

# *vilenica*

29. Mednarodni  
literarni festival  
29<sup>th</sup> International  
Literary Festival



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29. Mednarodni literarni festival Vilenica /  
29<sup>th</sup> Vilenica International Literary Festival

Vilenica 2014

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*Uredili / Edited by*  
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*Založilo in izdalo Društvo slovenskih pisateljev, Tomšičeva 12, 1000 Ljubljana*  
Zanj Venó Taufer, predsednik

*Issued and published by the Slovene Writers' Association, Tomšičeva 12, 1000 Ljubljana*  
Veno Taufer, President

*Jezikovni pregled / Proofreading*  
Jožica Narat, Jason Blake

*Grafično oblikovanje / Design*  
Goran Ivašič

*Prelom / Layout*  
Klemen Ulčakar

*Tehnična ureditev in tisk / Technical editing and print*  
Ulčakar&JK

*Naklada / Print run*  
500 izvodov / 500 copies

Ljubljana, avgust 2014 / August 2014

Zbornik je izšel s finančno podporo Javne agencije za knjigo Republike Slovenije.  
The almanac was published with financial support of the Slovenian Book Agency.

CIP - Kataložni zapis o publikaciji  
Narodna in univerzitetna knjižnica, Ljubljana  
821(4)-82  
7.079:82(497.4Vilenica)"2014"  
MEDNARODNI literarni festival (29 ; 2014 ; Vilenica)  
Vilenica / 29. Mednarodni literarni festival Vilenica =  
29th Vilenica International Literary Festival ; [uredili Tanja  
Petrič, Maja Kavzar Hudej]. - Ljubljana : Društvo slovenskih  
pisateljev = Slovene Writers' Association, 2014  
ISBN 978-961-6547-84-0  
1. Petrič, Tanja, 1981-  
274737152

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**Nagrajenec**

**Vilenice 2014**

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*Vilenica*

*Prize Winner 2014*

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*Foto © Gyula Czímber*

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# László Krasznahorkai

László Krasznahorkai se je rodil leta 1954 v Gyuli na Madžarskem. Od zaključka univerzitetnega študija na Madžarskem se preživlja kot svobodni pisatelj. Leta 1985 je njegov prvenec požel velik uspeh in Krasznahorkaija uvrstil med vidne madžarske pisatelje.

Iz komunistične Madžarske je prvič odptoval leta 1987: kot dobitnik štipendije Nemške akademske službe za izmenjavo (DAAD) je eno leto preživel v tedanjem Zahodnem Berlinu. Po padcu vzhodnega bloka je bival po najrazličnejših krajih. Pogosto se vrača v Nemčijo in na Madžarsko, veliko časa pa je preživel in še zmeraj preživlja v Franciji, Španiji, ZDA, na Nizozemskem, v Italiji, Grčiji, na Kitajskem in Japonskem.

Leta 1993 je bil njegov roman *Az ellenállás melankóliája* (Melanholiija upora) odlikovan z nemško nagrado »Bestenliste« za najboljšo literarno delo leta. Pomembnost njegovih del so prepoznali tudi ameriški in japonski kritiki. Susan Sontag ga je poimenovala »sodobni madžarski mojster apokalipse, ki ga je mogoče postaviti ob bok Gogolju in Melvillu«. W. G. Sebald je o njem povedal naslednje: »Univerzalnost Krasznahorkaijeve vizije se lahko primerja z Gogoljevimi *Mrtvimi dušami* in občutno presega prozaičnost sodobnega pisanja.« Leta 1996 je bil štipendist nemške znanstvene ustanove Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin. Med pisanjem romana *Háború és háború* (Vojna in vojna, 1999) je spontano potoval po Evropi. Pri omenjenem delu mu je izjemno pomagal ameriški pesnik Allen Ginsberg. Krasznahorkai je nekaj

časa bival v Ginsbergovem stanovanju v New Yorku, pesnikovi prijateljski nasveti pa so se izkazali kot dragocen doprinos k nastanku knjige.

Leta 1990 se mu je prvič ponudila priložnost za daljše bivanje na območju vzhodne Azije. V delih *Az urgai fogoly* (Uničenje in žalost pod Nebom, 1992) in *Rombolás és bánat az Ég alatt* (Zapornik v Urgu, 2003) Krasznahorkai opisuje svoje izkušnje v Mongoliji in na Kitajskem. Na Kitajsko se še zmeraj pogosto vrača. V letih 1996, 2000 in 2005 je preživel po šest mesecev v Kjotu na Japonskem.

Slavni režiser in Krasznahorkaijev dobri prijatelj Béla Tarr že od leta 1985 ustvarja filme skoraj izključno po njegovih literarnih predlogah, med drugim tudi po izjemnih uspešnicah, kot sta *Sátántangó* (Satanov tango) in *Werckmeister harmóniák* (Werckmeisterjeve harmonije). S Tarrom sodelujeta še danes: Krasznahorkai piše scenarije in režiserju svetuje pri pomembnih odločitvah.

Avtor je za svoje delo prejel številne nagrade, med drugim tudi nagrado Lajosa Kossutha, najpomembnejšo madžarsko državno nagrado za književnost, in nemško nagrado za književnost »Brücke-Berlin«. Leta 2008 je kot štipendist sklada Samuela Fischerja predaval na nemški univerzi Freie Universität Berlin, trenutno pa se kot gostujoči profesor mudi na Univerzi Columbia v New Yorku. V zadnjih nekaj letih je bil trikrat nominiran za Nobelovo nagrado za književnost. Je oče treh otrok. Od leta 2005 živi s svojo drugo ženo sinologinjo in grafično oblikovalko Dorko Krasznahorkai v Berlinu.

## Izbrane nagrade in priznanja

- 1987 Nagrada Mikesa Kelemena Köra (Nizozemska).  
 1987 Nagrada Artile Józsefa (Madžarska).  
 1987/88 Štipendija Nemške akademske službe za izmenjavo – DAAD (Zahodni Berlin, Zvezna republika Nemčija).  
 1992 Nagrada Tiborja Déryja (Madžarska).  
 1993 Nagrada »Bestenliste« za književnost (Nemčija) za *Az ellenállás melankóliája* (Melanholija upora).  
 1993 Nagrada Gyule Krúdyja (Madžarska).  
 1998 Nagrada Sándorja Máraiya (Ministrstvo za izobraževanje in kulturo Republike Madžarske).  
 2002 Lavreat Republike Madžarske (Magyar Köztársaság Babérkoszorúja).  
 2003 Nagrada Soroseva sklada.  
 2004 Nagrada Lajosa Kossutha (Madžarska).  
 2007 Nominacija za nagrado Jeana Monneta (Francija).  
 2008 Nagrada za prispevek k madžarski dediščini (Madžarska).  
 2009 Nagrada Društva madžarskih pisateljev (Madžarska).  
 2010 Nagrada »Spycher« (Švica) za njegov literarni opus in posebej za roman *Északról hegy, Délről tó, Nyugatról utak, Keletről folyó* (Na severu gora, na jugu jezero, na zahodu nekaj cest, na vzhodu reka).  
 2010 Nagrada »Brücke-Berlin« (Nemčija) za *Seiobo járt odalent* (Seiobo tam spodaj).  
 2012 Nagrada »Prima Primissima« (Madžarska).  
 2013 Nagrada za najboljšo delo, prevedeno v angleški jezik: *Sátántangó* (Satanov tango) v prevodu Georgea Szirtesa.  
 2014 Nagrada »America Award« za življenjski prispevek k mednarodni književnosti.  
 2014 Nagrada za najboljšo delo, prevedeno v angleški jezik: *Seiobo járt odalent* (*Seiobo There Below / Seiobo tam spodaj*) v prevodu Otilie Mulzet iz madžarščine. Je prvi pisatelj, čigar dela so prejela dve nagradi za najboljšo delo, prevedeno v angleški jezik (BTBA).

## Izbrana bibliografija

### Knjige

*Sátántangó* (Satanov tango); roman; Magvető, Budimpešta 1985.

*Kegyelmi viszonyok* (Očarljiva razmerja); kratke zgodbe; Magvető, Budimpešta 1985.

*Az ellenállás melankóliája* (Melanholija upora); roman; Magvető, Budimpešta 1989.

*Az urgai fogoly* (Zapornik v Urgu); roman; Széphalom Könyvműhely, Budimpešta 1992.

*A Théseus-általános. Titkos akadémiai előadások* (Univerzalni Tezej. Tri namišljena predavanja); Széphalom Könyvműhely, Budimpešta 1993.

*Megjött Ézsaiás* (Izaija je prišel); kratka zgodba; Magvető, Budimpešta 1998.

*Háború és háború* (Vojna in vojna); roman; Magvető, Budimpešta 1999.

*Este hat; néhány szabad megnyitás* (Ob šestih zvečer: Nekaj brezplačnih nagovorov ob otvoritvah razstav); eseji; Magvető, Budimpešta 2001.

*Északról hegy, Délről tó, Nyugatról utak, Keletről folyó* (Na severu gora, na jugu jezero, na zahodu nekaj cest, na vzhodu reka); roman; Magvető, Budimpešta 2003.

*Rombolás és bánat az Ég alatt* (Uničenje in žalost pod Nebom); dokumentarni roman; Magvető, Budimpešta 2003.

*Seiobo járt odalent* (Seiobo tam spodaj); kratka proza; Magvető, Budimpešta 2008.

*Az utolsó farkas* (Poslednji volk); kratka zgodba; Magvető, Budimpešta 2009.

*Állat VanBent* (Znotrajžival); kolaž proze in slik; v sodelovanju z Maxom Neumannom, Magvető, Budimpešta 2010.

*Nem kérdez, nem válaszol. Huszonöt beszélgetés ugyanarról* (On ne odgovarja in ne sprašuje: Petindvajset razprav na isto temo); Magvető, Budimpešta 2012.

*Megy a világ* (Svet gre naprej); kratke zgodbe; Magvető, Budimpešta 2013.

## Scenariji za film

*Kárhozat* (Poguba), režija: Béla Tarr, 1988.

*Sátántangó* (Satanov tango), režija: Béla Tarr, 1994.

*Werckmeister harmóniák* (Werckmeisterove harmonije), režija: Béla Tarr, 1997–2001.

*A Londoni férfi* (Mož iz Londona), režija: Béla Tarr, 2007.

*A torinói ló* (Torinski konj), režija: Béla Tarr, 2011.

## Prevodi

Dela Lászla Krasznahorkaija so bila prevedena v številne jezike, med drugim v angleščino, bolgarščino, češčino, francoščino, hebrejščino, hrvaščino, italijanščino, japonsščino, nemščino, nizozemščino, poljščino, romunščino, slovenščino, srbsčino in španščino.

## Prevodi v slovenščino

*Melanholija upora* (odlomek iz romana), prevedla Marjanca Mihelič, v: *Nova revija*, št. 131 (marec 1993), str. 209–220.

László Krasznahorkai was born in 1954 in Gyula, Hungary. He completed his university studies in Hungary, and has supported himself as an independent author since then. In 1985, when his first major publication achieved amazing success, Krasznahorkai was immediately thrust into the forefront of Hungarian literary life.

He travelled outside of Communist Hungary for the first time in 1987, spending a year in West Berlin as a recipient of a DAAD fellowship. Since the collapse of the Soviet bloc, he has lived in an astonishing variety of locations. He returns often to Germany and Hungary, but he has also spent and spends varying lengths of time in France, Spain, the USA, England, the Netherlands, Italy, Greece, China and Japan.

In 1993, his novel *Az ellenállás melankóliája* (*The Melancholy of Resistance*) received the German “Bestenliste-Preis” for the best literary work of the year. From the United States to Japan, critics have acknowledged the importance of his writing. According to Susan Sontag, he is “the contemporary Hungarian master of apocalypse [and] inspires comparison with Gogol and Melville.” W. G. Sebald had this to say: “The universality of Krasznahorkai’s vision rivals that of Gogol’s *Dead Souls* and far surpasses all the lesser concerns of contemporary writing.” In 1996, he was a guest of the “Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin.” While completing the novel *Háború és háború* (*War and War*, 1999), he travelled widely across Europe. The American poet Allen Ginsberg was of great assistance in completing the work;

Krasznahorkai resided for some time in Ginsberg’s New York apartment, and the poet’s friendly advice was invaluable in bringing the book to life.

In 1990 he was able for the first time to spend a longer period in East Asia. Krasznahorkai renders an account of his experiences in Mongolia and China in his works *Az urgai fogoly* (*The Prisoner of Urga*, 1992) and *Rombolás és bánat az Ég alatt* (*Ruin and Sorrow beneath the Heavens*, 2003). Since then, he has returned many times to China. In 1996, 2000 and 2005 he spent six months in Kyoto, Japan.

Since 1985, the renowned director and the author’s good friend Béla Tarr has based his films almost exclusively on Krasznahorkai’s works, including the highly successful *Satantango* and *The Werckmeister Harmonies*. Their collaboration continues to this day: Krasznahorkai writes the screenplays, and assists the director in all important decisions.

Krasznahorkai has been honoured with numerous literary prizes, among them the highest award of the Hungarian state, the Kossuth Prize, and the “Brücke Berlin Preis” in Germany. In 2008, he was the S. Fischer guest professor at the Freie Universität Berlin, and is just currently a visiting professor at Columbia University, New York. In recent years he has been nominated three times for the Nobel Prize. He has three children, and has lived since 2005 in Berlin with his second wife, Dorka Krasznahorkai, who is a Sinologist and graphic artist.

## Selected Prizes and Awards

- 1987 Mikes Kelemen Kör Prize (The Netherlands).  
 1987 Attila József Prize (Hungary).  
 1987/88 DAAD Fellowship (West Berlin, Federal Republic of Germany).  
 1992 Déry Tibor Award (Hungary).  
 1993 Bestenliste-Prize (Germany) for *Az ellenállás melankóliája* (*The Melancholy of Resistance*).  
 1993 Krúdy Gyula Prize (Hungary).  
 1998 Márai Sándor Prize (Hungarian Ministry of Education and Culture).  
 2002 Laureate of the Hungarian Republic (Magyar Köztársaság Babérkoszorúja).  
 2003 Soros Foundation Prize.  
 2004 Kossuth Prize (Hungary).  
 2007 Nominated for Jean Monnet Prize (France).  
 2008 Hungarian Heritage-Award (Hungary).  
 2009 Prize of the Hungarian Society of Writers (Hungary).  
 2010 Spycher-Prize (Switzerland) for his complete work but in particular for *Északról hegy, Délről tó, Nyugatról utak, Keletről folyó* (From the North a Mountain, from the South a Lake, from the West Some Roads, from the East a River).  
 2010 Brücke-Berlin Prize (Germany) for *Seiobo járt odalent* (*Seiobo There Below*).  
 2012 Prima Primissima Prize (Hungary).  
 2013 Best Translated Book Award for English translation of *Satantango*, translated from the Hungarian by George Szirtes.  
 2014 America Award for a lifetime contribution to international writing  
 2014 Best Translated Book Award for English translation of *Seiobo There Below*, translated from the Hungarian by Otilie Mulzet. First author to win two BTBA awards.

## Selected Bibliography

### Books

- Sátántangó* (*Satantango*, novel), Magvető, Budapest 1985.  
*Kegyelmi viszonyok* (Relations of Grace, short stories), Magvető, Budapest 1985.  
*Az ellenállás melankóliája* (*The Melancholy of Resistance*, novel), Magvető, Budapest 1989.  
*Az urgai fogoly* (The Prisoner of Urga, novel), Széphalom Könyvműhely, Budapest 1992.  
*A Thészeus-általános. Titkos akadémiai előadások* (The Universal Theseus. Three fictional lectures), Széphalom Könyvműhely, Budapest 1993.

*Megjött Ézsaiás* (Isaiah Has Come, short story), Magvető, Budapest 1998.

*Háború és háború* (*War and War*, novel), Magvető, Budapest 1999.

*Este hat; néhány szabad megnyitás* (*Evening at Six: Some Free Exhibition-Opening Speeches*, essays), Magvető, Budapest 2001.

*Északról hegy, Délről tó, Nyugatról utak, Keletről folyó* (From the North a Mountain, from the South a Lake, from the West Some Roads, from the East a River, novel), Magvető, Budapest 2003.

*Rombolás és bánat az Ég alatt* (Ruin and Sorrow beneath the Heavens, documentary novel), Magvető, Budapest 2003.

*Seiobo járt odalent* (*Seiobo There Below*, short prose), Magvető, Budapest 2008.

*Az utolsó farkas* (*The Last Wolf*, short story), Magvető, Budapest 2009.

*ÁllatVanBent* (*Animalinside*, collage of prose and pictures), together with Max Neumann, Magvető, Budapest 2010.

*Nem kérdez, nem válaszol. Huszonöt beszélgetés ugyanarról* (He Neither Answers Nor Questions: Twenty-five Conversations on the Same Subject), Magvető, Budapest 2012.

*Megy a világ* (*The World Goes On*, short stories), Magvető, Budapest 2013.

### Screenplays for Films

*Kárhozat* (*Damnation*), directed by Béla Tarr, 1988.

*Sátántangó* (*Satantango*), directed by Béla Tarr, 1994.

*Werckmeister harmóniák* (*The Werckmeister Harmonies*), directed by Béla Tarr, 1997-2001.

*A Londoni férfi* (*The Man from London*), directed by Béla Tarr, 2007.

*A torinói ló* (*The Turin Horse*), directed by Béla Tarr, 2011.

### Translations

László Krasznahorkai's works have been translated into many languages, among them into Bulgarian, Croatian, Czech, Dutch, English, French, German, Hebrew, Italian, Japanese, Polish, Rumanian, Serbian, Slovenian and Spanish.

### Slovenian Translation

*Melanholija upora* (*The Melancholy of Resistance*, excerpt from the novel), translated by Marjanca Mihelič, in: *Nova revija*, Issue 131 (March 1993), pp. 209-220.

## *László Krasznahorkai* *Nagrajenec Vilenice 2014*

*Jutka Rudaš*

### **Pasti tanga**

László Krasznahorkai, rojen 5. januarja 1954, je eden najprepoznavnejših sodobnih madžarskih avtorjev svetovnega formata. Pisatelj, ki od leta 1982 deluje kot samostojni umetnik, je na Madžarskem prejel vse najpomembnejše literarne nagrade, vključno s prestižno Kossuthovo nagrado leta 2004, časti pa je bil pogosto deležen tudi v tujini, od ZDA in Nemčije do Japonske. Njegove knjige so prevedene v številne svetovne jezike in so prejele priznanje kritikov širom sveta. Kot pisec scenarijev sodeluje od leta 1985 s filmskim režiserjem Bélo Tarrom. S filmom po svojem istoimenskem romanu *Satanov tango* (*Sátántangó*, 1985) in delom *Melanholija upora* (*Az ellenállás melankóliája*, 1989) s filmskim naslovom *Werckmeisterove harmonije* (*Werckmeister harmóniák*) se je zapisal tudi med velikane filmskega sveta. Njun zadnji skupni projekt je bil monumentalni film *Torinski konj* (*A torinói ló*) leta 2011, za katerega je bil na berlinskem festivalu nagrajen s Srebrnim medvedom in nagrado filmskih kritikov. Melanholično in saturnovsko obarvana Krasznahorkaijeva poetika bralca z neverjetno lahkostjo potegne v najgloblje labirinte človeškega bivanja. Je poet marginaliziranih, osamljenih ljudi. Njegova poetika temelji na izgubljenosti človeka v družbi in času. S precizno kompozicijo vpenja svoje like v neskončno izčrpavajoč turobni svet eksistence. Tej temačni atmosferi primerna je tudi retorika upodobitve stanja duha v artikulaciji njegovih del – to je retorika z izpusti in zamolki. Celoten Krasznahorkaijev poetični svet uprizarja posameznike oz. posebneže, izrinjene na rob družbe, na rob preživetja. S tem pričara vzdušje brezizhodnega nesmisla in prikaže obliko tiste eksistence, ki ji je danes zapisanih vse več ljudi.

Njegovo najpomembnejše delo – *Satanov tango* (*Sátántangó*, 1985) – je reprezentativno, paradigmatično in kanonizirano delo sodobne madžarske proze. Krasznahorkai je prav s svojim prvim romanom oblikoval novo literarno zvrst, modificiral je njegovo strukturo, funkcijo, predvsem pa naracijo in jezik. Že sam naslov – *Satanov tango* – nosi močne simbolične pomene. Aludira na korak argentinskega tanga, ki temelji na koraku naprej in nazaj. Ta vražje začarani ponavljajoči se korak tanga – zagon in stagnacija – daje narativni

okvir celotnemu romanu. Figure se nahajajo v satanskem krogu, kjer ni niti obstanka niti izstopa. V njegovem delu je to ples ljudi brez upanja nekje v zakotnem, depresivnem miljeju madžarskega Alfölda, v neki do obisti umazani gostilni, kjer družba zgubljenih duš čaka na odrešenika v upanju, da s pojavnostjo preroka vstajenja pride do usodnega zasuka stanja stvari, duha in družbe v boljšo smer. Množica, ujeta v svetu, iz katerega ne vidi izhoda, ki je izgubila ves smisel, čaka na odrešenika, ki bo osmisлил njihova življenja. Prerok Irimiás – simbolična podoba, ki aludira na topose iz Biblije (Jeremija) – se naposled pojavi. Ljudje mu brezpogojno verjamejo, mu sledijo, dokler ne ugotovijo, da je tudi on samo prevarant in izkoriščevalec njihove ranljivosti in človeške degradiranosti. In prav ta nenadna in nenavadna sreča, ki je priletela kot božji dar, jim daje jasen kažipot, možnosti izhoda iz sicer brezupnega in neznosnega sveta. Zatorej duše, vajene tesnobe, kar naenkrat zauzijejo obljudbo (lažne) prostornosti. Irimiás kratkotrajno sicer spremeni njihova zaznavanja, stanja njihovih zavesti, kajti figure v bedi brezperspektivne, nemočne preteklosti se hitro prepustijo upom na boljšo prihodnost. Irimiás ni nič drugega kot manipulator človeških duš, ki dobro ve, kako delati z ljudmi, ki so izgubili vse človeško dostojanstvo in so potisnjeni na rob preživetja. Takih ljudi ni težko izigrati, ni jim težko obljubljeni lepote sveta in jim vzbujati lažne upe na lepšo prihodnost – če se bodo le uklonili. Ker se figure romana gibljejo na dveh narativnih ravneh – na ravni degradacije na eni strani in na ravni čakanja na čudež na drugi strani – *Satanov tango* bravurozno pleše na plesišču bipolarnosti, ki je hkrati znak upanja in nezaupanja.

V podoben tekstualni (fiktivni/realni!?) svet vstopimo tudi v *Melanholiji upora* (*Az ellenállás melankóliája*, 1989). Skupaj z romanesknimi junaki bi iz njega najraje kar pobegnili, če nas ne bi avtor z neverjetno subtilnimi, samorefleksijskimi, ponekod grenkimi ironičnimi prijemi ponovno potegnil v nižinski svet madžarskega Alfölda, kamor prispe potujoči cirkus z dvema glavnima atrakcijama: s kitom velikanom in malim postavnim princem. Praznina, zmedenost, odpoved, brezup, nezaupanje, strah, nasilje, sla po moči so elementi romana, v katerem ljudje kita občudujejo, hkrati pa se ga bojijo. Ob vsem tem jih vendarle najbolj vznemirja retorika princa, ki besno pljuva po šibki in zatirani množici. Delo na simbolni ravni prikaže dejanski prenos oblasti, pri čemer se stari red počasi sesuje in se ustoliči nov diktatorski režim. Prikaže se črna podoba človeške sedanosti in prihodnosti, kjer ni mesta za noben idealizem, kjer je ločnica med morilci in žrtvami

takorekoč zabrisana. Ob branju romana se sprehajamo med dejanskimi razbitinami in bedo apokaliptičnih vizij, zaznavamo popolno blokado duha in zdravega razuma. Roman postavlja kar nekaj filozofsko-ontoloških vprašanj: Ali je svet res tako temačen? Ali se zlo tako oklepa racionalnega in iracionalnega? Ali je zlo sploh sposobno ostrega gledanja v kristalno čisto noč ali pa njegov pogled popolnoma oslepi njegova naduta zaverovanost, da je vladar tega sveta? Temno in hladno tonaliteto temačnega romanesknega sveta stopnjuje tudi spoznanje, da je v ontološkem propadanju sveta vsak korak brezupen. Pa vendar, vso to temačnost Krasznahorkai razsvetli s samosvojim humorjem in ironijo, nemalokrat z močno samoironijo. Roman je bil leta 1993 v Nemčiji nagrajen kot knjiga leta z nagrado »Bestenliste-Preis«.

Tudi bravurozna knjiga *Vojna in vojna* (*Háború és háború*, 1999) nas zapelje v temačne globine bivanja, tokrat v življenjski labirint arhivarja dr. Györgya Korina, ki pride na svoj štirideseti rojstni dan do usodnega spoznanja, da ne razume niti sebe niti sveta. Realnost mu v hipu postane zaskrbljujoče težka, še posebej, ko v arhivu naleti na skrivnostno nenavaden rokopis. V iskanju smisla življenja in v želji po dekodiranju besedila se poda na pot. Po njej ga vodi grški bog Hermes, skrivnosten, neoprijemljiv, temačen gospod. Tako nas Krasznahorkaijev roman mistike in skrivnosti razburljivo popelje v vse globlje p(l)asti romana. Korinov načrt, da bi zaradi nesmrtnosti rokopisa besedilo prepisal in objavil na internetu, se lahko uresniči le, če se bo podal v središče (internetnega) sveta, v New York. Prepisovanje kot akt razlage in razumevanja ga privede do spoznanja, da delo skriptorja, tega neznanega avtorja, govori tudi o njem, da je tudi on del te zgodbe oz. da v tej zgodbi bere svoje življenje. *Vojna in vojna* tako postaja roman v romanu, ki s pomočjo magične igre podvoji fiktivni svet. Korin med prepisovanjem rokopisa torej ugotovi, da obstajajo vzporednice med tekstualnim svetom in realnim svetom, ki ga obdaja. Vsi štirje angeli kot glavni junaki rokopisa se namreč v različnih zgodovinskih obdobjih in krajih bojujejo za isto stvar in hrepenijo po isti stvari kot sedaj on: po miru, spokojnosti in lepoti. Vsem štirim pa kot senca sledi Mastemann, angel strahu, duh uničenja, princ teme. Korin v umetnosti – v zapisovanju na internet z naslovom *War and war* – najde izhod iz neznosnega zunanega sveta.

László Krasznahorkai je leta 1990 nekaj časa preživel v vzhodni Aziji, predvsem v Mongoliji in na Kitajskem, kasneje, leta 1996, 2000 in 2005, pa na Japonskem. Srečanje z azijsko kulturo ga je navdihnilo za romana *Zapornik v Urgu* (*Az urgai fogoly*, 1992) ter

*Uničenje in žalost pod Nebom (Rombolás és bánat az Ég alatt, 2004)* in za zbirko kratkih zgodb *Seiobo tam spodaj (Seiobo járt odalent, 2008)*, nagrajeno leta 2010 z nemško nagrado »Brücke-Berlin«. Tokratne Krasznahorkaijeve zgodbe nas popeljejo v skrivnostne globine umetnosti, v brezčasnost božanskega s poudarkom na kulturni raznolikosti zahodne in vzhodne civilizacije. Zgodbe *Seiobo* s presenetljivo natančnim poznavanjem kulturnozgodovinskih ozadij in z globoko melanholijo izrisujejo presenetljive dogodke iz različnih – bibličnih ali stvarnih – obdobij, kultur in duhov. Zbirka 17 zgodb v ospredje postavlja vprašanje umetnosti oz. izpraševanje umetniških del o umetnosti sami. Za Krasznahorkaijevega pesimističnega pripovedovalca sta v svetu kaosa in propada tudi umetnost in lepota neoprijemljivi, neizrekljivi in nepotrebni.

László Krasznahorkai v svojih delih mojstrsko oriše koreografijo pasti, anatomijo uničenja, apokaliptično vizijo sveta. Kljub temačnemu in tragičnemu izrisu človeške brezupnosti ustvarja – s svojimi retoričnimi prijemi in z intelektualno izjemno nabitim diskurzom – pravi užitek pri branju. Njegova besedila temeljijo na lepoti klasične naracije. Njegova poetika ustvarja pripoved o živem tkivu. Reflektira družbeno dinamiko in v njej zometke skorajšnjega propada. Do kosti skorumpirana in neumna družba, človekove etične in moralne dimenzije na ničli, medčloveški odnosi, ki lahko posameznika ranijo v vsakem trenutku, so v romanih Lászla Krasznahorkaija artikulirani do estetske dovršenosti. Njegova dela postavljajo mikrozgodbo na makro raven. Zadušljivo ozračje brezperspektivnosti preide iz lastnega mikrokozmosa, provincializma ter deklasiranosti v makrokozmos, v širšo dimenzijo, zajame državo in svet. Dela aludirajo na vzhodnoevropski model družbe in družbenih sprememb, ki je danes še kako aktualen, saj zajema globalno raven. Politične bitke, laži, demagogija, zamaskirane obljube, ki manipulirajo z milijoni ljudi in jim prepletajo življenja, prodrejo do človeških globin, kjer se dogajajo prave življenjske katastrofe. Krasznahorkaijeva umetniška dela so mojstrski orisi apoteoze podlosti ter propadanja človeške in družbene psihe ter morale. Figure romanov so resnične podobe sodobnega človeka, so brezčasne, predvsem pa (ne)literarne.

**László Krasznahorkai**  
**The 2014 Vilenica Prize Winner**

*Jutka Rudaš*

**The Traps of Tango**

László Krasznahorkai, born on January 5, 1954, is one of the most recognisable contemporary Hungarian authors of international stature. A freelance writer since 1982, he has received all the major Hungarian literary awards, among them the prestigious Kossuth Prize in 2004, as well as numerous tributes from abroad, including the USA, Germany and Japan. His books, translated into many languages, have gained critical acclaim all over the world. Since 1985 he has been collaborating with film director Béla Tarr as a script writer. The films *Satantango*, based on his eponymous novel *Sátántangó*, (1985), and *The Werckmeister Harmonies* (*Werckmeister harmóniák*), based on his novel *The Melancholy of Resistance* (*Az ellenállás melankóliája*, 1989), have secured him a place among the Titans of film. His latest project with Tarr was the monumental 2011 film *The Turin Horse* (*A torinói ló*), which won the Jury Grand Prix Silver Bear and the Competition FIPRESCI Prize at the Berlin Film Festival. Krasznahorkai's poetics, melancholy and saturnine ways effortlessly carry the reader into the deepest labyrinths of human existence. He is a poet of the marginalised, the lonely, his poetics being based on man's bewilderment in society and time. His meticulous composition sets his characters in an endlessly exhausting, bleak world of existence. This sombre atmosphere is matched by the rhetoric articulating the mood of his works: a rhetoric of ellipsis and aposiopesis. Krasznahorkai's poetic world figures idiosyncratic individuals relegated to the edge of society, the edge of existence. This conjures up an atmosphere of ineluctable meaninglessness, demonstrating a form of the existence which preys on more and more people nowadays.

His masterpiece, *Satantango* (*Sátántangó*, 1985), is a representative, paradigmatic, canonised work of contemporary Hungarian prose. It was in this novel, his first, that Krasznahorkai shaped a new literary genre, modifying the structure and function of the novel and, above all, its narration and language. The very title – 'The Satan Tango' – carries strong symbolic undertones, alluding to the Argentinian tango, which is based on one step forward and one step back. This

jinxed, repetitive tango step – impetus and stagnation – provides a narrative framework for the whole novel: the characters are caught in a satanic circle, where staying and leaving are equally impossible. In Krasznahorkai's novel, this tango is the dance of prospectless characters in the depressing backwater of the Great Hungarian Plain (Alföld), in a sordid tavern where a group of lost souls are waiting for their saviour, hoping that the appearance of a resurrection prophet may prompt a decisive turn for the better in their circumstances, in mentality, and in society. A crowd caught in a world from which it sees no escape, a crowd that has lost every sense of purpose, is waiting for a saviour to give meaning to their lives. At last there appears the prophet Irimiás, a symbolic figure alluding to the Biblical Jeremiah. The characters believe and follow him unconditionally until they realise that he is a mere impostor, exploiting their vulnerability and human degradation. It is this unexpected, extravagant stroke of good fortune, this seeming godsend, that supplies them with a clear roadsign, with possibilities of escaping their otherwise hopeless and unbearable world. Souls inured to anxiety suddenly taste a (false) promise of the great wide open. Irimiás briefly changes their perceptions, their states of consciousness: the figures trapped in the misery of a prospectless, helpless past are quick to surrender to the hope of a better future. Irimiás is nothing but a manipulator of human souls, adept at handling people who have been deprived of all human dignity and thrust on the edge of survival. Such people are not difficult to cheat with promises of the world's loveliness and with false hopes of a better future, all supposedly within their reach if they will but obey. Since the figures move at two narrative levels, at the level of degradation and the level of waiting for a miracle, the Satan Tango whirls with consummate skill on the dance floor of a polarity which signals both hope and mistrust.

A similar textual (fictive? real?) world opens up in *The Melancholy of Resistance* (*Az ellenállás melankóliája*, 1989). Together with its characters, one would feel an urge to bolt if it was not for the author's devices, subtle, self-reflective, sometimes bitterly ironic, which carry us again to the plains of Hungarian Alföld. The book describes the arrival of a travelling circus which sports two main attractions: a giant whale and a dapper diminutive prince. The elements of the novel are hollowness, bewilderment, renunciation, hopelessness, mistrust, fear, violence, power-hunger. The characters, who admire and fear the whale at the same time, are most agitated by the rhetoric of the Prince, who furi-

ously rants at the weak and oppressed crowd. At a symbolic level, the book depicts the translation of power, with the gradual disintegration of the old order and the rise of a new, dictatorial regime. What emerges is a dark picture of the human present and future, which allows no room for idealism and virtually blurs the demarcation line between killers and victims. Reading the novel, one wanders among the debris and misery of apocalyptic visions, sensing a complete blockage of the mind and common sense. The novel raises a number of philosophical, ontological questions: Is the world really so dark? Does evil cling so strongly to the rational and irrational? Is evil at all capable of gazing keenly into the crystal clear night, or is its gaze entirely blinded by a conceited absorption in its sovereignty over this world? The sombre, chilling tonality of the novel's murky world is enhanced by the realisation that the ontological decline of the world makes every step hopeless. And yet all this gloom is brightened by the author's peculiar humour and irony, often a strong self-irony. The novel won the 1993 Bestenliste-Preis in Germany as the book of the year.

It is into these same murky depths of existence that we are spirited by yet another of Krasznahorkai's works: his tour de force, *War and War* (*Háború és háború*, 1999). We descend into the labyrinthine life of an archivist, Dr György Korin, whose fortieth birthday is marked by the fatal recognition that he understands neither himself nor the world. Suddenly oppressed by reality as a gnawing burden, he comes across a mysterious manuscript in the archives and sets out on a journey, driven by a search for the meaning of life and a desire to decode the text. His guide is the Greek god Hermes, a mysterious, elusive, gloomy gentleman. Krasznahorkai's novel of mysticism and mystery thus takes us on a stirring descent into its many layers and traps. Korin's plan to commit the text to eternity by typing it all on the world-wide web can only come to fruition if he heads for the centre of the (Internet) world, for New York. Copying as an act of explication and comprehension leads him to realise that the work of the unknown scribe is about him as well, that he, too, is part of the story, in which he reads his own life. *War and War* thus evolves into a novel within a novel, doubling the fictive world through a magic game. Copying the manuscript, Korin realises that there are parallels between the textual world and the real world of his surroundings: the protagonists of the manuscript, the four angels, struggle and yearn in various ages and places for the very causes that he has espoused: peace, tranquillity, beauty.

But all four are shadowed by Mastemann, the angel of fear, spirit of destruction, prince of darkness. Korin finds an exit from the intolerable external world in art: in recording the text online, under the title *War and War*.

In 1990, László Krasznahorkai lived for a while in East Asia, mainly Mongolia and China, and later, in 1996, 2000 and 2005, in Japan. The encounter with Asian culture inspired his novels *The Prisoner of Urga* (*Az urgai fogoly*, 1992) and *Ruin and Sorrow beneath the Heavens* (*Rombolás és bánat az Ég alatt*, 2004) as well as a short story collection, *Seiobo There Below* (*Seiobo járt odalent*, 2008), which was awarded the German Brücke-Berlin-Preis in 2010. These stories take us into the mysterious depths of art, the timelessness of the divine, highlighting the cultural diversity of the Eastern and Western civilisations. With a stunningly detailed knowledge of the cultural and historical backgrounds, the tales of Seiobo, tinged with a deep melancholy, depict surprising events from various – Biblical or historical – periods, cultures, mentalities. The collection of 17 stories foregrounds the issue of art, the inquiry of artworks into art itself. For Krasznahorkai's pessimistic narrator, a world of chaos and decline renders even art and beauty intangible, unspeakable and redundant.

László Krasznahorkai masterfully depicts a choreography of traps, an anatomy of destruction, an apocalyptic vision of the world. And yet, for all his gloomy, tragic picture of human hopelessness, his rhetorical techniques and intellectually charged discourse make his works a delight to read. His texts rest on the beauty of classic narration. His poetics create a narrative about a living tissue, reflecting the social dynamics carrying the germs of imminent destruction. A society corrupt and stupid to the marrow, a total eclipse of human ethical and moral dimensions, human relationships which cause pain to the individuals at every moment – all this is articulated in László Krasznahorkai's novels to aesthetic perfection. His works construct the micro story at a macro level. The stuffy atmosphere of perspectivelessness spreads from its original microcosm, provincialism and degradation to the macrocosm, a larger dimension, enveloping the state and world. The works allude to the East European model of society and societal changes, a burning issue nowadays as it has a global impact. The political battles, lies, demagoguery, the masked promises manipulating millions of people and pervading their lives penetrate into the human depths, triggering true life catastrophes.

Krasznahorkai's works are virtuoso depictions of an apotheosis of villainy, of the decline of the human and social psyche and morality. The characters are accurate portrayals of contemporary man, but they are timeless as well; they are both literary and non-literary.

*Translated by Nada Grošelj*

## *Legkésőbb Torinóban*

Jó száz évvel ezelőtt, 1889 egy maihoz hasonló napján Torinóban Friedrich Nietzsche kilép a Via Carlo Alberto hatos számú házának kapuján, talán hogy sétáljon egyet, talán a postára, a leveleiért. Nem messze, vagy akkor már nagyon is messze tőle, egy konfliskocsis – úgymond! – csökönyös lovával bajlódik. Hiába noszogatja, a ló nem mozdul, mire a kocsis – Giuseppe? Carlo? Ettore? – elveszíti a türelmét, és ostorával verni kezdi az állatot. Nietzsche a föltehető csődülethez ér, s a dühtől nyilván már tajtékozó kocsis kegyetlen színjátéka ezzel be is fejeződik. Az óriás termetű, dús bajuszu úr ugyanis – a nézők alig titkolt derűtségére – váratlanul a kocsishoz ugrik, és zokogva a ló nyakába borul. Házigazdája viszi haza, két napig mozdulatlanul és némán fekszik egy heverőn, még kimondja a kötelező utolsó szavakat („Mutter, ich bin dumm”), aztán szelíd háborodottként anyja s nővére felügyelete alatt még tíz évig él. Hogy mi lett a lóval, nem tudjuk.

Ez az amúgy rendkívül kétséges hitelű történet – az ilyenkor elvárható természetes önkénnyel mégiscsak hitelt adva neki – mint az értelem drámájának modellje különös élességgel világítja be szellemünk végjátékát. Az eleven filozófia ördögi sztárja, az úgynevezett „egyetemes emberi igazságok” káprázatos ellenfele, a részvétre, a megbocsátásra, a jóságra és az együttérzésre már-már elfúlva nemet mondó, utánozhatatlan bajnok – a *vert* ló nyakában? Megbocsáthatatlanul közönséges, de szükségszerű fordulattal élve: hogyhogy nem a kocsiséban?

Minden tisztelet Möbius doktoré, akinek mindez csupán egy szifiliszből eredő paralysis progressiva kitérésének szimpla esete, mi azonban, késői utódok egy tragikus tévedés villanásszerű fölismerésének tanúi vagyunk: oly hosszú és gyötrelmes küzdelem után ezúttal Nietzsche lényé mondott nemet Nietzsche következményeiben különösképp pokoli gondolatmenetére. Thomas Mann azt írja, ez a tévedés abban áll, hogy az elvetemült élet eme „gyöngéd profétája az életet és a morált egymás ellenértékeiként tárgyalta. Az igazság az – fűzi hozzá –, hogy összetartoznak. Az etika az élet támasza, s a morális ember az élet igazi polgára.” Olyan szép ez a manni kijelentés, a nemes megnyilatkozásnak ez a feltétlensége, hogy akár meg is érné, szakítani egy kis időt, tovább hajózni rajta, ám mégsem ezt tesszük, hajónkat a torinói Nietzsche kormányozza most, s ez nemcsak más vizeket jelent, hanem más idegzetet is kíván, sőt, kapóra

jött fordulattal azt is mondhatnánk, szinte kötéliddegzetet. És szükségünk is lesz rá, hiszen legnagyobb megrázkódtatásunkra ugyanabba a kikötőbe érkezünk, ahová ez a manni mondat vezetne, szükségünk lesz rá, mert ha a kikötő ugyanaz is, másképp érezzük ott majd magunkat, mint ahogy ő ígéri.

Nietzsche torinói drámája azt sugallja, az erkölcsi törvény szellemében élni nem rang, mert nem választhatom az ellenkezőjét. *Ellenére* élhetek, ám ezzel nem szabadulhatok meg rejtélyes s valóban megnevezhetetlen erejétől, mely elszakíthatatlanul összeköt vele. Ha így teszek ugyanis, és ellenére élek, egészen biztosan eligazodhatom az emberi szervezettségű s emiatt minden meglepetés nélkül származás társas létben, melyben – Nietzsche szavaival – „élni és igazságatlannak lenni ugyanaz”, de nem igazodhatom el abban a feloldhatatlan konfliktusban, mely engem időnként a létezésem értelme iránti sóvárgás centrumába állít. Mert amiként része vagyok ennek a társas világnak, ugyanúgy része vagyok annak is, amit, ki érti, miért, folyton egy nagyobb egésznek kerestelek el, nagyobb egésznek, mely bennem – a megkerülhetetlen Kantra pillantó kifejezéssel – ezt és épp ezt a törvényt ültette el, a szabadságnak azzal a szomorú felhatalmazásával, hogy megszeghetem.

Itt már a kikötőt jelző bóják közt hajózunk, kissé vakon, mert manőverünket a világítótorony alvó személyzete nem képes segíteni – hogy aztán odabent horgonyunkat abba a homályba vessük, mely kérdésünket, hogy akkor e nagyobb egész eme törvény magasabb értelmét tükrözi-e, azonnal elnyeli. Itt állunk hát, és nem tudunk semmit, csak nézzük, ahogy ezernyi irányból, lassan, közelednek felénk a társaink, nem üzenünk semmit, csak nézzük őket, s részvételt elelve hallgatunk. Azt gondoljuk, ez a részvétel helyesen van így bennünk, s hogy a közeledőkben is helyesen volna így, hiszen ha ma mégsem, akkor majd ekképpen lesz holnap... vagy tíz... vagy harminc év után.

Legkésőbb Torinóban.

## *Az író hatalmának természete*

Az írónak hatalmában áll belegondolni és elfogadni, hogy még ha egyáltalán lehetséges is megfelelni az író hatalmára vonatkozó kérdésre, attól még ugyanúgy lehetetlen választ adni a kérdésben benne rejlő, bár a kérdező előtt talán még rejtve is maradó, valódi elvárásra, hiszen a válasz, mely a kérdező kérdésének lényegéig nem jut el, s amelyet így a kérdező nem ért, nem válasz; pedig a történelmi reménységek és látomások zavaros időszakának kellős közepén ő, a kérdező bizonyára nem tudná megérteni, hogy vége, vége a közös hivatkozások boldog világának, vége összefüggő kultúránk poétikus kötőanyagának, mely a szeretet és a szépség iránti egyféle érzékenység és az univerzális felfedezésére irányuló vágy visszahozhatatlan elege; s bizonyára nem értené meg, hogy már a XX. század kezdete óta, mely a megelőző század szokásos módján lett elgondolva, ez a kötőanyag lassan kezdte erejét veszteni és kezdett kipörögni a városainkat övező dicsőséges falak téglái közül abban a könyörtelen szélben, amely a XXI. század felől fúj, s hogy ezt a következőt, a XX. században megálmodott XXI. századot egy valóban vadonatúj, számunkra rémisztő tény fogja uralni, a növekedni vágyó haszon mindent felzabáló eszméje, melyből mi most csak annyit észlelünk, hogy eltűnik a hely és az egyediség valósága, és mind a hely, mind az egyediség a maga eredeti jelentését elveszíti, amennyiben nem tudjuk többé állítani, ahogyan egészen a XIX. századig tudtuk ezt, hogy valami itt vagy ott: *van*, vagy pedig, ahogyan a XX. században, hogy itt vagy ott: *volt* valami, lévén, hogy „jelenlegi tudásunk szerint” a dolgok ott is voltak meg nem is voltak ott, itt is vannak meg nincsenek is itt, miközben múlttá vált, vagy éppen múlttá váló realitásuk az egyedüli, bár megfoghatatlan tapasztalatunk -- hogyan magyarázhatnánk hát el a kérdezőnek, hogy az éppen kihunyóban lévő egyediség eszméje nagyjából azt jelzi, hogy az embernek az arra egyáltalán képes része a társadalom legutolsó forradalma után most újra meg fog változni, és ismét azt látjuk, hogy a gyermek egy kicsit másképpen fordul a szülei felé, és a szülők is a gyermek felé, a fiatal egy kicsit másképpen az idős felé, és az idős is a fiatal felé, a nő másképpen a férfi felé, ahogy a férfi is a nő felé, hogyan magyarázzuk hát el neki, hogy otthontalanok vagyunk, hazátlanok, és világtalanok, és hogy a jelenlegi spirituális pillanatban sajnos semmiféle hisztérikus ragaszkodás az otthonhoz, a hazához és a világhoz nem tehet ez ellen *semmit*, és hogyan értessük meg a kérdezővel, hogy egyáltalán nincs

helye itt ez előlött érzett szomorúságnak, sokkal inkább biccentünk kell erre meg arra, mindarra, ami történni fog, rezzenéstelen, post-keatoni arccal, s ekképpen felnőttként viselni a tagadhatatlan keserűséget, úgy, mint amikor – hogy röviden és búcsúzásképpen a személyes vallomás intim hangvételével éljek – hazaérve egyszer nem tudom honnét, akkor éppen vonattal, fél hat és háromnegyed hat között, egy *szándékosan* meleg és égető nyári délutánon, először vettem észre, hogy semmiféle örömet nem érzek amiatt, hogy hazaértem, és azóta képtelen vagyok hazaérve örömet érezni, nem mintha nem vágnék örülni annak, hogy hazaérek, hanem, és ettől leszek mindig oly levert, mert éppen a hazafelé vezető úton vagyok képtelen a hazatérés örömét érezni, pedig a másik irányban, vagyis amikor az „otthontól való eltávolodás” irányában mozgok, nem a megkönnyebbülés örömét érzem, vagy kíváncsiságot, hanem a reménytelenség tökéletes bizonyosságát, mert akkor éppen attól távolodom, amelyhez, gondolom, folytonosan közelednem kellene, ahogyan, gondolom, azt is nagyon nehéz lenne elmagyarázni, hogy a fenti történet értelme szerint ama század kultúrájában sincs valójában semmi keresnivalónk, amelyben élünk adatik, miközben épp ez az, amit a mi régi agyunkkal felfogni valójában lehetetlen, hogy ugyanis nincs hová, és nincs minek, lehetetlen elfogadni, hogy korunk legalább az emberen kívüli természetben nem kereste a valódi szépségek vagy szépséges illúziók tényét és okát, sokkal inkább a borzalmak tényét és okát kutatta, s bizonyára jó oka volt rá, mivel valóban rá is akadt ezekre, kizárólagos módon, legalább itt tehát, ebben a nagyobb egészben, vetné ellenünk a kérdező, kereshette volna, de nem kereste, mert belevakult az emberi természet borzalmába, mi meg csak hallgatnánk ezek után, nem szólnánk végképp egy szót sem, csak szavakba öntenénk egy idő után az egészet, azt, hogy lehetetlen, hogy vége, hogy megszűnt, hogy otthontalanság és hazátlanság mindenütt, s már csak a szavak maradnak, szavak örökre: a méltóságról, a méltóságban való elhülyülésről, az idiótáról, akiről már senki nem vesz tudomást, ahogy csak hajtogatja és hajtogatja, ahogy Sao Paolo északi külvárosának egy pontján, valami árnyékba húzódva, a nigeri Lagos déli nyomornegyedének ronccstelepén, vagy éppen az oradeai belváros hajdani rettenetes autóbuszainak egyikén, a hátsó ülésen, csak dűnnyögi, csak vinnyogja, csak szűkül, mint egy állat, hogy haza, haza, hazafelé.

## *Háború És Háború*

(a regény részlete)

345b

I.

### **Mint egy égő ház**

1. *Már nem érdekel, hogy meghalok*, mondta Korin, majd hosszú csend után egy közeli bányatóra mutatott: – *Azok ott hattyúk?*

2. Hét gyerek fogta körül a vasúti felüljáró közepén, félkörben, guggolva, a korlátnak szinte nekiszorítva őt, éppen úgy, mint egy félórával ezelőtt, amikor megtámadták, hogy kirabolják, pontosan úgy, csak hát mostanra már senki nem akarta se megtámadni, se kirabolni, hisz nyilvánvalóvá vált, hogy a kiszámíthatatlan következmények miatt az effélet, mint ő, megtámadni és kirabolni ugyan lehet, de nem érdemes, mivel valószínűleg tényleg nincsen semmije, amije viszont van, az meg beláthatatlan teher, így aztán, mikor ez – Korin kusza, viharos, de a számukra „tulajdonképpen rohadtul unalmas” monológjának egy bizonyos pontján – lassan eldőlt, nagyjából azon a ponton különben, ahol az fejének az elvesztéséről kezdett beszélni, akkor nem álltak fel, nem hagyták ott, mint egy bolondot, hanem maradtak úgy, ahogy voltak, és azért, amiért jöttek, félkörben, guggolva, mozdulatlanul, mert közben lassan rájuk esteledett, mert az alkonyat ipari csöndjében leereszkedő sötét elnémította őket, s mert *ez* a rezzenetlen, szótlán állapot fejezte ki amúgy is a legmélyebben figyelmüket, melynek, hogy Korin kiúszott belőle, egyetlen tárgya maradt csupán: a sínek odalent.

