives!" one of the soldiers shouted, and hundreds of old legs set off running; we ran, we fell down, we stood up, we began running again, while behind us we heard the laughter of the soldiers, filled with the sweet sound of carelessness, with the acid sound of enjoying someone else's pain.

Rosa, Pauline, Marie, and I passed that evening in silence. Pauline trembled— perhaps not so much out of fear for her own life as at the thought that never again would she see the human being closest to her, the one who had come from her womb. Rosa's and Marie's children were dead, and the sole remnant of the family I never created was a fading bloody trace on the wall by my bed. They say it is more difficult for those with children to depart from this world: death separates those who received life from those who gave it. Pauline sat in the corner of the room and trembled, sensing that separation.

The next day, I went to see Sigmund. It was Friday afternoon, the time he devoted to the ritual cleaning of the antiques in his study. I wanted to tell him what had happened to Pauline and me the day before, but he showed me an excerpt from a newspaper.

"Look what Thomas Mann wrote," he said.

"Marie and Pauline are afraid nonetheless," I said.

"They are afraid—of what?" he asked setting the news article down on the table.

"They say that the same thing they saw in Berlin is going to happen here."

"What they saw in Berlin..." Then he picked up one of the antique objects from the table, a stone monkey, and began cleaning the small figure with a small brush. "None of that is going to happen here."

"It is already happening. Gangs are entering apartments in our quarter; they are beating up everyone they meet. Hundreds of people committed suicide last week, they couldn't take the pressure. Crazy people broke into the Jewish orphanage; they smashed the windows, and forced the children to run across shattered glass."

"They forced the children to run across shattered glass..." Sigmund passed the small brush across the monkey's stone body. "All this will not last long here."

"If it will not last long here, then why is everyone who can get an exit visa fleeing the country? Have you run into any of the people fleeing? They are leaving their homes, leaving them forever—they have gathered their most important things in a bundle or two, and they are fleeing to save their lives. They say that death camps are going to open here too. You have influential friends here and around the world; they can arrange for you to get exit visas for as many people as you request. Ask for enough for the whole family. Half of Vienna is trying to get those visas, in vain . Use your friends to get us out of here." Sigmund set the monkey down on the table and picked up a figurine, a fertility goddess. He began to brush the naked body. "Are you listening to me?" I asked in a dry and tired voice.

My brother looked at me and asked, "And where, then, would you go?"

"To Pauline's daughter in New York."

"What is Pauline's daughter going to do with four old women in New York?"

"At least try to get an exit visa for Pauline." He looked at the nude fertility goddess. I was not sure if he heard me. "Are you listening? Nobody needs to see Rosa, Marie, and me. But Pauline needs to be with her daughter. And her daughter needs to be with her mother. She wants her mother to be safe. She calls every day begging us to beg you to request an exist visa for her mother. Are you listening to me, Sigmund?"

He set the fertility goddess down on the table.

*Translated by Christina E. Kramer
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