4. Kátrányszag volt a levegőben, émelyítő, átható, tömény kátrányszag mindenütt, és ezen nem segíthetett az erős szél sem, mert ez a szél, mely egyébként már csontig átjárta őket, ezt a szagot csak felcsapta és körbekergette, de nem tudta kicserélni másra, hiszen az egész környéken, kilométereken át, s főleg itt, a keletről beérkező és rögtön legyezőlekként szétfutó sínek torkolata meg a hátuk mögül idelátszó rákosrendezői teherpályaudvar között, ebből volt a levegő, ebből a kátrányszagból, amelyről aztán végül is elég nehezen lehetett megmondani, hogy a lecsapódott korom meg füst, a száz- és száz-ezer átdübörgő szerelvény, a szennyes talpfák, zúzalékkövek és a sínek acéljának szaga mellett mi mindent foglalt még össze, ám kétségkívül nem csupán ezeket, hanem más, rejtettebb, épp csak körülírható

vagy egyenesen megnevezhetetlen elemeket is, köztük az emberi hiábavalóságnak azt az irdatlan terhét bizonyosan, amit abban a száz- és százezer szerelvényben errefelé hordott át az innen, a felüljáró magasából nézve végképp ijesztő céltalansággá egybeállt milliányi hánytató akarát, mint ahogy bizonyosan táplálta a kietlenségnek, az elhagyatottságnak, a kísérteties, üzemi dermedtségnek az a lebegő szelleme is, mely évtizedek alatt záródott rá lassan erre a tájra, s amelyben Korin igyekezett most elhelyezni önmagát, ő, aki menekültében eredetileg – észrevétlenül, gyorsan, hangtalanul – csak át akart menni a túloldalra, hogy folytassa útját a város feltételezett középpontja felé, most meg, mondhatni, be kellett rendezkednie a világnak ezen a huzatos, hideg pontján, megkapaszkodnia – korlát, járdaszegély, aszfalt, fém – a szemmagasságból jelentősebbnek tűnő, amúgy persze véletlen részletekben, hogy így azután egy vasúti felüljáró, ez itt pár száz méterre a rákosrendezői teherpályaudvar előtt, a világ egy nem létező szeletéből a világ egy létező szeletévé, új életének, vagy mint maga fogalmazott később, „ámokfutásának” egyik fontos korai állomásává váljon, egy felüljáró, amin különben, ha nem tartóztatják föl, csak vakon átsiet.

8. Lámpa csak a feljáró és a levezető lépcsők felett égett, az újra meg újra rájuk csapó szélből egy-egy sivár, borzongó kúpban eresztve le a fényt, a kettő közt vagy harmincméternyi távon a felüljáró összes többi neonja mind ki volt verve, így aztán oda, ahol ők guggoltak, világosság már végképp nem jutott; mégis: egymást pontosan érzékelték, amiként az ég sötét, irdatlan tömegét is a kiütött neonok miatt, az eget, mely most önmagának ezt a sötét, irdatlan, csillagoktól reszkető tömegét akár ebben az alattuk szétterült óriás vasúti tájban is visszatükrözve láthatta volna, ha reszkető csillagjai és a sínek közé szórt számtalan szemaforpár tompa vöröse között lehetett volna valami kapcsolat; de nem volt kapcsolat közöttük, hisz nem volt közös rend, és nem volt közös összefüggés, csak külön rend és külön összefüggés fent és lent és mindenütt, mert vakon nézett egymásra csillag és szemaforerdő, és vak volt egymásra a létezés minden nagy tétele, vak a sötétség és vak a ragyogás, de vak a föld és vak az ég, hogy eképpen végül egy magasabb nézet elveszett tekintetében a tágasságnak egy halott szimmetriája jöjjön létre, s benne persze középen egy parányi folt: ahogy Korin... a felüljárón... meg a hét gyerek.

13. *Valahogy ihattam a Léthe vizéből*, magyarázta Korin, s miközben csüggedten megcsóválta a fejét, ezzel is jelezve, hogy a dolog

lefolyásának körülményeit ő már valószínűleg soha nem ismerheti meg, előhúzott egy doboz Marlborót: – *Van valakinél tűz?*

14. Nagyjából egykorúak voltak mind, a legfiatalabb tizenegy, a legidősebb talán tizenhárom-tizennégy éves lehetett, de legalább egyetlen borotvapenge egy tokban mindnél ott lapult, és nemcsak hogy ott lapult, hanem a legkisebbtől a legnagyobbig tökéletesen kezelte is mind azt a legalább egyet, amit „szimplának”, vagy azt a hármát, amit „készletnek” neveztek, egy sem akadt köztük, aki ne lett volna képes akár egyetlen szempillantás alatt előrántani, és belesimítani a magáét a két ujj közé a feszes tenyérbe, miközben a tekintet meg se rebben, csak rászegeződik az áldozatra, hogy aztán az éppen soron lévő villámgyorsan el is találja az eret a nyakon – ez volt az, amit ők a legjobban tudtak, különösen együtt, heten, egyszerre, ez példátlanul veszélyessé tette őket, és tényleg már most kezdett hírnevet szerezni nekik, persze gyakorolták is folyamatosan, míg eljutottak idáig, gyakorolták pontos kiképzési terv szerint, állandóan változtatott helyszíneken százszor és százszor végrehajtották, míg csak nem ment utánozhatatlan, fokozhatatlan sebességgel és összehangoltsággal, hogy aztán attól kezdve, hogy hibátlan szintre jutottak, attól kezdve, hogy egy támadásnál szó nélkül dőlt el, adott esetben ki lép előre, és ki marad és milyen rendben hátul, már nem volt helye a hengegésnek, egyszerűen nem is lehetett beszélni a dologról, annyira tökéletes volt együtt, meg az ilyenkor kiömlő vér látványa ön magában is a torkukra forrasztotta a szót, némává tette őket, fegyelmezté és komollyá, sőt bizonyos értelemben nagyon is komollyá, mely még nekik is túlzott terhet jelentett, szükségük volt hát valamire, ami játékosabban, véletlenszerűbben, azaz némi kockázattal vezeti el őket a halálhoz, hisz ezt keresték mindannyian, így alakult, ez érdekelte őket, és ezért jártak ide, ez volt az ok, hogy jó néhány délutánt már itt töltöttek, a saját szórakoztatásukra, hetek óta jó néhány délutánt és kora estét.

15. A mozdulatában, mondta Korin másnap a MALÉV-irodában, annyira nem volt semmi kétértelmű, meg az egész annyira normális, olyan hétköznapi volt, ahogy benyúlt a cigarettásdobozért, annyira ártatlan és veszélytelen, tulajdonképpen csak amolyan rögtönzés, váratlan ötlet, hogy hátha valamivel, például egy ilyen barátságos gesztussal levezethet valamit a feszültségből, egyszerű próbálkozás, hogy egy efféle cigaretta-körbékínálással enyhíthet egy kicsit a helyzetén,

szóval tényleg, mondta, annyira így volt, nem túloz, hogy mindenre számított, csak arra nem, hogy mire a keze kijut a Marlborós doboz-  
zal a zsebéből, már ott is van rajta, a csuklóján, egy másik kéz, de  
nem markolta, mint egy bilincs, hanem megbénította, és ezt a csuk-  
lót egy pillanat alatt elöntötte a melegség, érezte, mesélte még más-  
nap is megdöbbenve, ahogy elgyengülnek az izmai, de csak azok,  
amelyek a Marlborós dobozt tartották, és közben nem hangzott el  
egyetlen hang sem, sőt a hozzá legközelebbi gyerek kivételével, aki  
ilyen akrobatikus, valóban lélegzetelállító ügyességgel, félreértve az  
ő mozdulatát, lecsapott rá, a többi meg se rezzen, épp csak oda-  
néztek a lehulló Marlborós dobozra, aztán az egyik felemelte, kivett  
belőle egy szálát, továbbadta a másiknak, és így ment aztán a doboz  
sorban végig, míg ő, Korin, ijedtében úgy csinált, mintha semmi  
se, mintha csak valami aprócska, nevetséges és szóra sem érdemes  
baleset történt volna, s maga sem tulajdonítva jelentőséget neki,  
*avétlen* kezével ösztönösen átfogta a sebesült csuklót, de nem értette  
meg rögtön, mi történt, amikor pedig mégis, lassan, felfogta, akkor  
meg a hüvelykujját odaszórtotta a pici sebhez, mert csupán ennyi  
volt, mesélte, egy icipici vágás, és mire az ilyenkor szokásos hirtelen  
támadt eszeveszett dobogás, zakatolás, láрма csöndesedni kezdett a  
fejében, ugyanezt a fejet valami hideg nyugalom öntötte el, mint  
az előbb a csuklót a vér, vagyis, jelentette ki másnap határozottan,  
akkor már biztos volt benne, hogy meg fogják ölni.

19. Alattuk egy újabb hosszú teher dübörgött el, és a felüljáró ismét  
finoman megremegett, s remegett végig, míg csak el nem ment –  
két ugrándozó, vörös pontot hagyva hátra – az utolsó vagon is, ak-  
kor csendesedni kezdett s hamarosan el is halt a kerekek zakatolása,  
majd a beállt csöndben, a két távolodó vörös pontocska nyomában,  
közvetlenül a sínek fölött, nem több, mint egy méter magasan egy  
csapat denevér tűnt fel s húzott el a szerelvény után Rákosrendező  
felé; minden nesz nélkül, egészen hangtalanul, mint valami közép-  
kori kísértetalakzat repültek zárt rendben, szorosan egymás mellett,  
egy állandó, egy rejtélyesen állandó sebességgel, suhantak szigorúan  
a két sín között tovább, olyan képet nyújtva így, mintha vontatnák  
magukat Budapestre, mintha kihasználnák a vonat mozgása keltette  
légfolyosót, hogy mutassa nekik az utat, s vigye őket, sodorja, szívja,  
s ők erőfeszítés nélkül, rezzenetlen, terített szárnyakkal ériék el a sö-  
tétben Budapestet, egy méter magasan a talpfák felett.

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## *Nem kell innen semmi*

Én itt hagynék mindent, a völgyeket, a dombokat, az ösvényeket és a szajkókat a kertből, én itt hagynék csapot és papot, eget és földet, tavaszt és őszt, itt hagynám a kivezető utakat, az éjszakákat a konyhában, az utolsó szerelmes pillantást, s a városok felé vezető összes borzongató irányt, itt hagynám a tájra ereszkedő sűrű alkonyt, a súlyt, a reményt, a bűvöletet és a nyugalmat, itt hagynék szeretettet és közelít, mindent, ami meghatott, megrendített, magával ragadott és felemelt, itt hagynám a nemest, a jóakarátút, a kellemest, s a démonian szépet, itt hagynék minden rügyfakadást, minden születést és létet, itt hagynám a varázslatot, a rejtélyt, a messzeségek, a kimeríthetlenségek s az örökkévalóságok kábulatát: mert itt hagynám ezt a földet és ezeket a csillagokat, mert nem vinnék semmit magammal innen, mert belenéztem abba, ami jön, és nem kell innen semmi.

## *Najpozneje v Torinu*

Pred dobrimi sto leti, leta 1889, na dan, ki je bil podoben današnjemu, stopi Friedrich Nietzsche na vrata iz hiše številka šest na Ulici Carla Alberta v Torinu, morda zato, da bi se malce sprehodil, morda zato, da bi stopil na pošto po pisma. Nedaleč ali pa takrat že zelo daleč stran ima neki kočijaž – baje! – hude sitnosti s trmastim konjem. Zaman ga priganja, konj se ne premakne, nakar kočijaž – Giuseppe?, Carlo?, Ettore? – izgubi potrpljenje in začne po konju udrihati z bičem. Nietzsche dospe do domnevne gruče ljudi in konča okrutno predstavo kočijaža, zdaj že čisto penastega od jeze. Visokorasli gospod z ogromnimi brki namreč – na komaj skrito veselje gledalcev – nepričakovano skoči h kočijažu in hlipajoč pade konju okoli vratu. Hišni gospodar ga odvede domov, kjer dva dni leži tiho in negibno na zofi, izreče še obvezne zadnje besede (»Mutter, ich bin dumm«), potem pa krotek in pogreznjen v temo še deset let živi v oskrbi matere in sestre. Kaj se je zgodilo s konjem, se ne ve.

Ta že tako dvomljiva zgodba, kar se tiče verodostojnosti – ki pa ji v takšnih primerih po pričakovanju naravno in samovoljno vendarle podelimo verodostojnost – posveti v zadnjo igro našega duha kot model drame smisla s posebno ostrino. Demonska zvezda filozofije življenja, bleščeči nasprotnik tako imenovanih »univerzalnih človekovih pravic«, ki je odpuščanju, dobroti, sočutju že zdavnaj rekel svoj – dih jemajoči – ne, ta neposnemljivi prvak – okoli vratu prebičanega konja? Neodpustljivo banalno, toda če izvedemo nujni obrat: kako da ne okoli kočijaževega?

Vse spoštovanje doktorju Möbiusu, za katerega je vse to samo simple primer progresivnega izbruha paralize zaradi sifilisa, mi, njegovi pozni potomci, pa smo priče bliskovitemu odkritju tragične pomote: po tako dolgi in mukotrpnih borbi je zdaj Nietzschejevo bitje reklo ne Nietzschejevemu toku mišljenja, posebej peklenskemu v svojih posledicah. Thomas Mann piše, da tiči pomota v tem, da je ta »mehkosrčni profet izprijenega življenja razpravljal o življenju in morali kot o nasprotnih vrednotah. Resnica je – pripominja – da spadata skupaj. Etika je opora življenja in moralni človek je pravi državljan.« Ta Mannova trditev je tako lepa, tako brezpogojno plemenita izjava, da bi si veljalo utrgati zanjo malo časa in še naprej pluti z njenim tokom, vendar tega ne storimo, naj krmari našo ladjo torinski Nietzsche, kar pa ne pomeni samo drugih vodá, ampak narekuje tudi drugačen živčni sistem, še več, s kot naročenim obratom bi lahko

celo rekli, da skoraj železne živce. In res jih bomo potrebovali, saj na svoje brezmejno presenečenje prispemo v isti pristan, kamor bi nas pripeljal tudi Mannov stavek, potrebovali jih bomo, kajti če je pristan res isti, se bomo počutili drugače, kot obljublja.

Nietzschejeva torinska drama nam prišepetava, da življenje v duhu moralnega zakona ni bogvekaj, ker ne morem izbrati nasprotnega. *Kljub temu* lahko živim, vendar se tako ne morem osvoboditi skrivnostne moči, ki je resnično ne znam poimenovati in me neločljivo povezuje z njim. Če namreč kljub temu živim, se prav gotovo znam usmerjati v organizirani in zaradi tega brez kakršnih koli presenečenj tudi obžalovanja vredni družbeni biti, v kateri je – z Nietzschejevimi besedami – »živeti in biti nepravičen isto«, ne znam pa se usmerjati v nerešljivem konfliktu, ki me od časa od časa postavi v središče hrepenenja po smislu mojega bivanja. Kakor sem namreč del tega družbenega sveta, tako sem tudi del tega, kar – kdo razume, zakaj – vselej krstim za neko večjo celoto, večjo celoto, ki je vame – z izrazom, ki se neizogibno obrača na Kanta – vsadila ta in prav ta zakon, z žalostnim pooblastilom svobode, zato, da ga lahko kršim.

Tu pa že plujemo med bojami, ki naznanjajo pristanišče, malce na slepo, ker nam speče osebje svetilnika ne more pomagati pri našem manevru – da bi potem že odznotraj vrgli sidro v mrak, ki pri priči pogoltne naše vprašanje, in sicer: Ali potemtakem ta večja celota zrcali višji smisel tega zakona? Tu smo torej in ne vemo ničesar, samo gledamo, kako se iz tisoč smeri počasi približujejo naši bližnji, ničesar jim ne sporočamo, samo gledamo jih in polni sočutja molčimo. Mislimo, da je prav, da smo sočutni, in da bi bilo prav, da bi bili sočutni tudi tisti, ki se nam približujejo, a če danes vendarle še ne, pa potem jutri ... ali čez deset ... ali čez trideset let.

Najpozneje v Torinu.

## *Narava pisateljeve moči*

V pisateljevi moči je, da se miselno poglubi in sprejme, da četudi bi bilo še mogoče odgovoriti na vprašanje o pisateljevi moči, je zaradi tega še vedno nemogoče dati odgovor na resnično pričakovano, skrivajoče se v tem vprašanju, čeprav vprašujočemu morda še ostaja skrito, saj odgovor, ki ne seže do bistva vprašanja vprašujočega in ga ta tako ne razume, ni odgovor; vprašujoči pa, natanko sredi nejasne zgodovine upov in prividov, zagotovo ne bi mogel razumeti, da je konec, konec srečnega sveta občega sklicevanja, konec poetičnega veziva medsebojno odvisnih kultur, ki je nepovratna mešanica želje po njihovem univerzalnem odkrivanju in isti občutljivosti do ljubezni in lepote; in zagotovo ne bi razumel, da je že od začetka XX. stoletja, ustvarjenega po zamisli in običajih prejšnjega stoletja, začelo to vezivo počasi izgubljati moč in se začelo v neusmiljenem vetru, ki je bril iz XXI. stoletja, krušiti in ga je začelo odnašati izmed opek slavnih zidov, obdajajočih naša mesta, in da bo temu naslednjemu, XXI. stoletju, videnem v sanjah XX. stoletja, gospodovalo neko popolnoma novo, za nas strašljivo dejstvo, vsepožirajoča ideja s pohlepom po še večjem dobičku, ki jo za zdaj zaznavamo le toliko, kolikor izginja resničnost prostora in individualnosti in izgubljata svoj prvotni pomen tako prostor kot tudi individualnost, da ne moremo več trditi, kot smo lahko vse do XIX. stoletja, da tu ali tam nekaj: *je* ali pa, kot v XX. stoletju, da je tu ali tam nekaj: *bilo*, glede na to, da so stvari »glede na naše sedanje znanje« tam bile pa tudi niso bile, da so stvari tukaj pa da jih tudi ni tukaj, medtem ko je naša edina, čeprav neoprijemljiva izkušnja njihova realnost, ki je postala ali pravkar postaja preteklost – kako bi torej lahko razložili vprašujočemu, da ideja izumirajoče individualnosti večidel označuje to, da se bo zdaj tisti del človeka, ki je tega sploh zmožen, po zadnji družbeni revoluciji znova spremenil, in vnovič vidimo, da se otrok malce drugače obrne do staršev in tudi starši do otroka, mlad človek malce drugače do priletnega človeka in priletni do mladega, ženska drugače do moškega, kakor tudi moški do ženske, kako naj mu torej razložimo, da nimamo doma, nimamo domovine in nimamo sveta in da proti temu v sedanjem stanju duha nobena histerična privrženost domu, domovini ali svetu žal ne more storiti *ničesar*, kako naj torej pojasnimo vprašujočemu, da tukaj preprosto ni mesta za žalost nad tem, veliko bolj je treba kimati temu ali onemu, vsemu, kar se bo zgodilo, s postkeatonovskim obrazom, ne da bi trenili, se pravi,

da odraslo prenašamo grenkobo, ki je ni mogoče zanikati, tako kot takrat, ko sem – da na kratko in preden se poslovim, izkoristim še intimni ton osebne izpovedi – tako kot sem nekoč ob prihodu domov, ne vem, od kod že, pripeljal pa sem se z vlakom, torej nekega *namerno* toplega in žgočega poletnega popoldneva med pol šesto in tri četrt na šest, prvič opazil, da ne občutim nobenega veselja ob prihodu domov, in od takrat ne morem več občutiti veselja, kadar se vračam, a ne zato, ker si ne bi želel biti tega vesel, ampak zato, in zaradi tega bom vedno zelo potr, ker ravno na poti, ki vodi domov, ne morem čutiti veselja zaradi tega, v drugi smeri, se pravi, kadar se gibljem v drugi smeri in se tako »oddaljujem od doma«, pa tudi ne občutim veselja zaradi olajšanja ali radovednosti, ampak popoln in gotov brezup, ker se takrat oddaljujem prav od tistega, k čemur bi se moral, mislim, nenehno približevati, kakor bi bilo, mislim, težko razložiti tudi to, da glede na smisel zgornje pripovedi prav tako v resnici nimamo kaj iskati v kulturi tega stoletja, v katerem nam je usojeno živeti, medtem ko je prav to tisto, kar je z našimi starimi možgani resnično nemogoče dojeti, namreč da nimamo kam, in čemu sploh, ter je nemogoče sprejeti, da naša doba ni iskala dejstva in vzroka pristnih lepot ali iluzij v naravi, vsaj v izvenčloveški ne, ampak je veliko bolj raziskovala dejstvo in vzrok grozot in je gotovo imela dober razlog za to, kajti v resnici je tudi zadela nanje, in to izključno, torej bi lahko iskala vsaj tukaj, v tej večji celoti, bi nam navrgel vprašujoči, pa ni iskala, ker je oslepela zaradi grozote človeške narave, mi pa bi po vsem tem samo molčali in dokončno ne bi izustili niti ene besede več, le čez nekaj časa bi celoto prelili v besede, to, da je nemogoče, da je konec, da se je nehalo, da brezdomci in brezdomovinci obstajajo povsod in da ostajajo samo besede, besede, zapisane večnosti: o dostojanstvu, norčevstvu v dostojanstvu, o idiotu, ki ga nihče več ne opazi, kako kar naprej samo goni in goni svoje, kako na neki točki severnega predmestja Sao Paola, kjer se je zavlekel v senco, na odpadu ubožnih četrti na jugu Lagosa v Nigeriji ali na zadnjem sedežu enega od nekdanjih groznih avtobusov v mestnem središču Orade samo še momlja, samo ječi, samo cvili kot žival, domov, domov, na pot domov.

## *Vojna in vojna*

(odlomek iz romana)

I.

### *Kot goreča hiša*

1. *Ne zanima me več, ali bom umrl,* je rekel Korin, potem pa po dolgi tišini pokazal na bližnje jezero s toplim izvirom: – So tam labodi?

2. Sedem otrok ga je obstopilo na sredini železniškega nadhoda, v polkrogu, čepe, in ga skoraj pritisnilo ob ograjo, prav tako kot pred pol ure, ko so ga napadli, da bi ga oropali, natanko tako, samo da ga zadnje čase že ni hotel nihče več niti napasti niti oropati, saj je postalo očitno, da zaradi nepredvidljivega izida nekoga, kot je on, sicer lahko napadejo in oropajo, a se ne spleča, saj po vsej verjetnosti res nima ničesar, kar pa vendarle ima, je nedogledno breme, tako se je – na določeni točki Korinovega zmedenega, burnega, zanje pa »preklete dolgočasnega« monologa – počasi odločilo, večidel zlasti na točki, ko je začel govoriti, da izgublja glavo, takrat niso vstali, niso ga pustili tam kot kakšnega norca, ampak so ostali, kot so bili, v polkrogu, čepe, nepremično, pač zaradi tega, zaradi česar so prišli, ker se je medtem spustil večer, ker jim je tema, ki se je zgrnila nanje v industrijski tišini somraka, zavezala jezik in ker je *to* negibno stanje brez besed že tako najgloblje izražalo njihovo pozornost, ki ji je, potem ko je Korin izpadel iz nje, ostala le še ena stvar: tiri tam spodaj.

4. V zraku je bil vonj po katranu, ogaben, prediren, gost vonj po katranu vsepovsod, čemur ni odpomogel niti močan veter, ker je veter, ki jih je sicer prepihal že do kosti, ta vonj samo odsunil kvišku in ga obračal, ni pa ga mogel spremeniti v kaj drugega, saj je v vsem okolishu, kilometre daleč, zlasti pa tukaj, v delti tirov, ki prihajajo z vzhoda in se pri priči kot konice pahljače tudi razbežijo, ter tovarne železniške postaje v Rákosrendezőju, ki se je izza njihovih hrbtov videla od tu, iz vsega tega je bil zrak, iz tega vonja po katranu, za katerega je bilo navsezadnje precej težko reči, iz česa vsega še sestoji poleg sajastih usedlin pa dima in vonja sto in sto tisočev drdrajočih kompozicij vlakov, umazanih železniških pragov, gramoza in jeklenih tirov, a brez dvoma ne samo iz teh, ampak tudi iz drugih, bolj skritih elementov, ki jih komajda lahko opišemo ali poimenujemo, med njimi je zagotovo tudi to nepopisno breme človeške jalovosti, ki so ga vozili v teh

sto in sto tisočih drdrajočih kompozicijah semkaj in tjakaj, gledajoč iz višine nadhoda milijonska želja po bruhanju, nakopičena v docela strašljivo brezciljnost, ki jo je zagotovo hranil tudi lebdeči duh opustelosti, zapuščenosti in pošastne tovarniške otrplosti, duh, ki je skozi desetletja zlagoma sklenil krila nad to pokrajino, v kateri se je Korin zdaj trudoma želel nastaniti, on, ki je prvotno hotel na svojem begu samo – neopazno, hitro in neslišno – priti na drugo stran in nadaljevati pot proti domnevnemu središču mesta, zdaj pa se je moral, lahko rečemo, spoprijeti s položajem na tej hladni, prepisni točki sveta in se držati opore – ograja, rob pločnika, asfalt, kovina – iz višine oči se zdijo pomembnejši, ampak seveda le v naključnih podrobnostih, da bi tako postal neki železniški nadhod, nekaj sto metrov pred tovorno železniško postajo v Rákosrendezőju, kakor se neki neobstoječi kos sveta preobrazi v obstoječi kos sveta, ena od pomembnih zgodnjih postaj njegovega novega življenja ali, kot je sam formuliral kasneje, »obsedenosti s sindromom amok«, neki nadhod, preko katerega bi, če ga ne bi zadržali, slepo zdrvel na drugo stran.

8. Luči sta goreli samo nad stopnicami gor in stopnicami dol, od vetra, ki je spet in spet butal vanje, in spuščali svetlobo v ločenih, puščobnih in drgetavih stožcih, vse druge neonke med tema dvema lučema oziroma v razdalji tridesetih metrov pa so bile razbite, tako da do mesta, kjer so čepeli, svetloba nikakor ni mogla prodreti; pa vendar so drug drugega dobro čutili, kakor tudi temno, gromozansko maso neba zaradi razbitih neonk, kot bi nebo lahko videlo svojo temno in gromozansko maso, trepetajočo od zvezd, četudi v tej silni, razprostranjeni železniški krajini pod njimi, v lastnem odsevu, če bi bila možna kakšna zveza med trepetavimi nebesnimi zvezdami in topo rdečino številnih semaforskih parov, raztresenimi med tiri, toda ni bilo zveze med njimi, saj ni bilo skupnega reda in ni bilo medsebojne povezanosti, bila je zgolj ločena povezanost zgoraj in spodaj in vsepovsod, ker so zvezde in semaforski gozd gledali drug na drugega kot slepci, kot so bile slepe druga za drugo tudi vse velike postavke bivanja, slepa je tema in slepo je žarenje, slepa je zemlja in slepo je nebo, da bi lahko končno v izgubljenem pogledu nekega višjega motrenja nastala neka mrtva simetrija prostranosti z majčkeno piko v sredini: kot so Korin ... na nadhodu ... in sedmerica otrok.

13. *Nekako sem lahko pil iz reke Lete*, je razlagal Korin in medtem, ko je pobito zmajeval z glavo in tudi s tem naznanjal, da on verjetno

ne bo mogel nikoli spoznati okoliščin poteka stvari, privlekel na dan škatlico Marlboro: *Ima kdo pri sebi ogenj?*

14. Povečini so bili vsi enake starosti, najmlajši je bil star enajst let, najstarejši pa morda trinajst ali štirinajst, vsak je imel pri sebi skrito vsaj eno britvico v toku, in ne samo da je bila tam pritajena, ampak so vsi od najmanjšega do največjega znali tudi do popolnosti rokovati s to britvico, ki so jo imenovali »simpel«, če je bila ena sama, če so bile tri skupaj, pa »set«, tako da med njimi ni bilo nobenega, ki je ne bi mogel, in to v enem samem trenutku, potegniti ven in jo poravnati med dvema prstoma v napeti dlani, ne da bi pri tem trenil s pogledom, strogo pripetim na žrtev, da bi potem na tistem, ki se je ravno znašel na vrsti, bliskovito hitro našel žilo na vratu – to je bilo to, kar so najbolj znali, zlasti skupaj, vseh sedem, naenkrat, zato so bili tudi nevarni brez primere in se je njihova slava že širila okoli, seveda so tudi vadili brez prestanka, vse dokler se niso izurili do te stopnje, vadili in usposabljali pa so se po natančnem načrtu, vse to izvedli sto in stokrat na vedno drugih mestih, dokler pač ni vse teklo z neposnemljivo hitrostjo, ki je ni bilo več mogoče povečevati, in z medsebojno usklajenostjo, da so potem od trenutka, ko so usvojili stopnjo brezhibnosti, od trenutka, ko je pri napadu brez besede padla odločitev, kdo v danem primeru stopi naprej, kdo ostane v ozadju in v kakšnem redu, tudi širokoustenje ni bilo več na mestu, preprosto se sploh ni dalo več govoriti o zadevi, tako popolno je bilo njihovo bivanje skupaj, pogled na brizgajočo kri pa jim je tako sam od sebe zamašil usta, zavezal jezik, jih discipliniral in zresnil, v določenem smislu celo zelo zresnil, kar je bilo tudi zanje prehudo breme, torej so potrebovali nekaj, kar jih bo odvedlo k smrti bolj igrivo, bolj naključno, se pravi s kančkom tveganja, saj so vsi iskali to, tako se je obrnilo, to jih je zanimalo in zato so hodili sem, to je bil razlog, da so že nekaj popoldnevov prebili tukaj, v lastno zabavo, že nekaj tednov kar nekaj popoldnevov in zgodnjih večerov.

15. V njegovem gibu, je dejal Korin naslednjega dne v pisarni letalske družbe MALÉV, res ni bilo nič dvomljivega, vse je bilo tako normalno, tako zelo vsakdanje, takrat namreč, ko je segel v žep po cigaretno škatlico, tako nedolžno in nenevarno, pravzaprav nekaj čisto spontanega, hipna domislica, češ, kaj ko bi z nečim, na primer z nekakšno prijateljsko kretnjo sprostil nekaj napetosti, preprost poskus, da bi s ponujanjem cigarete v krogu malce omilil položaj,

skratka res, je dejal, čisto tako je bilo, ne pretirava, vse se mu je že zdelo možno, samo to ne, da bo v trenutku, ko bo njegova roka potegnila iz žepa na dan škatlico Marlboro, na njegovem zapestju že neka druga roka, a ga ni zgrabila kot okovi, ampak ga je ohromila, zapestje pa je v trenutku oblila toplota, čutil je, kako so mu oslabele mišice, je še naslednjega dne pripovedoval ves osupel, a samo tiste, ki so držale škatlico Marlboro, vmes pa ni bilo slišati niti enega samega glasu, še več, z izjemo najbližjega otroka, ki je z dih jemajočo akrobatsko spretnostjo pač narobe razumel njegov gib in planil nanj, ostali pa se niso niti ganili, ampak so uprli pogled v škatlico Marlboro na tleh, nakar jo je eden izmed njih pobral, vzal iz nje cigareto, predal škatlico naprej drugemu, da je tako potem škatlica potovala po vrsti do zadnjega, medtem ko se je on, Korin, v strahu delal, kot da se ni nič zgodilo, kot da se je pripetila samo malenkostna, smešna nezgoda, nevredna besede, ki ji tudi sam ne pripisuje pomena, z *nedolžno* roko pa nagonsko prijel ranjeno zapestje, čeprav ni pri priči razumel, kaj se je zgodilo, ko pa je počasi vendarle dojel, je pritisnil palec na majceno rano, res ni bilo hujšega, je pripovedoval, majcen, drobcen rez, potem pa, ko se je nenadno, brezumno bobnenje, ropotanje in trušč v glavi, običajno v takšnih primerih, počasi poglelo, je isto glavo oblil nekakšen mir, tako kot prej kri zapestje, oziroma, je izjavil odločno naslednjega dne, je bil takrat že povsem prepričan, da ga bodo ubili.

19. Pod njimi je grmel nov dolg tovor in nadhod je vnovič rahlo zadrhtel in drhtel vse dotlej, dokler ni odpeljal – in pustil za sabo samo dve poskakujoči rdeči piki – tudi zadnji vagon je bil vse tišji, drdranje koles je hitro zamrlo in takrat se je ne več kot meter visoko pojavila jata netopirjev in v švistu poletela za kompozicijo proti Rákosrendezőju; leteli so brez vsakega šuma, povsem brezglasno in v zaprtem redu kot v obliki srednjeveške prikazni, tesno drug poleg drugega, s skrivnostno stalno hitrostjo so švigali strogo med dvema tiroma naprej, kar je bilo videti, kot da se pustijo vleči v Budimpešto, kot da izkoriščajo zračni hodnik, ustvarjen z gibanjem vlaka, ki jim kaže pot in jih nosi, vali in srka dalje, da bodo lahko brez napora, ne da bi trenili in razprostrtih kril, v temi dosegli Budimpešto meter visoko nad železniškimi pragovi.

## *Ne potrebujem ničesar od tu*

Jaz bi vse pustil tukaj, doline, hribe, iz vrta šoje in stezice, vse, razen šila in kopita, tukaj bi pustil nebo in zemljo, pomlad in jesen, tukaj bi pustil poti, ki vodijo ven, noči v kuhinji, zadnji zaljubljeni pogled, vse smeri proti mestom, ob katerih te spreletava srh, tu bi pustil gost somrak, spuščajoč se na pokrajino, težo, upanje, čar in mir, tukaj bi pustil ljubljene in bližnje, vse, kar me je ganilo, pretreslo, potegnilo s seboj in povzdignilo, tukaj bi pustil plemenito, dobrohotno, prijetno in demonsko lepo, tukaj bi pustil vse brsteče popke, vsa rojstva in bitja, tukaj bi pustil čarovnijo, skrivnost, vrtoglavico daljav, neizčrpnosti in večnosti: ker bi tukaj pustil to zemljo in te zvezde, ker od tukaj ne bi vzel ničesar s seboj, ker sem pogledal v to, kar prihaja, in ne potrebujem ničesar od tu.

*Prevedla Marjanca Mihelič*

## *At the latest in Turin*

A good hundred years ago, in 1889, on a day very like today in Turin, Friedrich Nietzsche sets out from the gate of number 6, Via Carlo Alberto, possibly to take a walk, perhaps in order to go to the post office to pick up his mail. Not far off, though it may be very far from him by that time, he spots the driver of a carriage – let us suppose! – struggling with an obstinate horse. However the driver chides the horse the horse refuses to move and so the driver – Giuseppe? Carlo? Ettore? – loses his temper and starts beating the animal with his whip. Nietzsche arrives at this, let us call it, fracas, though by this time the singular drama of the the driver, who is no doubt sweating and exhausted by his fury, is over. But the enormous figure with the resplendent moustache suddenly leaps over to the driver and – to the barely hidden amusement of the crowd – embraces the horse’s neck and starts sobbing. His landlord takes him home where he lies on a divan for two days without speaking or moving before pronouncing the obligatory last words (“Mutter, ich bin dumm”) then, in the care of his sister and his gentle, grief-crazed mother he lives on for another ten years. No-one knows what happened to the horse.

That is, one should say, a highly unreliable account – though the natural tendency at such times to believe strong narratives lends it a certain credence and casts a particularly intense light on the last acts of the spirit according to a dramatized model of the intellect. The demonic star of living philosophy, the brilliant opponent of so-called “universal human truths”, the inimitable hero who almost chokes on the word “No!” when he denies sympathy, forgiving and goodness – is he really hanging on to the neck of a *flogged* horse? To deploy an unforgivably common but necessary objection: how come he’s not hanging on to the neck of the driver?

With great respect to Doctor Möbius to whom all this represented nothing more than a simple case of progressive paralysis common to syphilitics, we later generations feel we are witnessing, as if by flashlight, a tragic mistake: what we see is the very soul of Nietzsche, after a long and exhausting struggle, saying No to a line of Nietzsche’s own thought that was bound to lead to a particular form of hell. Thomas Mann suggests his mistake was that “the gentle prophet of a life of passions regarded life and morality as opposing values. The truth,” he adds, “is that they are inseparable. Ethics supports life and moral man is the true citizen of life.” This statement of Mann’s is so beautiful, such an unconditionally noble sentiment, that it might be worth

taking some time out and sailing on with it, but we won't do that now since our ship is being steered by Nietzsche as he was in Turin and this means not only sailing other waters but requires an entirely different nervous system, indeed a condition that, in an appropriate turn of phrase, we might regard as approaching nervelessness. And we will need it because, to our extreme consternation, it entails us sailing into exactly the same harbor as Mann's sentence does: we will need it because while the harbor is the same, what we feel on our arrival will be very different from what he promises us we will feel.

The drama of Nietzsche in Turin suggests that living in the spirit of the moral law can not be regarded as a virtue because we have no choice. I may live counter to the spirit but that does not release me from the mysterious and truly unnameable power that binds me firmly to it. If I do do so, and live counter to it, I will certainly adjust to the regrettable social existence that locates me in the human scheme of things with all those concomitant limits on crude intervention within which nothing can possibly surprise anyone, and where – in Nietzsche's own words – “to live is to be unjust”, but I don't know where I stand in the unresolvable conflict that from time to time lands me right at the heart of a desperate yearning for the meaning of my existence. Because in so far as I am part of the social world I am also part of something I always name as (who knows why?) the greater whole, a greater whole that has – to take a passing glance at the Kantian categorical imperative – implanted a law in me, this particular law: that it is the sad prerogative of freedom to negate freedom.

We are now steering past the buoys of the dock, a little blindly, because the sleeping staff of the lighthouse cannot help us with our maneuvers, ready as we are, once safely within the walls of the harbor, to cast anchor in the dim light at which point any question about whether the greater whole is likely to reflect the higher meanings of the enigma is immediately lost in the darkness. And so that is where we are, knowing nothing, only watching as our fellow humans slowly approach us from a thousand different angles, not trying to communicate, our communion completely filling us, silencing us. And we think we are right to have this sense of communion, that those approaching us are also right in having it, because even if they don't have it now, they'll have it tomorrow... or in ten... or in thirty years time.

At the latest in Turin.

*Translated by George Szirtes*

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## *The Nature of a Writer's Power*

It lies within a writer's power to envisage and accept that if it is still at all possible to respond to the question relating to the writer's power, by the same token it is still impossible to give an answer to the real expectation inherent in the question, though maybe as yet concealed to the questioner, for the answer, which does not get to the heart of the questioner's question and that the questioner does not understand, is no answer; yet right in the middle of a troubled period of historical hopes and visions he, the questioner, would no doubt be unable to understand that an end has been reached, an end to the happy world of mutual allusiveness, an end to our linked cultures' poetic binding material, that irretrievable blend of love and a kind of sensitivity to beauty and a desire for universal discovery; and he would no doubt not understand that this binding material was already gradually starting to lose its strength from the beginning of the 20th century, as conceived in the conventional manner of the preceding century, and, in the merciless wind which was blowing from the 21st century, was starting to moulder from between the bricks of the glorious walls that gird our cities, so that this next century, the 21st, as dreamed in the 20th, would be governed by a truly brand-new (and for us frightening) fact, the idea of all-consuming growth-fixated profit of which all we notice now is that the reality of place and individuality are disappearing, and that both place and individuality are losing their original meaning insofar as we are no longer able to assert (as we were right up until the 19th century) that there is something here or there, or else (as in the 19th century) there was something, given that "according to the present state of knowledge" things were there yet not there, are here yet not here, and meanwhile the reality that had become or was becoming the past is our sole, albeit incomprehensible experience – how, then, could we explain to the questioner that the idea of an individuality that is now falling into extinction is roughly a signal that, after the final revolution in society, the part of mankind that still has the capability at all is now about to change afresh, and again what we see is that children turn to their parents in a slightly different way, and parents likewise to their children, the youngster slightly differently to the older person and the older person to the youngster, a woman differently to a man just as a man to a woman, so how should we explain

to him that we are without a home, a state or sight of the world, and that in the present spiritual moment, sadly, no amount of hysterical clinging to the home, the state and the world can do *anything* about this, and how are we going to make the questioner understand that there is no place at all here for sadness about this, instead we must far rather nod our assent to this and that, to everything that is going to happen, with an impassive, post-Keaton expression, and suffer the undeniable bitterness accordingly like adults, in just the way that – to avail myself, briefly and by way of a farewell, of the intimate tone of a personal confession – returning home one day from I know not where, by train as it happened, between five-thirty and quarter to six on a *deliberately* hot and scorching summer evening, I noticed for the first time that I felt no pleasure at all over arriving back home, and since then I have been incapable of feeling pleasure over arriving back home, not that I have no desire to feel pleasure over arriving back home but (and this is what always makes me so despondent) because it is precisely on the homeward-bound journey that I am incapable of feeling pleasure over arriving back home, although in the other direction, which is to say when my movement is in the “moving away from home” direction, I don’t feel any pleasure of relief or curiosity but an absolute certainty of hopelessness, because right then I am moving away from the very thing that, I suppose, I ought to be continually approaching, just as, I suppose, it would also be very hard to explain that, according to the sense of the above story, in truth we have nothing to do with the culture of the century in which we happen to be living, and meanwhile it is precisely this that is in truth impossible to comprehend with our old brains, that there is nowhere and no reason, impossible to accept that our age has not sought the fact and cause of true beauties or beautiful illusions in nature beyond mankind but has far rather explored the fact and cause of horrors, and no doubt with good reason, since in truth it lighted upon these, exclusively, so it could have searched here at least, in this larger entity, the questioner would object, but it didn’t do so because it became blinded in the horror of human nature, and after all this we would fall silent, we would not in the end utter so much as a single word, just put the whole thing into words after a while, the thought that it’s impossible that it is over, it has ceased, there is homelessness and statelessness everywhere, and only words are left, words for ever: about hope, about a remote belief and dignity that we can never forego.

## *War and War*

(excerpt from the novel)

### I.

#### **Like a Burning House**

1. *I no longer care if I die*, said Korin, then, after a long silence, pointed to the nearby flooded quarry: *Are those swans?*

2. Seven children squatted in a semi-circle surrounding him in the middle of the railway footbridge, almost pressing him against the barrier, just as they had done some half an hour earlier when they first attacked him in order to rob him, exactly so in fact, except that by now none of them thought it worthwhile either to attack or to rob him, since it was obvious that, on account of certain unpredictable factors, robbing or attacking him was possible but pointless because he really didn't seem to have anything worth taking, the only thing he did have appearing to be some mysterious burden, the existence of which, gradually, at a certain point in Korin's madly rambling monologue – which “to tell you the truth,” as they said, “was boring as shit”- became apparent, most acutely apparent in fact, when he started talking about the loss of his head, at which point they did not stand up and leave him babbling like some halfwit, but remained where they were, in the positions they had originally intended to adopt, squatting immobile in a semi-circle, because the evening had darkened around them, because the gloom descending silently on them in the industrial twilight numbed them, and because this frozen dumb condition had drawn their most intense attention, not to the figure of Korin which had swum beyond them, but to the one object remaining: the rails below.

4. The air was full of the sharp, nauseous smell of tar that cut through everything, nor did the strong wind help because the wind, that had chilled them through to the bone, merely intensified and whipped the smell up without being able to substitute anything else for it in return, the whole neighborhood for several kilometers being thick with it, but here more than anywhere else, for it emanated directly from the Rákos railway yard, from that still visible point where the rails concentrated and began to fan out, ensuring that air and tar would be indistinguishable, making it very hard to tell what else,

apart from soot and smoke, that smell – composed of the hundreds and thousands of trains that rumbled through, the filthy sleepers, the rubble and the metallic stench of the rails – comprised, and it wouldn't be just these but other, more obscure, almost indiscernible ingredients, ingredients without name, that would certainly have included the weight of human futility ferried here by hundreds and thousands of carriages, the scary and sickening view from the bridge of the power of a million wills bent to a single purpose and, just as certainly, the dreary spirit of desolation and industrial stagnation that had hovered about the place and settled on it decades ago, in all of which Korin was now endeavoring to locate himself, having originally determined simply to cross over to the far side as quickly, silently and inconspicuously as possible in order to escape into what he supposed to be the city center, instead of which he was having, under present circumstances, to pull himself together at a cold and draughty point of the world, and to hang on to whatever incidental detail he could make out, from his eye-level at any rate, whether this was barrier, curb, asphalt or metal, or appeared the most significant, if only so that this footbridge, some hundred meters from the railway yard, might become a passage between the non-existing to the existing section of the world, forming therefore an important early adjunct, as his later put it, to his mad life as a fugitive, a bridge that, had he not been detained, he would have rushed obliviously across.

8. The only lamps burning were those at the top of the stairs and the light they gave out fell in dingy cones that shuddered in the intermittent gusts of wind that assailed them because the other neon lights positioned in the thirty or so meters between them had all been broken, leaving them squatting in darkness, yet as aware of each other, of their precise positions, as of the enormous mass of dark sky above the smashed neon, the sky which might have glimpsed the reflection of its own enormous dark mass as it trembled with stars in the vista of railway yards spreading below it, had there been some relationship between the trembling stars and the twinkling dull red semaphore of lights sprinkled among the rails, but there wasn't, there was no common denominator, no interdependence between them, the only order and relationship existing within the discrete worlds of above and below, and indeed of anywhere, for the field of stars and the forest of signals stared as blankly at each other as does each and every form of being, blind in darkness and blind

in radiance, as blind on earth as it is in heaven, if only so that a long moribund symmetry among this vastness might appear in the lost glance of some higher being, at the center of which, naturally, there would be a miniscule blind-spot: as with Korin. the footbridge. the seven kids.

13. *I must somehow have drunk of the waters of Lethe*, Korin explained, and while disconsolately wagging his head as if to convey to them that the understanding of the manner and consequence of events would probably always lie beyond him, he brought out a box of Marlboros: *Anyone got a light?*

14. They were roughly the same age, the youngest being eleven, the oldest perhaps thirteen or fourteen, but every one of them had at least one slip-cased razor-blade nestling by his side, nor was it just a matter of nestling there, for each of them, from the youngest to the oldest, was capable of handling it expertly, whether it was of the simple “singleton” kind or the triple sort they referred to as “the set”, and not one of them lacked the ability to yank the thing forth in the blinking of an eyelid and slip it between two fingers into the tense palm without the merest flickering of outward emotion while gazing steadily at the victim so that whichever of them happened to be in the right position could, quick as a flash, find the artery on the neck, this being the skill they had most perfectly mastered, a skill which rendered them, when all seven of them were together, so exceptionally dangerous that they had begun to earn a genuinely well-deserved reputation, only through constant practice, of course, the practice that enabled them to achieve their current level of performance and involved a carefully planned course of training that they carried through at constantly changing venues, repeating the same moves a hundred times, over and over again, until they could execute the moves with inimitable, blinding speed and such perfect co-ordination that in the course of an attack, they knew instinctively, without saying a word to each other, not only who would advance and who would stand, but how those standing would form up, nor was there any room for boasting, you couldn’t even think of it, so faultless was their teamwork, and in any case, the sight of gushing blood was enough to stop their mouths and render them dumb, disciplined and solemn, perhaps even too solemn, for the solemnity was something of a burden to them, leaving them with a

desire for some course of action that would lead rather more playfully, more fortuitously, that is to say entailing a greater risk of failure, to the fact of death, since this was what they all sought, this was the way things had developed, this was what interested them, in fact it was the reason they had gathered here in the first place, the reason they had already spent a good many afternoons, so many weeks of afternoons and early evenings, passing the time right here.

15. There was absolutely nothing ambiguous about the way he moved, said Korin next day in the MALEV tourist office, the whole thing being so completely normal, so ordinary, the reaching for his cigarettes so perfectly innocent and harmless that it was merely a kind of instinct, the result of an on-the-spur-of-the-moment notion that he might lessen the tension and thereby ease his own situation by a friendly gesture such as the offering of cigarettes, for really, no exaggeration, it was just that and nothing more, and while he expected almost anything to happen as a result, what he did not expect was to find another hand holding his wrist by the time his had reached the Marlboros in his pocket, a hand that did not grip the way a pair of handcuffs would, but one that rendered him immobile and sent a flood of warmth lapping across his wrist, or so he explained the next day, still in a state of shock, while at the same time, he continued, he felt his muscles weaken, only those muscles that were grasping the pack of Marlboros, and all this happened without a word being exchanged and, what was more – apart from the child nearest to him, who had responded so nimbly and with such breath-taking skill to the gesture he had misinterpreted – the group did not move an inch, but merely glanced at the falling Marlboro packet, until one of them eventually lifted it up, opened it and drew out a cigarette, passed it on to the next, and so forth to the end while he, Korin, in his terror, behaved as though nothing had happened, nothing significant at least, or, if anything had happened it was only by accident so minor and so unworthy of mention as to be laughable, an accident that left him gripping his wounded wrist with his blameless hand, not quite understanding what had happened, and even when he did eventually realize, he merely pressed his thumb against the tiny nick, for that was all it was, he told them, a miniscule cut, and when the expected rush of panic, with its attendant throbbing, trembling, and loud noises in the head began to die away, an icy calm had lapped about him in much the same

way as the blood had lapped about his wrist, in other words, as he declared the next day, he was utterly convinced that they were going to kill him.

19. Another long goods train rumbled by below them and the foot-bridge shook gently along its whole length until the train was gone - leaving two blinking red lights in its wake - when the noise of the very last wagon began to fade along with the rattling of wheels, and, in the newly settled silence, after the two red lights disappearing in the distance, just above the rails, no more than a meter high, a flock of bats appeared and followed the train towards the Rákosrendező, utterly silent, without the least sound, like some medieval battery of ghosts, in close order, at even pace, indeed at a mysteriously even pace, swooping strictly between the parallel lines of the rails, suggesting somehow that they were being drawn towards Budapest or riding in the slipstream of the train as it went, the train that was showing them the way, carrying them, drawing them, sucking them on so that they could travel perfectly effortlessly, with steady, spread wings, reaching Budapest, at a precise height of one meter above the sleepers.

*Translated by George Szirtes*

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## *I Don't Need Anything from Here*

I would leave everything here: the valleys, the hills, the paths, and the jaybirds from the gardens, I would leave here the peacocks and the padres, heaven and earth, spring and fall, I would leave here the exit routes, the evenings in the kitchen, the last amorous gaze, and all of the city-bound directions that make you shudder, I would leave here the thick twilight falling upon the land, gravity, hope, enchantment, and tranquility, I would leave here those beloved and those close to me, everything that touched me, everything that shocked me, fascinated and uplifted me, I would leave here the noble, the benevolent, the pleasant, and the demonically beautiful, I would leave here the budding sprout, every birth and existence, I would leave here incantation, enigma, distances, inexhaustibility, and the intoxication of eternity; for here I would leave this earth and these stars, because I would take nothing with me from here, because I've looked into what's coming, and I don't need anything from here.

*Translated by Otilie Mulzet*



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**Slovenski avtor  
v središču 2014**

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*Slovenian Author  
in Focus 2014*

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*Foto © Agnese Divo*

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# Marko Sosič

Marko Sosič se je rodil leta 1958 v Trstu v Italiji. Je pisatelj in režiser. Leta 1984 je diplomiral iz režije na Akademiji za gledališko in filmsko umetnost v Zagrebu. Režiral je v različnih slovenskih in italijanskih gledališčih in na televiziji. Kratko prozo je začel objavljati ob koncu osemdesetih let v revijah *Sodobnost* in *Mladje*. Več let je bil umetniški vodja Primorskega dramskega gledališča v Novi Gorici in umetniški vodja ter ravnatelj Slovenskega stalnega gledališča v Trstu. Bil je selektor za gledališki festival Teden slovenske drame, v sezonah 2003/04 in 2004/05 pa tudi selektor osrednjega slovenskega gledališkega festivala Borštnikovo srečanje. Piše romane, kratko prozo, scenarije in dramske priredbe. Za svoje delo je prejel več literarnih in gledaliških nagrad.

Marko Sosič was born in 1958 in Trieste, Italy. He is a writer and director. Having graduated from the Zagreb Academy of Dramatic Art in 1984, he has worked as a director for various Slovenian and Italian theatres and for TV. He began to publish his short prose in the *Sodobnost* and *Mladje* literary magazines in the late 1980s. He was the artistic director of the Primorje Drama Theatre in Nova Gorica, and the artistic director and general manager of the Slovenian Permanent Theatre in Trieste for several years. He was the selector for the Week of Slovenian Drama theatre festival during the seasons of 2003/04 and 2004/05, as well as for the Borštnik Festival – the main Slovenian event dedicated to the art of theatre. He is a novelist, short story writer, scriptwriter and author of adaptations for theatre. His work has been honoured with a string of awards for literature and theatre.

## Izbor nagrad in priznanj

- 1997 Nagrada festivala Zlata paličica za najboljšo režijo otroške predstave *Palček* Slovenskega stalnega gledališča v Trstu.
- 1998 Tržaška nagrada Vstajenje za kratki roman *Balerina, Balerina*.
- 1998 Nominacija za nagrado Kresnik za najboljši slovenski roman za delo *Balerina, Balerina*.
- 2000 Nagrada festivala Zlata paličica za najboljšo režijo predstave *Maček, ki je naučil galebko leteti* (po Luisu Sepúlvedi).
- 2005 Posebno priznanje Umberta Sabe za roman *Balerina, Balerina*.
- 2005 Prva nagrada »Città di Salò«.
- 2007 Nominacija za »Premio Strega International« za roman *Balerina, Balerina*.
- 2008 Z romanom *Balerina, Balerina* uvrščen med deset najboljših slovenskih romanov po letu 1989 v okviru projekta *100 slovanskih romanov* Foruma slovanskih kultur.
- 2006 Nominacija za nagrado Prešernovega sklada za roman *Tito, amor mijo*.
- 2006 Nominacija za nagrado Kresnik za najboljši slovenski roman za delo *Tito, amor mijo*.
- 2012 Nominacija za nagrado Fabula za najboljšo zbirko kratkih zgodb *Iz zemlje in sanj*.
- 2012 Nominacija za nagrado Kritiško sito Društva slovenskih literarnih kritikov za kratkoprozno zbirko *Iz zemlje in sanj*.
- 2013 Nominacija za nagrado Kresnik za najboljši slovenski roman za delo *Ki od daleč prihajaš v mojo bližino*.
- 2013 Nominacija za nagrado Kritiško sito Društva slovenskih literarnih kritikov za delo *Ki od daleč prihajaš v mojo bližino*.

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*Balerina, Balerina* (kratki roman), Mladika, Trst 1997.

*Tito, amor mijo* (roman), Litera, Maribor 2005.

*Iz zemlje in sanj* (kratka proza), Litera, Maribor 2011.

*Ki od daleč prihajaš v mojo bližino* (roman), Študentska založba (knjižna zbirka Beletrina), Ljubljana 2012.

*Onkraj dreves: dnevnik njenega glasu / Al di là degli alberi: diario della sua voce*, risbe Guido Scarabottolo, uredil in prevedel Michele Obit, Cooperativa Novi Matajur / Zadruga Novi Matajur, Cividale del Friuli / Čedad 2013.

**Objave v antologijah (izbor):**

*V meni prevrat* (skupaj z Alešem Bergerjem). V: *Štiri zgodbe za eno življenje*, Kulturno društvo Vilenica, Sežana 2004.

*Jaz slutim toliko lepote* (skupaj z Miranom Košuto). V: *Štiri zgodbe za eno življenje*, Kulturno društvo Vilenica, Sežana 2004.

*Počitek v senci*. V: *Poletne zgodbe*, Delo, Ljubljana 2011.

*Kakor sube trave*. V: Peter Handke: *Še vedno vihar*, Gledališki list SNG Drama Ljubljana, let. XCII, št. 10, maj 2013.

*Prezir*. V: *Miti naši vsakdanji*, Študentska založba (knjižna zbirka Žepna Beletrina), Ljubljana 2013.

*Svetle hlače, sinja snajca*. V: *Dogodek v mestu*, Goga (Literarna zbirka), Novo mesto 2013.

**Prevodi**

*Verso dove: scritture di confine da Merano a Trieste*, antologija, uredila Laura Mautone, Fernandel, Ravenna 2003.

*Ballerina, Ballerina: romanzo breve*, v italijanščino prevedla Darja Betocchi, Ibiscos, Empoli 2005.

*Ballerina, Ballerina* (odlomek iz romana), v angleščino prevedla Maja Visenjak Limon, v: *Contemporary Slovenian Novel*, Center for Slovenian Literature, Ljubljana 2009.

*Parole d'avena / Ovsene besede*, v italijanščino prevedli Darja Betocchi in Jasmina Gustincic, Associazione temporanea di scopo Jezik – Lingua / Ciljnočasno združenje Jezik – Lingua, Trieste / Trst 2011.

*Balerina, Balerina*, v srbsčino prevedla Ana Ristović, Arhipelag, Beograd 2012.

*Tito, amor mijo*, v italijanščino prevedla Darja Betocchi, Comunicarte, Trieste 2012.

*Balerina, Balerina*, v hrvaščino prevedla Sanja Širec Rovis, Istarski ogranak Društva hrvatskih književnika, Pula 2013.

*Balerina, Balerina*, v francoščino prevedla Zdenka Štimac, Éditions franco-slovènes & Cie, Montreuil 2013.

*Ballerina, Ballerina*, v angleščino prevedla Maja Visenjak Limon, Dalkey Archive Press, Champaign, Illinois 2014.

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**Selected Prizes and Awards**

- 1997 The Golden Baton Festival Award for best direction for the staging of the children's play *Palček* (The Gnome) at the Slovene Permanent Theatre in Trieste.
- 1998 Trieste Literature Prize for the short novel *Balerina, Balerina (Balerina, Ballerina)*.
- 1998 Nomination for the Kresnik Award for the best Slovene novel of the year for *Balerina, Balerina (Ballerina, Ballerina)*.
- 2000 The Golden Baton Festival Award for best direction for the staging of the play *Maček, ki je naučil galebko leteti* (adaptation of the tale *The Story of a Seagull and the Cat Who Taught Her to Fly* by Luis Sepúlveda).
- 2005 Umberto Saba Special Award for the novel *Balerina, Balerina (Balerina, Ballerina)*.
- 2005 Città di Salò Premier Award.
- 2007 Nomination for the "Premio Strega International" prize for the novel *Balerina, Balerina (Ballerina, Ballerina)*.
- 2008 The novel *Balerina, Balerina (Ballerina, Ballerina)* is ranked among the 10 best Slovenian novels published after 1989 by the Forum for Slavic Cultures within the project *100 slovanskih romanov* (100 Slavic Novels).
- 2006 Nomination for the Slovenian Prešeren Fund Award for the novel *Tito, amor mijo*.
- 2006 Nomination for the Kresnik Award for the best Slovenian novel of the year for the book *Tito, amor mijo*.
- 2012 Nomination for the Fabula award for the best Slovenian collection of short stories for *Iz zemlje in sanj* (Out of Earth and Dreams).
- 2012 Nomination for the "Kritiško sito" prize awarded by the Slovenian Literary Critics' Association for the collection of short stories *Iz zemlje in sanj* (Out of Earth and Dreams).
- 2013 Nomination for the Kresnik Award for the best Slovenian novel of the year for *Ki od daleč prihajaš v mojo bližino* (You Who Are Nearing Me from Far Away).
- 2013 Nomination for the "Kritiško sito" prize awarded by the Slovenian Literary Critics' Association for *Ki od daleč prihajaš v mojo bližino* (You Who Are Nearing Me from Far Away).

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**Marko Sosič**

**Slovenski avtor v središču 2014**

**Alojzija Zupan Sosič**

**Balerina, Balerina**

Že prva beseda, ki je hkrati kar prvi stavek romana *Balerina, Balerina*, napoveduje povsem drugačen roman in posebno literarno zgodbo. Medmet »ajaaaj« nas uvede v sanje prvoosebne pripovedovalke Balerine, v katerih letenju glavne literarne osebe sledi padanje, lirični podobi manjše vasice pa banalna ugotovitev, da pripovedovalko tišči lulat. Bralec se torej že po prvem odstavku zaveda, da glavno literarno osebo označuje nemoč razvozlati prehod med sanjskim in resničnim svetom, medtem ko se ga njena nelagodnost dotakne na čustveni in racionalni ravni. Že takoj za trenutek prekine z branjem in se vpraša nekako takole: »Kakšna (posebna) literarna oseba se mi je pravkar predstavila? Zakaj pripoveduje samo v sedanjem času? Ali bom razumel/a njeno pripoved?«

Pripovedna dela Marka Sosiča (1958) nas nagovarjajo na več ravneh in nam, kot je značilno za kvalitetno književnost, zastavljajo veliko vprašanj. Že od prve njegove knjige, zbirke kratke proze *Rosa na steklu* (1990), pa vse do zadnjega romana *Ki od daleč prihajaš v mojo bližino* (2012) se od ostalih sodobnih slovenskih del razlikujejo po nekaterih lastnostih, ki tvorijo jedro Sosičeve poetike. Med njimi je določujoča posebna realistična tehnika, ki z lirizacijo in izbiro posebnice ali posebnice kot glavnega lika ustvarja prepoznavno poetiko. Pripovedna realistična tehnika se razlikuje od večine sodobnih proznih del, v katerih prevladuje t. i. transrealizem, nova smer v zadnjih dvajsetih letih. Natančni popisi vsakodnevnih navad, življenjskega ritma in (ne)navadnih dogodkov se namreč izmikajo klasičnemu mimetizmu transrealizma, ko za vrati verizma odstirajo znatno več kot zvesto posnemanje življenja slovenske manjšine v Trstu, in z lirizacijo izmikajo predstavljeno resničnost preverljivosti in objektivnosti. Tipizacija, prepoznavna realistična lastnost, je prisotna prav zato, da bi s svojo ustaljeno pomensko konotacijo še bolj razgibala podobe enkratnih posebnic in posebnicev. Prav zadnje, izbira posebnega literarnega lika, z njegovo nezanesljivostjo izoblikuje poseben pogled na svet, potujen z različnimi viri nezanesljivosti. Izbira posebnice ali posebnice zastavlja vprašanja posameznika v svetu tako, da njihov etični problem odene v lirsko tančico.

Jedrne lastnosti Sosičeve poetike – posebna realistična tehnika, lirizacija in izbira posebneža ali posebnice – so prisotne v vseh njegovih pripovednih knjigah: v obeh zbirkah kratke proze (*Rosa na steklu*, *Iz zemlje in sanj*) in treh romanih (*Balerina*, *Balerina*, *Tito, amor mijo*, *Ki od daleč prihajaš v mojo bližino*). Pridružuje se jim še ena stalna lastnost, vezana na kronotop. Večina avtorjevih pripovedi si je namreč izbrala za literarno prizorišče Trst oziroma kraške vasice ob Trstu, naseljene z zamejskimi Slovenci. Tako kot izbira stalnega dogajalnega prostora ni samo odsev avtorjeve pokrajinske pripadnosti ali vezanosti na svoj rojstni kraj, tudi kronotopska zaznamovanost ni samo zrcaljenje konkretnih realij, saj simbolični nanosi obarvajo preproste skice tržaškega večkulturnega okolja v univerzalno podobo posameznikove usode. Ta je izrisana s pretanjeno občutljivostjo za nasprotje med večino in manjšino, med normalnim in nenormalnim ter običajnim in posebnim.

Največ posebnega vnaša v avtorjev opus in hkrati tudi v sodobni slovenski prostor prav izbira nezanesljivega pripovedovalca oziroma pripovedovalke. Ker nastopa v vseh pripovednih delih, se ne moremo izogniti splošnemu pripovednemu vprašanju: »Zakaj je pisatelj sploh zaupal pripovedovanje nezanesljivemu pripovedovalcu?«. To je ključno vprašanje, ki si ga pri branju nezanesljive pripovedi moramo zastaviti poleg bolj konkretnih, npr. koliko so podatki, ki jih pripovedovalec navaja, sploh točni, in koliko naj zaupamo njegovi interpretaciji in presoji. Splošni učinek nezanesljive pripovedi izvira iz usmerjanja bralčeve pozornosti z zgodbene ravnine na pripovedno raven, ki jo zavzema pripovedovalec, in s tem osredičenje na pripovedovalčeve posebnosti. Obstaja namreč veliko različnih razlogov nezanesljivosti, od pripovedovalčevega omejenega znanja, osebne vpletenosti in problematične vrednostne lestvice. Prav tako v Sosičevih pripovedih zaživijo uveljavljeni tipi tovrstnih pripovedovalcev, kot so psihični bolnik (norec), posebnež na razvojni stopnji otroka, otrok, naivnež in nevednež.

Roman *Balerina*, *Balerina* (1997) vsebuje že omenjene določnice samosvoje poetike, med katerimi je za slovenski prostor najbolj inovativna prav izbira nezanesljive pripovedovalke, posebnice na razvojni stopnji otroka. Izbira posebneža sicer ni novost, saj je že prvi slovenski roman *Deseti brat* (1866) zaznamovan prav z njim; novost je njegova postavitve v položaj pripovedovalca in izenačitev nezanesljive pripovedovalke s t. i. vključeno pripovedovalko, v svetovnem merilu pa je to odstopanje od literarne tradicije nezanesljivega

pripovedovalca, ki si je v preteklosti izbirala predvsem pikareskne in satirične romane. Pretresljivo zgodbo o povprečni slovenski družini iz vasice nad Trstom pripoveduje namreč Balerina, odrasla ženska na razvojni stopnji otroka, katere miselno-čustveni horizont je zaradi njene hibe omejen. Glavno junakinjo so poimenovali Balerina šele kasneje, ko je začela zaostajati v razvoju in se na nekatere dražljaje odzivati nenavadno: ob vznemirjenosti namreč stopa na prste kot balerina. Ker sveta izven domače kuhinje ne razume, se ga boji, hkrati pa se zaradi komunikacijske omejenosti oklepa le matere. V nemoči odzivati se na okolje lahko zaznamo globlja bivanjska vprašanja, kot npr. vprašanje nemoči zaradi (hierarhičnih) razlik med ljudmi, minljivosti in fatalizma, prepada med »nami in vami«, iskanja sreče ...

Balerinina izjemnost ima sicer zelo banalen in celo tragičen izvor: njen razvoj se je zaradi nepojasnjenih razlogov zaustavil na stopnji otroka, a je to dejstvo zaradi posebne miline in časovne odmaknjenosti (dogajanje je postavljeno v šestdeseta leta 20. stoletja) sublimirano v poetičnost in nostalgijo, medtem ko otroška perspektiva prelije tragičnost v empatijo otroškega vitalizma. Balerina nadaljuje zgledno tradicijo Kosmačeve galerije posebnežev, ki niso samo predstavniki manjše skupnosti, ampak tudi kazalniki posebne resničnosti, univerzalnih resnic in tenkočutne občutljivosti za nemočne ali odrinjene osebnosti. Perspektiva omejenega horizonta namesto socialnih poudarkov prislika estetske in emocionalne naglase, večje prestopanje meja med povprečnim in nadpovprečnim ter običajnim in izjemnim pa motivira etično dovzetnost do sveta in razpira bralčevo razumevanje drugačnosti. Že Bahtin je bil prepričan, da »maska« podeli posebnežu pravico nerazumevanja določenega pojava, zmotnosti presoje, hiperboliziranja in parodiziranja; tako je tudi Balerinina nevednost primerna za razkrinkovanje škodljive konvencionalnosti. Posebna kvaliteta Balerinine pripovedi je tudi to, da je prvoosebna pripoved obogatena z značilnostmi tretjeosebne, saj je pripovedovalka le opazovalka in ne aktivna udeleženka, kar povzroči neko razdaljo do dogajanja, ko celo sebe sliši kot iz daljave (»Zdi se mi, da slišim svoj glas, ko postavljam krožnike«).

V zakladnici slovenskih literarnih likov je Balerinina presežna vrednost tudi prilagojenost njenega govora: Balerina govori enostavno, v kratkih stavkih, s ponovitvami stavčnih vzorcev in istih ali podobnih besed. Ker je Balerina predvsem poročevalka in nam kot vključena pripovedovalka vseskozi poroča sproti, brez časovne

in intelektualne razdalje, se njene izjave zgostijo v neko univerzalno sedanjost. Čeprav se nizajo kot podobni členi, ne delujejo monotono, saj jih razgiba spoj fantastike in verizma, ritmizira pa ponavljanje hrepenenjskih podob, ki se vrtili okrog simbolov modre barve, ptice ter napevov *volare* in *cantare*. Poleg narečnih besed in posebne skladnje dialogov sta prav besedi *volare* in *cantare* iz italijanske popevke *Nel blu dipinto di blu* (Domenico Modugno) zelo pomembni, saj vnašata v roman pridih dvojezičnosti, večkulturnosti in duha šestdesetih let prejšnjega stoletja v Trstu. Njuna simbolika je pomenljiva: letenje in petje sta osrednja simbola romana, saj se letenje pojavi že na začetku romana in pomeni prehod v nadrealnost ali drugačno resničnost ter preseganje banalnosti in običajnosti, medtem ko ima tudi petje skoraj metafizične razsežnosti, sami junakinji pa pomeni terapevtsko dejavnost.

Prehod iz enega sveta v drugega je temeljno gibalno romana in se kaže na več ravneh. Na jezikovni se odraža v premikih iz slovenskega v italijansko okolje, iz knjižnega v pogovorni jezik in iz premege v poročani govor, na zgodbeni pa je to nenehna prepletenost slehernikov in posebnežev. Če pomeni na etični ravni prehod premikanje od nevednosti k moralni odgovornosti, je za estetsko raven predvsem pomembna prepustnost med fiziko in metafiziko, saj so prehodi od preverljive resničnosti k fantastiki in nadrealnosti potrjeni že s klasičnima simboloma prehodnosti, tj. ptico in modro barvo. Prav večplastnost in pripovedna izčiščenost glavnega lika je presežna vrednost Balerine tudi v svetovnem merilu. Po duševni zastonosti, ljubečnosti in moralnem zdravju je sicer najbolj podobna Benjaminu iz Faulknerjevega romana *Krik in bes* (1929), vendar je bistvena razlika med njima v obsežnosti posredovane resničnosti. Benjy (na stopnji triletnega otroka) kot magnetofonski trak obširno in natančno poroča o zunanjih dogodkih, prenaša celotne dialoge, stalno na robu konflikta, hkrati pa je njegova zgodba le ena izmed štirih različic izpovedi sestrine nesrečne usode. Balerinina pripoved je v tem smislu bolj skopa, a je glede prilagojenosti intelektualni starosti prepričljivejša, v estetskem smislu pa sploh dosti bolj odprta in večpomenska.

Nenadzorovano premakljiva meja med fikcijo in resničnostjo je za Balerino nelagodna in se je kot pripovedna nenavadnost napovedovala že v prvi Sosičevi knjigi *Rosa na steklu*, v kateri so literarni liki želeli na različne načine preseči svoje običajne danosti, kar označuje tudi desetletnega dečka, glavno osebo v drugem Sosičevem romanu

*Tito, amor mijo*, ki je spet postavljen v isti kronotop, Trst v šestdesetih letih dvajsetega stoletja. V okolje Trsta je postavljen tudi zadnji roman *Ki od daleč prihajaš v mojo bližino*, upodobitev posebneža Ivana Slokarja, tržaškega Slovenca in profesorja prirodoslovja, pa je drugačna, saj mora bralec postopoma sam ugotoviti vire njegove nezanesljivosti. Perspektiva odraslega nezanesljivega pripovedovalca je introvertirani svet tišine, ki ga je v *Balerini*, *Balerini* zapisovala gluha filmska kamera, ozvočila v predvsem etični problem, problem kolektivne in individualne krivde, vezan na motiv sorodnikov iz Bosne. V primerjavi z zadnjim Sosičevim romanom je v prvem prav molčeča predmetnost bralcu omogočila več asociativne kreativnosti, predvsem pri predstavitvi literarnih likov. Karakterizacijo namreč izdelata gibanje in obnašanje literarnih likov, kot jih vidi Balerina, ki ne podaja otipljive zunanje ali notranje podobe. Čeprav literarne osebe zaradi svojih nepopolnosti in neizpolnenih hrepenenj delujejo nesrečno, nam implicitni avtor sporoča, da je takšno pač življenje, bolj nesrečno kot srečno.

Od različnih romanesknih prehodov je eden izmed najbolj poglobljenih prav gotovo prehajanje od letenja k petju, ki ga na zvočni ravni vseskozi ponavlja že omenjeni napev *volare-cantare*, na strukturni pa uravnoteženje obeh simbolov skozi različne pripovedne prvine, najbolj očitno z razmerjem med začetkom in koncem romana. Če se roman začne z medmetom, ki uvaja strah pred letenjem, se konča s pesmijo pogrebcev, ki mrtvi Balerini obeta bližnje srečanje z mamo in njeno pesmijo. Pojav mrtve pripovedovalke je poleg že omenjene inovativne postavitve posebnice za nezanesljivo pripovedovalko največja novost v slovenski pripovedi, ki z ostalimi kvalitetami prinaša romanu *Balerina*, *Balerina* presežno vrednost tudi v svetovnem merilu. Lepota glasbe, zelo sorodna lepoti otroške duše, vzpostavlja v romanu posebno vrednoto, tesno prepleteno z liričnimi odlomki o materinski dobroti. Vse to in ljubezen, presevaajoča kot osrednja življenjska moč, nam odgovarja na literarna in neliterarna vprašanja, ki se nam porajajo še dolgo potem, ko smo *Balerino*, *Balerino* že odložili.

## **Marko Sosič** **Slovenian Author in Focus 2014**

### **Alojzija Zupan Sosič**

#### **Ballerina, Ballerina**

The opening word – and sentence – of the novel *Ballerina, Ballerina* (*Balerina, Balerina*) prefigures a novel and literary tale with a difference. The interjection *aieee* introduces the dream of the first-person narrator, Ballerina, in which the protagonist's flying is followed by falling, while the lyrical portrayal of a small village is shattered by the banal observation that the narrator needs to pee. Thus the very first paragraph conveys the protagonist's inability to unravel the transition between the world of dreams and the world of reality, and her uneasiness is affecting both emotionally and rationally. Even at this early stage, the reader will pause for a moment to wonder: 'What (extraordinary) character has just been introduced to me? Why is she only narrating in the present tense? Shall I understand her narrative?'

The narrative works by Marko Sosič (1958) appeal to the reader at several levels and pose many questions, which is the stamp of high-quality literature. From his first book, the short fiction collection *Dew on Glass* (*Rosa na steklu*, 1990), to his latest novel, *You Who Are Nearing Me from Far Away* (*Ki od daleč pribajaš v mojo bližino*, 2012), they are distinguished from other contemporary Slovenian literature by features which make up the core of Sosič's poetics. The determining feature is a unique realistic technique which creates, through lyricisation and the focus on an extraordinary character as protagonist, recognisable poetics. The realistic narrative technique diverges from the bulk of contemporary prose, which is dominated by the so-called transrealism, a new trend of the last two decades. The detailed descriptions of daily habits, life rhythm and un/usual events elude the classic mimetism of transrealism, unveiling behind the door of verism something much more than a faithful imitation of the lives led by the Slovenian minority in Trieste, and the lyricisation removes the reality portrayed beyond the scope of verification or objectivity. The well-established semantic connotation of typification, a recognisable realistic feature, serves to diversify the portraits of the extraordinary characters still further, while the choice of such unreliable protagonists shapes an original perception of the world,

a world alienated through various sources of unreliability. The focus on an unusual character conveys the individual's questions about the world by spreading over their ethical problems a veil of lyricism.

The core features of Sosič's poetics – a unique realistic technique, lyricisation, focus on an unusual character – are present in all of his narrative books: two short fiction collections (*Dew on Glass* and *Out of Earth and Dreams – Iz zemlje in sanj*) and three novels (*Ballerina*, *Ballerina*; *Tito, amor mijo*; *You Who Are Nearing Me from Far Away*). They are complemented by another regular, chronotope-bound feature: most of the author's narratives are set in Trieste or in the Karst villages scattered around Trieste, which are populated by Slovenians living beyond the state border. Just as the regular choice of setting does more than reflect the author's regional affiliation or attachment to his place of birth, the chronotopical stamp does more than mirror the specific realities: rather, the symbolic layers transform the simple sketches of the multicultural Trieste environment into universal pictures of individual fates. The latter are crafted with a subtle sensitivity to the dichotomies between majority and minority, normal and abnormal, commonplace and original.

The most originality in the author's oeuvre, as well as in contemporary Slovenian literature, arises from the choice of an unreliable narrator. Figuring in all of Sosič's narratives, these narrators prompt the unavoidable question: 'Why did the author entrust the narration to an unreliable narrator?' This is the key question to ask when reading an unreliable narrative, in addition to more specific ones, such as 'How accurate are the facts cited by the narrator?' and 'How far are we to trust the narrator's interpretation and judgment?' The effectiveness of unreliable narration springs from diverting the reader's attention from the level of the plot to the narrator's level of narration, and thus to his or her peculiarities. The causes of unreliability are many and varied: the narrator's limited knowledge, personal involvement, problematic scale of values. Sosič's narratives bring to life such time-honoured types of unreliable narrator as the mental patient (madman), the character arrested at a child's developmental level, the child, the ingénu.

The novel *Ballerina, Ballerina* (1997) includes all these elements of idiosyncratic poetics, the most innovative – in terms of Slovenian literature – being the choice of an unreliable female narrator, whose development has been arrested at a child's level. A quirky character is no novelty as such, since it marks the very first Slovenian novel,

*The Tenth Brother* (*Deseti brat*, 1866); what is new is the casting of this character in the narrator's role and the merging of the unreliable narrator with the so-called involved narrator. And what is new from a global perspective is the departure from the literary tradition in which the unreliable narrator used to figure in picaresque and satirical novels. The poignant story of an average Slovenian family from a village above Trieste is told by Ballerina, an adult woman at the level of a child, her mental and emotional horizons limited by her disability. 'Ballerina' became her nickname after she began to lag behind in her development and respond oddly to certain stimuli: excitement makes her rise on tiptoe like a ballet dancer. Unable to understand the world outside her home kitchen, she is afraid of it, and her communicative limitations make her cling to her mother. Her inability to respond to her surroundings suggests deeper existential issues, such as powerlessness caused by the (hierarchical) differences between people, transience and fatalism, the chasm between 'us' and 'you', the search for happiness...

The source of Ballerina's exceptionality is banal, or even tragic: for reasons left unexplained, her development was arrested at a child's level, but this fact is sublimated into poetry and nostalgia through her peculiar sweetness and through the remoteness in time (the story is set in the 1960s), while the tragic quality is recast by her child's perspective as the empathy of a child's vitalism. Ballerina continues the exemplary tradition of Ciril Kosmač's gallery of unusual characters, who not only represent a minor community but also point to a special reality, to universal truths, to a fine sensitivity to the plight of helpless or marginalised persons. Instead of social highlights, the perspective of a limited horizon adds aesthetic and emotional ones, while the skilful crossing of boundaries between the average and above-average, the commonplace and the exceptional, motivates an ethical susceptibility to the world, widening the reader's concept of otherness. According to Bakhtin, the 'mask' confers on the 'fool' the right not to understand, to misjudge, to hyperbolise, to parody; Ballerina's ignorance thus lends itself to unmasking harmful conventionality. A particular quality of Ballerina's narrative is the enrichment of first-person narration with features of its third-person counterpart, since the narrator is a spectator rather than an active participant. This establishes a distance to the events: she even hears herself as if from a distance ('I think I can hear the sound of me setting down the plates').

In the gallery of Slovenian literary characters, *Ballerina* further stands out with the adaptation of her language: it is simple, with short sentences and repetitions of sentence patterns and of the same or similar words. As *Ballerina* is mainly a reporter, an involved narrator giving a running commentary without temporal or intellectual distance, her utterances condense into a universal present. Despite their similarity they are saved from monotony through an enlivening blend of fantasy and verism, as well as through the rhythm shaped by repeated images of yearning: images revolving around the symbolism of the colour blue, the bird, and the song refrains of *volare* and *cantare*. Next to the dialectal words and the peculiar syntax of the dialogues, it is precisely the words *volare* and *cantare* from the Italian song *Nel blu dipinto di blu* (Domenico Modugno) that carry great weight, adding a hint of bilingualism, multiculturalism and the 1960s Trieste spirit. Moreover, flying and singing are the central symbols of the novel: flying appears at the very beginning, signalling a transition to the surreal, to a different reality, a transcendence of the banal and commonplace, while singing – experienced as a therapeutic activity by the heroine – is similarly endowed with well-nigh metaphysical qualities.

The transition from one world to another is the prime mover of the novel, manifested at several levels. At the level of language it is reflected in the shifts from a Slovenian to an Italian environment, from literary to colloquial language, from direct to reported speech, and at the plot level in the intertwining between ordinary and extraordinary characters. At the ethical level, transition means progression from ignorance to moral responsibility, while the aesthetic level is maintained by the permeability between physics and metaphysics, where transitions from the verifiable reality to the fantastic and surreal are confirmed by the classic transition symbols, the bird and the colour blue. *Ballerina*'s multilayered personality and narrative refinement are what makes her unique even in the context of world literature. While her mental retardation, affectionate character and moral health recall Benjamin from Faulkner's novel *The Sound and the Fury* (1929), the two differ significantly in the extent of the reality mediated. Benjy, at the level of a three-year-old, reports on the external events exhaustively and precisely like an audiotape, reproducing entire dialogues, ever on the edge of conflict, while his story is merely one out of four versions recounting his sister's unfortunate fate. From this perspective, *Ballerina*'s narrative is sparer but more

convincingly adapted to the heroine's mental age, and much more open and polyvalent in aesthetic terms.

The uncontrollably fluid line between fiction and reality, a source of unease for *Ballerina*, has been heralded as a distinctive narrative feature as early as Sosič's first book, *Dew on Glass*, where the characters strive to transcend their commonplace circumstances in various ways. It similarly marks the ten-year-old male protagonist of *Tito, amor mijo*, Sosič's second novel, which is set in the same chronotope, the Trieste of the 1960s. The vicinity of Trieste is also the setting of his latest novel, *You Who Are Nearing Me from Far Away*; however, the portrayal of Ivan Slokar, a Slovenian living in Trieste and teaching natural history at the Liceo, is different in that the readers have to unravel the sources of his unreliability on their own. The perspective of an adult unreliable narrator gives voice to the introvert world of silence – a world recorded in *Ballerina, Ballerina* by a mute film camera – as a predominantly ethical problem of collective and individual guilt, linked to the motif of relatives from Bosnia. Compared to Sosič's latest novel, it is precisely the dumb materiality of his first that allows the reader to engage in greater associative creativity, especially in the presentation of the characters. Their characterisation is accomplished through their movements and actions as perceived by *Ballerina*, who provides no tangible picture, external or internal. If the characters seem unhappy because of their imperfections and frustrated desires, the implied author suggests that this is what life is like: unhappy rather than happy.

Of the manifold transitions in the novel, one of the most elaborate is certainly the transition from flying to singing. At the level of sound, it is continually repeated in the refrain of *volare-cantare*; at the level of structure, in the balancing of the two symbols through various narrative elements, most conspicuously through the relationship between the beginning and conclusion of the novel. If the novel begins with an interjection introducing the fear of flying, it concludes with a funeral song: a promise of dead *Ballerina*'s reunion with her mother and her song. The device of a dead narrator is, next to the innovative casting of a retarded person as an unreliable narrator, a major novelty in Slovenian storytelling, which, coupled with the rest of its qualities, makes *Ballerina, Ballerina* an outstanding novel even on a global scale. The beauty of music, cognate with the beauty of a child's soul, represents a special value in the novel, closely intertwined with lyrical passages on maternal goodness. All

this as well as love, shining through as the central vital force, suggests answers to the questions, literary and non-literary, which come to haunt us long after we have already laid *Ballerina, Ballerina* aside.

*Translated by Nada Grošelj*

## *Angeli spomina*

*November 2013*

Kakor me je lani nagovorilo besedilo Petra Handkeja *Še vedno vihar*, da sem začel grebsti po sebi in svoji družini, tako me danes nagovarja roman Maje Haderlap *Angel pozabe*, ki odpira v meni suhe razpoke spomina ... In zdi se mi, kakor da med njunimi besedami slišim šelestenje krošenj oddaljenih dreves, ki se potihoma pogovarjajo o vodi, ki jih bo odžejala ...

*Danes, decembra 2013*

Zdi se, da nimam druge izbire in da moram nadaljevati svojo zgodbo ...

Kakor da sta se Peter Handke s svojim delom *Še vedno vihar* in Maja Haderlap s svojim *Angelom pozabe* skoraj istočasno dotaknila kolektivne zavesti svoje dežele in v meni odprla veličasten prostor refleksije ... Njuni literarni stvaritvi odpirata kompleksnost vprašanja identitete in v meni odgrinjata vprašanja naše ali morda zgolj moje identitete, tako imenovane manjšinske identitete oziroma identitete manjšinskih stvarnosti sveta, njihovih intimnih vzgibov in stvarnih dejanj, ki so botrovali bolečim izbiram v toku zgodovine dvajsetega stoletja, a so tudi stvar splošnih človeških dejanj, ki delajo posameznika še bolj ranljivega, a zato nič manj odgovornega do sebe in drugih.

Tu, v literaturi Petra Handkeja in Maje Haderlap, so očetje in sinovi, matere in hčere, bratje in sestre. Kakor da se mi ta trenutek izrisujejo na neki sliki slovenskega slikarja Marka Šušteršiča, ki je sicer še nikoli nisem videl v živo. Vidim ljudi na tisti sliki, na metafizično zeleni gričevnati pokrajini, kakor da je pod tistimi griči nekakšna Poljanska dolina, vidim jih, kako gledajo proti meni, polni nemih besed in glasnih misli. Ljudje na sliki so sicer meščani, niso kmetje ali delavci, kakor so bili moji predniki, a vseeno je na tisti sliki nekaj, kar me vedno znova vrača k mojim ljudem, za ktere mislim, da stopajo skozi pokrajino mojega časa in življenja ... Oče Maje Haderlap, kot ga opisuje v svojem imenitnem romanu, si upam trditi, je ena najmočnejših literarnih figur, kar jih premore sodobna književna scena. In prav on, Majin oče, je tisti, ki me je znova nagovoril, da stopim v svojo zgodbo, prav on je tisti, ki mi je

znova odprl podobe mojega časa in sveta ... In ta čas je tudi tisti, ko sem v Bosni nenadoma zagledal reko Drino in spoznal pravo resnico o sorodnikih, na katere smo pozabili.

*Nekoč prej, 2010*

In kakor da iznenada zagledam ljudi na mostu, ki je v Višegradu vpet čez reko Drino. Kakor da se ljudje iznenada zgrnejo nanj. V Bosni sem, tu iščem svoje sorodnike, ki so jih drugi sorodniki pozabili. Jaz nisem zanikal teh ljudi, a žal jim tudi pomagal nisem. Tu je tudi neki oče, Kristjan mu je bilo ime. Kristjan je bil nonin brat, ki je v času fašizma odšel v Bosno, da se reši preganjanja in preživi. Sinovom njegovih sinov nismo pomagali, ko so to najbolj potrebovali. Kakor da smo vsi skupaj hoteli ostati čisti, kakor da nas vojna v bivši Jugoslaviji ni smela kontaminirati. Zdi se, kakor da smo vsi pozabili nanje.

*Ni samo slutnja, resnica je, spregovori v mojih mislih oče teh sinov, ki jim nismo znali pomagati, Franc, Kristjanov sin.*

Zdaj sem na mostu, ki je v Višegradu vpet čez Drino, in vidim ljudi, ki se zgrnejo nanj istočasno, ko stopimo z G. in s prijatelji, ki so me pospremili v Bosno, na njegova kamnita tla. Ljudje se zdijo, kakor da so izstopili iz legendarne slike da Volpeda, na kateri so naslikani kmetje in delavci, ki stopajo proti nam, ljudje, ki stopajo naprej proti nam kakor v boj za svoje pravice in svoje dostojanstvo. Tako ljudje v Višegradu stopajo zdaj čez most na Drini proti nam in govorijo, govorijo, kakor da se je v njih nabrala stoletna tišina, ki jo morajo preglasiti. Vsakdo izmed njih nam pripoveduje svojo zgodbo, ki ni zgodba o moči in zmagi, ampak kakor neka pripoved, ki bo prej ali slej imela srečen konec, ki ga pa že dolgo ni videti na obzorju. Gledam njihove obraze, za katerimi se vidijo sive hiše Višegrada. Te se zdijo, kakor da jih je kdo tam pozabil, kakor da so komu zdrsnile z dlani, ko jih je gradil, kakor da so padle in ostale pokonci, v prahu in blatu. A obrazi teh ljudi se zdijo svetli, kakor ožarjeni od spomina in žarkov sonca, ki se blešči na gladini mirne Drine. In njihove oči, ki se v tisti sivi in blatni pokrajini Višegrada zdijo kakor kresnice, ki letijo nad prelepim kamnitim mostom, ožarjajo pokrajino, ki je okrog nas, in nas same. Zdi se, kakor da bi se ti ljudje ob našem prihodu zatekli na most, ki ščiti njihovo svetlo

vero v bodočnost, ki jih čuva pred prahom, blatom in trupli zadnje vojne v Jugoslaviji.

Poslušam besede teh ljudi, ki preglášajo drug drugega, vidim visokega moškega srednjih let, ki skuša pritegniti pozornost nase, ko dvigne svoj klobuk in začne z navzgor stegnjeno roko pripovedovati zgodovino višegrajskega mostu. Pomislim, da pripoveduje zato, da bi mu potem dali nekaj denarja, a zdi se, da v resnici pripoveduje zgodbo mostu samo zato, ker jo preprosto mora povedati, ker je to zgodbo treba poznati, ker jo mora poznati vsakdo, ki stopi nanj. Moški s klobukom v roki govori ponosno, glavo dviguje čez ljudi, kakor da bi moral kdaj pa kdaj pogledati proti Drini in preveriti, ali ga tudi reka posluša ... In nenadoma mu tudi drugi ljudje, domačini, ki so prihiteli na most, prisluhnejo, zamaknjeni, kakor da prvič slišijo zgodbo tega mostu, kakor da so zdaj utihnili, da bi nekdo drug, ki ni domačin, slišal zgodbo njihovega prelepega mostu, in bi bili ob tem še bolj ponosni. In medtem ko ta govori, se potihem oglasi neki starejši moški, ki pravi, da je bil za časa Jugoslavije vojak v Sloveniji, in sprašuje, ali poznamo Jožkota, ki je bil z njim v vojski, naj ga pozdravimo, če ga kaj vidimo, Jožkota, reče, saj je Slovenija majhna dežela, gotovo se vsi poznate, reče in se mehko smeji skozi priprta usta, kakor da bi želel, da se skoznje zlije vse, kar smo lahko zanj prinesli svetlega in dobrega. In potem, kakor da bi se iznenada odprla vrata nekega dvorišča, se na most zgrne krdelo psov, ki niso nikogaršnji, a so višegrajski, naši, reče domačin, ki se je s svojimi modrimi očmi zagledal v nas in je do tega trenutka poslušal moškega s klobukom in dvignjeno roko, ki še naprej pripoveduje zgodbo njihovega kamnitega mostu in kako so ga poplave pred leti skoraj prekrile.

Psi nas gledajo s svojimi milimi očmi, kakor da bi se spraševali, ali smo mi tisti, ki bi lahko postali njihovi novi gospodarji. Pomislim, ali ni morda v tem tropu tudi kak pes, ki je iz Sarajeva pobegnil pred granatami in snajperisti, ki se je potem zatekel v gozd, ker je njegov gospodar obležal pod svinčenimi krogli. Ko gledam ljudi in pse na mostu čez Drino, je v meni neskončno sramu in tišine, nekaj neizrekljivega in sramotnega in spomin se mi zavrti za par dni nazaj, ko se doma v Trstu odločim, da obiščem svoje daljne sorodnike v Bosni, tiste, ki sem jih videl samo enkrat, ko sem bil še otrok, tiste, ki so pred štiridesetimi leti prišli na obisk in tik pred Trstom trčili v avto, kar jih je prisililo, da so ostali nekaj tednov pri nas. Spominjam se jih, kako so takrat spali, na divanu in na postelji, kako tihi in mehki so bili. Kljub trčenju se niso poškodovali, danes

pa so njihove rane še čisto odprte in bojim se, da jih ne bodo mogli tako hitro zaceliti, pomislim, ko se odpravljam, da jih obiščem.

Ja, Kristjan, nonin brat, on je pobegnil pred fašizmom in si v Bosni, v Kaknju, poiskal delo v rudniku. Njegova hči in sin sta bratranca moje mame. Rozalija in Franc. *Živa sta, živa*, poslušam besede, ki že dvajset let odzvanjajo v meni. *Živa je žlahta v Bosni, živa*, slišim besede, ko vojne v Jugoslaviji še ni konec. Takrat čutim, da bi jim vendarle morali pomagati, a ne storim ničesar, da bi prepričal svoje. Preveč problemov s samim seboj imam takrat. A tudi nihče od sorodnikov iz Slovenije jim ne pomaga. Nihče nima prostora, da bi jih vzel k sebi, kakor so nekajkrat prosili, in ne razumem, zakaj ne moja mama ne moja teta, njena sestra, nista prepričali ostalih sorodnikov v Sloveniji, da jim pomagajo, ne razumem, zakaj jim onidve nista pomagali, saj bi se našel kak prostor, ki bi jih zaščitil pred strahom, pred neskončnim strahom, da umrejo.

In ko se leto ali dve po koncu vojne v Jugoslaviji v meni znova prebudi zavest o tem, da jim ni v resnici nihče pomagal, da so živi, a da ne vemo, kako živijo, se zatekam k podobam, ki govorijo o Bosni. Spoznam slikarja Safeta Zeca, ki se je zatekel v Videm ali v Udine, če bi kak Slovenec ne vedel, kateri kraj imam v mislih, ki se je zatekel v Italijo, da nadaljuje svojo likovno zgodbo, ki se je po mojem mnenju skupaj z vojno in spominom šele rodila: gledam njegove krošnje divjih kostanjev, zelene in cvetoče, vidim njegova okna, na katerih so včasih pelargonije ali sledi njihove rdeče barve, vidim zidove, poraščene z bršljanom, z zelenjem, vidim plot, onkraj katerega je zelenje, gričevnato bosansko pokrajino, ki jo ožarja sonce. In takrat, ko gledam Safetove podobe, se vendarle vprašam, kje so moji sorodniki, in jih nehote zagledam, kakor da se skrivajo za tistimi okni s pelargonijami ali brez, kakor da so počepnili za plot, ki ga prerašča bršljan, kakor da so splezali v krošnjo divjega kostanja in so vsi zeleni od listja in vsi beli od kostanjevih cvetov, da se zdijo še bolj podobni drevesu ali zidu, da so še bolj podobni bršljanu in okenskim podbojem, zato da se lažje skrijejo, da lažje preživijo, drugačni, brez vsakršnih človeških sledi.

Zdaj gledam ljudi na mostu, pse, ki strmijo v nas s svojimi milimi očmi, in vame vstopi spomin na dan, ko se odločim, da jih obiščem, da preverim, kako živijo ti, ki so preživeli vojno. Rečem materi, da

grem v Bosno, da grem z G. in s prijatelji v Bosno, da jih obiščem, ji rečem in jo prosim, naj jim vendarle kaj pošlje, naj najde kakšno svojo fotografijo, da bodo videli, kakšna je, naj jim s sestro nekaj podarita, da jim bom izročil v njunem imenu. In že isti hip se pokesam svojih besed, ker razumem, da nobeno darilce ne bo pomagalo, da bi pozabili ... Nemiren sem. Tudi mama in teta sta nervozni. Zdi se, kakor da bi jima bilo nelagodno, da drezam v njuno zasebnost, a se ne zmenim za njuno počutje.

Tisti dan, ko se odpravimo na pot, mi mama izroči dva darilna zavojčka s pozlačenim trakcem in pentljo. Eden je njen, eden pa od njene sestre, moje tete. Oba zavojčka sta enaka, kakor sta enaki onidve, mama in njena sestra, kakor dvojčici. Rdeč papir in pozlačen trakec, zvit v pentljo. V notranjosti kamen, umetniško oblikovan košček kraškega kamna, delo domačega obrtnika, in dve fotografiji. To je njuno darilce za bratrance v Bosni. Najraje bi pustil kamna nekje ob cesti, hkrati pa si mislim, da moram vsaj malo spoštovati mamino izbiro, čeprav je nepremišljena. Lahko bi bil sam predlagal materi, kaj naj pošlje svojemu bratrancu in sestrični v Bosno, a tega nisem storil. Občutek imam, kakor da jo želim ves čas kaznovati, kakor da želim kaznovati obe, mater in teto. Naj se pacata v lastnem občutku nelagodja, naj izbereta sami darilo, da bomo lahko vsi razumeli, kolikšna je njuna navezanost nanje ... Grozno razmišljanje, vem, a v meni je veliko jeze. Nazadnje vzamem tista dva kamna, težka, zavita v rdeč papir in z zlatim trakcem, ki je privezan v pentljo. V sebi čutim globoko praznino in v njej mraz. Zdi se mi, kakor da tista dva »umetniško« izdelana kamna iznenada padeta vame in udarjata ob notranje stene mojega telesa, vse dokler se ne dotakneta dna, ki ga še ni slutiti ...

In pripeljemo se do Sarajeva. Naslednji dan je bister od sonca in čistega zraka. Prijatelja B. in M. ostaneta v Sarajevu, kjer bi rada našla pokopališče in grob svojega sorodnika. Midva z G. sedeva v avto in se odpeljeva proti Kaknju, da najprej srečava Rozalijo, mamino sestrično, potem pa še Franca, bratranca, ki živi v Visokem. V meni je še večji nemir kakor ob odhodu. G. gleda zemljevid, da ne bi zavil na napačno pot. Molčiva. Zadaj na sedežu vrečka z dvema kamnom, kakor bi bila v rdečem papirju zavita dragulja brez kakršne koli vrednosti. V glavi zaslišim Rozalijin glas, ko sem jo pred tednom dni poklical v Kakanj in ji dejal, naj sporoči tudi Francu, da pridem. *Dodji, dodji, samo ti pridi*, slišim njen glas v glavi, *pridi, sinko, jaz*

*živim nad pošto, v bloku, v tretjem nadstropju, samo ti dodji*, reče v moji glavi njen glas in zazdi se mi, da jo vidim, kako pred več kot štiridesetimi leti, ko se jim je zgodila tista nesreča z avtom, priteče v naš dom in s svojimi rdečimi ustnicami, ki so me, otroka, poljubile na usta, takrat reče: *Ja sam Rozalija, sinko, Rozalija, gdje ti je tata, da nam dodje pomoći ...*, reče takrat in razumem, da išče mojega očeta, da bi jim prišel pomagat na cesto zaradi nesreče z avtom, sprašuje po mojem očetu, da bi jim prišel prevajat, se pogovorit s policijo ... In potem vidim v svojih mislih očeta, kako pride, kako gresta z Rozalijo do ceste, da jim pomaga, in ga vidim kasneje, kako pride nazaj domov z vsemi maminimi sorodniki iz Bosne in jih bo nekaj od njih prespalo pri nas in jih bom gledal vsak večer, dokler ne bo popravljen avto, ki je močno razbit, gledal jih bom, kako spijo, kako bodo njihove veke spuščene, kako bodo njihovi obrazi, med katerimi se zdaj ne morem spomniti Francevega, mehki in tihi.

Kakanj, ura je enajst, z G. čakava pred pošto, da Rozalija pride po naju. Gledam glavno ulico, vrvež malega mesteca, višje vidim železna vrata v rudnik, spomenik padlim. Sonce je močno in zrak je bister. Povsod veliko prahu. Razmišljam, ali se bomo spoznali, ali bom jaz njo prepoznal, ona mene? Težko, takrat sem bil še otrok. Ura je že petnajst čez enajsto. Petnajst minut zamude ima. Pomislim, da se morda ni premislila, da me morda ne želi več srečati, ko nenadoma stopi pred mene žena. Rozalija. V skromni in lepi pomladni obleki. Rozalija. *Dodji sinko, dodjite gore ...* naju povabi v svoj skromni dom, na mizo postavi skodelice za kavo in šilček žganja. Z G. sediva na divanu. Nekaj časa strmimo drug v drugega, ko nenadoma ona spregovori. Iz njenih ust se izlije slap besed, med katerimi se večkrat ponovi ime njenega brata Franca, maminega bratranca, ki ga bova kasneje obiskala v Visokem. *Eh, reče, z njim je težko, z njegovimi otroki je težko*, kakor bi naju hotela pripraviti na obisk. A besede, ki jih izreka potem, so še težje, kot sem si mislil, in moj sram je vse globlji. *Da, da ... Mislili smo, da nam bo vsaj v Trstu kdo pomagal, če so že v Sloveniji odpovedali ...*, reče Rozalija, ko ji izročim darilce, ko pogleda fotografijo moje matere in moje tete, kakor bi bili še včeraj pri njej ... *Da, da, sestrične*, reče takrat in skoraj nemarno odloži fotografijo na kredenco, kakor da na njej nista obraza moje mame in njene sestre, ampak obraza nekih anonimnih žena, in se je zdaj po neki slučajnosti prikradla med njene prste. Potem se njene besede znova zlijejo skozi njena usta. Gledam njene blede ustnice, ki

so bile nekdanj v mojem otroštvu rdeče, kako brez predaha govorijo o strahu in vojni, o njihovih prošnjah, da bi jima kdo dal zatočišče, njej in možu, ki je umrl sredi vojne, bolan. Da bi kdo dejal, pridite k nam, dokler se ne konča vojna, da boste na varnem. In potem Rozalija ne govori več. Kakor da se ji je nekaj zataknilo v grlu. Vsi trije ostanemo v tišini, dokler ne vzamem fotoaparata in jo prosim, če jo lahko fotografiram, ona pokima in se nasmehne, nema, kakor da nima več besed v sebi. V trenutku, ko naredim fotografijo, se znova sramujem svojega dejanja, ker ne razumem, čemu sem čutil to veliko potrebo, da jo ovekovečim, saj je ona itak v meni.

In potem se z G. odpeljeva v Visoko, kjer živi Franc s svojim sinom in hčerko. Na poti razmišljam, kako je mogoče, da se je ravno v naši družini zgodil ta odklon, da je prišlo do te pozabe. Kako se to lahko zgodi v družini? Pa se. Res je, da so si bili daleč, da se desetletja nismo videli ne slišali, a so se potem oglasili. Resnične so bile še groznejše stvari, kakor to, da so ljudje prihajali iz Italije opazovat vojno in se malce poigrat s svojim lastnim adrenalinom. Prišli so na fronto in plačali srbske vojake oziroma tiste, ki so oblegali Sarajevo, da bi namesto njih ubili človeka ali vsaj malo pogledali, kako je v resnici takrat, ko človeka zadene krogla in se zgrudi mrtev na tla. A dejstvo, da je bilo to hujše od naše pozabe, od našega odklona, nikogar od nas ne opravičuje.

V Visokem sprašujeva za ulico, kjer živi stric Franc, kakor mu pravim v mislih, ko se mi pokaže pred očmi v nejasni podobi iz otroštva. Prijazno nas napotijo nekoliko ven iz centra, kjer stojijo štirje stanovanjski bloki. V enem izmed teh živi stric Franc. Na blokih ni številke, ki jo imam zapisano. Stopamo mimo nizkih stanovanjskih blokov, ki so preluknjani od svinčenih krogel. Njihova barva je opečnato blatna in vsi so preluknjani. Okrog njih dolgo ni videti človeka, da bi ga lahko vprašali za strica Franca. Z G. stopava med bloki, po sveže zeleni pomladni travi, v kateri so še luže nedavnega dežja. Končno zagledam žensko, ki se nama približuje. Ustavim jo, skušam jo vprašati, ali pozna strica Franca, Franc Bratina mu je ime in ima enega sina in hčer, rečem. Če je tisti, ki ima sina, ki je izgubil pamet, potem je on tisti Franc, ki stanuje tam, vidite? Za hčerko pa ne vem, nisem je videla že nekaj let, reče ženska v eni sapi, stegne roko, da nam pokaže, kje stanuje Franc, in stopi dalje. Zmrazijo me njene besede. Gledam jo, kako se oddaljuje med preluknjanimi blokoma.

Stopiva v vežo stanovanjske hiše, ki nam jo je pokazala ženska. V njej je tema. Iščem stikalo, da bi prižgal luč, ne najdem ga. Prižgem vžigalnik. Začneva gledati imena, ki so napisana ob vratih. Plamen na vžigalniku sveti proti vratom, proti zvoncu ob vratih. Nikjer ne piše Bratina Franc. Stopiva v prvo nadstropje. Vžigalnik nama pomaga, da se ne spotakneva ob predmete, ki so na stopnišču. Vonj po vlagi, po spominu in oddaljenosti. Tudi v prvem nadstropju ni njegovega imena. Šele v drugem nadstropju ga najdeva. Franc Bratina piše na vratih. Zadihan sem in nemiren.

Potrkava. Nihče ne odpre. Pritisnem na zvonec, čeprav je gumb še komaj viden, ker je potisnjen v zid, kakor da bi nanj nekdo pritiskal cele dneve in noči, da bi mu kdo odprl vrata.

Iznenada nekdo na stežaj odpre vrata. Mlajši moški, star približno štirideset let, visok in močan, kakor gora, kakor visoko in debelo drevo. Ne vem, kdo je. Vprašam po Francu. *Ja nisam Franc, ja sam Nenad, tata bude odmah natrag*, tata bo takoj nazaj, reče, *samo po benzin za avione je otišao*, po bencin za letala je šel, reče, in razumem, kaj je hotela reči Rozalija, ko naju je na nek način opozarjala, da pri Francu ni ravno vse najbolje, in razumem tudi, da naju je ženska malo prej napotila v pravo smer.

Vstopiva v stanovanje, ki ima velika okna, da je skozi videti ostale bloke in nedaleč od blokov goščavo, ki je močno pomladno zelena. Francev sin Nenad stoji pred nama kakor dober in nasmejan velikan, ki je srečen, ker se bo njegov tata kmalu vrnil z bencinom za letala. Nama je zelo nelagodno. Usedeva se na dotrajani divan, da je potem Nenad, ki stoji pred nama, videti še večji in po svoje še bolj srečen, tako širok je zdaj njegov nasmeh brez stranskih zob. Ne mine minuta, ko se vrata znova odprejo. *Evo tate*, reče Nenad in se vznemiri od veselja. Vstaneva z divana in se rokujeva s stricem Francem, rahlo upognjenim starim moškim z debelimi lečami v očalih. *Ajde, odi narezat malo salame*, reče Nenadu stric Franc in Nenad najprej pove, kako bo pilotiral avion, kako nas bo vse odpeljal stran od tod, in potem gre v kuhinjo, srečen, da lahko nareže salamo za nas. In stric Franc se usede k nama na divan. Znova pomislim na tisti umetniško obdelan kraški kamen, ki se ga sramujem. Moram mu ga izročiti čim prej, pomislim. Vzamem ga iz vrečke, ki jo imam ob sebi, in mu ga izročim, od mame in njene sestre, rečem. On pogleda darilni zavojček, ga odloži na mizico, ki je pred nami, in začne govoriti tako kakor Rozalija, brez prestanka, kakor slap, ki je v notranjosti gore dolgo čakal, da se bo njegova voda nabrala vse do

gorske odprtine in bo bruhtnil, ven, v globino. *Ja*, reče naposled stric Franc, pol po slovensko, pol po bosansko, *z ženo sva mislila, da nam bodo bratrance v Sloveniji pomagali, ne zaradi nas, zaradi otrok*, reče, *zaradi otrok. Vidite, kaj je nastalo s sinom, skrival sem ga tri leta, da se mu ni bilo treba klati, a od strahu, od silnega strahu se mu je zmešalo, če bi sestrična v Sloveniji in njen mož vzela moje otroke, bi ostali zdravi*, reče Franc, *tudi hčerka*, reče, *moja žena je v Nemčiji pri njej, tudi ona je izgubila pamet, zaradi strahu, zaradi strahu, ne vem, ne razumem, kako so lahko pozabili na nas, ne razumem, zakaj jih niso vzeli k sebi, nočem jih več videti takih sorodnikov, ne želim jih več videti, dovolj je bilo*, reče, *in zdaj, in zdaj, kaj naj z njim*, še reče in pogleda Nenada, ki je ves radosten prinesel krožnik, na katerega je narezal salamo, *saj ne rečem, dela mi družbo, toda včasih, včasih pomislim, da bi bilo še najbolje, če se ubijeva, oba*, reče in čez ovelo staro lice mu spolzi solza. Nenad se smeji, znova govori, kakšna je njegova strategija, da nas bo vse odpeljal z avionom, zdaj, ko je tata prinesel zanj bencin, in jaz ga gledam, srečnega velikana, kako stoji nad nami, visok in močan.

V meni je tedaj luknja in vanjo pada tisti kamen, ki sem ga prinesel v dar, čutim, kako pada vame, še zaviti v papir in s pozlačenim trakcem, ki je spet v pentljo, čutim, kako pada, kako je vse večji in večji in kako ne more priti do dna, da bi obležal tam.

Čeprav me je bilo pri Rozaliji sram, da smo se fotografirali, imam znova ta vzgib, da se fotografiram s Francem. Stopim zraven njega, ne vem, ali naj mu položim roko čez ramo, on stopi bliže, čutim njegovo telo, njegovo toplino. In G. naju fotografira.

Z G. se posloviva. On naju pospremi. Gledam ga, kako stopa po temnem stopnišču s svojimi debelimi lečami, gledam ga, kako se drži dostojanstveno, ko stopi iz stanovanjskega bloka na travo, ki je mokra od zadnjega dežja, in kako obstoji, ko se znova posloviva, Franc, moj stric, kakor mu pravim.

Ko naju Franc ne vidi več, se G. spusti v jok. In jaz z njo.

In znova sem tu, na mostu, ki je speljan čez Drino, nedaleč stran stoji hiša, v kateri je nekaj časa živel Ivo Andrić. Vse je sivo, vse je prašno, le Drina je bistra in mirna. Na mostu stojijo še vedno ljudje

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in psi. Moški še vedno pripoveduje zgodovino kamnitega mostu in drži klobuk v roki, ki jo steguje v zrak, in tu pa tam pogleda proti Drini, ali tudi reka še vedno sliši njegove besede. In ljudje ga še vedno poslušajo. Tudi psi so se obrnili stran od nas, kakor bi spoznali, da so jim domačini vendarle bližji.

Pomislim, da s svojim obiskom pri sorodnikih, ki so živi, živi, pri njih, ki so jih drugi pozabili, nisem dosegel ničesar. Morda sem hotel le oprati svojo neodgovornost, svojo pozabo.

Fotografij še nisem razvil in tudi telefoniral nisem več, da bi slišal Rozalijo, ki reče, *pridi sinko, pridi ...*, ali strica Franca, ki je tudi po naši zaslugi zdaj oče dveh božjih otrok, ki je kakor njun Angel spomina, ki ne skriva svojih solz.

*V Trstu, decembra 2013, januarja 2014*

## *Angels of Memory*

*November 2013*

Just as Peter Handke's *Storm Still* spoke to me last year, inspiring me to delve into myself and my family, so Maja Haderlap's *Angel of Oblivion* speaks to me now, opening up within me the dry cracks of memory... And it seems as if, between their words, I can hear tree-tops rustling in the distance, speaking softly of the water that will quench their thirst...

*Today, December 2013*

It seems I have no choice but to continue my story...

It's as if Peter Handke's *Storm Still* and Maja Haderlap's *Angel of Oblivion* touched the collective consciousness of their country almost at the same time, opening up a glorious place of reflection within me... The authors' literary creations reveal the complexity of the issue of identity, laying bare before me the questions of our, or perhaps merely my own identity, the so-called minority reality or realities of the world, the intimate impulses and actual actions that had led to painful choices in the course of 20<sup>th</sup> century history but that also have to do with a person's general actions that make one even more vulnerable, yet no less accountable to oneself and to others.

Here, in the literary works of Peter Handke and Maja Haderlap, are fathers and sons, mothers and daughters, brothers and sisters. It's like I see them before me at this very moment in some painting by Slovenian painter Marko Šušteršič that I've actually never seen in real life. I see the people in that painting, standing against a metaphysical, green landscape of rolling hills, as if those hills are overlooking something that calls to mind the Poljanska Valley, I see them looking my way, full of silent words and loud thoughts. The people in the painting are bourgeois, not farmers or workers like my ancestors were, and yet there is something about that painting that always makes me think of my people whom I picture walking through the landscape of my time and my life... I believe Maja Haderlap's father to be, based on the description that the author gives of him in her excellent novel, one of the most powerful literary figures on the contemporary literary scene. And it was him, Maja's father, who inspired me to re-enter my story, it was him who reawakened the images of my time and my

world within me... And that was also the time when I saw the River Drina in Bosnia and suddenly discovered the real truth about the relatives we had forgotten.

*Some time earlier, 2010*

And it's as if I suddenly see people on the bridge spanning the River Drina in Višegrad. As if the bridge is suddenly swarming with people. I am in Bosnia, searching for my relatives whom the other relatives have forgotten. I did not deny those people, but sadly, I didn't help them either. There was also a father, Kristjan was his name. Kristjan was *nonna's* brother who fled to Bosnia during the fascist regime to escape persecution and stay alive. We failed to help his sons' sons when they most needed it. As if we all wanted to stay pure, not letting the war in former Yugoslavia contaminate us. It seems as though all of us had forgotten them.

*It's not just a feeling, it's the truth*, I hear the father of those sons we didn't know how to help saying, Franc, Kristjan's son.

Now I am on the bridge spanning the River Drina in Višegrad and I see people pouring onto it at the same time as I, G. and some friends who have accompanied me to Bosnia step on the stone slabs of the bridge. The people look as though they've stepped out of Volpedo's legendary painting portraying the approaching farmers and workers, coming towards us as if marching for their rights and their dignity. That is how the people in Višegrad are walking across the bridge over the River Drina towards us now, talking and talking, as if filled with a hundred years' silence that must be drowned out. Each one of them is telling us their story that is not a tale of power and triumph but a story that will sooner or later have a happy ending that has, however, long been out of sight. I look at their faces behind which rise the grey houses of Višegrad. The houses look as if they were left behind, as if they slipped out of the palm of someone's hand when they were building them, as if they fell and remained upright, in the dust and dirt. But those people's faces seem bright, as if illuminated by memory and the rays of sun sparkling on the surface of the calm Drina. And their eyes, which look like fireflies in that grey and muddy landscape of Višegrad flying over the beautiful stone bridge, light up the surroundings and us. It's as if, when we arrived, those people retreated to the bridge that protects their bright

faith in the future and shields them from the dust, the dirt and the bodies of the latest war in Yugoslavia.

I listen to the words of the people all talking at once and I see a tall, middle-aged man trying to attract attention as he raises his hat and, with his arm in the air, starts to recount the history of the Bridge of Višegrad. I think to myself that he's telling the story of the bridge to make some money out of it but it seems that he's doing it simply because he has to, because the story has to be heard, it has to be heard by everyone who sets foot on that bridge. The man with the hat in his hand is speaking with pride, craning his neck over the people as if to steal an occasional glance at the Drina to check if the river is listening as well... And suddenly the other people, the locals who have come rushing to the bridge, start listening to what he's saying, enraptured, as if hearing the story of the bridge for the first time, as if falling silent to let someone else who is not a local hear the story of their beautiful bridge and that makes them feel even prouder. And then, as he speaks, we hear the low voice of an elderly man who says he served in Slovenia in the times of Yugoslavia, asking us if we know Jožko, who was in the army with him, telling us to say hi to him if we see him around, Jožko, he says, after all, Slovenia is a small country, you must all know each other, he says, laughing softly, his mouth half-open, as if wishing for all the bright and the good we could bring him to come pouring through. And then, as if the doors to some courtyard have suddenly flung open, a pack of dogs floods the bridge, dogs that belong to no one, but are Višegrad dogs, our dogs, says a local who has fixed his blue eyes on us and who, until now, has been listening to the man with the hat and his arm in the air who is still telling the story of their stone bridge and how it was almost inundated by floods some years ago.

The dogs are looking at us with those pleading eyes of theirs, as if wondering if we were the ones who could be their new masters. I ask myself if there might be a dog in this pack that ran away from the grenades and snipers of Sarajevo, taking shelter in the woods because its master had been struck dead in a hail of lead. As I look at the people and the dogs on the bridge over the Drina, I'm filled with infinite shame and silence, something unspeakable and disgraceful, and I rewind to a few days earlier back home in Trieste, when I decide to visit my distant relatives in Bosnia, the relatives I saw only once when I was still a child, the relatives who came to see us forty years ago and had a car accident just outside Trieste, as a result of which they were forced to stay with us for a couple of weeks. I remember

them sleeping there on the sofa and the bed, how quiet and soft they were. They were not injured in the collision, but today, their wounds are still very much open and I fear it's going to take time for them to heal, I think to myself as I'm getting ready to go see them.

Yes, Kristjan, *nonna's* brother, he fled fascism and found work in a mine in Kakanj, Bosnia. His daughter and son are my mother's cousins. Rozalija and Franc. *They're alive, alive*, I hear the words that have been ringing in my mind for the past twenty years. *Our people in Bosnia are alive, alive*, I hear the words when the war in Yugoslavia is still raging. At that point, I feel that we should help them but I don't do anything to convince my folks. I had too much on my plate back then. But the relatives in Slovenia don't do anything to help them either. No one has the room to take them in, as they asked a couple of times, and I can't understand why neither my mother nor my aunt, her sister, tried to convince our relatives in Slovenia to help them, I can't understand why the two of them didn't help them, I'm sure we could find the space to protect them from the fear, the infinite fear of dying.

And a year or two after the end of the war in Yugoslavia, as it dawns on me again that truly no one helped them, that they are alive but we don't know what their life is like, I turn to the images telling the story of Bosnia. I meet Safet Zec, a painter who fled to Videm or Udine, in case some Slovenian doesn't know which city I mean, taking refuge in Italy to continue his painting story that I believe had only just been born, together with the war and memory: I look at the crowns of his horse-chestnut trees, green and covered with bloom, I see his windows that are sometimes adorned with pelargoniums or traces of their red flowers, I see walls covered in ivy, in greenery, I see a fence beyond which is the green, hilly Bosnian landscape bathed in sunlight. And at that moment, as I look at Safet's paintings, I cannot help asking myself where my relatives are, and all of a sudden, I see them, as if they're hiding behind those windows, with pelargoniums or without, as if they're crouching behind that fence overgrown with ivy, as if they've climbed to the top of the horse-chestnut tree, all green from the foliage and all white from the chestnut blossoms, blending even more with that tree or that wall, with the ivy and the window frame, which makes it easier for them to hide, to survive, different, without any human trace.

Now I'm looking at the people on the bridge, the dogs staring at us with those pleading eyes of theirs, and I have a sudden flashback to the day when I decide to visit them, to see how those who survived the war are living. I tell my mother that I am going to Bosnia, that G. and I are going to Bosnia with some friends to pay them a visit, I tell her, asking her to send them something, to find a photograph of herself so they can see how she looks, I tell her that she and her sister should send them a present, that I'll give it to them on their behalf. I instantly regret saying it because I understand that no trifle gift is going to make them forget... I am restless. My mother and aunt are anxious as well. It seems as though they're uncomfortable with me intruding on their privacy, but I ignore their feelings.

On the day of our departure, my mother hands me two gift-wrapped parcels, complete with a gold ribbon and a bow. One of them is from her and the other one is from her sister, my aunt. Both parcels are the same, like they are, my mother and her sister, like twins. Red wrapping paper and a gold ribbon tied in a bow. Inside is a stone, a crafted little piece of Karst stone, the work of a local craftsman, and two photographs. This is their little present for the cousins in Bosnia. I have a good mind to leave the stones somewhere by the road but at the same time, I feel I have to show a little respect for my mother's choice, tactless as it may be. I could have suggested something for her to send to her cousins in Bosnia, but I didn't do that. I feel as if I'm intent on punishing her forever, on punishing both of them, my mother and my aunt. Let them stew in their own feelings of discomfort, let them choose their own present, so we can all see how fond they are of them... Awful of me to think that, I know, but there is a lot of anger inside me. Finally, I take the two stones, heavy, wrapped in red wrapping paper and tied with a gold ribbon made into a bow. There is a deep emptiness inside me and that emptiness is filled with cold. I feel as if those two "crafted" stones are suddenly falling inside of me, hitting against the inner walls of my body until they touch the bottom of which there is no sign yet...

And we arrive in Sarajevo. The following day is bright with sun and clean air. Our friends B. and M. stay in Sarajevo, wishing to find the cemetery and the grave where a relative of theirs is buried. G. and I get into the car and leave for Kakanj, where we first plan to see Rozalija, my mother's cousin, then Franc, the cousin who lives in Visoko. I have an even greater feeling of uneasiness than when we set out. G. is looking at the map, making sure I don't take a wrong

turn. We drive in silence. Lying on the backseat is a bag with the two stones, as if the gift-wrapped jewels had no value whatsoever. In my head, I hear Rozalija's voice when I called her in Kakanj a week earlier, asking her to tell Franc I was coming to see him as well. *Dodji, dodji, samo ti pridi*, come, come, just you come and see us, I hear her voice inside my head, come, son, I live above a post office, in a block of flats, on the third floor, *samo ti dodji*, just you come, I hear her saying in my head, and I think I can see her running up to our doorstep more than forty years ago when they had that car accident, her red lips kissing me, a child, on the mouth, saying: *Ja sam Rozalija, sinko, Rozalija, gdje ti je tata, da nam dodje pomoći*, I'm Rozalija, son, Rozalija, where is your father, we need his help... she says and I realise she is looking for my father so he can come out on the street and help them, because of the car accident, she is asking for my father to come and translate, talk to the police... And then, in my mind, I see my father coming, I see him going out on the street with Rozalija to help them and I see him later, coming back home with all of my mother's relatives from Bosnia, some of whom would be sleeping over and I could see every night until the car that was badly damaged was fixed, I would watch them sleeping, their eyelids closed, their faces, one of which was Franc's that I can't seem to remember now, soft and quiet.

Kakanj, eleven o'clock, G. and I are waiting outside the post office for Rozalija to come and get us. I look at the main street, the hustle and bustle of a small town, higher up I see an iron gate leading to the mine, a memorial to the fallen. The sun is strong and the air is pure. Lots of dust everywhere. I stand there thinking whether or not we'll recognise each other, will I recognise her, will she recognise me? It's unlikely, I was still a child back then. It's already fifteen minutes past eleven. She's fifteen minutes late. I think to myself that she might have changed her mind, that she might not want to see me again, when a woman suddenly walks up to us. Rozalija. Wearing a plain, beautiful summer dress. Rozalija. *Dodji sinko, dodjite gore*, come, son, come on up... she says, inviting us into her humble home, placing coffee cups and shots of schnapps on the table. G. and I are sitting on the sofa. We stare at each other for a while until she suddenly speaks. A flood of words comes pouring from her mouth, with frequent mentions of her brother Franc, my mother's cousin, whom we're to visit later in Visoko. *Ah*, she says, *things are*

*difficult for him, for his children too*, as if wanting to prepare us for our visit. But the words she utters after that are even more difficult than I expected and my shame is growing deeper and deeper. *Yes, yes... We thought that, if the relatives in Slovenia had failed us, at least someone in Trieste would help us...* says Rozalija, as I give her the present and she looks at the photograph of my mother and my aunt, as if it was only yesterday they came to see her... *Yes, yes, cousins*, she says, putting the photograph down on the cupboard almost carelessly, as if those were not the faces of my mother and her sister, but a photograph of some anonymous women that just happened to find its way between her fingers. Then another gush of words comes pouring out. I look at her pale lips that used to be red when I was a child, talking incessantly about the fear and the war, their pleas for someone to give them a place to stay, her and her husband who died during the war, ill. For someone to say, come stay with us until the war is over so you can be safe. And then Rozalija stops speaking. As if something got stuck in her throat. We all sit there in silence until I take out my camera and ask her if I can take a picture of her, she nods, smiling, speechless, as if there are no more words left inside her. The moment I take the photograph I feel ashamed at having done it, not understanding why I felt this great need to immortalise her when I carry her inside me anyway.

And then G. and I leave for Visoko, where Franc lives with his son and daughter. Driving there, I ruminate on how, of all the families, this deviation, this neglect could happen to our family. How can this happen in a family? But it does happen. True, they weren't close, we hadn't seen nor heard from each other in decades, then they got in touch. Even more horrible things happened, like the fact that there were people coming from Italy to see the war from up close, toying with their adrenaline. They would go to the battlefield and pay the Serbian soldiers or the people laying siege to Sarajevo so that they could kill a man in their stead or at least see for themselves how it really was when a man was hit by a bullet and dropped dead on the ground. But the fact that that was worse than our neglect, our deviation, doesn't excuse what any of us did.

In Visoko, we ask for directions to the street where Uncle Franc lives, as I call him in my mind when the faint image I have of him from my childhood appears before my eyes. They kindly direct us a little way away from the city centre, where we see four apartment blocks. Uncle Franc lives in one of them. The address number I have

for him is not on any of them. We walk past the low-rise apartment blocks riddled with bullet holes. They are mud brick in colour and all of them have holes. For quite a while, there is no one around we could ask where Uncle Franc lives. G. and I walk between the apartment blocks, on the freshly green spring grass, still dotted with puddles from the recent rain. Finally, I see a woman approaching. I stop her, trying to find out if she knows Uncle Franc, Franc Bratina is his name and he has a son and a daughter, I say. If he's the one with the son who has lost his mind, then he's the Franc who lives over there, you see? But I don't know about the daughter, I haven't seen her in years, says the woman in one breath, stretching out her arm to show us where Franc lives, and walks on. Her words send a chill down my spine. I watch her disappear between two hole-ridden apartment blocks.

We step into the hall of the apartment house that the woman indicated. It's dark inside. I look for the switch to turn on the light, but can't find it. I flick my lighter. We start scanning the nameplates next to the doors. The flame of the lighter lights up the doorways, the doorbells. None of them says Bratina Franc. We go up to the first floor. The lighter helps us not to trip over the objects lying on the stairway. The smell of damp, of memory and distance. No Bratina Franc on the first floor either. It's only when we get to the second floor that we find it. The door says Franc Bratina. I'm out of breath and anxious.

We knock. No one answers. I press the doorbell even though the button is barely visible and is rammed into the wall as if someone had been pressing it day and night for someone to answer the door.

All of a sudden, the door bursts wide open. A younger man in his forties, tall and mighty like a mountain, like a great big tree. I don't know who he is. I ask him about Franc. *Ja nisam Franc, ja sam Nenad, tata bude odmah natrag*, I'm not Franc, I'm Nenad, dad will be right back, he says, *samo po benzin za avione je otišao*, he just went to get some fuel for the plane, he says, and I realise what Rozalija was trying to say when she warned us in a way that things were not great with Franc, and I also realise that the woman from before pointed us in the right direction.

We enter the apartment that has big windows giving a view of the other apartment blocks and a nearby thicket, brilliantly green from the spring. Franc's son Nenad stands before us like a good, smiling giant, happy that his dad will soon return with fuel for the plane. We feel very uncomfortable. We sit down on the battered

sofa and Nenad, who is still standing there, seems even bigger and in a way even happier, so broad is his smile now, revealing his missing side teeth. Not a minute goes by and the door opens again. *Evo tate*, here comes dad, says Nenad, ecstatic with joy. We get up from the sofa and shake hands with Uncle Franc, a slightly bent old man with thick glasses. *Ajde, odi narezat malo salame*, go and slice some salami, says Uncle Franc to Nenad, who first starts telling us how he's going to fly a plane, how he's going to take all of us away from here, then goes to the kitchen, happy to get us some salami. Uncle Franc sits down on the sofa with us. I remember the crafted Karst stone that makes me feel ashamed. I must give it to him as soon as possible, I think. I take it out of the bag that's lying next to me and hand it to him, from my mother and her sister, I say. He looks at the gift parcel, lays it down on the coffee table before us and starts talking, just like Rozalija, without pausing, like a waterfall that has been waiting inside a mountain for ages for the water to accumulate and rise all the way up to the opening in the mountain, then comes pouring down into the depths. *Yes*, says Uncle Franc after a while, half in Slovenian, half in Bosnian, *my wife and I thought that our cousins in Slovenia would help us, not for our sake, for the sake of the children*, he says, *for the sake of the children. You see what has become of my son, I hid him for three years so he wouldn't have to be part of that butchery, but from fear, from the terrible fear, he went mad, if our cousin in Slovenia and her husband had taken my children, they would be healthy*, says Franc, *even my daughter*, he says, *my wife is with her in Germany, even she has lost her mind because of the fear, because of the fear, I don't know, I can't understand how they could have forgotten us, I can't understand why they didn't take them in, I don't want to see relatives like that ever again, I don't want to see them again, enough is enough*, he says, *and now, now what am I supposed to do with him*, he says, looking at Nenad who has walked in with a plateful of salami, all smiles, *sure, he keeps me company, but sometimes, sometimes I think it would be best if we just killed ourselves, the both of us*, he says and a single tear rolls down his sunken old cheek. Nenad is laughing, explaining his strategy all over again, how he's going to take us all away in a plane, now that dad has brought him the fuel, and I look at him, the happy giant, standing above us, tall and mighty.

There is a hole inside me right then and the stone I have brought with me as a present is falling down that hole, I feel it falling inside me, still gift-wrapped, with a gold ribbon tied into a bow, I feel it

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falling, growing bigger and bigger, unable to reach the bottom and just lie there.

Though I was ashamed of taking that photograph of Rozalija, I feel the urge again to take a picture with Franc. I stand next to him, not knowing whether or not to put my arm around his shoulder, he steps closer, I feel his warmth. And G. takes a picture of us.

G. and I say goodbye. He walks us out. I watch him as he goes down the dark staircase with his thick glasses, I watch his dignified bearing as he steps out of the apartment block on the grass wet from recent rain, how he halts as we say goodbye again, Franc, my uncle, as I call him.

When Franc can't see us anymore, G. bursts out crying. As do I.

And here I am again, standing on the bridge across the River Drina, not far away from here stands the house where Ivo Andrić used to live for a while. Everything is gray, everything is dusty, only the Drina is clear and calm. There are still people and dogs on the bridge. The man is still recounting the history of the stone bridge, holding his hat, raising his arm in the air, stealing an occasional glance at the Drina to check if the river can still hear his words. And the people are still listening. Even the dogs have turned their backs on us, as if realising the locals were nevertheless closer to them.

I think to myself that my visit to the relatives who are alive, alive... has made no difference to them whom the others have forgotten. Perhaps all I wanted was to wash away my own responsibility, my own neglect.

I haven't had the photographs developed yet and I didn't call anymore either to hear Rozalija say *come son, come...* or Uncle Franc who is now, thanks to us, a father of two of god's children, like their Angel of memory, not hiding his tears.

*Trieste, December 2013, January 2014*

*Translated by Špela Bibič*



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**Literarna branja**  
**Vilenice 2014**

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*Vilenica Literary*  
*Readings 2014*

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# Ivan Antić

Ivan Antić se je rodil leta 1981 v Jagodini v Srbiji. Je pisatelj in prevajalec. Leta 2009 je objavil knjigo kratkih zgodb *Tonus* v znameniti zbirki *Prva knjiga* založbe Matica srpska v Novem Sadu. Njegove zgodbe so prevedene v angleščino, nemščino, poljščino, albanščino in slovenščino ter uvrščene v antologijo mlade srbske proze *Pucanja* (Pokanja, 2012), v antologijo proze kulturnopropagandnega kompleta »Beton« v albanskem jeziku *Nga Bergradi, me dashuri – Tregimi i ri nga Serbia* (Iz Beograda z ljubeznijo – Nove zgodbe iz Srbije, 2011), v slovensko antologijo manjšinske in priseljenke književnosti *Iz jezika v jezik* (2014) in druge zbornike. Je soavtor izbora srbske kratke proze avtoric in avtorjev, rojenih po letu 1975, *Plejlista s početka veka* (Playlist z začetka stoletja, 2011). Je član Društva srbskih pisateljev in nekdanji urednik študentske literarne revije *Znak* Filološke fakultete Univerze v Beogradu. Prevaja leposlovje in humanistiko iz slovenščine. Od leta 2012 živi v Ljubljani.

Ivan Antić was born in 1981 in Jagodina, Serbia. He is a writer and translator. In 2009, he published a book of short stories titled *Tonus*, in the esteemed *Prva knjiga* (First Book) collection published by the Novi Sad-based Matica Srpska Publishing House. His short stories have been translated into English, German, Polish, Albanian and Slovenian, and included in the young Serbian prose anthology *Pucanja* (Burstings, 2012), the Albanian-language prose anthology of the cultural dissemination package "Beton" titled *Nga Bergradi, me dashuri – Tregimi i ri nga Serbia* (From Belgrade with Love – New Stories from Serbia, 2011), the Slovenian anthology of contemporary ethnic minority and immigrant literature *Iz jezika v jezik* (From Language to Language, 2014) as well as and other almanacs. He is the co-author of *Plejlista s početka veka* (Playlist from the Beginning of the Century, 2011) – a volume of selected short prose by Serbian authors born after the year of 1975. He is a member of the Serbian Writers' Association and a former editor of *Znak* (Sign), the student literary magazine of the Faculty of Philology at the University of Belgrade. He translates literature and theory from Slovenian. He has lived in Ljubljana since 2012.

## Istiskivanje

### I

Tek sa ove distance mogu uvideti da je Pavle, u stvari, na vrlo dosledan način bio odan jednom sasvim određenom vidu obesmišljavanja drugih života, života drugih *in toto*, kao da bi uvek, pri tom, doživljavao neko *mitsko napajanje*, što je povremeno uzimalo oblike koji su me navodili (još tada) da sve to počnem – intimno – da nazivam *namigivanjem đavolu*. Jer ja ne znam šta bi drugo (do osećaj da *time* namiguje đavolu) moglo da ga navede da predloži Valeriji tako nesvakidašnji vid prijateljske pomoći, što me je kad sam za sve to – dosta pozno, nažalost – saznao: pre-ne-ra-zi-lo. Priča, naimе, počinje time što je Valerija, posle izvesnog vremena, poželela da upoznam Pavla. Dotad sam samo znao da postoji neki njen *Prijatelj Pavle*, koji joj je izašao u susret kada joj je bilo najteže, međutim, još tokom prvog susreta s njim, mnogo mi se toga nije dopalo. Pre svega, njegova hvalisava spremnost da postupa uvek tako da šokira drugog. Imao je neku čudnu potrebu da navodi ljude da osete tačno gde su im granice, i da ih bivanje unutar tih granica – koje dotični, naravno, ne mogu da prevaziđu, ili bar ne bez njegove pomoći – čini *nečim* manje vrednim. *Čovek* nije morao provesti puno vremena pored njega da bi uočio ovu njegovu osobinu. Isto tako, *čovek* nije imao da poseduje neko posebno istančano psihološko čulo pa da uoči da se Pavlovo naslađivanje šokiranjem drugih iscrpljuje u šokiranju opsezima njegove iracionalnosti – jedne kolosalne iracionalnosti, *bez premca*, monstrozne iracionalnosti. Kao da je jedini princip biti iracionalan, i to, upravo na onim mestima gde bi se svako drugi, čak i najiracionalniji čovek, ukoliko sebi, makar u minimalnoj meri – misli dobro (*a sve je u tome*) – ponašao na određen, ustaljen način. Baš tad: distorzirati situaciju, činiti suprotno od najekstremnije stvari koja se može zamisliti. Biti ispolin iracionalnosti: ispolin ipseiteta.

Valerija jeste bila u velikoj depresiji pre nego što je upoznala Pavla, to sam znao, čak na granici samoubistva. Znao sam i za mrtvu zečicu, i za druge stvari, mada je način na koji je Pavle sve to dovodio u *uzročno-posledičnu vezu* sa Valerijinim problemom, stvarao retke primerke *filigranske perverzije*. Ali najgore ću tek imati da saznam. Ja sam, inače, učestvovao u *ponečemu* što su priređivali u svom stanu Pavle i njegova devojka sa svojim društvom, širim i užim, u čije sam

se članove sada ubrajao i ja, ali bilo je i onih stvari u kojima nisam želeo da sudelujem, što je Pavla, sviklog na omamljenu pokornost pastve, *bez sumnje*, činilo jarosnim. No, zanimljivo je da je onaj sinhronicitet koji mi je ulivao nadu da išta ima smisla u tom periodu mog života, upravo isti onaj sinhronicitet koji me je uveo u jednu od najvećih zabluda u mom životu: *rečju*, patka-zec sinhronicitet.

## II

Pre pet godina, početkom decembra, Valerija me je pozvala prvi put u svoj stan. Taj dan je, sećam se, ozbiljno zahladneviši već oko podne, primorao prolaznike da hodaju brže, što uvučenijih vratova u kragne jakni i kaputa, što dublje uronjenih ruku u džepove. Šoferšajbne automobila već su bile zadobile svoju glazuru koja se pod uličnim svetiljkama, nekoliko sati kasnije, u predveče, presijavala u spektru duginih boja, pretakajući se hitro iz jedne u drugu, dok bi neko, kraj njih, prolazio. Upoznao sam je oko dve nedelje ranije na jednoj radionici. Sedeo sam tamo za stolom i nisam ni primetio kada i kako mi se nametnula. Njeno nabranje, različiti vidovi kretanja kroz prostor. Ponovila je nešto nekoliko puta, izdvojila se od ostalih. Sam taj njen ritam, opsednuto ispražnjen. I ne opažajući kada sam doneo odluku, a jednako ne osećajući dovoljno jasno da moram – ustao sam mirno, i otišao do balona s pijaćom vodom. Ostalo je išlo samo. Prva reč kod drugog javljanja pogledom skliznula je u razrešenje koje nisam odbacio.

Sećanje na nju čuvao sam narednih dana, nekom obazrivom dinamikom svojih pokreta. Nešto, što nije bilo moje i što mi nije bilo poznato od pre: učitalo se u moje kretanje. A sada sam se obreo u njenom stanu: upijam njene boje, upoznajem je. Sve može da čili, pomišljam, no, ona je koncentrisanost. Kada sedim na dvosedu, a ona stoji nasred sobe, čini mi se da je na tom mestu nekakva sažetost.

Kao da cela soba iz te tačke pulsira.

Na leđima je imala – tek sam te ranodecembarske večeri bio u prilici da primetim – *tattoo* s motivom Alfonsa Muhe. Nadomak vrhunca, oko mi se (i nehotice) zadržalo na tetovaži: poniranje u taj čarobni splet – dalo je nešto oštro, bledo i floralno mom orgazmu. Čak nešto slovenski jezivo. Stresao sam se, doduše, jedva primetno, izašavši iz nje. Kao da je to bio nekakav podvodni ledeni orgazam. (Tutnjalo mi je u ušima do zaglušnosti.) Otud sva ta – nastavila je

moja misao, malko kasnije, da traga – neočekivana i zaprepašujuća ozarenja. To je samo sunce viđeno odozdo kroz potmulo zatamnjujuću masu vode.

Posle dok sam pušio cigaretu, setio sam se fotografije na kojoj Gogen sedi, golih nogu, i svira na Muhinom harmonijumu. – Primetio sam da je napadao sneg vani.

Nešto sam joj rekao u tom trenutku. Nasmejala se. Osmeh joj je bio takav da joj je zatezao gornju usnicu, *čak toliko* da bi se izdigla milimetar-dva iznad granice prednjih zuba i desni. Opasne granice, krvoločne granice – *bio sam u iskušenju da pomislim*, ali odmah mi je otkrila drugo, blaže lice svog osmeha. Kao da je znala da sam poslednju misao pripisao odnekud iznenada doplutoj dečjoj percepciji, počela je: „Ona vrsta dečjeg straha kada izgubiš sve svoje boje, ostaneš siv, kao i predmet kojeg si se uplašio. Kada jedina boja koja opstaje jeste boja krvotoka. Tako sam se osećala prekjuche. Strah iznenađenja, ispražnjenosti, strah preneraženosti, kao da je iz tebe isisano sve i preobražena si u ledeni minut apsolutnog iščašenja – puko posmatranje svega mimo svega.“

Pet-šest narednih dana, koliko se sećam, nismo bili u kontaktu, a onda me je ponovo pozvala kod sebe. U međuvremenu, osećao sam se na neki čudan i nov način izmeštenim. Kao da mi se nešto, iz dana u dan, dešavalo sa očima, kao da mi je nešto bilo poremećeno sa budnošću, kao da sam sav bio prožet nekim osećajem zatumljenosti i zapretenosti. No, kada sam se ponovo obreo u njenom stanu, primetio sam kod nje nešto slično. Prelaz između dva njena pogleda, koja bi morala odražavati sasvim različita raspoloženja – taj prelaz hteo se sliti u neprimetnost i to do te mere da bi dva pogleda u potpunosti ličila jedan na drugi. Kao da bi drugi pogled trebalo da na neki način uspe da ostane unutar prvog. Samo je izvesni pad energije, *koji se ipak na momente dao osetiti*, ukazivao na pomanjkanje odlučnosti i tiho pomaljanje neke jezive drhturavosti.

Kada bismo se našli kasnije u toku dana, večer bi dobijalo na gustini, a kada bismo se sreli ranije tokom dana, vazduh oko nas činio bi mi se bistrijim. Jednog poslepodneva, spustila mi je dlan na ris desnog stopala, i, gotovo istog trena, zaspao sam. Kada bi mi obuhvatila testise svojim toplim dlanom, nekoliko trenutaka pre orgazma, nešto bi se raspuklo u meni, kao neko pupljenje, i osetio bih se na tren zbrinutim. Duboko, ničim opisivo ganuće kada bi ih drugom prilikom brižljivo usula u usnu duplju, počela da gnjeca, razvlači – skoro da bih zaplakao: napokon bliskost. Njen udaljeni šapat erek-

tirao bi moju misao i tokom vremena koje nismo provodili zajedno. Imao sam osećaj da je nežna prema meni na mestima gde sam najosetljiviji. Činilo mi se da je njen osmeh sam zaborav na sve što je ikada bilo ružno i bio sam potpuno smetnuo s uma jezivost koju sam osetio s prekoračenjem ivice zuba i desni tokom naše prve noći.

### III

Čudno je kako je Pavle umeo biti istovremeno harizmatičan i neurančunljiv – to mi je bilo nešto sasvim novo, budući da sam ranije mislio da su harizmatični ljudi uvek promišljeni do kraja. No, *istini za volju*, Pavle je upravljao pre svega tuđim životima i na taj način simulirao hipersamokontrolu i živeo od isparenja te pene (dosta istrajno i uspešno, čak virtuožno obmanjujući sebe). A ipak, činilo se da se prepušta događajima da ga vode (u čemu sam pak video leglo njegovog cinizma). I tada kada mi je rekao sve te stvari o njoj, i tada je sve to radio. Znao sam da je bila na ivici samoubistva. „*Na ivici samoubistva?* Bila je na ivici simsa. Stajala je na simsu i onda odustala. Nešto joj je reklo da time ništa neće postići, da će se samo vratiti u postojanje u nekom drugom obliku. Znaš da je Valerija poetična.“ Rekao je još da verovatno ne znam ni za njena tri dana i tri noći (na ekstaziju) provedenim u Soko-gradu.

Ali kada mi je ispričao na koji način su joj *pomogli* da se oslobodi straha od abortusa – što je, ukoliko sam dobro sračunao, padalo u vreme kada smo se ona i ja upoznali – rekao sam mu: voleo bih da to nikada nisi uradio, da to nikada niste uradili. Ono što mi je odgovorio uticalo je na mene kao ništa drugo u životu. No, pre toga ispričao mi je sve detaljno, prisiljavajući me da saslušam do kraja.

Tokom te sesije, izveo je *zahvat na Valerijinoj duši* uz pomoć svojih prijatelja, u nameri da joj pomogne da se oslobodi straha koji mu je priznala nekoliko meseci ranije, kako je rekao, tokom jednog ispovednog razgovora. (Jer on je to na ovaj način povezivao: ona je sebe kažnjavala dugogodišnjom vezom s džankijem – s kojim je bila pre mene – zato što je imala opsesivni strah od abortusa.) Pavle je nadgledao situaciju i nežno je usmeravao, dajući sugestije, hrabreći, kormilareći; njegova devojka, Čili, inače vaspitačica koja je donosila hrpe dečjih crteža u stan, držala je Valeriju za ruku i milovala joj čelo maramicom umočenom u čaj od kamilice. A Igor, Pavlov pajac, koji je toliko bespredmetna egzistencija da ga tek sad *uvodim u priču*,

lagano je, i pažljivo, prateći Pavlove instrukcije, uvlačio Valeriji kuhinjski nož u vaginu. – Rekao sam mu da to nije smeo da uradi. Da nisu smeli to činiti. Zaprepašćen, van sebe od toga što čujem, rekao sam patetično da bih *najviše voleo* da to nikada nije uradio. A on mi je rekao da ta rečenica koju sam upravo izgovorio daje njemu pravo da me ubije. Bio sam paralisani. Da je to bila pretnja, verujem da me ne bi toliko duboko porazilo (mada bih se na smrt preplašio, pretrnuo, to je izvesno). Ali reći da *ima pravo* da me ubije budući da sam poželeo da nije uradio nešto što jeste uradio, prenerazilo me je, sledilo do u koštanu srž.

Dok je opisivao scenu, napominjao je uvek iznova da ni kap krvi nije prolivena, pri čemu mi je ta njegova upornost u naglašavanju tog momenta, činila, *na neki neobjašnjiv način*, sve još neprihvatljivijim. Otišao sam. Mislim da nikada nisam niotkud otišao furioznije. Jednu afričku masku sa zida u predsoblju pogledao sam uezvereno-molećivo, delić sekunde pre nervoznog hvatanja za kvačku izlaznih vrata. Valeriji sam sutradan rekao da ne želim više ništa imati sa Pavlom (što je očigledno, istovremeno povredilo njen ponos i – doduše ne zadugo – dovelo u pitanje njenu lojalnost prema osobi koja joj je toliko pomogla u životu). Ono što mi je kasnije palo na pamet kada sam već mogao mirnije glave razmišljati o svemu – iskobeljavši se iz višemesečne depresije tokom koje sam ih neprestano sanjao i pri svakom izlasku iz kuće, misleći da ću sresti nekog od njih, strepeo od svake siluete – jeste da bi trebalo nekako reći samoubicama (*a ja sam i sâm sebi to rekao*) da se čuvaju onih koji ih žele razuveriti od samoubilačkih namera jer ih oni, ukoliko su nalik Pavlu, mogu kasnije posedovati na jedan za ljudsko biće više nego neprihvatljiv način, što sve zajedno podseća na to naglašavanje da nije bilo ni kapi krvi pri toj perverznoj penetraciji.

Mada, ono što me je oduvek činilo na neki poseban način ranjivim i što mi se i dalje vraća kao naknadna slika, premda nisam sopstvenim očima video tu scenu – to je smrt te nesretne zečice, koja je nastradala tako što je jedne noći Valerijin bivši dečko došao kući urađen, i, bacivši se na fotelju na kojoj je zečica spavala, zaspao preko nje, prikleštivši je. Uz uključen TV. Zašto je Valeriji ta smrt bila neophodna da bi napokon donela odluku da ga ostavi?

## Iztisk

### I.

Šele s te distance lahko sprevidim, da je bil Pavle dejansko zelo dosledno predan neki čisto določeni vrsti razvrednotenja drugih življenj, življenj drugih *in toto*, obenem pa kot da je dobival nekakšen *mitični navdih*, kar se je občasno udejanjalo v oblikah, ki so me spodbudile (že takrat), da sem vse to – intimno – poimenoval *spogledovanje s hudičem*. Ker ne vem, kaj drugega (razen občutka, da se s tem spogleduje s hudičem) bi ga lahko privedlo do tako nevsakdanje oblike prijateljske pomoči, kakršno je ponudil Valeriji, kar me je, ko sem za vse to – žal, dokaj pozno – izvedel: pre-su-ni-lo. Zgodba se je namreč začela, ko si je Valerija po določenem času zaželela, da bi spoznal Pavleta. Dotlej sem vedel le, da obstaja neki njen *prijatelj Pavle*, ki ji je prišel naproti, ko ji je bilo najhujše, toda že pri prvem srečanju z njim mi marsikaj ni bilo všeč. Predvsem njegova hvalisava pripravljenost ravnati zmeraj na način, da je šokiral drugega. Imel je nenavadno potrebo, da je ljudi privedel do tega, da so se natančno zavedli lastnih meja in da so bili zaradi obstajanja znotraj teh meja – ki jih sami seveda niso mogli prestopiti ali vsaj ne brez njegove pomoči – po *nečem* manjvredni. V njegovi družbi *človek* ni potreboval veliko časa, da je opazil to njegovo lastnost. Prav tako *človeku* ni bilo treba biti obdarjenemu s kakšnim posebno pretanjenim psihološkim čutom, da je opazil, kako se je Pavletovo naslajanje ob šokiranju drugih zvajalo na šokiranje z obsegom njegove iracionalnosti – neznanske iracionalnosti, iracionalnosti *brez primere*, pošastne iracionalnosti. Kot da je bilo njegovo edino načelo biti iracionalen, in to ravno tam, kjer bi se vsak drug, celo še tak iracionalnež – če si le količkaj želi dobro (*in v tem tiči bistvo*) – vèdel na ustrezen, ustaljen način. Ravno takrat: sprevreči situacijo, delati nasprotno od nečesa najbolj ekstremnega, kar si lahko zamisliš. Biti velikan iracionalnosti: velikan sebstva.

Valerija je bila v globoki depresiji, preden je spoznala Pavleta, to sem vedel, celo na robu samomora. Vedel sem tudi za mrtvo zajkljo in druge zadeve, čeprav je bil način, kako je Pavle vse to spravil v *vzročno-posledično zvezo* z Valerijino težavo, redke primer *filigranske perversije*. Toda najhujše bom moral šele izvedeti. Sodeloval sem sicer *pri nekaterih rečeh*, ki sta jih prirejala v svojem stanovanju Pavle in njegovo dekle s svojo širšo in ožjo družino, v katero sem se sedaj

tudi sam prišteval, vendar so bile tudi reči, pri katerih nisem želel sodelovati, kar je Pavleta, navajenega na omamljeno pokornost črede, *nedvomno* spravilo v bes. Ampak zanimivo je, da je bila sinhronost dogodkov, ki mi je vlivala upanje, da ima v tistem obdobju mojega življenja kar koli smisel, prav tista sinhronost, ki me je pripeljala do ene največjih zablod v življenju: *z eno besedo*, raca-zajec sinhronost.

## II.

Pred petimi leti me je Valerija v začetku decembra prvič povabila v svoje stanovanje. Tisti dan, se spominjam, je že okoli poldneva pošteno pritisnil mraz in prisilil mimoidoče, da so hodili hitreje, z vratovi čim bolj stisnjenimi med ovratnike jopičev in plaščev, z rokami čim globlje v žepih. Vetrobranska stekla avtomobilov so bila že prevlečena z glazuro, ki je v svetlobi uličnih svetilk nekaj ur kasneje, pozno popoldne, odsevala v spektru mavričnih barv, ki so se bliskovito prelile druga v drugo, kadar je kdo šel mimo njih. Spoznal sem jo približno dva tedna poprej na neki delavnici. Tam sem sedel za mizo in nisem niti opazil, kdaj in kako me je opozorila nase. Njene ponovitve, različne oblike premikanja v prostoru. Nekajkrat je nekaj ponovila, se izločila od ostalih. Že sam njen ritem, obsedeno izprazenjen. In ne da bi se sploh zavedel, kdaj sem se odločil, in ne da bi dovolj jasno občutil, da moram, sem mirno vstal in stopil do balona s pitno vodo. Ostalo je šlo samo. Prva beseda ob drugem spogledu je zdrsnila v razplet, ki se mu nisem uprl.

Spomin nanjo sem naslednje dni ohranjal z nekakšno oprezno dinamiko lastnih kretenj. Nekaj, kar ni bilo moje in česar od prej nisem poznal, se je preneslo v moje kretnje. In zdaj sem se znašel v njenem stanovanju: vpijam njene barve, spoznavam jo. Vse lahko zmedli, me prešine, le ona je čista osredotočenost. Ko sedim na dvosedu in ona stoji sredi sobe, se mi zdi, da je tam nekakšna zgoščenost.

Kot da vsa soba utripa iz tiste točke.

Na hrbtu je imela – šele tega zgodnjedecembrskega večera sem to lahko opazil – *tattoo* z motivom Alphonsa Muche. Tik pred vrhuncem se je moj pogled (nehote) zadržal na vtetovirani podobi: ob potopitvi v ta čarobni splet je moj orgazem postal nekam oster, bled, floralen. Celo nekam slovansko grozljiv. Stresel sem se, resda komaj zaznavno, ko sem izstopil iz nje. Kot da sem doživel nekakšen podvodni ledeni

orgazem. (V ušesih mi je donelo do oglušlosti.) Od tod vsa ta – se je nadaljevala moja misel nekoliko kasneje, v raziskovanju – nepričakovana in presunljiva ožarčenost. To je le sonce, kot se ga vidi od spodaj skozi mračno gmoto vode, ki zatemnjuje pogled.

Potem, med kajenjem, sem se spomnil na fotografijo, na kateri Gauguin sedi, golih nog, in igra na Muchov harmonij. – Opazil sem, da je zunaj zapadel sneg.

V tistem trenutku sem ji nekaj rekel. Zasmejala se je. Njen nasmeš je bil takšen, da ji je razpotegnil zgornjo ustnico, *celo tako zelo*, da se je dvignila za milimeter, dva nad mejo sprednjih zob in dlesni. Nevarna meja, krvoločna – *me je obšla skušnjava, da bi pomislil*, vendar mi je takoj odkrila drugo, blažjo plat svojega nasmeha. Kot da bi vedela, da sem zadnjo misel pripisal otroški zaznavi, ki je od nekod nenadoma priplavala, je začela: »Tista vrsta otroškega strahu, ko izgubiš vse svoje barve, postaneš siv kot stvar, ki si se je prestrašil. Ko je edina barva, ki obstaja, barva krvnega obtoka. Tako sem se počutila predvčerajšnjim. Strah zaradi presenečenja, zaradi izpraznjenosti, strah zaradi osuplosti, kot da je iz tebe vse izsesano in si se preobrazil v ledeno minuto absolutne izpahnenosti – golo opazovanje vsega mimo vsega.«

Naslednjih pet, šest dni, kolikor se spominjam, nisva bila v stiku, potem pa me je spet povabila k sebi. Medtem sem se počutil, kot da bi bil nekako nenavadno in na novo premaknjen v samem sebi. Kot da se je nekaj iz dneva v dan dogajalo z mojimi očmi, kot da je nekaj kalilo mojo budnost, kot da me je scela prežemal občutek zadušnosti in zakopanosti. Ampak ko sem se znova znašel v njenem stanovanju, sem pri njej opazil nekaj podobnega. Prehod med njenima pogledoma, ki bi morala odražati docela različni razpoloženji – ta prehod se je skušal neopazno zlit, in sicer do te mere, da bi si bila oba popolnoma podobna. Kot da bi se drugi pogled moral nekako zadržati znotraj prvega. Zgolj določen upad energije, *ki ga je bilo kak hip vendarle moč občutiti*, je izpričeval pomanjkanje odločnosti in tiho prezenco nekakšnega mrzličnega potrepetavanja.

Kadar sva se sešla v poznejših urah dneva, se je v večer naselila gostota, kadar pa sva se srečala prej, se mi je zrak okoli naju zdel bistrejši. Nekega popoldneva mi je položila dlan na del desnega stopala in skoraj v istem hipu sem zaspal. Ko je svojo toplo dlan sklenila v objem okrog mojih testisov, skoraj tik pred orgazmom, se je v meni nekaj razpočilo, kot nekakšni poganjki, in za hip sem se počutil varno preskrbljenega. Globoko, z ničimer opisljivo ganotje, ko jih je

ob drugi priložnosti pazljivo zajela v ustno votlino, jih začela gnesti, raztezati – skoraj zajokal sem: naposled bližina. Njen oddaljeni šepet je vzburljal mojo misel tudi tačas, ko nisva bila skupaj. Občutek sem imel, da je nežna do mene tam, kjer sem najbolj občutljiv. Zdelo se mi je, da je njen nasmeh odplaknil v pozabo vse, kar je bilo kdaj koli grdega, in popolnoma sem pozabil na grozo, ki sem jo občutil, ko sem prestopil rob zob in dlesni v najini prvi noči.

### III.

Čudno, kako je bil lahko Pavle karizmatičen in neprišteven hkrati – to je bilo zame nekaj popolnoma novega, glede na to, da sem poprej menil, da so karizmatični ljudje zmeraj do konca premišljeni. Ampak *resnici na ljubo*, Pavle je upravljal predvsem tuja življenja in na ta način simuliral hipersamokontrolo ter živel od puhlosti tega videza (dokaj vztrajno in uspešno, celo virtuozno slepeč samega sebe). In vendar, zdelo se je, da se prepušča dogodkom, da ga vodijo (v čemer sem videl izvor njegovega cinizma). Tudi takrat, ko mi je o njej povedal vse tiste zadeve, tudi takrat je to počel. Vedel sem, da je bila na robu samomora. »*Na robu samomora?* Bila je na robu okenske police. Stala je na okenski polici in si potem premislila. Nekaj ji je reklo, da s tem ne bo dosegla ničesar, da se bo le vrnila v bivanje v neki drugi obliki. Saj veš, da je Valerija poetična.« Dejal je še, da najbrž niti ne vem za njene tri dni in tri noči (na ekstaziju), ki jih je prebela v Soko gradu.

Toda ko mi je povedal, kako so ji *pomagali*, da bi se znebila strahu pred splavom – kar je, če sem pravilno izračunal, sovpadalo s časom, ko sva se z Valerijo spoznala –, sem mu rekel: želel bi si, da tega ne bi nikoli storil, da tega ne bi nikoli storili. Njegov odgovor je name vplival bolj kot kar koli drugega v življenju. Ampak poprej mi je do potankosti vse povedal, ko me je prisilil, da sem poslušal do konca.

Med seanso je ob pomoči svojih prijateljev opravil *poseg na Valerijini duši*, z namenom, da ji pomaga znebiti se strahu, ki mu ga je priznala nekaj mesecev poprej, kot je dejal, med nekim izpovednim pogovorom. (Kajti on je to povezal takole: kaznovala se je z dolgoletno zvezo z nekim džankijem – s katerim je bila pred mano –, ker se je kot obsedena bala splava.) Pavle je nadzoroval situacijo in nežno usmerjal, svetoval, opogumljal, krmaril; njegovo dekle Čili, sicer vzgojiteljica, ki je prinašala v stanovanje na kupe otroških risb, je držala Valerijo

za roko in jo gladila po čelu z robcem, namočenim v kamilični čaj. In Igor, Pavletov norček, ki je tako brezpredmetna eksistenca, da sem ga šele sedaj *vpeljal v zgodbo*, je počasi in previdno, sledeč Pavletovim navodilom, vstavljaj kuhinjski nož Valeriji v vagino. – Dejal sem mu, da tega ne bi smel narediti. Da tega ne bi smeli početi. Zgrožen, ves iz sebe zaradi slišane, sem patetično rekel, da bi *mi bilo najljubše*, če tega ne bi nikoli naredil. In on mi je rekel, da mu stavek, ki sem ga pravkar izgovoril, *daje pravico*, da me ubije. Bil sem ohromljen. Če bi to bila grožnja, verjamem, da me ne bi tako globoko dotokla (čeprav bi se na smrt prestrašil, otrpnil, to je gotovo). Toda reči, da me ima pravico ubiti zato, ker sem si želel, da ne bi storil nečesa, kar je storil, me je osupilo, zmrzilo do kosti.

Medtem ko je opisoval prizor, je vedno znova pripominjal, da ni bila prelita niti kaplja krvi, pri čemer se je zaradi njegovega vztrajnega poudarjanja vse *nekako nerazložljivo* zdelo še bolj nesprijemljivo. Odšel sem. Mislim, da nisem nikoli od nikoder odšel tako besno. Neko afriško masko na steni v predsobi sem pogledal zbegano proseče, delček sekunde, preden sem živčno prijel za kljuko izhodnih vrat. Valeriji sem naslednji dan dejal, da s Pavletom nočem imeti ničesar več (kar je očitno istočasno prizadelo njen ponos in – sicer ne za dolgo – postavilo pod vprašaj njeno lojalnost do osebe, ki ji je tako zelo pomagala v življenju). To, kar mi je pozneje prišlo na pamet, ko sem o vsem lahko razmišljal že z mirnejšo glavo – potem ko sem se izkopal iz večmesečne depresije, med katero se mi je kar naprej sanjalo o njih, in sem pri vsakem odhodu z doma, prepričan, da bom katerega srečal, trepetal pred sleherno silhueto – je, da bi morali nekako povedati samomorilcem (*in to sem rekel tudi samemu sebi*), naj se pazijo tistih, ki jih skušajo odvrniti od samomorilskih namer, ker se jih kasneje, če so podobni Pavletu, lahko polastijo na neki za človeško bitje več kot nesprijemljiv način, kar vse skupaj spominja na poudarjanje, da ni bilo niti kaplje krvi pri tisti perverzni penetraciji.

Čeprav je tisto, zaradi česar sem od nekdaj na poseben način občutljiv in kar se mi še zmeraj kaže pred očmi kot paslika, četudi prizora nisem sam videl – smrt nesrečne zajklje, ki je plačala z glavo, ko je nekega večera Valerijin bivši fant zadet prišel domov in se zvalil v fotelj, na katerem je spala zajklja, jo ukleščil in zaspal. Ob prižganem teveju. Zakaj je bila ta smrt za Valerijo nujna, da se je nazadnje odločila, da ga bo zapustila?

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## *The Squeezing-Out*

I

Only from this distance am I able to see that Pavle was truly dedicated, in a very consistent manner, to a clearly defined effort of rendering other lives – the lives of others *in toto* – utterly pointless. It was as if he would always, in committing this act, experience a kind of a *mythic charge* which occasionally took on shapes that (even then) led me to call it all – to myself – his *winking at the devil*. Because I have no idea what else (but the sense that he was in *this* way winking at the devil) could have made him suggest to Valerija such an unusual type of friendly aid, and when I found out about it – rather late, I'm afraid – it all flab-ber-gast-ed me. The story begins with the fact that Valerija had, after a while, expressed the desire for me to meet Pavle. Until that moment I had simply known there was *A Friend Pavle*, who had been there for her when the times were tough, but even at first meeting him there was much I didn't like. Above all it was his conceited readiness to always behave in ways aimed to shock others. He possessed a strange need to make people feel conscious of their limitations, and that existing inside those limitations – which said people, of course, couldn't overcome, or at least not without his help – made them become *something* less valuable. *One* didn't need to spend much time at his side to recognize this trait of his. Also, *one* didn't need to be in possession of a finely tuned psychological sense to recognize that Pavle's enjoyment in shocking others consisted of shocking by the very range of his irrationality – a colossal irrationality – peerless – a monstrous irrationality. As if the only principle was to be irrational and at precisely those points within which anybody else, even the most irrational person, if they wished themselves at least a modicum of good (*and that is all the point*) – would behave in a certain, established way. Exactly then: to distort the situation, to do the opposite of the most extreme thing imaginable. To be the giant of irrationality: the giant of *ipseity*.

It is true that Valerija had been deeply depressed before she met Pavle, I always knew that, she was on the verge of committing suicide. I also knew about the dead rabbit and about the other things, although the way Pavle brought every one of those things into a *causal* connection with Valerija's problem created rare examples of a *filigree perversion*. But the worst was yet for me to find out. I did,

incidentally, participate in *some events* that Pavle and his girlfriend used to organize at their apartment with their friends, close friends and acquaintances, of whom I was now considered a member, but there were things in which I refused to participate, and that, *beyond doubt*, enraged Pavle, used as he was to the hypnotic obedience of his congregation. However, it is interesting to note that the very synchronicity which during that period used to give me hope that anything in my life made any sense was the same synchronicity that led me to one of the greatest notional errors of my life: *in a word*, the duck-rabbit synchronicity.

## II

Beginning of December, five years ago, Valerija invited me to her apartment for the first time. The day, I remember, having grown very cold around noon, made passers-by walk faster with their necks nestled in the collars of their jackets and coats and their hands burrowed deep in their pockets. The windshields of cars had already acquired their glaze which several hours later glistened in the twilight under the glare of streetlights displaying quickly changing colors of the rainbow as one would pass them by. I had met her two weeks before at some workshop. I was sitting at my desk, and never even noticed how and when she inched her way into my awareness. The way she listed things, different ways she moved through space. She repeated something several times, she stood apart from others. That rhythm of hers, obsessively voided. I never noticed when I had reached the decision, nor did I feel it clearly enough that it was something I had to do – yet I stood up calmly and went to the pitcher with water. The rest happened on its own. The first spoken word after the second look slipped into a solution I did not reject. I kept the memory of her during the following days through some careful dynamic of my movements. Something that wasn't mine and that I had not known before: it coded itself into my gestures. And now I found myself in her apartment: drinking in her colors, getting to know her. Anything can fade away, I thought, but she was a concentration of stimuli. As I was sitting on the couch and she was standing in the center of the room, it seemed to me there was a kind of concise focus there.

As if the whole room pulsated from that spot.

On her back she had – I only noticed this during that early December night – a *tattoo* with the motif by Alphonse Mucha. Near the climax, my eye was (accidentally so) caught by the tattoo: plunging into that magical whirl – it added something sharp, pale and floral to my orgasm. Even something Slavonic and macabre. I shuddered, though not so she'd notice, as I came out of her. As if it had been a strange underwater icy orgasm. (My ears were splitting with the drumming.) That was where all those – my thoughts continued a bit later to seek – unexpected and stunning illuminations came from. It was just the sun seen from above through the murky and darkening mass of water.

Afterwards, while I smoked a cigarette, I remembered a photograph of Gaugin sitting, barefooted, and playing Mucha's harmonium. – I noticed it had been snowing outside.

I said something to her at that moment. She laughed. Her smile was such that it pulled her upper lip tight, *so tight* that it would lift a millimeter or so above the endline of her front teeth and her gums. Dangerous lines, bloodthirsty lines – *I was tempted to think*, but she immediately revealed another, softer side of her smile to me. As if she could have known that I attributed that last thought to a child's perception which had suddenly floated into my mind from who knows where, she began: "The kind of child's fear where you lose all your colors, and remain gray, like the object that scared you. When the only color that survives is the color of your bloodflow. That's how I felt the day before yesterday. The fear of surprise, of voidedness, the fear of flabbergastedness, as if everything is being sucked out of you and you have been transformed into an icy minute of absolute slippage – mere observation of everything above everything."

The next five or six days, as I remember, we weren't in touch, and then she asked me to visit again. In the meantime I was feeling displaced in a strange and new kind of way. As if something was happening with my eyes, day after day, as if something was off-kilter with my wakedness, as if I was flooded by a sense of dimness and convolution. But when I found myself next in her apartment I noticed something similar in her. The shift between each of her looks which were supposed to be signaling completely opposing moods – that shift tended to slip into invisibility to such a measure that each look ended up being exactly like the other. As if the second look needed in some way to manage to remain embedded within the first. And only a certain decrease in the energy flow, *which in*

*moments could be felt*, pointed towards a lack of resolution and a quiet evolution of some scary quiver inside.

If we met later in the day, the evening would gain in density, and if we came together earlier the air around us would seem clearer to me. One afternoon she placed her hand onto the arch of my foot and, almost immediately, I fell asleep. When she would cup my testicles with her warm hand a few moments before orgasm, something would burst inside of me, something like a flower breaking free, and for a moment I would feel taken care of. A deep, indescribable sadness overcame me when, some other time, she caringly rolled them into her mouth and began to knead and roll – I almost cried: finally intimacy. Her distant whisper would erect my thought even during the time we spent apart. I had a sense that she was being gentle towards me in places where I could feel it the most. It seemed to me that her smile meant forgetting everything that ever had been bad and the creepiness I had felt when her lips went over the endline of her teeth and her gums during our first night together completely slipped my mind.

### III

It is odd how Pavle could be charismatic and mentally unreliable at the same time – this was for me something quite new as I used to think charismatic people had to be calculating. However, *truth be told*, Pavle was primarily in control of *other* lives which allowed him to simulate hyperself-control and live off the fumes of that foam (while managing to delude himself with virtuosity and success for a long time). It seemed, though, as if he allowed circumstance to guide him (which I perceived as the root of his cynicism). And when he told me all those things about her, he was doing it then as well. I knew she had been on the verge of committing suicide. “*On the verge of suicide?* She was on the verge of the window sill. She stood on the sill and then she gave up. Something told her that she would accomplish nothing by it, that she would only come into existence in some other form. You know that Valerija is poetic.” He also added that I probably wasn’t aware of her three days and nights spent (on Ecstasy) in Soko-grad.

But when he told me how they *had helped* her to get rid of her fear of abortion – which, if I calculated it well, happened around the

time Valerija and I met – I replied: I wish you had never done that, none of you. What he said next influenced me as nothing else in my life. However, before that he told me everything in detail, forcing me to listen to it all.

During that session, he had performed a *surgery on Valerija's soul* with the help of his friends, intending to help her free herself of a fear she had admitted to him some months before, as he phrased it, during a confessional conversation. (For this is how he connected things: she was punishing herself within a long-lasting relationship with a drug addict – the one before I came – because she was in obsessive fear of abortion.) Pavle was overseeing the situation, guiding her gently, giving suggestions, encouraging her, controlling the rudder; his girlfriend, Chili, who was incidentally a kindergarten teacher and who kept bringing home armfuls of children's drawings, held Valerija's hand and stroked her forehead with a handkerchief dipped in chamomile tea. All the while Igor, Pavle's marionette, who represents such a pointless existence that has only now merited to be *introduced into the story*, inserted slowly and carefully, observing Pavle's instructions, a kitchen knife into Valerija's vagina. – I told him he had no right to do that. They shouldn't have done it. Stunned, shocked by what I was hearing, I told him sentimentally that *I would like it best* if he had never done it. And he replied that the sentence I had just said gave him the right to kill me. I was paralyzed. If it had been a threat, I don't believe it would have defeated me so deeply (although it would have scared me, numbed me, to death, that is certain). But to hear him say he *had the right* to kill me since I wished he hadn't done something he had astounded me, froze me to the bone.

While he was describing the scene he kept repeating that not a drop of blood had been spilt, and this insistence on emphasizing that fact made it all, *in some inexplicable way*, even more unacceptable. I left. I don't think I have ever left a place in a more furious state. There was an African mask hanging on the wall in the hall, and I paused enough to look at it pleadingly and in confusion a second before I gripped the front door handle nervously. The day after, I told Valerija that I wanted nothing more to do with Pavle (which obviously hurt her pride and – though not for long – brought into question her loyalty to the person who had helped her so much). What later came to my mind when I was able to think about things with a cooler head – after months of depression during which I

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constantly dreamed of them, and was in fear of every shadow every time I left the house thinking I might bump across one of them – was that all suicides should be somehow told (*and I have told it to myself as well*) to beware those who wish to dissuade them from committing the act because such people, if they were anything like Pavle, might later come to possess them in a way that is more than unacceptable for any human being.

And yet, the thing that always made me in some special way vulnerable, and that still comes to me as an afterimage, though I did not witness the scene myself – was the death of the unfortunate bunny rabbit which perished one night when Valerija's ex-boyfriend came home high and, having thrown himself on the armchair where the rabbit was sleeping, he himself fell asleep on her, squashing her to death. With the TV on. Why was this death necessary for Valerija to finally decide to leave him?

*Translated by Uroš Tomić*



*Foto © Duo Mattar Gueye*

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# Gabriela Babnik

Gabriela Babnik se je rodila leta 1979 v Göppingenu v Nemčiji. Leta 2005 je končala študij primerjalne književnosti in literarne teorije na Filozofski fakulteti v Ljubljani, kjer je leta 2010 magistrirala iz nigerijskega moderne romana. Od leta 2002 redno objavlja literarne kritike, intervjuje, komentarje, poročila in eseje v literarno-kulturnih revijah in prilogah, kot so *Literatura*, *Mentor*, *Ekran*, *Poetikon*, *Književni listi*, *Pogledi* idr. Za prvi roman *Koža iz bombaža* (2007) je na Slovenskem knjižnem sejmu leta 2007 prejela nagrado za najboljši prvenec. Njen drugi roman *V visoki travi* (2009) je bil 2010 nominiran za nagrado Kresnik, za najnovejši roman *Sušna doba* (2012) pa je 2013 prejela nagrado Evropske unije za književnost. Iste leta je kot literarna kritičarka dobila tudi Stritarjevo nagrado za mlade kritike. Pred kratkim je izdala svojo prvo zbirko zgodb *Nočne pokrajine* (2014). Kot književna prevajalka je v slovenščino med drugim prevedla dela nigerijske pisateljice Chimamande Ngozi Adichie. Od leta 2010 je članica Društva slovenskih pisateljev in Društva slovenskih literarnih kritikov. S svojo družino živi med Slovenijo in Afriko.

Gabriela Babnik was born in 1979 in Göppingen, Germany. She completed her studies in Comparative Literature and Literary Theory at the Faculty of Arts in Ljubljana in 2005, where she also obtained her Master's degree in 2010, writing on the modern Nigerian novel. Since 2002 she has been regularly publishing literary criticism, interviews, commentary, reports and essays in literary-cultural magazines and supplements such as *Literatura*, *Mentor*, *Ekran*, *Poetikon*, *Književni listi*, *Pogledi*, among others. Her first novel, *Koža iz bombaža* (Cotton Skin, 2007), received the award for the Best Debut Novel at the Slovenian National Book Fair in 2007. Her second novel, *V visoki travi* (In the Tall Grass, 2009), was shortlisted for the "Kresnik Award" for the best novel of the year in 2010. Her most recent novel, *Sušna doba* (Dry Season, 2012), was awarded the European Union Prize for Literature in 2013. As a literary critic, she was honoured with the "Josip Stritar" Young Critics Award that same year. She recently published her first collection of stories, *Nočne pokrajine* (Landscapes by Night, 2014). As a literary translator, she has also translated works by the Nigerian writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie into Slovenian. She has been a member of the Slovenian Writers' Association and the Slovenian Literary Critics' Association since 2010. She and her family divide their time between Slovenia and Africa.

## *Sušna doba*

(odlomek iz romana)

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»Spiš?« je rekel in premaknil svoje božansko telo. Bil je iz zlate dobe, ko se ljubimci niso držali za roke, še skozi lase so si komaj šli.

»Ne, ne morem.«

Hotela sem reči »ne znam spati kot ti«, vendar ni imelo smisla, ne bi razumel. Naključni tujec, s katerim sem v postelji preležala popoldne in eno noč, ne da bi se med nama karkoli zgodilo.

Med ponovnim odlaganjem torbe na tla, na tepih, po katerem se je sprehodilo že toliko stopal, večinoma bosih, od kod sicer tisti vonj po potu, po goloti, po zamolčanosti, me je spreletelo, da je ta navesek vse, kar mi je ostalo od prejšnjega življenja. Zunaj lije noč, na njo kapljajo zvezde in moj sin nekje v onstranstvu gleda še en nor film. Tokrat iz lastnega življenja.

Zazrla sem se v njegov molk in nato v njegove velike dlani z lepo oblikovanimi nohti – nekoliko nenavadno za fanta s ceste, ki je počel že toliko stvari, pa vendarle – zatlačene za kavbojke. To je tisto golo, kamnito področje, ki ga verjetno premorejo samo moški. Ali pa sem jaz iz kakšne stare šole.

»Zebe me,« je rekel in z brado pomignil nekam pod pas, kot da hoče prekiniti moj tok misli.

»In si greješ roke?«

»Ja, pa še navajen sem.« Vedno sem si predstavljala, da moške roke v hlačah pomenijo protekcijo in seveda preverjajo, ali je stvar še tam. Moj sin tega ni počel, vsaj ne v moji prisotnosti. V tem je bilo verjetno tudi najino nesoglasje. Ko se je dogajalo njemu, je skrival, ko se je dogajalo meni, bi mu morala pokazati. Ga učiti. Vendar sem mislila, da bi ga vsega o flori in favni morala naučiti druga ženska. Druga, kot sem bila jaz druga za tega mladca pred menoj. »Veliko moških to počne,« je leno dodal in mi namenil nasmešek, pri čemer je razkril zgornji rob dlesni. »Nisi videla tega pri nogometu?«

Zmedlo me je, zmedlo njegovo nenadno tikanje. Bo zdaj še enkrat ponovil tiste vulgarne besede, razkleni se, daj, da te pofukam, čeprav, čeprav jih ni nikoli izrekel. Veliko žensk, to sem videla v tistih reklamah za mila in detergente ali pa celo prebrala v detektivskih romanih ter raznobarnih časopisnih dodatkih, ima to željo, kaj željo, obsesijo po posiljevalcu. Groza, da bi si nekdo na silo vzel njihovo telo, da bi v zatemnjeni hotelski sobi prodril vanje, sploh če

je moški lep in mlad in temnopolt in one stare in ovenele in svetlopolte, se lahko spremeni v mantranje, v priklicevanje. O bog, če bo res storil kaj od tega, bo z menoj konec. Razprla bom usta kot ona z vlažnim, svetlikajočim v sebi, medtem ko ji je otrok padal med snežinke. In je stol ob oknu ostal prazen.

»Sem. In?«

»Tam spodaj smo najbolj občutljivi.« Spet sem pogledala proti torbi na tleh. Vse prijateljice, ki so poznale mojega sina, so me potem, ko so opazile njegovo nekoliko uvelo, zaprepadeno pojavo, začele gledati sumničavo. Zanje sem postala nekdo drug, ne Ana, ki so jo poznale. Še vedno Ana v visokih usnjenih škornjih pozimi in kačjih balerinkah poleti, Ana, ki izdeluje mehke blazine z botaničnimi vzorci in tapete v ognjenih barvah, vse to, ker ni znala ukrotiti svojega skrivnostnega in nepredvidljivega vrta, pa vseeno drugačna Ana. Ana izdajalka. Ana izumiteljica svojega sina, ki je bila videti tako močna, ko ga je rodila. Ana, ki po rojstvu ni bila nič drugačna od onih div, ki na odru bosih nog srkajo viski ter kljubujejo celemu svetu. Toda potem se je tej isti Ani otrok sfižil. »Nisi vedela, da hijene žrtev najprej zgrabijo za moda?«

In ker nisem hotela, da bi samo sebe ter svoje celotno življenje opazovala iz neke nove perspektive, sem mu na hitro odgovorila:

»Če ulovijo samca; kaj pa, če ulovijo samico?«

»Vas ne zaboli šok tam spodaj?« je rekel in zdaj se ni več smehljajal, ni več kazal dlesni. Nagnil se je nekam proti moji polovici postelje in zdelo se mi je, da se vendarle hoče dotakniti tistega skrivnostnega področja.

»Ne vem, še nikoli se mi ni zgodilo. Čeprav je po mojem vagina bolj za nežno odprtje in dotik.«

Jezik, ki sva ga govorila, ni bil njegov jezik. Dajal je vtis nonšalantnega razbojnika, ki se ima povsem v oblasti, vendar je bil tam pri srčnem prekatu še ranljivejši od mojega sina. »Ja, to je res, bolj zaprta je.«

Zdaj sem bila jaz na vrsti, da se zasmejim, da pokažem dlesni. »Ali veš, kaj se pogovarjava?« In ker ni kazalo, da bi vedel, da bi v tistem hipu sploh karkoli vedel, sem rekla, nekoliko predrzno sicer, za tisto hotelsko sobo in za svoja leta: »Ali veš, da sva se ravno zdajle ljubila?«

Vsi moji akvareli skupaj niso premogli pol toliko nežnosti kot njegovo vprašanje. »Misliš z jezikom?«

Zaželela sem si, da bi mi šel skozi gozd las in da bi doživela tisti čudoviti, sanjski trenutek zblížanja moškega in ženske ali pa da bi

vsaj razgrnil zavese, težke žametne zavese, ki so naredile noč še bolj temno, vendar je storil nekaj čisto drugega.

\* \* \*

Ne vem, koliko časa sva z Malikom preživela v Cotonouju, teden, dva, mesec, leto, tisti čas je zame kakor izbrisan. Med čakanjem na konec šole sva živila pri neki Francozinji, ki ji je bilo ime Julie Amado. Lahko bi bila mimobežna ženska iz Črne ulice z visoko spetimimi lasmi, vitkim hrbtom, ki se ji je v notranjost telesa odpiral v obliki črke s, in počasno hojo, prepočasno celo za njeno starost, izdajala jo je ta hoja, govorila o njeni nejasni preteklosti ali pa vsaj o pretirani nagnjenosti k melanholiji, vendar sem se po daljšem premisleku odločil, da ne gre za isto osebo. Malik ni mogel imeti stvari pod tolikšnim nadzorom in tudi Julie sama po sebi se je zdela napol nora. Ponoči na primer *ni spala, saj so njeno velikansko posteljo zasedale mačke; sama je sedla na stol in položila noge na posteljo, vse tiste mačke, moralo jih je biti več kot dvajset, pa so spale ob njenih nogah in med krožniki napol gnilih rib.*

Malika nisem spraševal, kje je spoznal Julie niti kaj počneva pri njej. Vse, kar sem razumel, je bilo, da čakava. Malik me je Julie sicer predstavil kot prijatelja, ki zna delati stavke in zato piše roman. Zanj si je celo izmislil naslov, *Spet morje* ali nekaj podobnega, in Julie je bila navdušena. Ponudila mi je pisalni stroj, veliko, črno, predpotopno žival, ki je ob tipkanju oddajala grozeč zvok ali pa požirala papir, na desetine dreves je šlo v njeno podolžno grlo, v takšnih napetih trenutkih sem skočil izza mize ter začel z rokami vleči papir, sprva previdno, potem pa vse bolj razjarjeno, raztrgani kosi so leteli po zraku kakor snežinke, *smo kot sneg, ki vedno poneha*, sem si mrmral stavek, za katerega še zdaj ne vem, kje sem ga pobral, ampak po nekaj dneh je stroj odnehal, tropski gozdovi so bili rešeni, pokrajina odmrznjena, medtem ko se je zame vse šele začelo. Julie mi je po kotih hiše začela pripovedovati svoje spomine. Menda so bili do tolikšne mere zanimivi, da naj bi iz njih sklofal knjigo. Odklonil sem, češ, v resnici sploh ne znam delati stavkov, Malik je tisto rekel kar tako, vendar je še naprej prislanjala hrbet na steno, grizla v luknjast sir in bageto ter pripovedovala. Tako sem izvedel, da je v Cotonou prišla pred leti kot učiteljica prostovoljka. Toda ker se stvari niso izšle, rekla je čisto tako, natančno se spominjam, je službo pustila.

»Ne razumi me narobe, po srcu sem še vedno humanitarka, otrokom pomagam, kolikor lahko, olajšam jim pot, brez mene bi še bolj

trpeli, toda če misliš, da iz tega posla lahko izstopiš, ko si enkrat v njem, se motiš.«

Več ko je govorila, manj sem razumel. Otroci od osem do šestnajst let, zvezane roke, treba jih je pospremiti. Uradna razlaga: transport mladoletnikov, ki jih hočejo posvojiti belci (moje razmišljanje: morda jih bodo prodali v suženjstvo, morda za prostitucijo, kajti lepo vas prosim, kateri beli par bi pa hotel posvojiti malega črnuha?). In kdo je še vpleten v posel? Ljudje na položajih, polkovniki, birokrati, ministri.

V tem trenutku sem se nehote zarežal: »Julie, z vsem spoštovanjem, kje se nahajam jaz v tej bordelski verigi?«

V naročje je vzela eno izmed mačk, ki so se nama pletle med nogami, in jo začela božati. »Še vedno ti ni jasno, kaj? Morda pa res nisi pravi pisatelj.«

\* \* \*

V bližnji trafiki sem si kupila zavojček cigaret in telefonsko kartico za klice v tujino ter tako opremljena splezala na streho družinske hiše. Zdaj vem: od tu je Ismael strmel v ogenj, ki ga razširjajo kmetje v času harmatana, od tu je gledal bežeče živali, goreče ptice, ki letijo kakor feniksi, preden jih pogoltnejo plameni. Tu je bil prostor njegovega počitka in sanj, čeprav je mene na vrhu spreletaval prej občutek, da sem se prišla poslovit. Želela sem prekoračiti namišljeno ljubkovanje mladega moškega telesa, pa mi je spodletelo. Želela sem preseči bridko žalost, stopnjujočo se osamljenost, pa očitno investicija ni bila prava. Zato je bil čas, da odidem. Poleg tega ni imelo smisla obremenjevati Ismaelove tete. Za ljudi, ki so prihajali na dvorišče, si je v mojem imenu izmišljevala zgodbe, ki jim je le malokdo verjel; nekoč me je neka starejša ženska celo zgrabila za trebuh in mi v obraz izkričala grobe, najbolj grobe besede mojega življenja. Teta me je tolažila, naj se ne zmenim zanjo, same neumnosti, je rekla, vendar sem vseeno vedela; tega, kar sem občutila, ne bi smela preseči z Ismaelom, Ismael je bil namenjen za druge stvari.

Vtipkala sem številko telefonske kartice v mobilni telefon in nato očetovo telefonsko številko. Preden bi se odločila za karkoli, preden bi splezala s strehe in pustila goreče fenikse viseti v zraku, sem morala preveriti, kako je z očetom. Se me je odrekel, odkar sem mu priznala, da sem se tu z nekom zbližala, z nekom, ki je nekaj desetletij mlajši od mene, se me je odrekel, ker se kljub njegovim tožbam o prizadeti polovici možganov še vedno nisem odločila vrniti, ali pa

je še vse po starem? Če je še vse po starem, potem je to zame pravzaprav dobro, če pa bo prijazen, pomeni, da so mu zamenjali srce. In v tem primeru se ne bom imela več kam vrniti.

\* \* \*

Telefon je ponovno zazvonil. Zvonjenje sem slišala v glavi, v telesu, morda še intenzivneje, ker so vsi zunaj na dvorišču zadrževali dih. Noč, koze, celo kmetje, ki so zažigali travo, so za trenutek potihnili. Med dvigovanjem slušalke in še potem, ko sem namesto tistega praznega halo izrekla Ismaelovo ime, sem se zavedala, da je najina ljubezen trajala eno sušno dobo. Posejala sva seme v zemljo, in ker ni bilo klitja, ker ga nikoli ni moglo biti, se mi dozdeva, da je vse zgolj naključje, da sem sama bitje, oropano smisla.

## *Dry Season*

(excerpt from the novel)

“Are you sleeping?” he said, moving his divine body. He was from a golden age, where lovers didn’t hold hands; they barely ran their fingers through each others’ hair.

“No, I can’t.”

I wanted to say “I don’t know how to sleep like you”, but there was no point; he wouldn’t understand. The chance foreigner, with whom I had been lying in bed all afternoon and one night, without anything happening between us.

Whilst yet again placing the bag on the floor, onto the carpet over which so many steps had walked, mostly bare, from where that smell of sweat, nakedness and concealment came, it occurred to me that this bag was all that was left of my former life. Outside the night pours, stars splash into it, and somewhere beyond, my son watches another crazy film. This time from his own life.

I stared into his silence and then, despite them being tucked into his jeans, at his large palms with beautifully formed nails, somewhat unusual for a street boy who had done so much. This is that bare, stony terrain, which probably only men can possess. Either that, or I’m from some sort of old school.

“I’m cold,” he said with his chin beckoned somewhere below his waist, as if he wanted to interrupt my stream of thought.

“And you’re warming your hands up?”

“Yes, I’m used to it still.” I always imagined that male hands in trousers meant protection, and that they were of course checking that the thing was still there. My son didn’t do it, at least not in my presence. There was probably something of our misunderstanding in that too. When he did it, he concealed it, when I did it, I would have to show him. To teach him. But I thought that another woman should teach him all about flora and fauna. Another, just like I was another to this young man in front of me. “Lots of men do it,” he added lazily, giving me a smile which revealed an upper rim of gum. “You haven’t seen that in football?”

It threw me, his unexpected informal address. Will he now repeat those vulgar words again? Open yourself up, go on, so I can screw you, although, although he never uttered them. Many women - I’d seen it in those adverts for soap and detergent or even read it in detective novels and multi-coloured newspaper supplements - want

that, that desire, they obsess over somebody ravishing them. The horror, that someone would take their body by force, take them down in a darkened hotel room, if the man is at all handsome and young and dark-skinned, and they old and withered and light-skinned, that horror can turn into a mantra, a summoning. Oh god, if he were to do anything like that, it would be the end of me. I will widen my mouth like her, moist, opalescent inside her, whilst the child was falling amongst the snowflakes. And the chair by the window remained empty.

“I have. And?”

“It’s where we’re most sensitive, down there.” Again I looked towards the bag on the floor. All my female friends who knew my son began to look at me suspiciously when they noticed his somewhat withered, startled character. To them I had become someone else; not the Ana that they knew. Still Ana in leather high heels in winter and snakeskin ballerina pumps in summer; Ana, who makes cushions with botanical designs and wall hangings in fiery colours, all this, because she didn’t know how to tame her secret and unpredictable garden, yet still a completely different Ana. Ana the traitor. Ana, inventor of her son, who had seemed so strong when she gave birth to him. Ana, who after the birth was no different from those divas who would get up on stage bare-legged, would sip whiskey and defy the whole world. But then, the child of that very same Ana got spoilt.

“Didn’t you know that hyena’s prey go for the testicles first?”

And because I didn’t wish to observe myself and my entire life from some new perspective, I answered him quickly: “If they catch buck; what about if they catch a doe?”

“Well doesn’t it give you a painful shock down there?” he said, no longer laughing and no longer showing his gums. He leant somewhere towards my side of the bed and it seemed as if he still wanted to touch this secret region.

“I don’t know, it’s never happened to me. But I think the vagina is more for softer opening and touch.”

The language which we were speaking wasn’t his language. He gave the impression of a nonchalant bandit, who has himself under complete control, although there, in those ventricles of the heart, he was more vulnerable than my son. “Yes, true, it’s more closed.”

Now it was my turn to burst out laughing, showing my gums. “Do you know what we’re talking about?” And as he didn’t look as if he did know, or as if he knew anything at that moment, I said,

somewhat boldly, for that hotel room and for his age: “Do you know that we just made love?”

All of my watercolours combined could not have contained half the softness of his question. “Do you mean with words?”

I wished he would go through my forest of hair and that I could experience that wonderful, dream-like moment of man and woman coming closer or that he would at least draw the curtains, the heavy, velvet curtains which made the night even darker, yet he did something completely different.

\* \* \*

I don't know how much time I spent with Malik in Cotonou; a week, two, a month, year – this time was somehow deleted for me. Whilst waiting for school to end the two of us lived with some French lady called Julie Amado. She could have been the fleeting woman from Black Street with hair tied-up high, a slender back which at the inner of her body opened out into the shape of a letter 's', and a slow gait, too slow even for her age. It betrayed her, that gait; it spoke of her vague past or at least of her excessive proclivity to melancholia. But after much thought I decided that it can't have been the same person. Malik couldn't have things under such supervision and also Julie herself seemed completely crazy. For instance *she didn't sleep at night, with her huge bed being overrun by cats; she sat alone in the chair with her feet on the bed, whilst all the cats – there must have been more than twenty of them – slept on her lap and in amongst plates of rotting fish.*

I didn't ask Malik where he met Julie, nor what the two of us were doing at her place. As far as I understood, we were waiting. Malik had otherwise introduced Julie to me as a friend, who knew how to form sentences and who was therefore writing a novel. He had even thought up a title for her, *Once Again, the Sea*, or something like that, and Julie was thrilled. She offered me a typewriter, a large, black, antiquated animal, which upon typing gave out a menacing sound and it consumed paper, with the trees going into its oblong mouth in tens. At such tense moments I leapt from behind the table and began to pull the paper, at first carefully, but then more and more furiously, with the torn up piece flying through the air like snowflakes, *we are like the snow which eventually ceases to fall*, I murmured a sentence to myself which I still don't know where I picked up, but after a few days the machine gave way, the tropical rainfor-

ests were saved, the landscape unfrozen whilst for me everything had only just begun. Julie began to tell me her stories all over every corner of the house. Maybe to some degree they were interesting enough for me to churn out a book about them. But I declined, seeing as in reality I had no idea how to construct sentences, Malik had just made that up, but she carried on leaning her back against the wall, biting into a baguette and some holey cheese, and recounted. It was how I learnt of how she came to Cotonou as a volunteer teacher a year earlier. But because things didn't work out – she said it just like that, I remember exactly – she had left her job.

“Don't get me wrong, I'm still a humanitarian at heart, I help children however I can, I make their paths easier and without me they'd suffer even more, but if you think that you can get out of that business once you're inside it, you're mistaken.”

The more she spoke, the less I understood. Children from eight to sixteen years old, hands tied, needed to be accompanied. The official explanation: the trafficking of children, which white people wanted to adopt (my thinking: maybe they were going to sell them into slavery, maybe into prostitution, because I ask you, which white couple is going to want to adopt a little black kid). And who is still involved in business? People in positions: colonelships, bureaucrats, ministers.

At that moment I involuntarily became angry: “Julie, with the greatest of respect, where do I fit into this licentious chain?”

Into her lap she placed one of the cats which had been winding between our legs and started to stroke her. “Do you still not get it, or what?” Maybe you're really not a true writer.”

\* \* \*

At the nearby newsstand I bought a pack of cigarettes and an international phone card and so-equipped, climbed to the roof of the family house. Now I know: it was from here that Ismael stared at the fire which the farmers spread in the time of Harmattan, it was from here that he watched the escaping animals, burning birds which fly like phoenixes before being swallowed by flames. Here was his place of rest and dreams, although here at the top I got more a feeling that I had come to say goodbye. I had wanted to get over the imaginary caresses of the young male body but I failed. I wanted to overcome the bitter sadness, the increasing loneliness, but this investment obviously wasn't the right one. That is why it was time to leave. Besides

that there was no sense in troubling Ismael's aunt. For people coming to the courtyard, she had been making up stories which nobody would believe; once an older woman had even grabbed my stomach and yelled rudely, the rudest words of my life, to my face. The aunt had comforted me, told me not to mind about her, it's all nonsense she'd said, but still I'd known; Ismael couldn't help me overcome what I was feeling, Ismael was meant for other things.

I typed the phone card's number into the mobile phone, followed by my father's telephone number. Before I decided on anything, before I climbed from the roof and left the burning phoenixes to hang in the air, I had to find out how things were with my father. He had renounced me ever since I confessed to him that I'd become close to somebody here, somebody who was a good few decades younger than me, he renounced me because despite his complaints about the affected parts of his brain I still hadn't decided to return, or was everything still as usual? If everything was still as usual, then it was actually good for me, but if he was going to be nice that meant that they'd changed his heart. And if that was the case I wasn't going to have anywhere to return to.

\* \* \*

The telephone rang again. I heard the ringing in my head, in my body, maybe even more intensely because everyone outside in the courtyard held their breath. The night, the goats, even the farmers who had been burning the grass, all fell silent for a moment. Between answering the phone and then afterwards, when instead of that empty hello I said Ismael's name, I realised that our love had lasted an entire dry season. We sowed seeds in the ground, and because they didn't germinate, because they never could have germinated, it seemed to me that everything was mere coincidence, that I am just a being, devoid of meaning.

*Translated by Olivia Hellewell*



*Foto © Peter von Felbert*

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# Marica Bodrožić

Marica Bodrožić se je rodila leta 1973 v Svibu na Hrvaškem. Od leta 1983 živi v Nemčiji. V Frankfurtu na Majni je študirala kulturno antropologijo, psihoanalizo in slavistiko. Piše poezijo, romane, kratke zgodbe in eseje. Med njena dela sodijo pesniške zbirke *Ein Kolibri kam unverwandelt* (Kolibri je priletel, nepreobražen, 2007), *Lichtorgeln* (Svetlobne orgle, 2008) in *Quittenstunden* (Ure kutine, 2011), zbirki kratkih zgodb *Tito ist tot* (Tito je mrtev, 2002) in *Der Windsammler* (Zbiratelj vetrov, 2005) ter romani *Der Spieler der inneren Stunde* (Igralec notranje ure, 2005), *Das Gedächtnis der Libellen* (Spomin kačjih pastirjev, 2010) in *Kirschholz und alte Gefühle* (Češnjevina in stara čustva, 2012). Za svoje literarno ustvarjanje je prejela številne nagrade in štipendije, med drugim tudi nagrado berlinske Akademije umetnosti za književnost za mlade pisatelje in nagrado »Kulturpreis Deutsche Sprache« za inovativno rabo literarne jezika. Njena dela so prevedena v angleščino, hrvaščino, francoščino in italijanščino. Marica Bodrožić živi v Berlinu, kjer deluje kot svobodna pisateljica.

Marica Bodrožić was born in Svib, Croatia. She has been living in Germany since 1983. She studied cultural anthropology, psychoanalysis and Slavic studies in Frankfurt am Main. She writes poetry, novels, short stories and essays. Her works include the collections of poetry *Ein Kolibri kam unverwandelt* (A Hummingbird Arrived Unchanged, 2007), *Lichtorgeln* (Light Organs, 2008), and *Quittenstunden* (Quince Hours, 2011), the collections of short stories *Tito ist tot* (*Tito is Dead*, 2002) and *Der Windsammler* (The Gatherer of Winds, 2005), the novels *Der Spieler der inneren Stunde* (The Player of the Inner Hour, 2005), *Das Gedächtnis der Libellen* (The Memory of the Dragonflies, 2010), and *Kirschholz und alte Gefühle* (*A Cherrywood Table*, 2012). She has received numerous awards and scholarships for her literary work, including the Literature Prize of the Berlin Academy of Arts for young writers, as well as the "Kulturpreis Deutsche Sprache" award for her innovative use of literary language. Her works have been translated into English, Croatian, French and Italian. Marica Bodrožić lives in Berlin, where she works as a freelance writer.

## *Kirschholz und alte Gefühle*

(Abschnitt aus dem Roman)

Heute habe ich fast alle Kisten ausgeräumt. In der Leere meiner neuen Wohnung ist noch nicht viel gesprochen worden. Die von Erinnerung freie Luft aus dem Vögelchenzimmer macht sich auch in den anderen Räumen breit. Manchmal scheinen sich meine Zimmer zu weiten. Seitdem ich hier wohne, denke ich immer wieder an das Meer. Je länger ich in der Lage bin zu schweigen, desto entschiedener reisen meine Ohren zum Meer, zurück zu den Orten am Meer, zu den Häusern am Meer, zu den Menschen am Meer. In der Erinnerung an das Meer strenge ich mich nie an. Es ist eine Reise ins Blaue. Innere des Wassers. Ohren, rauschen. Kein Knirschen. In den Knochen. Ich sehe Segelboote vor mir und kleine Fischerbarken. Netze, angefüllt mit dem nächtlichen Fang. Mein Kopf ist darüber so überrascht, dass der Druck vorne in meiner Stirn fast vollständig aufgehört hat. Das alte Pochen und Picken und Drängen, es ist Erinnerung. Bald wird es nur noch Ahnung sein, und ich werde mich im Zurückdenken anstrengen müssen, wenn ich wissen will, wie es damals war, mein Leben. Die Ohren hören das Meer. Sie hören es für mich, und ich werde durch mein Ohr dieser Klangraum, die sich stetig wiederholende Arbeit des Meeres. In der Tiefe der Stille kommen sie an der Küste an. Die Wellen. Ich spüre den Sand von früher zwischen meinen Zehen. Ich höre mich, höre meinen eigenen Atem, nach dem Einsatz des Meeres, in seinem Gleichklang, die unermüdliche Arbeit der Wellen und der Stille, die dann folgt, in meinen Ohren. In der Meeresstille habe ich keinen Namen. Bin ich. Noch nie vorher habe ich gehört, wie laut einem die Lunge das Leben voratmet. Und ich frage mich, da alle Orte ein Ort in mir geworden sind, alle Zeiten eine Zeit in mir, ob ich es nun hier schaffen werde, in ihrem Verlangen weiterzumachen, in ihrem Tempo in die Zukunft zu gehen, ohne ihr zum Opfer zu fallen. Oder ob ich meiner Lunge etwas anderes beibringen, ihr Murmeln in mein Murmeln wenden muss, in meine ganz eigenen Wörter, die sie nicht kennt, nicht kennen kann, da ich dafür zuständig bin, sie ihr zu geben, über den Rand zu reichen, durch das Gatter, das unsere Berührungen darstellen. Die Reibung mit der Luft. Zittern. Beim Gedanken an die Weite des nach Innen verlegten Raumes, in dem es keine Landkarte gibt. Nichts, das mir den Weg im Dunkeln weisen würde. Und doch liegt genau darin eine Genauigkeit,

die präzise mit meiner Lichtlinie verbunden ist. Das weiß ich. Da bin ich schon jenseits der Ahnungen. Auf eine immer gleiche Weise schiebt sich die Sonne in den Morgenstunden über die Fläche des Holztisches. Meine Küche, in der der Tisch steht, zeigt Richtung Osten. Der Tisch ist hier von Anfang an meine kleine Sonnenstation gewesen. Und wie jeden Morgen habe ich auch heute wieder als erstes meine Hände auf den Tisch gelegt, seine Wärme gespürt, bevor ich meinen Kaffee getrunken habe. Die Plastiktüten, die meine Mutter mitgebracht hat, habe ich nach dem Frühstück auf dem Tisch ausgeschüttet. Gestern Abend hatte ich Angst vor dem Durcheinander. Einen Moment lang spielte ich mit dem Gedanken, zur Mülldeponie zu fahren, alle Fotos aus den Tüten in einen großen schwarzen Sack zu stopfen und sie dort zu entsorgen. Aber dann stellte ich mir plötzlich vor, dass irgendein verrückter Künstler genau so etwas suchen würde, so etwas wie mein Leben, dass er dort vorbeikommen und die Fotos einfach aufklauben, sie zu seinem Eigentum, zu seinem Gedächtnis und am Ende zu irgendeiner Serie in seinem Werk machen könnte. Dann wäre er der Erzähler unserer Sommermonate am Meer. Nicht ich. Die Fotos musste ich allein schon deshalb behalten. Oder verbrennen. Sie durch das lebendige Feuer gehen lassen. Aber das konnte ich ja immer noch machen. Bevor ich einschlief, beschloss ich, die Plastiktüten keinem Fremden zu überlassen, sie nicht aus den Händen zu geben.

Ich versuche, eine Ordnung in das Chaos auf dem Tisch zu bringen und die Fotos nach Jahren, Geburtstagen und Festen zu sortieren. Meine Mutter und ihr Blick sind bei mir. Sie sieht mir über die Schulter, schaut nach, ob ich mich gut um ihr Kodak-Brownie-Erbe kümmere. Der warme Tisch wird mein großes Passepartout, ein Rahmen für meinen lange aufgeschobenen Versuch, Mutter und ihren Augen gerecht zu werden. Worüber wacht sie in meiner Vorstellung? Meine Mutter hat mich vor ein paar Monaten in meiner alten Wohnung besucht, und ich habe sie endlich gefragt, warum sie mir immer die alten Fotos in Plastiktüten bringt. Lieblos zwingt sie unsere ganze Welt von früher in die Tüten. Ihre Antwort war bezeichnend. Sie hat alles auf das begrenzte Gepäck geschoben. Sie wolle kein Geld wegen dieser alten Sachen ausgeben. Außerdem war es die letzte Tüte. Sie wird mir keine Fotos mehr mitbringen. Ich sehe sie mir an, ihre Schnappschüsse haben schon einen leichten Stich ins Haselnussfarbene. Fotos aus einem ganz anderen Jahrhundert. Sie wirken koloriert und einem mir jetzt schon fremden

Zeitmaß entsprungen, jenseits der Zeiger, die auf unseren Uhren die Stunden zählen. Das Haselnussfarbene sagt: Es ist für immer vorbei und wer bist du jetzt? Auf vielen Schnappschüssen trage ich die bunten Kleider, die mir meine Mutter angezogen hat. Ganz oft stehe ich zusammen mit meinem istrischen Freund Mateo unter einem Baum. Er lächelt und hat ein weißes T-Shirt mit blauen Streifen an. Mateo wollte schon damals Philosoph werden, nicht Matrose, wie ich es gern gehabt hätte. Er hat gesagt, dass nur Idioten Matrosen werden, das hatte ich ihm aber nicht geglaubt. Kein Idiot kann so gut aussehen wie ein Matrose, sagte ich, und Mateo lachte, ich solle abwarten und später noch einmal mit ihm darüber reden. Das habe ich ihm versprochen. Aber als Erwachsene haben wir nie wieder darüber geredet. In Istrien erzählte er mir jeden Sommer von Diogenes in der Tonne. Und schon damals, ich muss ungefähr fünf Jahre alt gewesen sein, versuchte meine Mutter, ihm beizubringen, dass es vielleicht gar keine Tonne war, in der der alte Grieche saß. Mateo ärgerte sich über sie. Er wollte einfach an der Diogenes-Tonne festhalten und fand es kleinlich, dass meine Mutter ständig auf ihre Übersetzungsidee zu sprechen kam. Sie ist rechthaberisch, sagte er dann, wenn wir unter den Bäumen saßen, die Hunde ihre Köpfe an unseren Füßen ablegten und mit ihren warmen Schnauzen unsere Zehen kitzelten. Mateo hat einige Jahre im Garten meiner Großmutter gearbeitet und so gab es keinen Baum, unter dem wir nicht irgendwann fotografiert worden wären. Jahrelang hat meine Mutter nichts über Mateo erzählt. Aber bei ihrem letzten Besuch redete sie nur noch über ihn, alles, was sie in der neuen Zeit als schmerzlich empfand, schien sich für sie in seiner Person zu bündeln. Ich weiß nicht, was von den Geschichten stimmt. Aber er hatte sie enttäuscht, das war nicht zu übersehen, wahrscheinlich gerade weil er Philosoph war, der einzige aus dem istrischen Dorf.

Die letzten zwei Wochen, die meine Mutter mit Nadeshda, Ezra und mir in Berlin verbrachte, redete sie beinahe ununterbrochen über Mateo und erzählte nichts über sich. Dabei hatte ich gehofft, dass sie sich dieses Mal nach all den Jahren des beharrlichen Schweigens öffnen und ich mehr über sie erfahren würde. Kaum dass aber die Rede nicht von Mateo war, sprach sie vom kommenden Sommer, und ich befürchtete plötzlich, dass sie mich bitten könnte, sie in Istrien oder in der Stadt zu besuchen. Ich wusste nicht, ob ich die Kraft haben würde, um ihr diesen Wunsch zu erfüllen. Aber als sie mich dann doch nicht fragte, war ich enttäuscht. Zugleich spürte

ich ihre Scheu wie nie zuvor, bemerkte, dass sie wie ein Kind auf die Füße sah, wenn ihr ein Thema unangenehm war. Schon früher war es immer ihre Art gewesen, jede Lücke mit Geschichten zu füllen, die ihr plötzlich einfielen und die sie uns fast atemlos erzählte, als ginge es um ihr Leben. Nie wusste ich, wie viel sie von mir wahrnahm, doch darüber, dass ich nun in Berlin lebte, schien sie glücklich zu sein. Weißt du, sagte sie, du wirst nie erfahren, wie beharrlich Blut an Schuhen kleben kann. Und das sei mein größtes Glück. Ich war sprachlos. Wir sahen uns an, lange, ich brachte kein Wort heraus, aber als ich dann auf sie zuzuging und fast schon dabei war, sie zu umarmen, trat sie einen Schritt zurück und tat, als hätte sie es nicht bemerkt. Alles, aber auch alles hat sich verändert, sagte sie. Den Satz wiederholte sie mehrmals. Ich glaube, sie merkte es selbst nicht einmal, wie oft sie den Satz wiederholte. Er klang wie ein Mantra, aber es half ihr nicht. Mich überkam das Gefühl, dass sie genau wusste, wie sie mich von sich fernhalten konnte. Es war ein bestimmter Ton in ihrer Stimme, eine alte Höhe, aus der sie mich wie früher in der Kindheit mit den Augen ins Visier nahm. Wenn ich diese Tonlage hörte, schwieg ich, war wieder das gehorsame Mädchen, das keine Fragen stellte und das wartete, bis es angesprochen wurde. Zuerst dachte ich, sie rede von Berlin und dem Fall der Mauer. Ich wusste, dass sie in ihrer Jugend mit meinen Großeltern längere Zeit in Schöneberg verbracht hatte und sich ein wenig auskannte. Aber sie sprach nicht über Berlin, sondern über unser früheres Leben. Über Jahre hinweg hatte sie, ganz anders als ich, mit ihren eigenen Augen gesehen, wie sich alles änderte, aber erst jetzt, und zum ersten Mal hier bei mir, schien sie in den fortwährenden Wiederholungen ihres Satzes zu verstehen, was in ihrem Leben unwiederbringlich verloren gegangen war. Statt den Verlust zu empfinden, erzählte sie wieder nur über Mateo. Schon morgens fing sie damit an. Kaum dass wir am Tisch saßen und Kaffee tranken, war sein Name mehrmals gefallen. Sie berichtete Nadeshda und mir von den Leuten, die mit Mateo in dem Sprachverein waren und sich jetzt alle hauptberuflich nur um die Korrektheit der Sprache kümmerten. Das setzte ihr besonders zu. Mateo sei unter den Sprachreinigern der ehrgeizigste und habe zu den Leuten gehört, die öffentlich arme Buchhändler beschimpften, nur weil sie Bücher in kyrillischer Schrift verkauften.

Auf den Fotos, die auf dem Tisch vor mir liegen, sehe ich einen anderen Mateo, seine Augen leuchten so zeitlos wie nachdrücklich. Er hatte damals einen wachen Blick. Ich kann die Freude, die von

seinem jugendlichen Gesicht ausgeht, nicht mit dem in Verbindung bringen, was meine Mutter erzählt hat. Meine Erinnerung trägt mich zurück zu den Sommern und den unzähligen Tagen, an denen wir unter den Bäumen saßen und stundenlang aufs Meer hinausschauten, zu den Möwen und auf die Wellen, die in unserer Vorstellung miteinander redeten. Das Meer verstand die Sprache der Möwen. Und die Möwen verstanden die Sprache des Meeres. Und wir sahen ihnen dabei zu und freuten uns, wenn Wind auf kam und über uns die Wipfel der Bäume zu hören waren, nirgendwo Stillstand, überall die pralle Bewegung.

## *Češnjevin* in stara čustva

(odlomek iz romana)

Danes sem izpraznila skoraj vse selitvene škatle. V praznini mojega novega stanovanja še nismo spregovorili prav veliko besed. Spominov prost zrak iz ptičje sobice se razteza tudi po drugih prostorih. Včasih se zdi, da se sobe širijo. Odkar stanujem tukaj, pogosto mislim na morje. Dlje kot mi uspeva molčati, odločneje potujejo moja ušesa k morju, nazaj k obmorskim krajem, k hišam ob morju, k ljudem na morju. Spomin na morje je lahkoten. Potovanje v neznane modrine. V globine vodovja. Ušesa, šumenje. Nobenega škrtanja. V kosteh. Vidim jadrnice in majcene ribiške barke. Mreže z nočnim ulovom. To me tako presune, da napetost spredaj, v čelu, skoraj povsem popusti. Dobro znano trkanje in kljuvanje in zbadanje, to je spomin. Toda kmalu bo le še sled spomina in morala se bom potruditi, da se bom spomnila, kakó je bilo prej, v nekdanjem življenju. Ušesa slišijo morje. Slišijo ga namesto mene, in ko prisluhnem, sama postanem ta prostranost šumenja, neutrudno delo morja. V globinah tišine pridejo na obalo. Valovi. Med prsti na nogah čutim pesek od nekoč. Slišim se, slišim lastno dihanje, ko vmes poseže morje s svojim enakomernim šumenjem – neutrudnim delom valov v tišini, ki sledi – v mojih ušesih. V morski tišini nimam imena. Sem samo jaz. Še nikoli poprej nisem slišala, kako glasno pljuča predihavajo življenje. In sprašujem se, ali so se vsi kraji v meni združili v en sam kraj, vsi časi v en čas in ali mi bo tukaj in zdaj uspelo iti naprej, kot mi narekujejo pljuča, v njihovem ritmu vstopiti v prihodnost, ne da bi ji podlegla kot žrtev. Mi bo uspelo pljuča naučiti še kaj drugega – njihovo mrmranje moram spremeniti v svoje, čisto svoje besede, ki jih ona ne poznajo, ki jih ne morejo poznati, ker sem tukaj jaz, ki jim jih posredujem, jih dam čez rob, skozi rešetke, ki nastanejo z najinimi dotiki. Trenje z zrakom. Trepet. Ko pomislim na prostranost navznoter zaprtega prostora, kjer ni zemljevidov. Ni ničesar, kar bi mi kazalo pot v temi. Pa vendar ravno tukaj tiči neka natančnost, ki je precizno povezana z mojo svetlobno črto. Vem. O tem ni več dvoma. Sonce se zarana na vedno enak način zarisuje na obzorje. Kuhinja, kjer stoji miza, je obrnjena proti vzhodu. Ta miza je že od nekdaj moja mala sončna opazovalnica. In tako kot vsako jutro sem tudi danes, preden sem popila kavo, najprej na mizo položila dlani in občutila njeno toplino. Po zajtrku sem na mizo stresla vsebino plastičnih vrečk, ki jih je prinesla mama. Sinoči me

je bilo strah te zmešnjave. Za hip sem pomislila, da bi vse fotografije iz vrečk nabasala v veliko črno vrečo, se odpeljala na odpad in jo pustila tam. Toda prešinilo me je, da bi lahko kakšen nori umetnik iskal nekaj prav takšnega, nekaj takšnega, kot je moje življenje, da bi lahko prišel mimo in fotografije preprosto vzel, si jih prisvojil, spremenil v lastne spomine, ki bi končali kot neka serija v njegovem opusu. Tako bi postal pripovedovalec naših poletnih mesecev ob morju on. Ne jaz. Že zgolj zavoljo tega moram fotografije obdržati. Ali pa zažgati. Skozi živi ogenj morajo. Toda to lahko naredim kadarkoli. Preden sem zaspala, sem sklenila, da plastičnih vrečk ne bom zaupala nikomur, da jih ne bom spustila iz rok.

Zmešnjavo na mizi skušam urediti, razvrstiti fotografije po letih, rojstnih dnevih in praznikih. Nad menoj bdita mama in njen pogled. Gleda mi čez ramo, preverja, ali dobro skrbim za njeno *Kodak Brownie* dediščino. Topla miza postane velik paspartu, okvir za moj poskus – da bi zadostila mami in njenemu pogledu – s katerim sem odlašala toliko časa. Nad čim vse bdi v moji predstavi? Pred nekaj meseci me je obiskala v prejšnjem stanovanju in takrat sem jo končno vprašala, zakaj mi vsakič prinaša te plastične vrečke s starimi fotografijami. Ves naš nekdanji svet brezčutno trpa v vrečke. Odgovor je bil tipičen zanjo. Vse je omejila na najnujnejšo prtljago. Za te stare reči ni hotela zapravljati denarja. Poleg tega je to zadnja vrečka. Ne bo mi več prinašala fotografij. Ogledujem si jih, njeni posnetki imajo že pridih lešnikaste porumenelosti. Fotografije iz povsem drugačnega stoletja. Videti so pobarvane in kot da prihajajo iz nekega drugega merjenja časa, onstran naših urnih kazalcev. Lešnikasta barva pravi: zdaj je za zmeraj konec in kdo si zdaj? Na številnih posnetkih nosim pisane obleke, v katere me je oblačila mama. Z mojim istrskim prijateljem Mateom pogosto stojiva skupaj pod drevesi. Smehlja se, na sebi ima belo majico z modrimi črtami. Mateo je hotel že takrat postati filozof in ne mornar, kot bi si želela jaz. Pravil je, da gredo za mornarje samo idioti, a mu tega nisem verjela. Idiot kot mornar že ni videti tako dobro, sem rekla, in Mateo se je zasmel, naj še malo počakam in da se bova o tem pomenila pozneje. To sem mu obljubila. Toda ko sva odrasla, nisva nikoli več spregovorila o tem. Vsako poletje v Istri mi je pripovedoval o Diogenu v sodu. In že takrat, stara sem bila približno pet let, ga je moja mama skušala prepričati, da morda le ni bil sod, kjer je stari Grk sedel. Mateo se je jezil. Vztrajal je pri Diogenovem sodu in zdelo se mu je malenkostno, ko ga je mama vedno znova hotela prepričati, da gre za napako v prevodu.

Tako zaverovana je v svoj prav, je rekel, ko sva pozneje sedela pod drevesi, na najina stopala so glave naslanjali psi in naju žgečkali s toplimi smrkčki. Mateo je nekaj let vrtnaril pri moji babici in ni bilo drevesa, pod katerim se ne bi fotografirala vsaj enkrat. Mama dolga leta ni spregovorila o Mateu. Toda med zadnjim obiskom je govorila samo o njem, zdelo se je, da so se vse bolečine zadnjega časa zanjo nakopičile v tej, eni sami osebi. Ne vem, kaj od povedanega drži. Ampak očitno jo je razočaral, tega ni bilo moč spregledati, najbrž prav zato, ker je bil filozof, in to edini v tej istrski vasi.

Dva tedna, ki ju je mama preživela z menoj, Nadeždo in Ezrom v Berlinu, je skoraj ves čas govorila o Mateu, o sebi ni povedala ničesar. Upala sem, da se bo tokrat po vseh teh letih vztrajnega molčanja odprla in da bom izvedela kaj več o njej. Toda komaj je nehala govoriti o Mateu, že je bila tema prihajajoče poletje, in nenadoma sem se zbalala, da me utegne prositi, naj jo obiščem v Istri ali mestu. Nisem vedela, ali bi imela dovolj moči, da ji izpolnim to željo. Toda ko me potem vendarle ni prosila, sem bila razočarana. Kot še nikoli prej sem čutila, kako plaha je, opazila sem, da je ob neprijetnih temah gledala v tla kot otrok. Od nekdanj je imela navado, da je vsako luknjo zapolnila z zgodbami, ki so se ji sproti utrinjale in ki nam jih je zasoplo pripovedovala, kot bi ji šlo za življenje. Nikoli nisem vedela, koliko res ve o meni, toda zdelo se je, da jo to, da zdaj živim v Berlinu, veseli. Veš, je rekla, ti ne boš nikoli izvedela, kako trdovratno se lahko kri lepi na čevlje. In to naj bi bila moja največja sreča. Ostala sem brez besed. Gledali sva se, dolgo, iz sebe nisem spravila niti glasu, toda ko sem se ji približala in jo že skoraj objela, je stopila korak nazaj in se pretvarjala, da ni ničesar opazila. Vse, prav vse se je spremenilo, je rekla. Stavek je večkrat ponovila. Mislim, da še sama ni opazila, kako pogosto je ponavljala ta stavek. Zvenel je kot mantra, a ji ni pomagal. Obšlo me je, da je natanko vedela, kako me lahko drži stran od sebe. Bil je določen ton v njenem glasu, dobro znana višina, s katero me je tako kot takrat, ko sem bila otrok, z očmi dobila na muho. Ob tej višini glasu sem obmolknila, postala spet poslušno dekletce, ki ne postavlja vprašanj in počaka, da jo najprej ogovorijo drugi. Sprva sem mislila, da govori o Berlinu in padcu zidu. Vedela sem, da je v mladosti z mojimi starimi starši dalj časa živela v četrti Schöneberg in da se nekoliko spozna na Berlin. Toda ni govorila o Berlinu, temveč o najinem nekdanjem življenju. Vsa ta leta je, povsem drugače kot jaz, na lastne oči videla, kako se vse spreminja, toda šele zdaj, prvič, tukaj pri meni se je zdelo, da je

doumela svojo mantro in kaj vse je v življenju za zmeraj izgubila. A namesto da bi občutila izgubo, je spet govorila o Mateu. Začela je že zjutraj. Še predno smo sedli za mizo in popili kavo, je že večkrat omenila njegovo ime. Z Nadeždo nama je poročala o ljudeh, ki so bili skupaj z Mateom v lingvističnem društvu in se zdaj vsi profesionalno ukvarjajo le še z jezikovno pravilnostjo. To jo je še posebej pestilo. Mateo naj bi bil med najbolj zagrizenimi puritanci, ki so javno zmerjali uboge knjigarne z golj zato, ker so prodajali knjige v cirilici.

Na fotografijah, ki ležijo pred menoj na mizi, vidim nekega drugega Matea, njegove oči se brezčasno in poudarjeno iskrijo. Takrat je imel tako živahen pogled. Veselja, ki sije iz njegovega mladostnega obraza, ne morem povezati s tem, kar je pripovedovala mama. Spomin me odvede nazaj v poletja in neštete dneve, ko sva sedela pod drevesi in ure in ure zrla na morje, h galebom in v valove, ki so se v najini domišljiji pogovarjali med seboj. Morje je razumelo jezik galebov. In galebi so razumeli jezik morja. In midva sva jih pri tem opazovala in se veselila, ko je zapihal veter in sva nad seboj zaslišala krošnje dreves; nikjer ni bilo zatišja, povsod se je nekaj premikalo.

*Prevedla Tina Štrancar*

## *A Cherrywood Table*

(excerpt from the novel)

I unpacked nearly all the moving boxes today. There hasn't been much talk yet in the emptiness of my new apartment. The memory-filled air from my tiniest room – I imagine it to be like a wee bird – suffuses all the other rooms. Sometimes my rooms seem to expand. Time and again I've turned my thoughts to the sea ever since moving here. The longer I'm able to remain silent, the more resolutely my ears travel to the sea, back to the villages by the sea, to the houses by the sea, to the people by the sea. I can bring the sea to mind without any effort. It's a mystery tour off into the blue. The interior of the water. Ears, rustling. No crackling. In my bones. I see sailboats before me, small fishing boats. Nets filled with the night's catch. Images that take my mind so utterly by surprise that the pressure in my forehead has let up almost entirely. The old pounding and hammering and pressing – it's all just a memory now. Soon to be a mere intimation, and it will be a strain to look backward if I try to comprehend what it was like back then, my life. My ears hear the sea. They hear it for me, and I'm becoming that sound-space through my ear, becoming the sea's steady, repetitious moiling. In the depths of silence they come onshore, the waves. I sense the long-ago sand between my toes. I listen to myself and hear – after the sea's toiling – my own breath in the synchronized sea, in the indefatigable labor of the waves and the following silence, in my ears. In the silence of the sea I have no name. I exist. Never before have I heard how lungs can draw breath so loudly before life does. And I ask myself – now that all places are one place in me, all times one time in me – whether I can manage to keep moving ahead at time's urging, here and now, on into the future, following time's tempo without falling prey to it. Or whether I should teach my lungs something new, to turn the murmuring of time into *my* murmuring, into words entirely my own that time does not know, cannot know, because I am charged with giving words to time, handing words over the edge, through the latticework that embody our contacts. Rubbing against the air. Trembling. At the mere thought of the vastness of the space now displaced inward, uncharted space. Nothing to lead me through the dark. And yet that's exactly where an exactness lies, tied precisely to my beam of light. I know it. I'm way beyond intuitions or inklings. The way the morning sun slides across the surface of the wooden

table is always the same. The table is in my kitchen, which faces east. This table has been my little sun station here from the very beginning. And the first thing I do every morning – and I did it again today – is to lay my hands on the table, feeling how warm it is before finishing my coffee. Yesterday, after breakfast, I emptied out on the table the plastic bags my mother had brought. I was afraid of that messy pile during the night. I toyed with the idea for a moment of stuffing all the photographs from the bags into a big black garbage bag and getting rid of them at the dump. But I immediately figured that some crazy artist might be looking for something like that, a thing like my life; he could come along and simply pick up the pictures, declare them to be his property – his *own* memories – and turn them into a photographic series, part of his oeuvre. Then *he* would be the one telling the story about our summer months at the seaside. Not me. Reason enough to keep the pictures to myself. Or burn them. Into the blazing bonfire to let go of them. Of course I could still do that any time. I decided before going to bed not to abandon the bags to a stranger, not let them out of my hands.

I make a stab at organizing the chaos on the table and sort the pictures by year, birthday, and other celebrations. Mother and her gaze are right there beside me. She peers over my shoulder, checking to see if I'm taking proper care of her Kodak Brownie legacy. The warm table becomes my large mounting board, a framework for my long-postponed attempt to live up to mother's expectations – and that look in her eye. What's in my mind that makes her stand on guard? Mother paid me a visit at my old apartment a few months ago, and I finally asked her why she keeps bringing the old photos in plastic bags. She crams all our bygone world into those bags – no love lost. Her answer was typical. She blamed everything on baggage restrictions, said she didn't want to spend money on all those old things. Besides, that was the last bag. She wouldn't be bringing me any more photographs. I take a good look at them; her snapshots have already gone a bit hazelnut brown. Photos from a very different century. They come across as colorized, as though they'd jumped out of a timescale foreign to me, one from beyond our clocks and their hands that count out the hours. That hazelnut tint tells me, "It's gone forever, so who are you *now*?" Many of the snapshots show me wearing colorful clothes my mother dressed me in. I'm very often standing under a tree with Mateo, my Istrian friend. He's smiling and has got on a white T-shirt with blue stripes. Even in those days

Mateo wanted to be a philosopher, not a sailor, which I'd have really liked. He said only idiots get to be sailors, but I didn't believe him. I said there's not one idiot as good-looking as a sailor, and Mateo laughed, telling me to wait and see, we'd talk about it later. And I promised him I would. But we never did talk about it when we were grown-ups. In Istria he'd tell me every summer about Diogenes and his barrel. And even then – I must have been about five – my mother tried to knock it into his head that maybe what the ancient Greek sat in wasn't a barrel at all. Mateo was annoyed with her. He just wanted to stick with Diogenes and his barrel; he thought my mother was mean to keep harping on her idea that it was something else. When we would sit under the trees and the dogs lay their heads on our feet and their warm muzzles tickle our toes, he used to say she was bossy. Mateo had worked in my grandmother's garden for several years so there wasn't a single tree where our picture had *not* been taken at some point. My mother didn't mention Mateo for years. But the last time she came over, all she could talk about was him; everything giving her pain recently seemed to be concentrated in his person. I don't know what the truth was in her stories. But it was impossible not to recognize he was a disappointment for her, most likely because he was a philosopher, the only one from our village in Istria.

When my mother, Nadezhda, Ezra, and I were in Berlin, she went on about Mateo almost non-stop for our last two weeks there – but said nothing about herself. I was hoping that now she'd open up after all those years of stubborn silence and I'd find out more about her. But the conversation would barely have turned away from Mateo before she'd start talking about the coming summer, and I was suddenly afraid she'd ask me to visit her in Istria or the city. I didn't know if I would have the strength to carry out her wish. But when she did *not* ask me, I felt let down. At the same time I sensed her diffidence as never before, noticing how she looked down at her feet like a child when she found any topic distasteful. It was her style from quite early on to plug any lull in a conversation with stories that popped into her head; she'd recount them almost breathlessly as if her life were at stake. I've never known how much she understood about me, but she seemed happy now that I was living in Berlin. "You know," she said, "you're never going to find out how blood can really stick to your shoes. And that's the biggest piece of luck you'll ever have." I was dumbfounded. We studied each other,

for a long time; I couldn't utter a word, but then as I was walking toward her and about to give her a hug, she took a step backward, as if she hadn't noticed. "Everything, and I mean everything, has changed" she said. She repeated the sentence several times. I don't think she realized how often she repeated that sentence. It sounded like a mantra, but it didn't do her any good. The feeling came over me that she knew perfectly well how she could keep me at a distance. A certain tone of voice was an old, elevated vantage point for her eyes to get me in their sights just like in the past, in my childhood. Whenever I would hear her voice at that pitch, I'd fall silent – once again the obedient little girl who didn't ask questions and didn't speak until spoken to. I thought at first she meant Berlin, the fall of the Wall. I knew she'd lived with my grandparents in Schöneberg for a fairly long time when she was young, so she knew her way around a little. But she didn't mean Berlin; she was referring to our former life. Unlike me she'd seen with her own eyes how everything changed over the years, but only now – for the first time, at my place, and by saying that sentence over and over – did she seem to realize what had been irretrievably lost in her life. But instead of feeling for her loss, she just went on and on about Mateo. She'd start up with it every morning. By the time we'd sat down at the table and were having our coffee, his name had already come up several times. She gave Nadezhda and me an account of the people with Mateo in the Society for Linguistic Purism; their main job was to enforce correct language usage. She said she was particularly worried because Mateo was the most ambitious of the language police and joined others in shouting abuse in public at poor little book dealers just because they sold books in Cyrillic.

But I perceive another Mateo in the pictures on the table before me, with sparkling eyes that are ageless and compelling. His eyes were always on the alert back then. I cannot connect the joy emanating from his youthful face with what my mother was saying. My memory takes me back to the summers and countless days when we would sit beneath the trees and gaze at the sea for hours, at the gulls and the waves; we imagined they were talking to one another. The sea understood the gulls' language. And the gulls understood the language of the sea. And we watched them converse, delighting in the strengthening wind that let us listen to the treetops above; nothing standing still, everything powerfully in motion.

*Translated by Gerald Chapple*





*Foto © Petrina Hicks*

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# Liliana Corobca

Liliana Corobca se je rodila leta 1975 v kraju Săseni-Călărași v Moldaviji. Med letoma 1992 in 1997 je študirala na Fakulteti za filologijo Moldavske državne univerze v Chișinău. Leta 2001 je končala doktorski študij humanistike (filologije) na Univerzi v Bukarešti. Pisateljica in raziskovalka je avtorica naslednjih romanov: *Negrissimo* (2003), za katerega je prejela moldavsko nagrado za najboljši romaneskni prvenec leta in romunsko nagrado kritikov »Prometheus« za najboljši knjižni prvenec, *Un an în Paradis* (Leto v raj, 2005), ki je bil preveden v italijanščino (2009) in nemščino (2011), in *Kinderland* (2013). Je tudi avtorica in urednica več znanstvenih monografij in člankov o romunskem medvojnem romanu, protikomunističnem romunskem izseljenskem gibanju, o ljudeh iz Bukovine, ki so bili deportirani v Sibirijo, in o komunistični cenzuri. Prejela je več nemških, avstrijskih, poljskih, francoskih in romunskih pisateljskih štipendij. Njen najnovejši literarni projekt, pesniški monolog v treh dejanjih z naslovom *Cenzura pentru începători* (Cenzura za začetnike), bo kmalu izšel tako v romunščini kot v nemškem prevodu pri avstrijski založbi Edition Thanhäuser.

Liliana Corobca was born in 1975 in Săseni-Călărași in Moldova. She studied at the Faculty of Philology at the State University of Moldova in Chișinău between 1992 and 1997. From 1997 to 2001 she was completing her PhD studies in humanities (Philology) at the University of Bucharest. The writer and researcher has authored the following novels: *Negrissimo* (2003), which won the Moldovan award for best new debut novel of the year as well as the Romanian "Prometheus Critics Award" for the best book debut, *Un an în Paradis* (A Year in Paradise, 2005), which was also translated into Italian (2009) and German (2011), and *Kinderland* (2013). She has written and edited academic volumes and papers on the Romanian interwar novel, the anti-communist Romanian exile, the Bucovina People deported to Siberia, and on communist censorship. She has been the recipient of numerous German, Austrian, Polish, French and Romanian literary fellowships. Her most recent literary project, a poetical monologue in three acts titled *Cenzura pentru începători* (Censorship for Beginners) is to be issued soon in the Austrian Edition Thanhäuser in both Romanian and German.

## *Kinderland*

(fragment de roman)

Căpușa era lipită de burtă, aproape de buric, sugând sângele copilului. Fetița, înspăimântată mai mult de urletele fratelui, decât de punctul acela negru, porni după ajutor. În mod normal, răcnetele ar fi adunat dacă nu o jumătate de sat, măcar întreaga mahala, dar acum nu venise nimeni. Ar fi putut ea să-i scoată căpușa, dar dacă-i rămâne capul și crește alta și mai mare... sau, Doamne ferește, întră cu totul înăuntru și viețuiește acolo, de unde nimeni n-o va putea scoate și fratele va muri, supt de căpușă.

La început, al treilea copil, fratele mai mic, bătut ori nedreptățit deseori de celălalt, privea cu oarecare satisfacție spectacolul. S-a tot rotit în jurul fratelui mai mare, în căutarea motivului care-l făcea pe acela să plângă și să urle atât de insistent. A privit în jur, în sus, în jos, să vadă dacă nu cumva e cazul să tragă și el un bocet, dar chiar n-a văzut nimic. Cămașa ridicată, burta goală și expusă la soare a lui Dan nu l-au impresionat deloc, nici nu l-au speriat. Nici punctul negru spre care se apleca atât de tragic frate-său nu l-a interesat, neînțelegând cum poate un frate atât de mare și de voinic să se sperie de un punctișor negru agățat de burtă. Apoi băiatul mai mic dispăru.

Fetița ieși în drum. Ar putea striga la vecini, dar la ora asta nu-s acasă. Mai departe locuiește o bunică a unei colege de școală, dar nici ea n-o fi pe acasă și, oricum, nu are vedere atât de bună ca să scoată și capul căpușei. Fetița porni de-a lungul drumului, în căutarea unei persoane potrivite. A strigat la unchiul Vasile, dar nu i-au răspuns decât câinii din toată mahalaua. La urletul unanim al câinilor, nu a foșnit nimic prin case, nu s-au trântit uși sau porți, nimeni n-a deschis, să vadă cine strigă și de ce. În general, când cineva striga pe drumul lor, auzeau toți și se găsea măcar unul care să răspundă: persoana căutată nu-i acasă, tocmai a plecat la vie, la nănașu-său ori în altă parte. La capătul drumului, a zărit într-o curte o mamă care spăla rufe. Nu știa cum o cheamă. A deschis poarta zgomotos și femeia a privit-o întrebător.

„Bună ziua. Nu vreți să ne scoateți și nouă o căpușă?”

Femeia a strâmbat din nas cu dezgust și i-a răspuns:

„Nu scot căpuși.” Și intră repede în casă.

Fetița s-a oprit în dreptul fântânii. Poate vine cineva însetat să ia apă. O să stea acolo să aștepte.

Între timp, fratele mai mic îi adusese celuilalt jucăria lui preferată. Cel cu căpușa l-a ignorat. Nu-i ardea lui acum de jucării.

Dan părea că nu mai termină de plâns. Ucisese cândva asemenea insecte, pe care taică-său le scotea din blana oilor. Tatăl îi spusese că, dacă nu le scoți, acestea sug tot sângele animalului, până nu mai rămâne nimic din el. Dan își imaginează cum căpușa flămândă îi va suga sângele până se va transforma într-un fel de balon mare, iar el mic, ofilit, un boț de oase, va fâlfâi neputincios din mâini și din picioare, în timp ce căpușa se va ridica în aer, până se va înalța la cer. Sute de căpușe umflate de sângele copiilor plutesc pe cerul senin și prietenos, iar copiii plâng, slăbănogi, uscați, alipiți de gângăniile necruțătoare. Dan își privi căpușa care, ce-i drept, nu era mai mare decât jumătate din unghia degetului lui cel mic, de fapt, nu era nici cât un bob de fasole, dar el, cu toate astea, se simțea fără pic de sânge în el.

Marcel își adusese aminte de mărul cel frumos, pe care l-a găsit alaltăieri și-l ascunsese, să-l mănânce doar el, fără să-l împartă cu frații. Mărul vecinilor rodise anul acesta și mai cădea câte un fruct în grădina lor. Mere văratice, dulci și cu miezul roz. Dan, la vederea mărului, făcu un gest care trebuia să însemne: ce-i mărul tău pe lângă durerea mea! Atunci Marcel începu, dintr-o solidaritate frățească, să scâncească și el.

O căruță se opri la fântână. Un om scoase o căldare de apă, bău, apoi umezi botul calului. Se uită și el la fata care-l privea țintă. Înalt, slab, urât, gura știrbă, doar câțiva dinți răzleți, părul rar și cărunț, urechi mari și clăpăuge, ar fi putut juca rolul morții cu coasa, de-ar mai fi avut și o coasă în căruță. Calul era și el slab, cândva cenușiu, acum murdar, pământiu verzui, cu niște dinți lungi și galbeni, compensându-i parcă pe ai stăpânului.

„Nu vreți să scoateți o căpușă?”

„Vreau, cum nu. Unde-i?”

„Acolo,” arătă Cristina spre poarta lor.

„De-a cui ești?”

„A lui Victor Dumitrache.”

„Măi, măi, ești fata lui Vichiușa? Păi eu te-am plimbat cu căruța când erai mică, aveam pe atunci un hărmăsar frumos și gras... Și tațu-i la ‘bani lungi’?” Fetița încuviință. „Și v-a lăsat pradă căpușelor.” Fetița iar încuviință.

Când au văzut omul intrând, cei doi frați au amuțit, uitând să mai plângă.

„Unde ești, măi căpușă?”

Apoi se uită la măr.

„Ce, nu vrea mărul tău? Ia hai să-l dăm căluțului, că imediat îl papă!”

Copilul mic mai întinse o dată mărul celui mare care, aflat între două opțiuni, să mănânce el mărul ori calul, a luat mărul fără a zice vreun cuvânt. La o adică, omul îi inspira mai multă frică decât căpușa.

„Ce, asta-i căpiușă, bre, micuță cât o furnicuță! Ia dă-o ncoa!”

Se adresă apoi fetei.

„Ai rachiul ori odikolon?”

Are, și se porni după alcool. „Vrea să bea, să se îmbete și să-mi arunce frații peste gard.”

Omul se apropie de copilul suferind, clănțani fioros căpușei din puștii lui dinți, gest care îl făcu pe cel mic să fugă după casă; se își de după colț, după ceva timp, pentru că nu se auzea nimic și era curios.

Cât ai clipi, omul strânse între unghiile murdare căpușa umflată și o aruncă jos, privind atent la burta băiatului.

„Am scos-o cu tot cu cap,” spuse el satisfăcut. „Calc-o acum în picioare.”

Și pentru că băiatul nu se mișcă, îl chemă pe cel mic:

„Vino, măi mucea, să vezi căpușa lui frate-tu.”

Dar nici acela nu acceptă invitația. Se apropie fata cu o sticluță de rachiu, din care bărbatul turnă puțin în pumn și frecă apoi burta copilului.

„Gata, calc-o tu, se adresă fetei.”

Fata apăsă conștiincios, sări de câteva ori peste gănganie.

„Și zici că tat-tu nu-i acasă.”

Copiii dădură din cap.

„Muncește. Trei copii nu-i lucru de glumă. Și mă-ta? Tot la lucru. V-au făcut pe voi și s-au împrăștiat care și pe unde,” vorbea omul în drum spre poartă. „Și a mea îi plecată, și copiii au plecat. Singurel am rămas, noroc de cal. Hai, iapă, și noi acasă.”

Zgomotul roților se mai auzi puțin, apoi se făcu liniște.

Fata își turnă în palmă puțin alcool din sticluță și frecă și ea burta fratelui, care stătea grav, nemișcat, privind undeva în zare. Sigur, dacă ar fi fost tatăl acasă, nicio căpușă nu s-ar fi lipit de el, nu i-ar fi intrat pe sub piele. Simți un fel de nemulțumire că totul s-a terminat atât de simplu și de repede, când el avea pretext să fie nefericit, alintat și important.

## *Kinderland*

(odlomek iz romana)

Klop se je prisesal na trebuh v bližini popka in pil otrokovo kri. Deklica, ki jo je bolj kot črna pika prestrašilo bratovo kričanje, se je odpravila po pomoč. Običajno bi kriki zbobnali skupaj vsaj vso soseščino, če že ne pol vasi, tistikrat pa ni bilo nikogar na spregled. Klopa bi mu sama že nekako odstranila, toda kaj če bi v telesu ostala njegova glava in bi postal še večji ... ali pa bi se, bog ne daj, ves zarinil v telo in se tam zaredil, da ga nihče več ne bi mogel odstraniti in bi brat umrl, ker bi ga celega posesal klop.

Na začetku je tretji otrok, mlajši brat, ki ga je starejši večkrat po krivici prebutal, vse dogajanje opazoval z dobršno mero zadovoljstva. Vrtel se je okrog starejšega brata, da bi odkril vzrok, ki je brata spravil v nenehni jok in stok. Gledal je okrog sebe, potem gor in dol, da bi videl, ali obstaja razlog, da bi tudi sam malo zastokal, a ni bilo ničesar. Dvignjena srajca in goli, soncu izpostavljeni Danov trebuh nista naredila nobenega vtisa nanj, prav nič ga nista prestrašila. Tudi črna pika, nad katero se je tako tragično sklanjal brat, ni pritegnila njegove pozornosti, saj ni mogel razumeti, kako se lahko njegov tako velik in krepek brat boji tako majhne pikice, ki se mu je prisesala na trebuh. Potem je mlajši brat izginil.

Deklica se je odpravila na cesto. Lahko bi poklicala sosede, a jih ob tisti uri ni bilo doma. Naprej od njih je stanovala sošolkina babica, toda tudi nje najverjetneje ne bi našla doma, po drugi strani pa sploh ni videla dovolj dobro, da bi lahko odstranila klopovo glavo. Deklica se je odpravila po cesti v iskanju primerne osebe. Poklicala je strica Vasileja, a so ji odgovorili samo vsi psi iz soseščine. Ob hkratnem laježu psov se v hišah ni zganil nihče, nihče ni zaloputnil s hišnimi ali dvoriščnimi vrati, nihče jih ni odprl, da bi videl, kdo kriči in zakaj. Po navadi so tistega, ki je na njihovi cesti kaj zakričal, slišali vsi in vsaj eden se je našel, ki mu je odgovoril: Tistega, ki ga iščete, ni doma, pravkar je odšel v vinograd ali pa k svojemu botru ali kam drugam. Na koncu ceste je zagledala neko mater, ki je prala perilo. Ni vedela, kako ji je ime. Glasno je odprla vrata in ženska jo je vprašujoče pogledala.

»Dober dan. Ali bi nama lahko odstranili klopa?«

Ženska je zavihala nos, češ da se ji gabi, in odgovorila:

»Ne odstranjujem klopov,« in odhitela v hišo.

Deklica se je ustavila pred vodnjakom. Morda bo kdo, ki ga bo zažejalo, prišel po vodo. Tam bo počakala.

Medtem je mlajši brat prinesel starejšemu njegovo najljubšo igračo. Brat s klopom se zanjo ni zmenil. V tistem trenutku ga igrače niso zanimale. Videti je bilo, da Danovemu joku ne bo konca. Včasih je tovrstne žuželke ubijal, potem ko jih je oče odstranil iz ovčjih kočuhov. Oče mu je govoril, da živali popijejo vso kri, če jih ne odstraniš, vse dokler od nje nič ne ostane. Dan si je zamišljal, kako mu bo požrešni klop posejal vso kri in se napihnil kot velik balon, on pa bo, čisto drobcen, upadel, sama kost in koža, nemočno otepal z rokami in nogami, medtem ko se bo klop dvigoval kvišku, vse do neba. Na stotine kloпов, nabreklih od otroške krvi, pluje po prijaznem, vedrem nebu, medtem ko slabotni, izsušeni, na neusmiljene žuželke prilepljeni otroci tarnajo. Dan je opazoval klopa, ki, roko na srce, ni bil večji od polovice nohta na mezincu, v resnici ni bil velik niti kot zrno fižola, toda kljub temu se je počutil, kot da ni v njem niti kapljice krvi več.

Marcel se je spomnil na lepo jabolko, ki ga je našel predvčerajšnjim in skril, da bi ga sam pojedel, da mu ga ne bi bilo treba deliti z bratom in sestro. Sosedova jablana je tistega leta obrodila in vsake toliko je kak sadež padel tudi na njihov vrt. Sladko spomladansko jabolko z rožnato sredico. Ko je Dan zagledal jabolko, je samo zamahnil z roko, kar naj bi pomenilo: le kaj je tvoje jabolko v primerjavi z mojo bolečino! V tistem trenutku je iz bratovske solidarnosti začel cviliti še on.

Potem se je pri vodnjaku ustavil voz. Nek moški je izvlekel vedro z vodo, pil in potem še konju navlažil gobec. Tudi on je pogledal deklo, ki je buljila vanj. Visok, suhljat, grd, škrbast moški, ki je imel le tu in tam kak zob, z redkimi kodrastimi lasmi in velikimi klapastimi ušesi bi lahko odigral vlogo smrti s koso, če bi na vozu ležala tudi kakšna kosa. Tudi konj je bil mršav, nekoč siv, zdaj pa umazan, zelenkaste barve, ki se je mešala z barvo prsti, z dolgimi rumenimi zobmi, za katere si imel občutek, da nadomeščajo gospodarjeve.

»Bi hoteli odstranili klopa?«

»Zakaj pa ne? Kje pa je?«

»Tam,« je Cristina pokazala proti njihovim dvoriščnim vratom.

»Čigava pa si?«

»Od Victorja Dumitracheja.«

»Jej, jej, si ti Vikijeja punčka? Z vozom sem te vozil okrog, ko si bila še majhna, takrat sem imel lepega in dobro rejenega žrebca ... Tvoj ati pa s trebuhom za kruhom, kaj?« Deklica je pokimala. »In vas je pustil na milost in nemilost klopom?« Deklica je spet pokimala.

Ko sta zagledala moškega, ki je vstopil, sta brata obmolknila in pozabila na jok.

»Kje pa si, klopek?«

Potem je pogledal jabolko.

»Noče tvojega jabolka? Potem ga dajmo konjičku, ta ga bo takoj popapal!«

Mlajši otrok je starejšemu še enkrat ponudil jabolko in ker je bil postavljen pred izbiro, ali on ali konj, je ta vzel jabolko brez besed. Očitno se je možakarja bolj bal kot klopa.

»Kaj, je to sploh klop? Saj je drobcen kot mravlja! Daj ga sem!«

Potem je rekel dekletu:

»Imaš žganje ali kolonjsko vodo?«

Deklica se je odpravila po alkohol. »Piti hoče, napil se bo in brata vrgel čez ograjo.«

Možak se je približal trpečemu otroku in s tistimi nekaj zobmi strašljivo zašklepetal proti klopu, kar je botrovalo temu, da je mlajši pobegnul od doma. Šele čez čas je pokukal izza vogala, ker se ni nič slišalo in je postal radoveden.

Kot bi trenil, je moški z umazanimi nohti zgrabil nabreklega klopa, ga vrgel v zrak in pri tem pazljivo opazoval dečkov trebuh.

»Celega sem dobil ven, z glavo vred,« je rekel zadovoljno. »Zdaj ga pa poteptaj.«

Ker se fant ni zganil, je poklical mlajšega:

»Pridi no, smrkavec, da vidiš bratovega klopa.«

Tudi ta ni sprejel povabila. Približala se je dekle s stekleničko žganja, iz katere si ga je moški malo zlil na roko in potem zdrgnil fantov trebuh.

»Konec je, ti ga poteptaj,« je rekel dekletu.

Dekle je golazen vestno pohodila in nekajkrat skočila nanjo.

»In pravite, da atija ni doma.«

Otroci so odkimali.

»Dela. Trije otroci niso šala. In mama? Tudi dela. Naredila sta vas in se potem raztepla po svetu,« je govoril moški na poti do dvoriščnih vrat. »Tudi moja žena je odšla in otroci tudi. Sam sem ostal, še dobro, da imam konja. Dajva, kobila, pojdiva še midva domov.«

Še nekaj trenutkov se je slišalo topotanje koles, potem je nastala tišina.

Deklica si je iz stekleničke natočila v dlan malo alkohola in tudi ona bratu, ki je resnobno stal in nepremično zrl v daljavo, zdrgnila trebuh. Seveda se nanj ne bi prisestal in mu zlezal pod kožo noben

klop, če bi bil oče doma. Občutil je nekakšno nezadovoljstvo, ker se je vse končalo tako preprosto in hitro, da je imel izgovor za to, da je bil lahko nesrečen, razvjen in pomemben, tako kratek čas.

*Prevedel Aleš Mustar*

## *Kinderland*

(excerpt from the novel)

The tick was glued to the child's belly, close to the navel, sucking his blood. Frightened more by her brother's screams than by that black dot, the girl ran off to fetch help. It would have been normal for the screams to bring if not half the village running then at least the whole neighbourhood, but nobody came. She could have pulled out the tick for him, but what if the head was left stuck inside and another even bigger one developed or, God forbid, what if it burrowed all the way in, where nobody would be able to get it out, and went on living there, meaning her younger brother would die, sucked dry by a tick?

At first, the third child, the youngest brother, who was often beaten or wronged by the other, watched the spectacle with a certain amount of satisfaction. He kept circling his older brother, trying to see what was making him cry and howl so urgently. He looked all around, up and down, to see whether he ought to join in the wailing, but he couldn't find anything. Dan's hitched up shirt and his belly bared to the sun made no impression on him; they didn't frighten him at all. And nor was he impressed by the black dot that his brother was fretting over so tragically, as he couldn't comprehend how such a large, strapping brother could be afraid of such a little black insect clinging to his belly. The younger brother then made off.

The girl ran into the road. She could call her neighbours, but they wouldn't be at home at that hour. The grandmother of a girl from her school lived down the road, but she wouldn't be at home either, and anyway her eyesight wasn't good enough to be able remove the tick, head and all. The girl set off down the road, in search of the right person. At Uncle Vasile's house she called out, but there was no answer, apart from the fact that all the dogs in the neighbourhood started barking. At the outcry set up by all the dogs, there was no movement inside the houses, no door or gate slammed, nobody came outside to see who was shouting and why. Normally, when you shouted from the road, everybody heard and there would be at least one who would answer, to say that person you were looking for wasn't at home, that he was in his vineyard, at his godfather's or wherever. At the end of the road she espied a mother washing clothes in her yard. She didn't know what her name was. She burst through the gate and the woman gave her a questioning look.

“Good day! Could you pull out a tick for us?”

The woman wrinkled her nose in disgust and answered:

“I don’t pull out ticks.”

And she quickly went inside the house.

The girl went over to the well. Maybe somebody would be thirsty and come for water. She would stand there and wait.

In the meantime, the youngest brother had brought the other brother his favourite toy. The brother with the tick ignored him. Toys were the last thing he was in the mood for.

Dan wouldn’t stop crying. He had once killed such insects, when his father picked them out of the sheep’s fleeces. His father told him that unless you picked them out, they would suck the animal’s blood until there was nothing left. Dan imagined the hungry tick sucking his blood until it turned into a great big balloon, leaving him shrivelled, a sack of bones, helplessly flapping his arms and legs, while the tick floated up into the air, soaring away aloft. Hundreds of ticks bloated with children’s blood float through the friendly blue sky, while the children weep, enfeebled, drained, attached to the merciless bugs. Dan looked at the tick, which, to be sure, was no bigger than half the nail of his little finger, it was not even as big as a bean, but nonetheless he felt as if there were not one drop of blood left in his body.

Marcel remembered the lovely apple he had found the day before and hidden so that he could have it all to himself, without having to share it with his siblings. The neighbours’ apple tree had borne fruit that year and an apple or two sometimes fell on their side of the fence. They were summer apples, with sweet rosy flesh. On seeing the apple, Dan waved his hand as if to say: what is your apple compared with my pain! And then, in brotherly solidarity, Marcel began to whine too.

A cart came to a stop by the well. The driver drew a pail of water, drank, and then moistened the horse’s muzzle. He looked at the girl, who was staring at him fixedly. He was tall, thin, ugly, all but toothless, with sparse grizzled hair and large lop ears; he could have played the rôle of the Grim Reaper, if he had had a scythe in his cart. The horse was thin too, once grey, but being unwashed it was now a greenish earthy colour, and it had long yellow teeth, as if to make up for its master’s lack.

“Could you pull out a tick?”

“Yes, I could. Where is it?”

“Over there,” said Cristina, pointing at their gate.

“Whose girl are you?”

“Victor Dumitrache’s.”

“Well I never. You’re Vikyusha’s girl? I took you for a ride in my cart when you were little. Back then I had a handsome fat stallion. Your dad’s away earning the ‘long money’, is he?” The girl nodded.

“And he’s left you here at the mercy of the ticks?” The girl nodded again.

When they saw the man enter the yard, the two brothers fell dumb, forgetting even to cry.

“Where are you, tick?”

Then he looked at the apple.

“What, doesn’t he want your apple? Let’s give it to the horsey. He’ll gobble it up in a wink!”

The youngest boy offered the apple to the oldest again, who, given the choice of whether to eat it himself or give it to the horse, took it without another word. When it came to it, the man scared him more than the tick.

“You call this a tick? It’s no bigger than an ant! Let me at it!”

Then he said to the girl:

“Got any vodka or oh dee colon?”

She went to fetch the alcohol. “He wants to get drunk and toss my brothers over the fence,” she thought.

The man approached the suffering child. He gnashed his few remaining teeth ferociously at the tick, which caused the youngest boy to flee behind the house. Not hearing anything else and because he was curious, he peeked out from behind the corner after a short while.

In a flash, the man gripped the bloated tick between his dirty fingernails and flung it on the ground, after which he carefully examined the boy’s belly.

“I’ve got it out head and all,” he said with satisfaction. “Now stamp on it.”

Because the boy made no move, he called to the youngest:

“Come over here, snotty, and look at your brother’s tick.”

But nor did the youngest accept the invitation. The girl came back with a small bottle of vodka. The man poured a little vodka into his cupped hand and then rubbed it on the child’s belly.

“All done. You stamp on it,” he said to the girl.

The girl obediently trod on the bug and then stamped on it a few times.

“So, you say your dad’s away.”

The children nodded.

“He’s working. Three children are no joke. And what about your ma? Also working. They made you and then they went and left you here to your own devices,” said the man as he went to the gate. “My daughter’s abroad too, and the children have gone away. And I’m all on my own. Lucky I’ve got the horse. Come on, mare, let’s away home.”

The creak of the cartwheels faded into the distance and then there was silence.

The girl poured some more alcohol from the bottle and rubbed it on her brother’s belly. He sat solemnly, motionless, gazing into the distance. Of course, if his father had been at home, no tick would ever have clamped itself to him and got under his skin. He felt a kind of dissatisfaction at it all having ended so simply and so quickly, depriving him of an excuse to be unhappy, coddled and important.

*Translated by Alistair Ian Blyth*





*Foto © Oksana Dutchak*

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# Artem Čapaj

Artem Čapaj se je rodil leta 1981 v Kolomni na vzhodu Ukrajine. Pisati je začel pri šestindvajsetih letih. V prvencu, potopisu *Авантюра* (Pustolovščina, 2008), opisuje leto in pol trajajoče popotovanje po Amerikah, kjer se je preživljal z različnimi deli. Njegovo drugo delo *Подорож із Мамайотою в пошуках України* (Potovanje z Mamayoto: Iskanje Ukrajine, 2011), nagrajeni potopis po vzoru Steinbecka, povzema vsebino srečanj in pogovorov z ljudmi, ki jih je spoznal med dvomesečnim potovanjem z motornim kolesom po rodni deželi. Po številnih kratkih zgodbah, objavljenih v različnih medijih, je leta 2014 izšel njegov romaneskni prvenec z naslovom *Червона зона* (Rdeča cona), družbena uspešnica, ki se odvija v bližnji prihodnosti. Artem Čapaj je dobitnik pisateljske štipendije Srednjeevropske pobude (SEP) za leto 2013.

Artem Chapeye was born in 1981 in Kolomna in Eastern Ukraine. He started writing at the age of 26. His debut work, the travelogue *Авантюра* (An Adventure, 2008), is the account of a year and a half spent wandering through the Americas, doing random jobs for a living. His second work, the award-winning, Steinbeck-inspired travelogue *Подорож із Мамайотою в пошуках України* (Travels With Mamayota: In Search of Ukraine, 2011), is based on interviews with people all over his native country during a two-month motorcycle trip. After several dozen short stories published in the media, Artem Chapeye debuted 2014 as a fiction novelist with *Червона зона* (Red Zone), a social blockbuster set in a near future. Artem Chapeye is the recipient of the Central European Initiative (CEI) Fellowship for Writers in Residence 2013.

## 233 за Цельсієм

- І вони так горіли! Отак! Не так, не так як вогонь, ну, коли ми, коли ми листя палили. Ну, в саду, пам'ятаєте? А це не так! Це так, це так – високо-високо! Оранжево! І нам дозволяли підкидати! Самим! І ми, і ми! – Марина задихнулася від захвату.

- І вчителька дозволяла підходити до вогню? – мама глянула на неї спідлоба.

- Ага! – Марина тріпнула кучерями. – Але там був пожежник.

Треба поговорити з вчителькою. Педагогіка педагогікою, але якщо дитина обпечеться? Їй тільки десять років. Он минулого року вії обгоріли. Теж на спаленні.

- І що, всю шкільну бібліотеку спалили? – озвався з кутка дідусь.

Він рипнув своїм плетеном кріслом, коли нахилився вперед. Дідусь був жиливий, з довгим сивим волоссям і орлиним носом.

- Ні, – обернулася до нього Марина. – Шкільну ще минулого року спалили. Старший клас. А нас зате нас повели в міську. Дорослу!

- Ого.

- Так! І спеціально для нас спеціально загородили вулицю, і ми самі палили!

Марина подивилася на дідуса з триумфом. Дідусь підняв праву долоню і провів по своєму довгому волоссю. Дідусь був не такий, як у всіх. Мама поза очі називала його “старий хіппі”, але не могла пояснити Марині, що це значить.

- Дорослу спалили? А для чого?

Мама скоса подивилась на діда. Зараз знову почне, подумала вона.

- Ну. Щоб місце не займала, – пояснила Марина. – Всі книжки осцир... осциф...

- Оцифрували, – підказала мама.

- Так, – тріпнула кучерями Марина, – і тепер не треба, щоб вони займали місце. Там тепер буде – супермаркет!

- Чудово! – дідусь підхопив тон дівчинки.

Мама вперлася руками в боки. Вона не набрала вагу, але вже стала трохи квадратною. Вік.

Марина повернулася від діда до мами:

- А ще вчителька казала, що бібліотеки допомагають піратам.

- От виб...

- Що!.. – мама голосно перебила дідуса, хоч той говорив ледь чути й сам зупинився, – що Ви собі дозволяєте при дитині?

Вона так і не навчилася казати свекрові тато, а називати по імені було ніяково, тож доводилось уникати прямих звертань.

- Колись вони казали, що піратству сприяють електронні книжки, – сказав дідусь мамі, – поки не навчились їх контролювати. Тепер у них піратству сприяють паперові книжки й бібліотеки.

- Все правильно, – мама міцніше вперлася руками в боки, – а як перевіриш, що один раз куплену чи взяту в оренду книжку читає тільки одна людина? З електронними все просто: у кожного свій електронний підпис, одні відбитки...

- А чому одну книжку має читати одна людина? – дід випрямився у кріслі. Плетене крісло різко рипнуло.

Марина не розуміла, чого вони зляться, але на дідове запитання добре знала відповідь:

- Право на знання треба заслужити. Знання не може бути безкоштовним, – відтарабанила вона.

- Вас і такого у школі вчать?

Дід затих і осів у своєму плетеному кріслі. Крісло зітхнуло.

- Правильно, Марино. Все правильно. Краще знати менше, зате законно.

Мама зробила помилку. Вона надала голосу педагогічного тону, тому Марина подивилась на неї з сумнівом.

- Спершу вони почали віддалено стирати книжки, – поверх голови дівчинки сказав мамі дідусь. – Доню, ви ж чули від мого сина історію з книжкою Оруелла, правда? Вони стерли її з гаджетів людей. Пшик! – дідусь клацнув пальцями, – і нема, як не було. Ніби в самій книжці Оруелла. Потім вони навчились активувати гаджет лише відбитком пальця. Одну книжку може читати одна людина. А тепер вони палять паперові книжки, бо не можуть їх контролювати – як у скільки там за Фаренгейтом.

- Це зовсім інше!

- Ага, зовсім інше. Скількись там за Цельсієм.

Мама замахала на нього обома руками, а дідусь продовжував:

- Вони продовжували копірайт назад і назад у часі, так що кожна блінська книжка вже під копірайтом, до Біблії й до Корану...

- Автор повинен отримувати винагороду!

- Якби ж автор. Це копі-райт, доню, копі – його вже й не називають авторським правом.

Марина кліпала очима й переводила погляд з дідуся на маму й назад, як глядач на тенісному матчі.

Дідусь підвищив голос:

- Те саме зробили з підручниками, з фільмами, з науковими передачами – плати або рости дебілом! І ростуть – дебіли!

- Не при дитині!!!

- Я не про тебе, сонечко, – дідусь схилив голову до Марини, тихо звернувшись до неї попід маминим криком, – ти якраз молодець. Думаєш трохи.

- Марино, вийди звідси, – наказала мама.

- Ну мама...

- Я тобі мамну! Йди роби домашнє завдання. Вчителька казала, що у тебе профайл незаповнений.

Марина пішла до себе в кімнату. Вона чула, як мама з дідусем іще сперечались на підвищених тонах. Потім, видно, розійшлися по своїх кутках.

Марина залізла в інтернет. Подлубалась у ньому, щосекунди бездумно закриваючи рекламу. Скачати вона нічого не могла. На комп'ютері стояла блок-програма. Програму поставили, коли Марина накачала свій улюблений мультсеріал про бідну дівчинку Сінді, що стає принцесою й допомагає бідним. За мультик у кінці місяця зняло третину маминої зарплатні. Автоматично. Блок-програма теж коштувала немало, проте мама вирішила витратитись один раз, щоб уникнути неприємних сюрпризів потім. Мама й сама часом випадково скачувала фільми, не там галочку поставивши – лише потім помічала. А з рахунку знімало, і спробуй доведи, що тобі їх підсунули, спробуй поверни гроші.

Марина зітхнула і взялася за домашнє завдання. Вона почала заповнювати профайл у соцмережі: улюблені телепрограми, який одяг любить, яких ляльок, хто її улюблені актори, персонажі мультиків. Щодо останнього Марина не вагалась. Принцеса Сінді.

Через годину до кімнати прошмигнув дідусь. Коли він не сидів, було краще видно, наскільки дідусь кістлявий. Він досі намагався триматися прямо, але вже не виходило.

- Марино, ти розумна дівчинка, – сказав дідусь, тримаючи руку за спиною. – Може, вже зрозумієш. Отут теж палять книжки, як ви сьогодні. На! Тільки мамі не показуй.

- Паперова? – простягнула руку Марина.

А потім різко сховала руки за спину:

- Ти не можеш передавати її мені.

- Я її купив. Колись, давно.

- Але якщо ти мені даси цю, а не купиш нову – ми обкрадемо автора.

Дідусь зітхнув:

- Автор давно помер.

Марина непевно потяглася до книжки:

- А що, паперові чесно кращі? Ти мамі казав.

- Та ні! – усміхнувся дід. – Жодного значення. Дивись... – він замислився і став накручувати пасмо сивого волосся на кістлявий палець. – Як у мультику про Сінді. Електронну книжку Сінді не може прочитати й віддати потім іншій дівчинці. А паперову – може. Електронну може прочитати тільки багата дівчинка. А паперову може й бідна дівчинка, у якої нема грошей. Колись могла. Наприклад, у бібліотеці взяти, – дід зітхнув. – Знання ж не повинно бути тільки за гроші.

- А в школі кажуть...

- Не все, що кажуть у школі, правда. Дивися, – дід розгорнув книжку, – тут є про дівчинку, яка робила не так, як усі. Вона схожа на тебе.

- Вона принцеса?

- Ні, – дідусь усміхнувся, – зовсім не принцеса. Але схожа на тебе. Її звуть Кларіс.

- Кларіс. Гарне ім'я.

- І Марина – дуже гарне ім'я, – дід погладив дівчинку по голові.

Марина невміло стала гортати жовті сторінки. Томик був тоненький, але все одно здавався їй незручним і громіздким. На її планшетку, значно меншу, вміщалися тисячі коміксів. І книжок. А ще мультиків.

- Тільки нікому не кажи, – сказав дідусь. – Навіть Лілі, добре? Бо тобі нічого не буде, ти маленька, а мене не похвалять.

- Я знаю. Передавати книжку чи слухати музику чи дивитися кіно разом – це все одно що красти.

- Які дурниці. Прочитай, а потім я тобі ще дам.

- У тебе є ще?

- Багато. Тільки тс-с-с.

- Марино, ти закінчила? Йди... – мама ввійшла в кімнату так раптово, що Марина не встигла заховати книжку за спину. – Що це? Ви! – мама підняла очі на діда. – Якщо Ви хочете піти слідом за своїм сином – будь ласка! Але дитину не чіпайте! – мамин голос ставав голоснішим щосекунди. – Мені начхати на вас! Але знайте, ми вже заставили будинок, аби заплатити Вашому сину за адвоката! А Вам – грошей більше нема! Але мені чхати! Мені начхати на вас! І на сина Вашого!!! – мама накрутила себе до істерики, її голос зривався. – Але дитину не чіпайте!

Марина кліпала очима, щоб не заплакати. Знову вони про тата, якого вона вже й погано пам'ятає. Дідусь казав, що тато просто любив читати й не робив нічого поганого.

Мама різко вирвала з рук дівчинки книжку.

- Геть з її кімнати, – тремтливим голосом сказала мама дідові, й тому було ще тяжче триматися прямо, коли він виходив.

Коли мама заспокоїлась, Марина слідом за нею пішла в сад, і вони спалили книжку на місці постійного вогнища. Книжка горіла яскраво-жовтим і майже без диму, сторінки спершу почорніли по краях, а тоді зайнялись одна за одною. Так: пши-пши-пши! Але цього разу Марина не відчула захвату, як вранці під бібліотекою.

- Ти менше слухай цього старого хіппі. І краще не розповідай про книжку в школі, – сказала мама, коли вони верталися від вогнища.

Марина розуміла. Вона розуміла і про тата.

Ввечері Марина зайшла на свій щоденник у соцмережі. Це були записи, які вона нікому ніколи не показувала. Тільки для себе. Марина написала:

“Ліля сказала що у них хом'ячиха народила хом'ячків і Ліля мені дасть одного якщо хочу але треба запитати маму але я ще не питала. Бо ми палили книжки і я хотіла розкзати і потім запитати але мама стала сварития з дідусем бо дідусь казав що паперові книжки кращі а мама не вірила. Дідусь подарував мені справжню паперову книжку і сказав що там дівчинка схожа на мене але вона не принцеса вона Кларіс але мама забрала книжку і кричала і ми її спалили але дідусь казав що у нього є ще багато. Завтра попрошу маму щоб дозволила взяти у Лілі найменшого манюсінського хом'ячка”.

Наступного дня по дідуся приїхали. У них був ордер. Все законно.

## 233 stopinj Celzija

»Kako je gorelo! Oh, kako! Ne tako, ne tako kot ogenj, ko smo kurili listje. Se spomnita, na vrtu? Tu ni bilo tako! Tu, tu je bilo tako visoko visoko! Oranžno! In dovolili so nam, da smo tudi mi metali na ogenj! Sami smo lahko metali! In smo, čisto sami!« je Marini jemalo sapo od navdušenja.

»Učiteljica vam je dovolila, da ste se približali ognju?« jo je mama pogledala izpod čela.

»Aha!« je Marina zavalovila s kodri. »Ampak blizu je bil gasilec.«

Pogovoriti se bo treba z učiteljico. Pedagogika gor ali dol, kaj pa če se otrok opeče? Šele deset let je stara. Lani si je ožgala obrvi. Prav tako pri sežiganju knjig.

»In kako, so skurili vso šolsko knjižnico?« je iz kota vprašal dedek.

Zaškripal je s svojim pletenim naslanjačem, ko se je nagnil naprej. Dedek je bil suhljat, imel je dolge sive lase in orlovski nos.

»Ne,« se je obrnila k njemu Marina. »Šolsko knjižnico so zažgali že lani. Tisti iz zadnjega razreda. Zato so nas peljali kar v mestno. Tisto za odrasle!«

»Oho.«

»Ja! In posebej za nas, samo za nas so zaprli ulico in smo knjige sežgali kar sami!«

Marina je zmagoslavno pogledala proti dedku. Dedek pa je dvignil desno dlan in si pogladil dolge sive lase. Njen dedek ni bil tak, kot so bili drugi. Ko je ni slišal, mu je mama pravila stari hipi, vendar Marini ni znala pojasniti, kaj to pomeni.

»Tisto za odrasle ste sežigali? Zakaj pa?«

Mama je naskrivaj pogledala deda. Zdaj bo spet začel, je pomislila.

»No, da ne bi zasedala prostora,« je pojasnila Marina. »Vse knjige so pretvorili v eklekt... eklekt...«

»Elektronsko obliko,« je rekla mama.

»Ja,« je Marina zavalovila s kodri, »in zdaj ni treba, da bi zasedale prostor. Tam bo supermarket!«

»Čudovito!« se je dedek pridružil zanosu vnukinje.

Mama je uprla roke v boke. Kilogrami se ji še niso nabirali, toda postala je nekoliko oglata. Leta.

Marina se je obrnila od deda k mami.

»Učiteljica pa je še rekla, da knjižnice podpirajo pirate.«

»To je la...«

»Kaj?« je mama glasno prekinila dedka, ki je sicer govoril komaj slišno in se tudi sam ustavil. »Kaj si dovolite pred otrokom?«

Nikoli ni zmogla tustu reči oče ali ga poklicati po imenu, zato se je morala izogibati temu, da bi ga neposredno naslavljala.

»Včasih so pravili, da piratstvo podpirajo elektronske knjige,« je rekel dedek mami, »potem so se jih naučili nadzorovati. Zdaj pa zanje piratstvo omogočajo natisnjene knjige in knjižnice.«

»Vse je res,« se je mama krepkeje uprla z rokami v boke, »kako pa preverijo, da bo enkrat kupljeno ali izposojeno knjigo bral samo en človek? Z elektronskimi je vse preprosto: vsak ima svoj elektronski podpis, en sam odtis ...

»Zakaj pa bi moral knjigo brati samo en človek?« se je ded zravnal v pletenem naslanjaču, ki je rezko zaškripal.

Marina ni razumela, zakaj se jezita, na dedovo vprašanje pa je dobro poznala odgovor:

»Pravico do znanja je treba zaslužiti. Znanje ne more biti brezplačno,« je zabobnala.

»Tega vas učijo v šoli?«

Ded je obmolknil in obsedel v svojem pletenem naslanjaču.

»Tako je, Marina. Prav imaš. Bolje je vedeti manj, zato pa zakonito.«

Mama je naredila napako. Svojemu glasu je dodala pedagoško noto, zato jo je Marina sumničavo pogledala.

»Najprej so začeli brisati knjige na skrivaj,« je čez dekličino glavo rekel dedek mami. »Hči, saj ste slišali od mojega sina zgodbo z Orwellovo knjigo, mar ni res? Ljudem so jo izbrisali iz bralnikov. Klak,« je dedek tlesknil s prsti, »in je ni, kot je sploh ne bi bilo. Kakor v Orwellovi knjigi. Potem so se naučili, da se lahko naprava aktivira samo s prstnim odtisom. Eno knjigo lahko bere samo en človek. Zdaj pa sežigajo natisnjene knjige, ker ne morejo nadzorovati, koliko stopinj je tam po Fahrenheitu.«

»To je nekaj povsem drugega!«

»Aha, povsem drugega. Koliko je tam stopinj Celzija.«

Mama mu je mahala z obema rokama, dedek pa je nadaljeval:

»*Copyright* so prestavljali vse bolj nazaj v času, tako je zdaj že vsaka knjiga zaščitena z avtorskimi pravicami, vse od Svetega pisma do Korana ...«

»Avtor mora dobiti plačilo!«

»Ko bi ga vsaj dobil avtor. To je *copyright*, hči moja, *copy*, niti avtorske pravice ne rečejo več.«

Marina je mežikala in premikala pogled od deda k mami ter nazaj kot gledalec na teniškem turnirju. Dedek je povzdignil glas:

»Enako so naredili z učbeniki, filmi, znanstvenimi oddajami – plačaj ali pa odrasti kot butec. In zrastejo butci!«

»Ne pred otrokom!«

»Saj ne govorim o tebi, sonček,« je dedek nagnil glavo proti Marini in ji med maminim kričanjem tiho rekel, »ti si pridna. Vsaj malo razmišljaš.«

»Marina, pojdi iz sobe,« je ukazala mama.

»Ampak, mama ...«

»Ti bom že pokazala ampak! Pojdi delat domače naloge. Učiteljica je rekla, da nimaš izpolnjenega profila.«

Marina je odšla v svojo sobo. Slišala je, kako sta se mama in dedek glasno prepirala. Potem sta očitno šla vsak na svoj konec.

Marina je odprla internet. Zakopala se je vanj in avtomatično zapirala oglase, ki so se pojavljali vsako sekundo. S spleta ni mogla sneti ničesar. Na računalniku je imela program, ki je to preprečeval. Namestili so ga, ko je Marina prenesla svojo najljubšo risano serijo o ubogi deklici Cindy, ki je postala princeska in pomagala pomoči potrebnim. Na koncu meseca je zaradi te risanke požrlo tretjino mamine plače. Avtomatično. Tudi program za blokiranje prenosov ni bil poceni, vendar se je mama odločila, da bo enkrat plačala več in se s tem izognila nevšečnostim v prihodnje. Tudi mama je nekoč po nesreči nalagala filme, merilec porabe pa ni bil pravilno nastavljen, vendar je to opazila šele kasneje. In z računa je odtegovalo denar, zdaj pa poskusi in dokaži, da so ti podtikali več prenosa, poskusi dobiti nazaj denar.

Marina je vzdihnila in se lotila domačih nalog. Začela je izpolnjevati svoj profil na socialnem omrežju: najljubše oddaje, obleka, punčke, najljubši igralci, junaki iz risank. Pri zadnji rubriki ni omarovala: princeska Cindy.

Čez dobro uro je v sobo smuknil dedek. Ko ni sedel, se je bolje videlo, kako je v resnici koščen. Še vedno se je trudil, da bi se držal vzravnano, vendar mu to ni več uspevalo.

»Marina, bistra deklica si,« je rekel dedek in držal roke za hrbtom. »Morda boš že lahko razumela. Tu tudi sežigajo knjige, kot ste jih vi danes. Izvoli! Samo ne pokaži je mami!«

»Papirnata?« je stegnila roko Marina.

Potem pa je hitro skrila roke za hrbet.

»Ne smeš mi je dati.«

»Kupil sem jo. Nekoč davno.«

»Ampak če daš to meni, nove pa ne boš kupil, bova s tem okradla avtorja.«

Dedek je zavzdihnil:

»Avtor je že zdavnaj umrl.«

Marina se je omahljivo približala h knjigi.

»Pa so te natisnjene res boljše? Tako si rekel mami.«

»Niti ne!« se je nasmehnil ded. »Drugačen pomen imajo. Poglej ...« se je zamislil in navijal pramen sivih las na koščeni prst. »Kot v risanki o Cindy. Tudi tam Cindy ne more posoditi elektronske knjige drugi deklici, potem ko jo je prebrala. Običajno knjigo lahko. Elektronska je dostopna samo bogatim. Natisnjeno pa lahko prebere tudi revnejša deklica, ki nima toliko denarja. Vsaj včasih jo je lahko. Izposodila si jo je v knjižnici, na primer,« je vzdihnil ded.

»Znanja ne moremo dobiti samo v zameno za denar.«

»V šoli so rekli ...«

»Ni vse res, kar pravijo v šoli. Poglej,« ded je odprl knjigo, »tu gre za zgodbo o deklici, ki je počela stvari drugače. Podobna ti je.«

»Ali je princeska?«

»Ne,« se je nasmehnil dedek, »nikakor ni princeska. Sta si pa podobni. Ime ji je Klarisa.«

»Klarisa. Lepo ime.«

»Tudi Marina je zelo lepo ime.« Ded je pobožal deklico po glavi.

Marina je začela nespretno listati porumenele strani. Knjiga je bila tanka, a se ji je vseeno zdela nepriročna in težka. Na njeno tablico, precej manjšo, je šlo tisoč stripov. In knjig. Pa tudi risank.

»Toda nikomur ne povej,« je rekel dedek. »Niti Lilji ne, zmenjeno? Tebi se ne bi nič zgodilo, ker si še majhna, mene pa ne bi pohvalili.«

»Vem. Podariti knjigo, poslušati glasbo in gledati filme je enako kot krasti.«

»Kakšne neumnosti. Preberi, potem ti bom dal še druge.«

»Ali jih imaš še?«

»Veliko. Ampak psst.«

»Marina, si končala? Pojdi ...« Mama je vstopila v sobo tako nenadoma, da Marina ni uspela skriti knjige za hrbet. »Kaj je to? Vi!« Mama je dvignila pogled k dedu. »Če bi radi po poti svojega sina, kar izvolite! Otroka pa pustite!« Ton maminega glasu se je iz trenutka v trenutek poviševal. »Požvižgam se na vas! Toda vedite, da smo morali zastaviti hišo, da bi plačali odvetnika za Vašega sina. Za Vas

pa niti ficka. Vseeno mi je za Vas. Požvižgam se na Vas! In na Vašega sina!!!« Mama je postala histerična, glas se ji je tresel: »Otroka pa pustite pri miru!«

Marina je mežikala, da ne bi zajokala. Spet govorita o očetu, ki se ga le še slabo spominja. Dedek je rekel, da je oče samo rad bral in ni naredil ničesar slabega.

Mama je deklici rezko iztrgala knjigo iz rok.

»Odstranite se iz njene sobe,« je s tresočim glasom rekla mama dedu, ki se je med odhajanjem še težje držal vzravnano.

Mama se je umirila in Marina ji je sledila na vrt, kjer sta knjigo zažgali na ustaljenem mestu, že pripravljenem za kurišče. Knjiga je gorela z živim rumenim plamenom, skoraj brez dima, najprej so počrnele strani po robovih, potem je zajelo list za listom. Tako: prsk, prsk, prsk. Toda tokrat Marina ni začutila enakega zanosa kot zjutraj, ko se je papir vnel pred knjižnico.

»Ne poslušaj toliko tega starega hipija. In v šoli raje ne govori o knjigi,« je rekla mama, ko sta se vračali s kurišča.

Marina je razumela. Razumela je tudi očetov položaj.

Zvečer je Marina odprla svoj dnevnik na socialnem omrežju. To so bili zapisi, ki jih ni nikoli nikomur pokazala. Bili so samo njeni. Marina je napisala:

»Lilja mi je povedala, da je pri njih hrčica skotila hrčke; in Lilja mi bo enega dala, če ga želim, a moram prej vprašati mamo, pa je še nisem vprašala. Sežigali sva knjige in sem ji hotela povedati in jo potem vprašati, pa se je začela kregati z dedkom, ker je dedek rekel, da so tiskane knjige boljše, mama pa ni verjela. Dedek mi je podaril pravo knjigo in rekel, da mi je deklica v njej podobna, ampak ni princeska, pač pa ji je ime Klarisa, a mama mi je knjigo vzela in kričala in sva jo skupaj skurili, dedek pa mi je povedal, da jih ima še dosti. Jutri bom prosila mamo, če mi dovoli vzeti Liljinega najmanjšega, čisto drobcenega hrčka.«

Naslednje jutro so prišli po dedka. Imeli so nalog. Vse je bilo zakonito.

*Prevedla Andreja Kalc*

## *Celsius 233*

“And they were burning so... Like... Not like, not like the fire, well, when we, when we were burning leaves. Like, in the garden, remember? And this was not like that! It was like, it was like, so high! Orange! And we were allowed to throw them in! By ourselves! And we, and we!” Marina lost her breath, being overly delighted.

“And your teacher let you go near the fire?” Mum frowned.

“Yeah,” Marina shook her curls, “but there was a fireman there.”

One should talk to the teacher. Instructive is instructive but what if the child gets burnt? She’s only ten. Last year her eyelashes go quite burnt. Also during the burning.

“So you burnt up your whole school library?” Grandpa said from his corner.

His wicker chair cracked when he leaned forward. Grandpa was sinewy. He had long grey hair and an aquiline nose.

“No,” Marina turned to him, “we burnt up the school library one last year. The older folks did. But they brought us to the city library! For grown-ups!”

“Whew.”

“Yeah. And just for us, they closed the street, and we were burning them all by ourselves!”

Marina glanced at Grandpa triumphantly. Grandpa raised his right hand and ran it through his long hair. Her grandpa wasn’t like other girls’ grandpas. Mum called him an “old hippie” behind his back, but Mum couldn’t explain to Marina what that meant.

“For grown-ups, and you burnt it? And what for?”

Mum eyed him askew. Here he goes again, she thought.

“Well. So it doesn’t take up room,” Marina explained, “All the books had been diggie... dijay...”

“Digitized,” Mum prompted.

“Yeah,” Marina shook her curls, “And now they needn’t take up room. There’s gonna be a – supermarket!”

“Great!” Grandpa picked up the girl’s tone.

Mum put her hands on her hips. Though she hadn’t really gained weight, she had already become a bit square. Age.

Marina turned from Grandpa to Mum:

“The teacher also said that libraries help pirates.”

“You sons of...”

“What!” Mum raised her voice even though Grandpa was speaking under his breath and had already stopped, “What are you allowing yourself in the child’s presence?”

She had never learned to call her in-law Dad, and calling him by name was awkward so she had to avoid direct naming

“They once said that e-books helped piracy,” Grandpa addressed Mum, “until they learned how to control them. Now it’s paper books and libraries that help piracy.”

“All correct.” Mum pressed her hands more firmly against her hips. “How can one check that a copy of a book once bought or rented was only read by one person? It’s easy with e-books though, everyone has their own e-signature, one set of fingerprints...”

“Why should only one person read each copy?” Grandpa raised in his chair. The wicker chair cracked raggedly.

Marina didn’t know why they got irritated. She knew the answer to Grandpa’s question, though.

“One should earn the right to knowledge. Knowledge can’t be free,” she rapped.

“You were also taught this at school?”

Grandpa went silent and subsided into his wicker chair. The chair sighed.

“Right, Marina. All correct. It’s better to know less but to know it all legally.”

Mum had made a mistake. She gave her voice an educational tone so Marina glanced at her with doubt.

“First they started to remotely erase books,” Grandpa said to Mum over the girl’s head. “Daughter, my son told you the story about the Orwell book, didn’t he? They just erased it from people’s gadgets. Zip!” Grandpa snapped his fingers, “aaaand it’s gone. Never was. Like in the Orwell book itself. Then they learnt how to activate gadgets with fingerprints only. One person can read one copy of a book. Now they’re burning paper books, as in Fahrenheit how-many-is-it.”

“That’s quite different!”

“Yeah, quite. Celsius how-many-is-it.”

Mum waved both of her arms at Grandpa and Grandpa went on: “They pushed copyright back and back in time so that each bloody book is now under copyright back to the Bible and the Quran...”

“The author must be rewarded!”

“Like it’s about the author. It’s copy-right, daughter, copy! It’s not even called ‘author’s rights’ anymore.”

Marina was blinking and turning her gaze back and forth from Grandpa to Mum like a spectator at a tennis game.

Grandpa raised his voice:

“They did the same to schoolbooks, movies, scientific programs. Either you pay or your kid grows up an imbecile. And they do grow imbecilic!”

“Not in the child’s presence!”

“I’m not talking about you, sunshine,” Grandpa turned his face to Marina talking to her in a low voice as if under Mum’s screaming, “You’re the good one. You think a bit.”

“Marina, go to your room,” Mum ordered.

“But Mum...”

“I’m gonna mum you! Go do your homework. The teacher said your profile isn’t complete yet.”

Marina went to her room. She heard Mum and Grandpa arguing in loud voices. Then they probably went each to their own corners.

Marina went online. She pushed stuff around the internet, unthinkingly, closing ads every second. She couldn’t download anything. There was a blocking program. The program had been installed after Marina had downloaded her favorite cartoon series about this poor girl Cindy who becomes a princess and starts to help the poor. At the end of the month, Mum was charged one third of her salary. Automatically. The blocking program wasn’t cheap either, but Mum decided to pay once so as to avoid disagreeable surprises in future. Mum herself had downloaded movies without even knowing it. You tick the wrong box and there you go, you only notice it after you’ve been charged, and try proving the movies were planted on you, try getting your money back.

Marina sighed and got to her homework. She started filling in her social network profile. Favorite video shows, favorite clothes, dolls, favorite actors, cartoon characters. As for the last, Marina didn’t hesitate. Princess Cindy.

After an hour Grandpa sneaked into her room. When he wasn’t sitting one could better see how gaunt Grandpa was. He still tried to walk upright but he couldn’t anymore.

“Marina, you’re a smart girl,” Grandpa said, holding his hand behind his back, “Maybe you’ll understand already. Here, too, they burn books, like you did today. Here! Just don’t show it to Mum.”

“A paper one?” Marina put out her hand.

And then she jerked it back and hid her hands behind her back.

“You can’t transfer it for my use.”

“I bought it. Once, a long time ago.”

“But if you give me this copy instead of buying me a new one, we’re both stealing from the author.”

Grandpa sighed:

“The author’s long dead.”

Marina hesitantly moved her hands toward the book.

“Are paper ones really better? You told Mum so.”

“Well no,” Grandpa smiled. “Not at all. Look...,” he thought a moment and stared, winding a lock of his grey hair around his bony finger. “Like in your Cindy cartoon. Cindy cannot read an e-book and then give it to another girl. But she can give her a paper book. Only a rich girl can read the e-book. But even a poor girl with no money can read a paper book. Once she could. For example, she could borrow it from a library,” Grandpa sighed, “Knowledge shouldn’t always be paid for.”

“Well, they say at school...”

“Not everything they say in school is true. Look,” Grandpa opened the book, “there’s a story of a girl who didn’t do what everyone else did. She reminds one of you.”

“She’s a princess?”

“No,” Grandpa smiled, “Not at all. But she reminds one of you. Her name’s Clarisse.”

“Clarisse. A beautiful name.”

“Marina is a very beautiful name, too,” Grandpa stroked her hair.

Marina started to clumsily turn the yellowish pages. The book was slim but she still found it inconvenient and cumbersome. Her much smaller mini tablet could contain thousands of comics. And books. And also cartoons.

“Just don’t tell anyone. Even Lily, okay? Because they won’t do anything to you, you’re a kid, but they won’t exactly compliment me.”

“I know. Transferring a book or joint listening to music or watching of films is the same as stealing.”

“What nonsense. You read, later I’ll give you more.”

“You got more?”

“A lot. But hush.”

“Marina, are you finished? Come...” Mum entered the room so suddenly that Marina couldn’t hide the book behind her back.

“What’s this? You!” Mum raised her eyes at Grandpa, “If you want to follow your son, please do! But leave the child alone!” Mum’s

voice was getting louder by the second. “I don’t give a damn about you! But do consider, we mortgaged the house to pay your son’s lawyer. And there’s now more money for yours! But I don’t give a damn! I don’t give a damn about you! Nor about your son!!!” Mum got herself worked up to hysteria, her voice broke, “But leave the child alone!”

Marina blinked so as not to start crying. Here they go again about Dad, whom she doesn’t really remember anymore. Grandpa said Dad just loved reading and didn’t do anything bad.

Mum tore the book from the girl’s hands.

“Get out of her room,” Mum said to Grandpa in a trembling voice, and it was even harder for him to walk upright when he was leaving.

When Mum calmed down Marina followed her into the garden and they burnt the book at their usual bonfire spot. The fire of the book was bright yellow, there was almost no smoke. The pages blackened at the edges at first, then caught fire one by one. Like that: pshh, pshh, pshh! But this time Marina didn’t feel the delight she felt in the morning near the library.

“Don’t listen too much to the old hippie. And you better not tell anybody at school about the book,” Mum said as they were walking back from the fireplace.

Marina understood. She also understood about Dad.

In the evening Marina logged into her diary at the social network. Those were the notes she never showed to anyone. The “only me” mode. Marina wrote:

“Lily said their mum hamster gave birth to little baby hamsters and Lily will give me one baby hamster if I like but I must ask Mum but I didn’t ask yet. Because we burned books and I wanted to tell Mum and then ask but Mum started to argue with Grandpa because Grandpa said that paper books are better and Mum didn’t believe it. Grandpa gave me a real paper book and said that there’s girl who reminds her of me but she’s not a princess she’s Clarisse but Mum took the book away and she shouted and we burned it but Grandpa said he got much more. I’ll ask Mum tomorrow to let me take the smallest little hamster.”

The next day they came after Grandpa. They had a warrant. All was legal.

*Translated by the author*





Foto © Zuzana Vajdová

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# *Ivana Dobrakovová*

Ivana Dobrakovová se je rodila leta 1982 v Bratislavi na Slovaškem. Študirala je angleščino in francoščino (prevajalstvo in tolmačenje) na Filozofski fakulteti Univerze Komenskega v Bratislavi. Kot nadarjena avtorica je prejela nagrado za najboljšo kratko zgodbo mladih avtorjev na literarnem natečaju »Jašíkove Kysuce« (2007). Za kratkoprozno prvenec *Prvá smrť v rodine* (Prva smrt v družini, 2009) je leta 2010 prejela nagrado Jána Johanidesa za avtorje do trideset let. Njen prvi roman *Bellevue* je izšel leta 2010. Obe omenjeni knjigi sta se uvrstili med finaliste za osrednjo slovaško literarno nagrado »Anasoft Litera«. Leta 2013 je izdala kratkoprozno zbirko *Toxo*. Njene kratke zgodbe in odlomki iz njih so bili prevedeni in objavljeni v več evropskih jezikih, med drugim tudi v slovenščini v prevodih Špele Sevšek Šramel in Diane Pungeršič, roman *Bellevue* pa je bil preveden v poljščino. Ivana Dobrakovová živi v Torinu v Italiji, kjer dela kot svobodna prevajalka.

Ivana Dobrakovová was born in 1982 in Bratislava, Slovakia. She studied translation and interpreting, with a focus on English and French at the Faculty of Arts at the Comenius University in Bratislava. She gained attention as an aspiring author by winning the "Jašíkove Kysuce" short story competition for young writers (2007). Her debut book, the collection of short stories *Prvá smrť v rodine* (The First Death in the Family, 2009), was awarded the 2010 "Ján Johanides" Award for writers under the age of thirty. Her first novel, *Bellevue*, was published in 2010. Each of these books was shortlisted for the main Slovak award for literature – "Anasoft Litera". In 2013, she published another collection of short stories, titled *Toxo*. Her short stories and excerpts of them have been translated and published in many European languages, among them in Slovenian, translated by Špela Sevšek Šramel and Diana Pungeršič. The novel *Bellevue* was translated into Polish. Ivana Dobrakovová lives in Turin, Italy, where she works as a freelance translator.

## *Návrat do domu medzi dvoma dialnicami*

Nikdy sa nemala vracat' do Lubľany, a keď už sme pri tom, ani do Marseille a už vôbec nie do Turína, vedela, že vracat' sa na miesta, kde kedysi žila, je číre bláznovstvo, nikdy by sa jej nepodarilo znovu navodiť vtedajšiu atmosféru a pocity, každá návšteva minulosti vedie nevyhnutne ku sklamaniu. Ostalo jej veľa spomienok, no jej to nestačilo, porušila nepísané pravidlo, presvedčila manžela, Agátu presvedčať nemusela, detí sa nikto nič nepýta, rodičia ich len posadia do autosedačky a prestaň revať, o chvíľu zastaneme na pumpe a pôjdeš sa vycikať, nie, nemohli by sme ísť do McDonaldu, zjedz ten banán, čo som ti olúpala.

Lubľana sa od čias jej študijného pobytu vôbec nezmenila, alebo možno aj áno, len ona si mesto tak detailne nepamätala. Veľmi skoro zistila, že prechádzať sa po Prešerenovom námestí, Plečnikovej tržnici a Slovenskej ceste je rovnako nudné ako nedelňé prechádzky ulicami Ženevy, práve preto, že už nie je na študijnom pobyte, ale na rodinnej dovolenke a ide zavesená do manžela, Agátka, drž sa ma a neutekaj na cestu, koľkokrát ti to mám hovoriť? no aký je v tom rozdiel, či okrikuje Agátu v Ženeve alebo v Lubľane?

Ešte stále sa nespamätala z toho, že sa jej podarilo presvedčiť manžela, len jeden večer, prosím ťa, veď tam neprespím, čoho sa, preboha, bojíš? päť rokov som ho nevidela, snáď si nemyslíš, že by som ti... no to hádam nie, prečo si si ma potom bral, keď mi neveríš? jedna hádka, ale potom ho zlomila, je to len kamarát a medzi nami nič nebolo, pár bozkov a nezabudni večer postaviť fľašu s vodou k Agátinej postieľke.

Rýchla chôdza nočným mestom, zbehnúť na Prešerenovo námestie a popri Lubľanici dolu kopcom, na mostoch je ešte stále toľko pavučín osvetlených pouličnými lampami, *Makalonca* tiež stojí, dolu schodmi na nábrežie, podarilo sa jej obsadiť stôl pri rieke, sadla si a čakala naňho. Cítila sa skoro ako vtedy, len keby jej manžel neprestajne nevyvolával, lyžičky sú v tom modrom batohu, nech si nezabudne umyť zuby, čítaj od predposlednej kapitoly, tam, ako sa pavúček Pája stretne so sršňom.

Drago prišiel takmer až po polhodine, ospravedlňoval sa a vyhovárал na mestské spoje, ale jej to ani v najmenšom nevadilo, začínala veriť, že je to ten istý Drago spred piatich rokov, ktorý sa stretol s tou istou Svetlanou. Sedeli na schodoch, popíjali *belo kavo*, *hočeš sladkor? ne, hvala*, je mi zima, bunda prehodená cez nahé ramená,

mala si si zobrat svet, večer býva pri rieke chladno, ale ona sa len usmieva, rukami si objíma kolená, stále si taký vysoký a prečo si si nechal narásť dlhé vlasy?

Dúfala, že k nemu pôjdu stopom, ako v ten večer pred jej odchodom, ale veď neodchádzaš navždy, nebuď smutná, budeme si písať, toto nie je koniec, milovanie pri mihotavom svetle reflektorov áut valiacich sa po diaľnici. Lenže potom prišlo ráno a s ránom odtrhnutie tiel, vstávať, vlak odchádza o dve hodiny, musíme ešte zájsť do študentského domu *Poljane*, nie, nechaj ma, ja nikam nejdem, mne je s tebou dobre, neblázni, veď sa uvidíme, nie je to navždy, tieto spomienky ju vždy mierne pichali pri srdci, ale napriek tomu sa k nim vracala, lebo bez nich by bola len prázdnota a bolesť je vždy lepšia než prázdnota.

Drago sa však rozhodol pre autobus, pri jej nesmelom návrhu čo-takto-ísť-stopom sa len zasmial, už nie som študent a môžem si dovoliť cestovať aj autobusom, nie, veď ja som to tak nemyslela, začala sa červenať, ale on ju chytil okolo pliec, moja malá Svetlana, ty si sa vôbec nezmenila, také dieťaťko, tomu nikdy neuverím, že nejaká Agáta a manžel, to si si určite vymyslela, tak poď, len žartujem, autobus ide každých dvadsať minút.

Sadla si k oknu, on oproti nej, dlhé minúty mlčania, vystupovať, Smrekovica, posledný telefonát od rodiny, dobrú noc, moja, to je od teba pekné, že si ma chcela pred spaním ešte počuť, keď sa zobudíš, budem už s tebou, tak papa. Štrková cesta, po ktorej kráčali až k domu medzi dvoma diaľnicami, nepríjemné vržďanie pod nohami, Drago s rukami hlboko vo vreckách, ako som len rád, dnes večer budú mäsové hody, otec pre teba pripravil pravú srbskú hostinu.

Zaškrípala zhrdzavená bránka a ocitli sa v záhrade, neprestajný hukot áut rútiacich sa po paralelných diaľniciach, odrezávajúcich dom od zvyšku sveta, otec v malom altánku, srdečne jej stisol ruku, vitajte u nás, už dávno som sa pýtal Draga, kedy nás opäť navštívite, vraj ste sa vydali do Ženevy a Špela vo dverách so širokým úsmevom schádza dolu schodmi, s otvorenou náručou, *živijo, Svetlana, kako sem srečna, da te vidim.*

Takmer sa o ňu pobili, Drago a Špela, každý ju chcel previesť po dome, ukázať, čo sa za päť rokov zmenilo, ale otec ich zadržal, veď potom, decká, kam sa tak ponáhľate? najprv sa bude jesť, mäso je už hotové, jahňacina a bravčové, minule ti chutilo, tak dúfam, že aj dnes bude, Svetlana sa usmieva, nebojte sa, *gospod*, určite bude výborné, už teraz to cítim.

Pri večeri ju zaplavil smútok, len s ťažkosťami sa držala na hladine, ako môžu byť dva večery rovnaké? navyše s odstupom piatich rokov! Drago po jej pravici, Špela za vrchstolom s pollitrovou fľašou majonézy a otec oproti, spokojné prežívanie a vyberanie kostí, kdetu prehodené *okusno, odlično*, z času na čas sa zahľadí na dva obrazy pribité na stene, Tito, áno, Tito je stále na stene a vedľa neho Drago-va matka, o ktorej Svetlana nič nevedela, len tolko, že pred šiestimi rokmi zomrela na rakovinu, nikdy nemala odvahu pýtať sa na viac.

Najradšej by strávila celý večer prevítaním Dragových črt, rozoberaním ho na kúsky, skladaním dokopy, veď on mal byť jej, Ženeva a všetko okolo bolo len náhradné riešenie, ona mala mať predsa Draga, tak si to zaumienila v ten večer, keď ležal na lavici v záhrade a ona mu prešla dlaňou po líci, Svetlana, keď sme teraz večerali, mal som pocit, akoby si patrila do rodiny, akoby si bola mojou ženou, čo ty na to? žili by sme tu, v dome medzi dvoma diaľnicami, po otcovej smrti sami dvaja, Špela by sa vydala a odsťahovala, ale je nemožné, aby sa to zopakovalo, prezerá si tváre celej rodiny, nie, druhý raz sa jej medzi nich nepodarí votrieť.

Po večeri odmietla Špelinu spoločnosť, na slovinskú hudbu asi naozaj nie je vhodná chvíľa, som už unavená a za štvrt hodinu mi ide autobus späť do Ľubľany, posledný, musím ho stihnúť, manžel by si robil starosti, keby som neprišla, ale to už ju táhá Drago za ruku, nepreniknuteľná tma v záhrade, takto sa ide do môjho brlohu, pevne sa ma drž, aby si nespada, výmole a dosky, krtince a kamene. Obišli dom a z druhej strany vnikli dnu, pivničná zatuchnutosť a vlhko zmizli, len čo sa dostali do Dragovej izby, tak a sme tu, *dobrodošli*, so smiechom dodal.

Svetlana ostala stáť v strede izby, rozhliadala sa, zatiaľ čo Drago pripravoval posteľ na noc, po stenách rozvešané tie isté obrazy, ako keď tu bola pred piatimi rokmi, na zemi v rohu veža a cédečká v troch úhľadne zarovnaných kôpkach, skriňa, kreslo, všetko zapadalo do seba, dokázala snívať s otvorenými očami, žiadnych päť rokov neubehlo, to všetko je len výmysel, blud a táto izba to dokazuje, ona a Drago, sú spolu, tak ako to malo vždy byť, veď prečo by inak teraz pripravoval lôžko pre dvoch ľudí, prečo by sa ospravedlňoval, že nemá dva vankúše (akoby to vadilo, veď ona môže pokojne spať nalepená na ňom), prečo by jej inak podával to modré tričko na spanie, o ktorom si do tejto chvíle myslela, že leží poskladané v rodičovskom dome v Bratislave?

Obaja sa prezliekli a vlezli pod perinu, bez ostychu, prirodzene, Drago ešte raz vyskočil a napustil pohár vody, ktorý postavil na

nočný stolík, niekedy v noci sa zobudím a som smädný, nechce sa mi potom vstávať z postele, predsa len je na to príliš veľká zima, aj keď sa to nezdá, sme v pivnici, Svetlana sa naňho usmieva, v tme len matne rozoznáva jeho obrysy, tíško tíško, sme spolu a to je všetko, na čom záleží.

Neskôr sa milovali a keď sa Drago spravil, Svetlana nečakane pocítila blahosklonnosť, som šťastná, slová znejúce groteskne v tme, ale Drago si to ani nevšimol, po tom, čo zahodil kondóm, zaspal ako zabitý, *lahko noc*, prepáč, som unavený, zajtra sa porozprávame, to nič, len si pospi.

Teraz nastala jej chvíľa, mohla využiť dlhoročnú nespavosť na vnímanie jeho prítomnosti, diaľnice stíchli, len kde-tu prebleslo svetlo reflektorov, horúčkovitý beh áut, počula, ako si Špela v kuchyni pospevuje odrhovačky Zorana Predina či Lovšina alebo snáď Kreslina? ale po chvíli aj spev stíchol a Svetlana mohla vnímať Dragov pravidelný dych, pokojný, hlboký, mohla sa dotýkať jeho rozohriateho tela, cítiť šlachovité ramená a mocný chrbát, mohla byť spokojná, vychutnávať jeho prítomnosť naplno, ale nedokázala to, hrdlo sa jej zvieralo úzkosťou, lebo vedela, že ráno o desiatej na ňu bude čakať vlak na *železniški postaji*, do ktorého nasadne a bude počítat zastávky, Maribor, Graz, Marseille, Turín a potom práca v Ženeve, manžel, Agáta, nudný rodinný život, a jediné, čo jej zostane z tejto noci, bude trýznivo ostrá spomienka, ktorú si bude môcť najlepšie sprítomniť frenetickým písaním o štvrtej ráno, keď ešte všetci spia, predtým, než sa pustí do domácich prác, varenie kávy, manželovi do postele, áno, už je ráno, Agi, musíme vstávať, treba ísť do škôlky, no tak, bude to?

## *Vrnitev v hišo med dvema avtocestama*

Nikoli se ne bi smela vračati v Ljubljano, in ko smo že pri tem, tudi v Marseille ne, še najmanj pa v Torino, vedela je, da je vračanje tja, kjer je včasih živela, čista norija, nikoli več se ne bo mogla ponovno vživeti v atmosfero in občutja, vsak obisk preteklosti neizogibno vodi k razočaranju. Ostalo je veliko spominov, zanjo to seveda ni bilo dovolj, prekršila je nenapisano pravilo, prepričala je moža, Agáte ni bilo treba prepričevati, otrok nihče nič ne sprašuje, starši jih samo posadijo v avtosedeže in nehaj se dret, takoj se bomo ustavili na črpalki in boš šel lulat, ne, ne gremo v McDonalds, pojej banano, ki sem ti jo olupila.

Ljubljana se od časa njenega študijskega bivanja sploh ni spremenila, mogoče tudi, vendar si mesta ni tako podrobno zapomnila. Zelo hitro je ugotovila, da je sprehod čez Prešernov trg, Plečnikovo tržnico in Slovensko cesto enako dolgočasen kot nedeljski sprehodi po ženevskih ulicah prav zato, ker ni več na študijski izmenjavi, ampak na družinskem izletu, hodi in visi na možu, Agica, drži se me, ne skači na cesto, kolikokrat ti bom še morala reči? kakšna je torej razlika, če krega Agáto v Ženevi ali Ljubljani?

Še vedno ni dojela, da se ji je posrečilo prepričati moža, samo en večer, lepo te prosim, saj ne bom prespala tam, pa česa te je strah? pet let ga nisem videla, saj si vendar ne misliš, da bi te ... tega pa res ne, zakaj si me potem vzela za ženo, če mi ne zaupaš? en prepir, potem pa se je zlomil, samo prijatelj je in nič ni bilo med nama, nekaj poljubov in ne pozabi zvečer postaviti stekleničke z vodo k Agátini posteljici.

Hitra hoja po nočnem mestu, hitro mimo Prešernovega trga in dol ob Ljublanici, na mostovih je še vedno toliko pajčevin, ki so osvetljene z uličnimi svetilkami, *Makalonca* še tudi stoji, spust po stopnicah na nabrežje, imela je srečo in dobila mizo čisto pri vodi, usedla se je in čakala nanj. Počutila se je skoraj tako kot takrat, samo če je ne bi mož ves čas klical, žličke so v tisti modri torbi, ne pozabi ta si umiti zob, preberi ji do predzadnjega poglavja, tam, kjer pajkec Paja sreča sršena.

Drago je prišel skoraj pol ure kasneje, opravičeval se je in izgovarjal na slabe avtobusne povezave, ampak to je ni niti najmanj motilo, začela je verjeti, da je to isti Drago izpred petih let, ki se je spoznal z isto Svetlano. Sedela sta na stopnicah, srkala *belo kavo*, *hočeš sladkor? ne, hvala*, zebe me, jakna ogrnjena čez gola ramena, pulover bi morala vzeti, ob večerih je ob reki hladno, ona pa se samo smeji, z

rokami si objema kolena, še vedno si tako visok in zakaj si si pustil dolge lase?

Upala je, da bosta šla k njemu na štop kot tisti večer pred njenim odhodom, saj ne odhajaš za zmeraj, ne bodi žalostna, pisala si bova, to ni konec, ljubljenje pri trepetajoči svetlobi avtomobilskih luči z avtoceste. Potem pa je prišlo jutro, telesi se odtrgata, vstani, vlak gre čez dve uri, še v dijaški dom na Poljane morava, ne, pusti me, nikamor ne grem, lepo mi je s tabo, daj, nehaj no, saj se bova videla, to ni za zmeraj, ti spomini so jo vedno zbadali v srcu, kljub temu se je vračala k njim, brez njih bi bila tam samo praznina in bolečina je vedno boljša kot praznina.

Drago pa se je odločil za avtobus, ob njenem ne ravno pogumnem predlogu kaj-pa-če-greva-na-štop se je samo nasmehnil, nisem več študent, zdaj si lahko privoščim, da grem na avtobus, ne, saj nisem mislila tako, oblila jo je rdečica, on pa jo je potrepeljal po ramenu, moja mala Svetlana, ti se pa res nisi spremenila, tak otroček, tega ne morem verjeti, Agáta in mož, to si si gotovo izmislila, greva no, hecam se, avtobus gre vsakih dvajset minut.

Usedla se je k oknu, on nasproti nje, dolge minute tišine, izstop, Smrekovica, zadnji telefonski klic od družine, lahko noč, moja, res lepo od tebe, da si me hotela še slišati pred spanjem, ko se zbudiš, bom že s tabo, dijo. Makadamska cesta, po kateri sta hodila vse do hiše med dvema avtocestama, neprijeten grušč pod nogami, Drago z rokami globoko v žepih, kako sem vesel, zvečer bomo jedli meso, oče je zate pripravil pravo srbsko pojedino.

Zaškripala je zarjavela ograja in znašla sta se na vrtu, ves čas zvok avtomobilov, ki se podijo po vzporednih avtocestah, hiša je tako odrezana od preostanka sveta, oče pred vhomom, toplo ji stisne roko, pozdravljeni, sem že vprašal Draga, kdaj nas boste spet obiskali, baje ste se poročili v Ženevo, in Špela na vratih s širokim nasmehom prihaja po stopnicah navzdol z razprtimi rokami, *živijo Svetlana, kako sem srečna, da te vidim.*

Kar tekmovala sta za njeno pozornost, Drago in Špela, vsak ji je hotel pokazati, kaj je novega v hiši v teh petih letih, oče ju je ustavil, bosta potem, otroka, kam se vama tako mudi? gremo najprej jest, meso je gotovo, jagnjetina in svinjina, nazadnje ti je teknilo, upam, da ti bo tudi danes, Svetlana se nasmehne, ne bojte se, gospod, gotovo bo odlično, že zdaj čutim.

Pri večerji jo je preplavila žalost, težko se je držala na površju, kako sta lahko dva večera čisto enaka? in s časovnim razmikom petih

let! Drago na njeni desni, Špela na čelu mize s pollitrskim kozarcem majoneze in oče nasproti, mirno prežvekovanje in obiranje kosti, tu in tam izgovorjen *okusno, odlično*, kdaj pa kdaj pogled na slike, obešene na steni, Tito, ja, Tito je še zmeraj na steni, poleg njega Dragova mama, o kateri ni Svetlana vedela ničesar, samo to, da je pred šestimi leti umrla za rakom, nikoli si ni upala vprašati kaj več.

Najraje bi večer preživela z analiziranjem Dragovih potez, razstavila bi ga na koščke in spet sestavila, on bi vendar moral biti njen, Ženeva in vse okrog tega je samo nadomestna rešitev, ona bi vendar morala imeti Draga, tako se je odločila tisti večer, ko je ležal na klopi v vrtu in ona se je z dlanjo dotaknila njegovega obraza, Svetlana, ko smo večerjali, sem imel občutek, da spadaš v našo družino, kot bi bila moja žena, kaj praviš? živela bi tukaj, v hiši med dvema avtocestama, po očetovi smrti bi bila sama, Špela bi se poročila in preselila, ampak ni mogoče, da bi se to ponovilo, ogleduje si njihove obraze, ne, drugič ji ne bo uspelo prodreti mednje.

Po večerji zavrne Špelino družbo, za slovensko glasbo zdaj res ni primeren čas, utrujena sem in čez petnajst minut imam avtobus nazaj v Ljubljano, zadnji, moram ga ujeti, moža bi skrbelo, če ne bi prišla, ampak Drago jo že vleče za roko, trda tema v vrtu, takole se gre v moj brlog, dobro se drži, da ne boš padla, vdolbine in deske, krtine in kamenje. Gresta okrog hiše in na drugi strani noter, zatohlost kleti in vlažnost izginjata, takoj ko prideta v Dragovo sobo, pa sva tu, *dobrodošli*, je dodal z nasmehom.

Svetlana je obstala sredi sobe, razgledala se je, medtem ko je Drago pripravljajl posteljo, na stenah visijo iste slike kot pred petimi leti, ko je bila tu, na tleh v kotu stolp in cedeji v treh lepo poravnanih kupčkah, omara, naslanjač, vse se je ujemalo, zdaj lahko sanja z odprtimi očmi, kot da ni bilo teh petih let, da je vse izmišljeno kot blodnje in ta soba je dokaz za to, ona in Drago, skupaj sta, tako kot bi ves čas moralo biti, zakaj bi sicer zdaj pripravljajl posteljo za dva, zakaj bi se opravičeval, da nima dveh blazin (kot da bi bilo to kaj narobe, saj lahko spim privita ob njem), zakaj bi ji podajal modro majico za spat, za katero je do zdaj mislila, da je pri njej doma v Bratislavi?

Oba sta se preoblekla in zlezla pod odejo, brez sramu, čisto naravno, Drago je še enkrat vstal, si natočil kozarec vode in ga postavil na nočno omarico, včasih se ponoči zbudim in sem žejen, ne da se mi vstati iz postelje, vseeno je precej mrzlo, čeprav ni čutiti, sva vendarle v kleti, Svetlana se mu smeji, v temi samo nejasno razpoznava njegove obris, tiho, čisto tiho, skupaj sva in to je vse, kar je pomembno.

Kasneje sta se ljubila in ko je Dragu prišlo, je Svetlana nepričakovano začutila ugodje, srečna sem, besede, ki zvenijo groteskno v temi, ampak Drago tega ni niti opazil, potem ko je vrgel stran kondom, je zaspal kot ubit, *lahko noč*, oprost, utrujen sem, se bova jutri pogovorila, ne skrbi, kar lepo se nasp.

Zdaj je nastopil njen trenutek, dolgoletno neprespanost lahko izkoristi za dojemanje njegove prisotnosti, avtocesta je utihnila, samo tu in tam se je zablistala svetloba reflektorjev, vročično hitenje avtomobilov, slišala je, kako si Špela v kuhinji prepeva že stokrat slišane ga Predina ali Lovšina, ali pa je to Kreslin? takoj zatem petja ni bilo več slišati in Svetlana je lahko slišala Dragovo enakomerno dihanje, mirno, globoko, lahko se je dotikala njegovega razgretega telesa, občutila široka ramena in močan hrbet, lahko je bila zadovoljna, do konca je okušala njegovo prisotnost, ampak ni zmogla, v grlu je začutila tesnobo, ker je vedela, da bo zjutraj ob desetih nanjo čakal vlak na *ljubljski železniški postaji*, kjer bo vstopila in štela postaje, Maribor, Gradec, Marseille, Torino, in potem delo v Ženevi, mož, Agáta, dolgočasno družinsko življenje in edino, kar bo ostalo po tej noči, bo mučen, oster spomin, ki si ga bo najbolje približala z besnim pisanjem ob štirih zjutraj, ko še vsi spijo, še preden se loti gospodinjskih opravil, kuhanje kave, k možu v posteljo, ja, jutro je že, Agica, vstati bo treba, v vrtec gremo, bo šlo?

*Prevedla Špela Sevšek Šramel*

## *Going Back to the House Between Two Highways*

She should never have gone back to Ljubljana, and while we're at it, not to Marseilles either, and definitely not to Turin. Going back to the places where she'd lived was lunacy, as she knew well: never once had she succeeded in summoning up the original atmosphere and feelings. Each visit to the past led inevitably to disappointment. She still had many memories, but it wasn't enough for her, she broke the unwritten rule and persuaded her husband, no need to persuade Agatha, kids don't have to be asked, their parents just bundle them into a car seat and stop bawling, in a while we'll stop at a filling station and you can go and pee, no, we couldn't go to McDonalds, eat that banana I've peeled for you.

Ljubljana hadn't changed at all from the time of her study stay, or maybe it had, just that she didn't remember the city in such detail. Very soon she discovered that to walk along Prešeren Square, Plečnik Market or Slovenska Street was just as boring as the Sunday walks on the streets of Geneva, precisely because she was no longer on a study stay, now she was hitched to a husband and little Agatha, hold on to me and don't run out on the road, how many times do I have to tell you? – but what difference did it make whether she was screaming at Agatha in Geneva or Ljubljana?

She still hadn't got over the fact that she'd managed to persuade her husband: just one evening, please, I'm not going to sleep there, what are you afraid of, for God's sake? I haven't seen him for five years, surely you don't think that I'd... well maybe not, but then why did you marry me if you don't trust me? – That was some row, but in due course she quelled his resistance: he's just a friend and there was never anything between us, a few kisses and at night don't forget to put a bottle of water by Agatha's cot.

A fast walk through the nocturnal city, rushing to Prešeren Square and down the hill along the Ljubljanica. The bridges still had all those cobwebs, lit up by the streetlamps. Down the steps towards the water; *Makalonca* too was still there, she'd managed to reserve a table by the river. She sat down and waited for him. She almost had the old feeling, if only her husband wouldn't incessantly ring her, the spoons are in that blue bag, make sure she doesn't forget to brush her teeth, read from the second last chapter, where Paja the spider meets the hornet.

Drago came nearly half an hour later. He apologised, blaming the public transport, but it didn't bother her in the least. She was

beginning to believe he was the same Drago of five years ago, meeting the same Svetlana. They sat on the steps, drinking *belo kavo*, *hočeš sladkor? ne, hvala*, I feel cold, coat thrown over her bare shoulders. You should have taken a sweater, evening by the river is cold – but she just smiled, twining her arms round her knees: you're still so tall, and why have you let your hair grow long?

She was hoping they'd hitchhike to his place, like that evening before her departure. But, look, you're not going forever, don't be sad, we'll write to each other, this isn't the end, making love by the flickering from the headlights of cars rolling down the highway. Just that afterwards dawn came, and with dawn separation of their bodies, rising, the train's leaving in two hours, we still have to go to the *Poljane* student centre, no, let me be, I'm not going anywhere, I feel good with you, don't be crazy, look, we'll see each other, it's not forever, these memories always mildly jabbed her in the heart, but despite that she'd returned to him, because without them there would only be emptiness and pain is always better than emptiness.

Drago, however, decided for the bus. He just smiled at her timid suggestion, what about hitching like before? I'm not a student now and I can afford to take the bus, no, well I wasn't thinking of it like that, she began to blush but he caught her round the shoulders, my little Svetlana, you haven't changed at all, such a child, I'll never believe there's an Agatha and a husband, you must have made it up, come on, I'm only joking, the bus goes every twenty minutes.

She sat by the window, him opposite her, long minutes' silence, getting off, Smrekovica, the final phone call from the family, good night, my dear, it's lovely that you wanted to hear me again before sleeping, when you wake I'll be with you already, so night-night. A gravelly path that they walked down as far as the house between two highways, an unpleasant scrunching under her feet, Drago with his hands deep in his pockets, how glad I am, tonight we'll feast on prime cuts, Dad's preparing a genuine Serbian banquet for you.

The rusty gate creaked and they found themselves in the garden, the incessant clamour of the cars hurtling down the parallel highways that cut off the house from the rest of the world, the father in the little summer-house, heartily he squeezed her hand, welcome to our home, I've been asking Drago for ages when you were going to visit us again, rumour had it you'd got married in Geneva, and Špela in the doorway with a broad smile came down the steps, arms outspread, *živijo, Svetlana, kako sem srečna, da te vidim*.

They almost fought over her, Drago and Špela, each of them wanted to bring her through the house, to show all that had changed in five years, but the father stopped them, Look, children, where are you off to in such a hurry? First we'll eat, the meat's already cooked, lamb and pork, you liked it in the past, so I hope you will again today. Svetlana smiled, don't worry, *gospod*, certainly it'll be excellent, I can feel it already.

After supper sorrow flooded over her, and it was only with difficulty that she kept control. How could two evenings be identical? above all, at a distance of five years? Drago on her right, Špela at the head of the table with a half-litre bottle of mayonnaise and her father opposite her, contented chewing and picking out bones, here and there something *okusno*, *odlično* thrown in. From time to time she glanced at two pictures nailed to the wall, Tito, yes, Tito was still on the wall and beside him Drago's mother, of whom Svetlana knew nothing, just that she'd died of cancer six years ago, Svetlana had never had the courage to ask to know more.

She'd sooner have spent the whole evening drilling through Drago's features, disassembling him and packing all the parts together, because he ought to be hers, Geneva et cetera was only a stopgap, she still ought to have Drago, it was the realisation that came to her that evening when he was lying on a bench in the garden and she passed her hand over his cheek, Svetlana, when we had supper just now I had a feeling that you belonged to the family, as if you were my wife, what d'you say to that? – we'd live here in the house between two highways, after Dad's death we'd be by ourselves, Špela'd get married and move out, but it was impossible to repeat all that, she'd be looking at the whole family's faces, no, she couldn't thrust herself in among them a second time.

After supper she turned down Špela's invitation, this really wasn't a suitable time for Slovenian music, I'm tired already and in a quarter of an hour my bus will be going back to Ljubljana, the last one and I have to catch it, my husband would be worried if I didn't arrive, but Drago was already tugging her by the hand, impenetrable darkness in the garden, this is the way to my den, hold on to me tight so you don't fall, hollows and planks, mole-holes and stones. They skirted the house and entered from the other side, the cellar's mustiness and damp disappeared once they got to Drago's room, so here we are, *dobrodošli*, he added with a laugh.

Svetlana stayed standing in the middle of the room, looking around, while Drago prepared the bed for the night, the same pictures

hanging on the walls as were here five years ago, the music system on the floor and the three equalised stacks of CDs, wardrobe, armchair, everything fitted in, and she was able to dream with open eyes that no five years had passed, it was all just a fabrication and aberration and this room proved it, her and Drago, they were together and that's how it should always be, why else would he be preparing a bed for two people now, why would he be making apologies for not having two pillows (as if that mattered, when she could easily sleep just clinging to him), why else would he be offering her as nightwear the blue T-shirt which until that moment she'd believed was stowed away in her parents' house in Bratislava?

Both of them changed and crawled under the quilt, without embarrassment, naturally, Drago jumped out one more time and filled a glass of water which he put on the night table, sometimes I wake at night and I'm thirsty, I don't want to get out of bed again, it's too cold for that, even if it doesn't seem so, we're in a cellar, Svetlana smiled at him, in the dusk she could only vaguely distinguish his features, softly softly, we're together and that's all that counts.

Afterwards they made love, and when Drago had done his business Svetlana unexpectedly felt indulgent, I'm happy, words that sounded grotesque in the darkness, but Drago didn't even notice, after he'd thrown away the condom he fell asleep like a man put to death, *lahko noč*, sorry, I'm tired, we'll talk tomorrow, no problem, get yourself some sleep.

Now her moment had come, she could use her abiding insomnia to perceive his presence, the highways had gone quiet, just now and then the flash of the headlights, the feverish rush of cars, she could hear Špela in the kitchen singing ditties by Zoran Predin or Lovšin, or was it Kreslin? But after a while the song ended and Svetlana was able to perceive Drago's regular breathing, peaceful, deep, able to touch his warmed-up body, feel his sinewy shoulders and powerful back, she might have been contented, savouring his presence to the full, but she did not manage to, her throat seized up with misery, because she knew that at nine in the morning a train would be waiting for her at the *železniška postaja*, she'd board it and count the stops, Maribor, Graz, Marseilles, Turin, and then afterwards work in Geneva, husband, Agatha, boring family life, and the one thing she would retain from that night would be a painfully sharp remembrance that she could best call up by writing frenetically at 4 a.m. while everyone still slept, before she launched into her household

duties, making coffee, bringing it to her husband in bed, yes, it's morning now, Aggie, we must get up, have to go to school, so then, are we going to?

*Translated by John Minahane*





*Foto © Edi Matić*

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# *Enes Halilović*

Enes Halilović se je rodil leta 1977 v Novem Pazarju v Srbiji. Je pesnik, pripovednik, dramatik in novinar. Izdal je pesniške zbirke *Srednje slovo* (Drugo ime, 1995), *Bludni parip* (Sladostrastni konj, 2000), *Listovi na vodi* (Listje na vodi, 2007) in *Pesme iz bolesti i zdravlja* (Pesmi iz bolezni in zdravja, 2011), zbirko izbranih pesmi z naslovom *Lomača* (Kres, 2012), zbirki kratkih zgodb *Potomci odbijenih prosaca* (Potomci zavrnenjenih snubcev, 2004) in *Kapilarne pojave* (Kapilarni pojavi, 2006), gledališki igri *In vivo* (V živem, 2004) in *Kemet* (2010) ter roman *Ep o vodi* (2012). Dobitnik nagrad Branka Miljkovića in Đura Jakšića za književnost je bil odlikovan tudi z zlatim znakom Kulturno-prosvetne skupnosti Srbije. Njegove pesmi, kratke zgodbe in gledališke igre so bile objavljene v različnih zbirkah in antologijah in prevedene v številne tuje jezike.

Enes Halilović was born in 1977 in Novi Pazar in Serbia. He is a poet, prose writer, playwright and journalist. He has published the following collections of poetry: *Srednje slovo* (Middle Name, 1995), *Bludni parip* (Voluptuous Horse, 2000), *Listovi na vodi* (Leaves on Water, 2007), *Pesme iz bolesti i zdravlja* (Poems from Sickness and Health, 2011), and the collection of selected poetry *Lomača* (Bonfire, 2012). As well, he has published the short story collections *Potomci odbijenih prosaca* (Descendants of the Rejected Suitors, 2004) and *Kapilarne pojave* (Capillary Actions, 2006), the plays *In vivo* (Within the Living, 2004) and *Kemet* (2010), as well as the novel *Ep o vodi* (The Epic of Water, 2012). A recipient of the “Branko Miljković” and “Đura Jakšić” awards for literature, he has also been honoured with the “Golden Badge” of the Serbian Culture and Education Society. His poetry, short stories and plays have been published in various volumes and anthologies. His works have been translated into numerous foreign languages.

## ***Kad bi***

Kad bi zaista postojao  
Orfej,  
Da li bi čitao poeziju?

## ***Portret angažovanog pisca***

*Siniši Soćaninu*

Još se priča na grčkim trgovima,  
na palubama i pod Olimpom  
da je na stolovima, na posteljama, na poveljama  
viđao prašinu.

Kažiprstom je ostavljao riječi.  
Nekada:  
*očisti me.*

A nekada ime svoje.

Pisao je i nije znao da piše pjesnik u njemu.

Ljudi brisahu prašinu, tako i slova njegova imena,  
time dodirivahu smisao poezije  
i angažman.

Sakriven osta pjesnik.

I Homer je s prahom sjedinjen.

Traži se onaj ko čita.  
Skriva se onaj ko piše.

## *Upredena creva*

I tako,  
svakoga jutra,  
ustajući umorniji no što legoh,  
jurio sam za vestima, za ljudima,  
od neukih mišljenje tražio,  
od crnih istiskao belinu  
i provlačio se kroz pukotine diktatora  
i preskakao senke trudnih sujeta  
obilazeći, usput, glasove pijanih rulja  
koje marširaju ka boljem sutra.

I gde je krv pala stigoh da slikam,  
I u krateru zalazio sam da bih opisao bombe.  
Pa i fetuse tražio sam, iz bolnica ukradene,  
istraživao decu ostavljenu, plodove uzgrednih ljubavi,  
pa šare na prstu i DNK –  
sve radi istine koju traže lažljive oči ljudske.

Informacija na tržištu smešila se kao hleb na trpezi.  
Potpečeš je ponekad ili prepečeš za zube narodne.

I tako,  
svakoga jutra,  
pišući čak i na bolničkim posteljama,  
zakačen, proboden sondama i ispiran cevima,  
pa opet jureći  
po snegu i ledu, po suncu,  
za tamnom stranom Meseca,  
uvek timaren tabletama i sa zujanjem u ušima koje  
osta mi od pištaljki  
svih koji su pištali na ulicama da bi u kule  
ušli crnji od crnijih.

I svaku reč gledao sam kroz hleb i mleko,  
kao progonjena divljač obilazio mase da bih  
javio kako sve je trulo u državi Danskoj  
i ostajao uvek iza zavese i čekao ubod.  
Kroz zvonjavu telefona, kroz pobede i proslave poraza,

zadihan, javljao sam kako padaju bombe,  
srećanim glasom javljao sam kad neko probudi nadu,  
zabrinut kada manijak bode u polutami,  
a vlasti ga gone u tami.

I stigoh neke debele tomove da probudim  
i prašnjave istorije naroda davno trulih  
i da zanjiham neke strofe i redove  
u pauzi između ispuštanja i uzimanja daha,

uvek hitajući posle ovog i pre onog.

I da me pitaju sada kako si uspeo ti da čitaš i pišeš,  
i da objaviš, kako i kada,

samo bih slegao ramenima.

I mene to pitanje mori,  
jutrom i s večeri. Danas i uvek.

## **Priča**

Pita me Srđan Papić  
zašto poeziju pišem. I veli:

*Znaš šta mi priča Jelena Angelovska?  
Radila u nekoj biblioteci, zamenjivala neku trudnicu,  
kaže, za godinu dana niko nije tražio poeziju,  
čitaju ljudi romane, priče... e, kaže, samo jednom,  
u sumrak, prepala se Jelena, bila zima, duvao vetar strašan,  
čovjek ulazi, visok, nije zatvorio ni vrata za sobom,  
potpuno sluden, izgubljen u svemiru,  
ulazi on, van sebe, i pita strašnim glasom:  
imate li nešto od poezije...*

Znam, rekoh mu, ja sam to bio.

## *Nova Gvineja*

Narod Talumbi,  
koji danas živi u kamenom dobu,  
nema u jeziku reč *dobro*, nego kada je nešto dobro  
pesnicom se udare u glavu.

Naši živi preci davnašnji su dokaz  
da nam svako dobro udari u glavu.

\*

Talumbi nemaju u jeziku reč *bolest*  
a po ceo dan i celog života puše divlji duvan.

Teško njima ako ga pripitome.

\*

Talumbi kažu da je, nekada,  
rodonačelnik njihovog plemena  
znao i jezik zvezda, al se učutale one  
kad je pitao za sudbinu.

\*

Talumbi poštuju svet, zakone i točak njegov.  
Nikada vodu ne trune.

Na dete nikad ne viknu.

Na svetkovinama, noću i danju,  
igraju tiho, bez pesme i dlanova.

Jer noću  
Sunce spava.  
Jer danju  
zvezde love.

\*

Talumbi pričaju san onome koga sniju.

U neka jutra, gledao sam,  
prepričavaju snove ženama i deci,  
čak cveću i drveću, reci ili oblaku.

Jedan među njima sanjao je kako mu ljubim ženu  
i reče mi to.

U znak izvinjenja ponudih mu ogledalo,

a on se čudi:

*Šta će mi ovo? Ne mogu piti odavde!*

\*

Ah, kakvi su lovci ti Talumbi,

u jeziku njihovom  
reč *korak*  
nastala je od reči *tišina*.

\*

Narod Talumbi ima jezik  
koji se upravo zove  
talumbi.

Oni znaju da ubiju za jednu uvredu,  
za jednu reč.  
Dakle, kod njih jedan čovek vredi kao reč.

Kada prebroje glave,  
Talumbi vide da imaju više reči nego ljudi.

Oni znaju da jezik vredi više nego narod.

\*

Svi glagoli njihovog jezika  
statični su i ne menjaju ih perfekat, prezent ili futur.

Jedino reč *umirati* ima nastavak – duži od osnove.

Šta će im reč vilica?

To je *šuma zuba*.

Vagina je *šuma bez zuba*.

A sve važne reči tako su nedužne, kao igre.

Reč *rat* prevodimo kao *decanje* ili *gađanje decom*.

Reč *mir* kao *majkanje* ili *gađanje majki*.

\*

Kad žene Talumba rode blizance  
daju im ista imena.

Jednog pojede li džungla, da isti majci ostane.

*februar 2009*

## ***Ko bi***

Ko bi zares živel  
Orfej,  
Ali bi bral poezijo?

*Prevedel Venó Taufer*

## ***Portret angažiranega pesnika***

*Sinišu Soćaninu*

Še se pripoveduje v grških lokalih,  
na palubah in pod Olimpom,  
da je po mizah, na posteljah, na listinah  
opažal prah.

Včasih je puščal  
s kazalcem besede:  
*očisti me.*

Včasih pa svoje ime.

Pisal je in ni vedel, da piše v njem pesnik.

Ljudje so brisali prah, tudi črke njegovega imena,  
tako so se dotikali smisla poezije  
in angažiranosti.

Pesnik je ostal skrit.

In Homer je eno s prahom.

Iskan je tisti, ki bere.  
Skriva se tisti, ki piše.

*Prevedel Venó Taufer*

## *Zapredena čreva*

In tako sem,  
vsako jutro,  
utrujen bolj kot takrat, ko sem legel,  
drvel za novicami, za ljudmi,  
nevedne sem prosil za mnenje,  
iz črnih sem iztiskal belino  
in se vlekel skozi razpoke diktatorjev  
ter preskakoval sence nadutih nečimrnosti,  
se izogibal glasovom pijanih tolpa,  
ki marširajo proti boljšemu jutri.

In tam, kjer je bila kri, sem slikal,  
se spuščal v kraterje, da bi opisal bombe.  
Iskal sem fetuse, ukradene v bolnišnicah,  
se zanimal za zapuščene otroke, sadove površnih ljubezni,  
proge na prstih in DNK –  
samo zaradi resnice, po kateri hlepijo lažnive človeške oči.

Informacija na trgu se je nasmihala kot kruh na mizi.  
Včasih jo podpečeš, spet drugič prepečeš za narodove zobe.

In tako sem,  
vsako jutro,  
pisal celo na bolniških posteljah,  
pripet, preboden s sondami in izpiran s cevmi,  
nato spet hiteč  
po snegu in ledu, po soncu,  
za temno stranjo meseca,  
vedno pod tabletami in z zvenenjem v ušesih,  
ki mi je ostalo od piščalk  
tistih, ki so piskali na ulicah, nato pa  
so vstopili v graščine slabši od slabših.

In na vsako besedo sem gledal skozi kruh in mleko,  
kot preganjana divjad obiskoval množice in  
sporočal, da je vse gnilo v deželi Danski,  
ter ostajal vedno za zaveso in čakal na vbod.  
Med zvonjenjem telefona, med zmagami in praznovanjem porazov

sem, zasopel, sporočal, kako padajo bombe,  
z veselim glasom sporočal, ko je nekdo vzbudil upanje,  
zaskrbljen, ko manijak zabada v poltemi,  
a oblasti ga preganjajo v temi.

In prebudil sem neke debele zvezke  
in prašno zgodovino davno strohnelih narodov,  
in zanihal neke verze in vrstice  
v premoru med izdihom in vdihom,

vedno hiteč za tem in pred onim.

In če bi me zdaj vprašali, kako ti je uspelo, da bereš in pišeš  
in da objaviš, kako in kdaj,

bi samo skomignil z rameni.

Tudi mene to vprašanje muči,  
zjutraj in zvečer. Danes in vedno.

*Prevedla Dragana Bojanić Tijardović*

## **Zgodba**

Srdan Papić me vpraša,  
zakaj pišem poezijo. In pravi:

*Veš, kaj mi pravi Jelena Angelovska?  
Delala je v neki knjižnici, nadomeščala neko nosečnico,  
pravi, da ni v enem letu nihče vprašal po poeziji,  
ljudje berejo romane, zgodbe, ... no, pravi, samo enkrat,  
v polmraku, se je Jelena ustrašila, bila je zima, pihal je veter, strašen,  
vstopi človek, visok, še vrat ni zaprl za seboj,  
čisto nor, zgubljen v veselju,  
vstopi, ves iz sebe, in vpraša s strašnim glasom:  
imate kaj od poezije ...*

Vem, sem mu rekel, to sem bil jaz.

*Prevedla Dragana Bojanić Tijardović*

## *Nova Gvineja*

Ljudstvo Talumbi,  
ki danes živi v kameni dobi,  
nima v jeziku besede *dobro*, ko je kaj dobro,  
se s pestjo udarijo po glavi.

Naši živi daljni predniki so dokaz,  
da nam vse dobro udari v glavo.

\*

Talumbi nimajo v jeziku besede *bolezen*,  
čepprav ves dan in vse življenje kadijo divji tobak.

Hudo bo, če ga bodo udomačili.

\*

Talumbi pravijo, da je nekoč  
praoče njihovega plemena  
poznal tudi jezik zvezd, te pa so utihnile,  
ko jih je vprašal po usodi.

\*

Talumbi spoštujejo svet, zakone in njegovo kolo.  
Nikoli ne onesnažijo vode.

Nikoli ne zavpijejo na otroka.

Ob praznikih, ponoči in podnevi,  
plešejo tiho, brez pesmi in dlani.

Ker ponoči  
sonce spi.  
Ker podnevi  
zvezde lovijo.

\*

Talumbi povejo sanje tistemu, o komer sanjajo.

Ob nekih jutrih, sem gledal,  
obnavljajo sanje ženam in otrokom,  
celo cvetju in drevju, reki ali oblaku.

Nekdo od njih je sanjal, da poljubljam njegovo ženo,  
in mi to povedal.

V opravičilo sem mu ponudil ogledalo,

on pa se je čudil:

*Kaj naj s tem? Ne morem piti iz tega!*

\*

Oh, kakšni lovci so ti Talumbi,

v njihovem jeziku  
je beseda *korak*  
nastala iz besede *tišina*.

\*

Ljudstvo Talumbi ima jezik,  
katerega ime je ravno  
talumbi.

Pripravljeni so ubijati zaradi žalitve,  
zaradi ene besede.  
Pri njih torej človek velja toliko kot beseda.

Ko preštejejo glave,  
Talumbi ugotovijo, da imajo več besed kot ljudi.

Vedo, da jezik velja več kot ljudje.

\*

Vsi glagoli njihovega jezika  
so statični in jih ne spremenijo dovršnik, sedanjik ali prihodnjik.

Samo beseda *umirati* ima končnico – daljšo od osnove.

Kaj bi z besedo *čeljust*?

To je *gozd zob*.

Vagina je *gozd brez zob*.

Vse pomembne besede pa so tako nedolžne kot igre.

Besedo *vojna* prevedemo kot *otrokanje* ali *obmetavanje z otroki*.

Besedo *mir* kot *mamanje* ali *obmetavanje mam*.

\*

Ko žene Talumbov rodijo dvojčka,  
jima dajo enaki imeni.

Če enega pogoltne džungla, da enak ostane materi.

*februarja 2009*

*Prevedla Dragana Bojanić Tijardović*

## *If*

If there really were  
Orpheus,  
Would he read poetry?

## *A Portrait of the Engaged Writer*

*for Siniša Soćanin*

There's still talk in the Greek squares,  
on the decks and under Mount Olympus  
that he used to see dust on the tables, sheets,  
and charters.

With his forefinger he used to leave words.  
Sometimes:  
*clean me.*

And sometimes his own name.

He wrote and he didn't know that a poet in him is writing.

People cleaned the dust, so as the letters of his name,  
Thus touching the meaning of poetry  
and engagement.

Hidden remained the poet.

And Homer is merged with dust.

Wanted is the one who reads,  
Concealed is the one who writes.

---

## *Twisted Bowel*

And like that,  
 each morning,  
 getting up more tired than when I lay,  
 I've chased the news, people,  
 asked for opinion the unlearned,  
 from the black I pressed out the whiteness  
 and I squeezed myself through the cracks of dictators  
 and leapt over the shadows of impregnated conceits  
 walking around, on the way, the voices of drunken hordes  
 that march toward better tomorrow.

And where the blood was spilt I managed to make picture,  
 and into the craters I used to go down to depict bombs.  
 I even looked for the fetuses, stolen from hospitals,  
 investigated abandoned children, fruits of accidental love,  
 so as the patterns of lines on fingertips and DNA –  
 all that for the truth that lying human eyes are seeking.

Information on a market smiled as a bread on a table.  
 Sometimes you would underbake it and sometimes you would  
 overbake it for people's teeth.

And like that,  
 each morning,  
 writing even in hospital bed,  
 hooked, pierced with probes and clystered,  
 and running again  
 over a snow and ice, and in the sun,  
 after the dark side of the Moon,  
 always groomed with pills and with ringing in the ears I was  
 left with after whistles  
 of those that whistled on the streets so that  
 the worst of the worst would climb into castles.

And each word I used to watch through bread and milk,  
 as hunted quarry I've visited crowds so that I could  
 post that all is rotten in the state of Denmark  
 and I've always stayed behind the curtain waiting for a jab.

Through the ringing of the phones, through victories and  
celebrations of defeats,  
breathless, I used to post that bombs are falling,  
with cheerful voice I posted when someone arouse hope,  
concerned when maniac stabbed in semi-darkness,  
and the authorities pursued him in darkness.

And I've managed to wake up some heavy tomes  
and dusty histories of nations rotten long ago  
and to swing some stanzas and lines  
in the break between breathing in and breathing out

always running after this and before that.

And if someone would ask me how I managed to read and write  
and to publish, how and when,

I would just shrug my shoulders.

That question bothers me too,  
in the morning and in the evening. Today and forever.

## ***A Story***

Srdjan Papic asked me  
why do I write poetry. And he said:

*Do you know what Jelena Angelovska told me?  
She worked in some library, as a substitute for some pregnant woman,  
she said, for a year nobody asked for poetry,  
people are reading novels, stories... and, she said, only once,  
in the twilight, Jelena was scared, it was winter, a furious wind was blowing,  
a man came in, tall, he didn't even closed the door after him,  
bewildered, completely lost,  
he comes in, out of himself, and asks in a dire voice:  
do you have poetry...*

I know, I told him, it was me.

## *New Guinea*

Tribe Toulambi  
that lives in the Stone Age today,  
has no word for good in its language but when something is good  
they hit themselves in the head.

Our living ancestors are the proof  
that each good hits us in the head.

\*

Tribe Toulambi doesn't have word for illness in its language  
even though they smoke wild tobacco for a whole day all their lives.

It won't be good for them to tame it.

\*

Tribe Toulambi says that, long ago,  
the founder of their tribe  
knew the language of the stars  
but the stars went quiet  
when he asked them about his destiny.

\*

Tribe Toulambi respects the world, its laws and its wheel.  
They never dirty the water.

They never yelled at a child.

During their feasts, either by night or day,  
they dance quietly, without song or clapping of hands.

Because during the night  
The Sun sleeps  
And during the day  
the stars hunt.

\*

Tribe Toulambi tells their dream to those whom they dreamt about.

On some mornings, I've watched them,  
they told their dreams to their wives and children,  
even to flowers and trees, river or cloud.

One of them dreamt me kissing his wife  
and told me that.

As an act of apology I offered him the mirror,

and he wondered:

*Why would I need this/I cant drink from this!*

\*

Oh, what hunters are the Toulambi,

in their language the  
word *step*  
originated from the word *silence*.

\*

Tribe Toulambi has language  
which is literally called  
Toulambi.

They can kill for one insult,  
for one word.  
so, a man's worth is a word to them.

When they count their heads,  
Toulambi see that they have more words than people.

They know that language is worth more than people.

\*

All verbs of their language  
are static and are not changed in perfect, present or future tense.

Only the word *dying* has a suffix longer than a word stem.

Why would they need the word *jaw*?

It's a *forest of teeth*.

Vagina is a *forest without teeth*.

And all the important words are so innocent, like *games*.

The word *war* we translate - *shooting with children*.

The word *peace* - *shooting with mothers*.

\*

When women Toulambi give birth to twins  
they give them the same name.

If one's got eaten by the jungle, the same stays with his mother.

*February, 2009*

*Translated by Danijela Jovanović*



*Foto © Yannis Vanidis*

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# *Elsa Korneti*

Elsa Korneti se je rodila leta 1969 v Münchnu v Nemčiji, odrasčala pa je v Grčiji. Po končanem študiju ekonomije v Trieru in Solunu se je posvetila novinarstvu. Je pesnica, esejistka in prevajalka del Alde Merini iz italijanščine, Homera Aridjisa iz španščine, Herte Müller, Petra Handkeja, Luise Glück in Jochena Kelterja iz nemščine ter Margaret Atwood in Anne Sexton iz angleščine. Izdala je sedem zbirk pesmi in esejev. Dve njeni pesniški zbirki, *Ένα μπουκέτο ψαροκόκαλα* (Šopek iz ribjih kosti, 2009) in *Κονσέρβα μαργαριτάρι* (Pločevinasti biser, 2011), sta bili nominirani za grško državno nagrado za poezijo. Prejela je nagrado »Ta Nea« za najboljšo grško kratko zgodbo leta in grško državno nagrado »Georgios Karter« za neobjavljeno zbirko poezije z naslovom *Κανονικοί άνθρωποι με λοφίο και μια παρδαλή ουρά* (Normalni ljudje s perjanico in progastim repom). Njeni literarni prispevki in prevodi so bili objavljeni v številnih znanih grških literarnih publikacijah, pesmi in kratke zgodbe pa prevedene v več jezikov in objavljene v različnih tujih antologijah in revijah.

Elsa Korneti was born in 1969 in Munich, Germany, and raised in Greece. She chose to work as a journalist after studying Economics in Trier and Thessaloniki. She is a poet, essayist and translator into Greek of works by Alda Merini from Italian, Homero Aridjis from Spanish, Herta Müller, Peter Handke, Luise Glück and Jochen Kelter from German, and Margaret Atwood and Anne Sexton from English. She has published seven books of poetry and essays altogether. Two of her poetry collections, *Ένα μπουκέτο ψαροκόκαλα* (A Bouquet of Fish Bones, 2009) and *Κονσέρβα μαργαριτάρι* (The Tin Pearl, 2011), were shortlisted for the Greek National Poetry Prize. She was awarded with the "Ta Nea" Prize for the best Greek short story of the year and the Greek national prize for an unpublished book of poetry (Georgios Karter Award) titled *Κανονικοί άνθρωποι με λοφίο και μια παρδαλή ουρά* (Normal People with a Plume and a Brindled Tail). Her literary contributions and translations have appeared in numerous well-known Greek literary magazines. Her poetry and short stories have been translated into several languages and featured in various foreign anthologies and magazines.

1.

### Συμπάσχοντας με την ανθρωπότητα

Στέκομαι έκπληκτος  
Και με κοιτώ  
Έγινα αυτό που πάντα ονειρευόμουν

Οδεύοντας αργά και σταθερά  
Υπηρετώ πειθήνια την τάξη  
Με πείσμα ακολουθώ τον ίδιο δρόμο  
Στέκομαι ασάλευτος όπου με ακουμπήσουν  
Οι αρθρώσεις μου δύσκαμπτες  
Πέφτοντας δυσκολεύομαι να σηκωθώ  
Ένα κλειδί μου τρυπά επίμονα την πλάτη  
Δεν διαμαρτύρομαι ποτέ  
Αδιαμαρτύρητα όλα τα υπομένω  
Με αισθήματα μεταλλικά  
Με γλώσσα ανύπαρκτη  
Αφήνομαι στο έλεος  
Όσων με διαλύουν Όσων με σπάνε  
Όσων με κλωτσάνε Όσων με πετάνε  
Όμως εμένα μου αρκεί  
Μόνο για πάντα να με θυμούνται

Γ' αυτό που πάντα ονειρευόμουν  
Γ' αυτό που έγινα  
Ένα Κουρδιστό Ανθρωπάκι

2.

Είμαι

Ένας άνθρωπος τυχερός  
 Ζω από την επικερδή διαχείριση ενστίκτου  
 Και την επιτυχημένη εξάσκηση της  
 Αισθηματικής αληθείας

Είσαι

Ένας άνθρωπος ευτυχισμένος  
 Όταν χορεύεις εξαφανίζεσαι  
 Και τότε  
 Τ' όνειρό σου  
 Κυνηγάει  
 Τη σκιά του

Είναι

Ένας άνθρωπος κανονικός  
 Ο Θεός του έδωσε  
 Ένα κεφάλι υπολογιστή  
 Ένα σώμα γραφείο  
 Μια καρδιά χρηματοκιβώτιο

3.

Αν κάποιος είναι σημαντικός  
 Δεν τον αφήνεις να φύγει  
 Τον φυτεύεις σε μια γλάστρα  
 Τον ποτίζεις  
 Τον βάζεις στο φως  
 Τον ονομάζεις  
 Άνθρωπο Εσωτερικού Χώρου

Κάποτε μια μύγα θα τον φτύσει  
 Κάποτε ένα κατοικίδιο θα τον μασήσει  
 Κάποτε ένα παιδάκι θα τον μαδήσει  
 Κάποτε η αδιαφορία θα τον μαράνει

4.

**Destroy Van Gogh**

Είμαι μόλις 33 και όμως καταρρέω  
 Πόσο διαρκεί ακόμα η αποδόμηση;  
 Όσο εγώ διαλύομαι  
 Τα μυρμήγκια αδειάζουν το μυαλό μου  
 Θαυμάστε με λοιπόν ως πτώμα  
 Ιδανική νεκρή φύση  
 Κρανίο ντυμένο με φύκια  
 Θα του βάλω ένα τσιγάρο να καπνίζει  
 Αν ήμουν ένα σώμα ακέφαλο;  
 Ίσως γλίτωνα το φρενοκομείο  
 Τι φταίει; Το αφέντι; Οι πόρνες;  
 Όλες οι σκοτεινές γυναίκες της ζωής μου  
 Φοράνε μαύρα  
 Βγες από την παραίσθηση - Μπες στην πραγματικότητα  
 Δεν γίνεται – Παντρεύτηκα την πράσινη νεράιδα  
 Κάθε βράδυ γίνεται διάβολος κι έπειτα φίδι –  
 Το φίδι δαγκώνει την ουρά του – γίνεται κόλπος γυναίκας  
 Με πνίγει στο υγρό κανάλι  
 Κατοικώ στο αγαπημένο τρίγωνο  
 Ανάμεσα σε τρεις γραμμές  
 Ο διάβολος σε προστάζει;  
 Με εμπνέει  
 Σε σκοτώνει  
 Τουλάχιστον ας διασώσουμε ό,τι απέμεινε μεταξύ μας  
 Η αγάπη οφείλει να είναι αθόρυβη  
 Εγώ όμως δεν σε ξέρω για να σε αγαπήσω  
 Ν' αλλάξεις - Συγκροτήσου  
 Λατρεύω την ακαταστασία  
 Είσαι καταδικασμένος  
 Π α τ έ ρ α λυπάμαι  
 Τώρα πια ξέρω  
 Έτσι γεννήθηκα  
 Ζω για να ζωγραφίζω την τελειότητα με τρέλα  
 Την τρέλα με τελειότητα  
 Κουράστηκα – Θέλω να κουρνιασώ στην πιο ευρύχωρη  
 Φωλιά πουλιού της συλλογής μου – η νάρκη είναι ωραία λέξη-  
 Υπόσχομαι να μην απολογηθώ ξανά για την αναπηρία μου

5.

**Ο ομφαλός της Εύας**

Θυμάσαι τα λόγια σου επί σκηνής;  
 Λυπάμαι όμως ποτέ δεν είχα ταλέντο στην αποστήθιση  
 Τότε ας ξεκινήσουμε  
 Μ' ένα συναίσθημα κυκλικό και όχι γραμμικό  
 Μ' ένα τριαντάφυλλο άσχημο και ακανόνιστο

Θα υπέμενα κάθε ταπείνωση  
 για να γίνω μέρος  
 αυτού του ονείρου.  
 Όμως, τι κρίμα!  
 Δεν ξέρω να κρατάω πινέλο

Τα όνειρα! Δεν μπορώ να τα αγγίξω  
 Όταν μόνο με την αφή αυτοκτονούν  
 Υπόσχομαι όμως να σεβαστώ τις λέξεις  
 Κυρίως αυτές που θάβουν απουσίες

Μου έλεγες:  
*Εξαρτάται  
 αν κοιμάσαι  
 για να ξεχάσεις  
 ή για να θυμηθείς*

Ενώνοντας όλες τις ευθείες συνδέσεις  
 Τυχαίων γεγονότων κατέληξα να κατοικώ  
 σε μίαν αποικία μικροβίων

Γαλάζιο νούφαρο  
 φύτρωσε στη στίξη  
 του ερωτηματικού  
 όταν αυτό τρύπησε  
 το κέντρο της κοιλιάς μου

Το μυαλό μου είναι ένα δωμάτιο με κήπο  
Καθισμένη στο κέντρο του η Εύα  
Διπλώνει και ξεδιπλώνει τον ομφαλό της  
Πλέκοντας μια πλεξίδα κυλιόμενου ολέθρου  
Μια πομπή από καβούρια  
Πιασμένα απ' τις δαγκάνες τους σφιχτά  
Για να μη διακρίνεις αν αλληλοβοηθούνται  
Η αλληλοτρώνονται

Τώρα πια ο λώρος κρέμεται αβοήθητος  
Κόκκινος συναγεμός που αναβοςβήνει  
Την ακούς να φωνάζει:  
*Παρακαλώ μπορεί κάποιος να ράψει το κουμπί μου;*

1.

**Sočutje do človeštva**

Stojim presenečen  
in se opazujem  
postal sem to kar sem si od nekdanj želel

Stopam počasi in zanesljivo  
ubogljivo služim redu  
trmasto hodim po ravni poti  
negibno obstanem kamor me prislonijo  
moji sklepi so okosteneli  
če padem se težka poberem  
neki ključ mi vztrajno vrta v hrbet  
nikoli se ne pritožujem  
potrpežljivo prenašam vse to  
s kovinskimi čustvi  
z neobstoječim jezikom  
se prepuščam na milost in nemilost  
vsem ki me razstavljajo vsem ki me razbijajo  
vsem ki me brcajo vsem ki me puščajo v nemar  
toda meni zadošča že to  
samo to da se me bodo večno spominjali

Zato sem od nekdanj sanjal o tem  
zato sem postal  
možic na vzmet

2.

Sem  
srečen človek  
živim od dobičkonosne uporabe nagonov  
in od uspešnega urjenja  
čustvenega prostaštva

Si  
srečen človek  
medtem ko plešeš se razblinjaš  
in takrat  
tvoje sanje  
preganjajo  
lastno senco

Je  
srečen človek  
Bog mu je dal  
glavo-računalnik  
telo-pisarno  
srce-blagajno

3.

Če je kdo pomemben  
mu ne dovoliš oditi  
posadiš ga v cvetlični lonec  
zalivaš ga  
postaviš ga na svetlo mesto  
imenuješ ga  
Človek zaprtega prostora

Nekoč bo nanj pljunila kakšna muha  
nekoč ga bo pohrustala kakšna domača žival  
nekoč mu bo kak otrok potrgal vse liste  
nekoč ga bo poparila ravnodušnost

4.

**Destroy Van Gogh**

Imam jih šele triintrideset in vendar lezem vase  
 koliko časa bo še trajalo to razgrajevanje  
 medtem ko jaz razpadam  
 mravlje praznijo mojo lobanjo  
 občudujte me torej kot telo  
 kot idealno tihožitje  
 kot lobanjo obraslo z algami  
 vanjo bom vtaknil cigareto da bo lahko kadila  
 če bi bil telo brez glave  
 bi se morda izognil norišnici  
 kdo je tega kriv? absint? kurbe?  
 vse mračne ženske mojega življenja  
 nosijo črnino  
 izstopi iz blodenj – vstopi v resničnost  
 to je nemogoče – poročil sem se z zeleno vilo  
 vsako noč se spremeni v hudiča in nato še v kačo –  
 kača grize svoj lastni rep – spreminja se v žensko nožnico  
 utaplja me v svojem vlažnem rovu  
 stanujem v ljubezenskem trikotniku  
 med tremi črtami  
 te mar hudič štiti?  
 navdihuje me  
 ubija te  
 poskušajva rešiti vsaj to, kar je ostalo med nama  
 ljubezen mora biti neslišna  
 toda jaz te ne poznam dovolj, da bi te lahko ljubil  
 spremeni se – sestavi se  
 obožujem nered  
 obsojen si  
 o č e obžalujem  
 zdaj že vem  
 takšen sem se rodil  
 živim zato, da slikam popolnost s pomočjo norosti  
 norost s pomočjo popolnosti  
 utrudil sem se – rad bi se zatekel v najudobnejše  
 ptičje gnezdo iz svoje zbirke – otrplost je lepa beseda –  
 obljubljam da se ne bom več opravičeval zaradi svoje  
 pohabljenosti

5.

## Evin popek

Se spominjaš svojih besed, izrečenih na odru  
    žal mi je toda nikoli se nisem mogla pohvaliti z učenjem na pamet  
torej začniva  
s kakšnim cikličnim čustvom in ne z linearnim  
s kakšno neugledno in nesomerno vrtnico

Prenesla bi vsakršno ponižanje  
    samo da bi postala del  
        teh sanj  
    toda: kakšna škoda!  
saj ne znam držati v rokah čopiča

Sanje! ne morem se jih dotakniti  
že sam moj dotik bi povzročil njihov samomor  
toda obljubljam da bom spoštoval besede  
zlasti tiste ki bodo pokopale odsotnost

Govoril si mi:  
*vse je odvisno od tega*  
*ali spiš zato*  
*da bi pozabila*  
*ali zato da bi se spomnila*

Združil sem vse neposredne povezave  
naključnih dogodkov in se nazadnje naselil  
v koloniji mikrobov

Sinji lokvanj  
je pognal med postavljanjem  
    vprašaja  
ko je le-ta prebodel  
središče mojega trebuha

Moji možgani so soba z vrtom  
sredi njega sedi Eva  
ki upogiba in prepogiba svoj popek  
in medtem spleta kito iz valečih se ruševin  
sprevod rakov  
tesno sprijetih s kleščami  
tako da ne moreš vedeti ali drug drugemu pomagajo  
ali drug drugega žrejo

popkavnica zdaj že nemočno opleta  
rdeča alarmna lučka utripa  
ona pa sliši jo kako vpije:  
*mi lahko kdo prosim prišije gumb?*

*Prevedla Klarisa Jovanović*

1.

### **Bearing Humanity's Pain**

I stand amazed  
And look at me  
Turned into what I always dreamed of

Slow and steady of step  
Faithful servant of law and order  
Dogged follower of the straight and narrow  
I freeze into my assigned position  
Rusty of joint  
I struggle to pick myself up when I fall  
A key bores obstinately into my back  
Never one to complain  
I endure all without a word  
Steely of sensibility  
Dead of tongue  
I throw myself on the mercy  
Of those who scourge me, those who break me  
Those who beat me, those who reject me  
Just this, let it suffice me  
To be remembered now and forever

For that which I always dreamed of  
For that which I have become  
A little Wind-up Man

*Translated by Patricia Barbeito*

2.

I am  
A fortunate man  
I live off the profitable management of impulses  
And a successful practice  
Of emotional thuggery.

You are  
A happy man  
When you dance, you vanish into thin air  
And then your dream  
Chases its own shadow

He is  
A regular man  
God gave him  
A computer for a head  
An office for a body  
A safe box of a heart

*Translated by Patricia Barbeito*

3.

If a person means something to you  
You do not allow him to leave  
You plant him in a flowerpot  
You water him  
You put him in the light  
You name him  
An Indoor Man

At times a fly  
Will spit on him  
At times a house pet will nibble on him  
At times a child will pluck him  
At times indifference will wither him.

*Translated by Patricia Barbeito*

4.

**Destroy Van Gogh**

I'm just 33 yet breaking down  
How long does the deconstruction last?  
While I'm falling apart  
The ants are emptying my mind  
Marvel at me as a corpse then  
An ideal *nature morte*  
Skull clad in seaweed  
I'll give it a cigarette to smoke  
If I were a headless body?  
Perhaps I'd escape the asylum  
What's to blame? Absinth? Whores?  
All the dark women in my life  
Wear black  
Come out of illusion – Get into reality  
Impossible – I married the green fairy  
Every night she becomes a demon and then a snake –  
The snake bites its tail – becomes a woman's vagina  
It drowns me in the wet channel  
I live in the beloved triangle  
Between three lines  
Does the demon command you?  
It inspires me  
It kills you  
At least let's save what still exists between us  
Love should be noiseless  
But I don't know you in order to love you  
Change yourself – Get yourself together  
I adore untidiness  
You're doomed  
F a t h e r I'm sorry  
Now I know  
That's how I was born  
I live to paint perfection with madness  
Madness with perfection  
I'm tired – I want to snuggle in the roomiest  
Bird's nest in my collection – torpor is a nice word –  
I promise never to defend my disability again

*Translated by David Connolly*

5.

**Eve's Navel**

Do you remember your words on stage?

Sorry but memorizing was never one of my talents

Let's begin then

With a circular not linear sentiment

With a blemished and misshapen rose

I'd undergo any humiliation  
to be part  
of this dream.

Yet, what a shame!

I can't hold a paintbrush

Dreams! I can't touch them

When simply at the touch they commit suicide

But I promise to respect the words

Especially those that bury absences

You said to me:

*It depends  
whether you sleep  
to forget  
or to remember*

Joining all the direct connections

Between chance events I ended up living in

a colony of microbes

A blue water-lily  
sprouted in the dot  
of the question mark  
when it pierced  
the middle of my belly

My mind is a room with a garden  
Sitting in its centre is Eve  
She rolls and unrolls her navel  
Weaving a braid of rolling ruin  
A procession of crabs  
Holding tightly by their claws  
So you can't tell if they're helping  
Or devouring each other

Now the cord is hanging helpless  
A red alert that flashes  
You hear her calling:  
*Can someone please sew my button?*

*Translated by David Connolly*





*Foto © Marc Raidpere*

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# Asko Künnap

Asko Künnap se je rodil leta 1971 v Tartuju v Estoniji. Diplomiral je iz industrijskega in grafičnega oblikovanja na estonski Akademiji za umetnost, na Akademiji za umetnost v Oslu pa je študiral notranji dizajn. Zase pravi, da je sinteza med pisateljem, umetnikom in oglaševalcem. Vodi tudi manjšo založbo, oblikuje knjižne platnice in izumlja družabne igre. Za svoj pesniški prvenec v obliki tipografskega zvezka *Ja sisalikud vastasid* (In kuščarji so odgovorili) je leta 2003 prejel estonsko državno nagrado za književnost. Med njegova dela sodijo še: pesniški zbirki *Kõige ilusam soda* (Najlepša vojna, 2004) in *Mardikate määraja* (Vodnik po svetu hroščev, 2011), zbirki poezije in grafične umetnosti *Kokkusattumuste kaitseks* (V bran naključjem, 2000) in *Su ööd on loetud* (Tvoje noči so štete, 2008) ter zbirka treh kratkih zgodb in grafičnih del z naslovom *Pimeduse Vastu* (Proti temi, 1999). Njegove pesmi so prevedene v 12 evropskih jezikov in objavljene v pesniških antologijah v Veliki Britaniji in ZDA.

Asko Künnap was born in 1971 in Tartu, Estonia. He graduated from the Estonian Academy of Arts as an industrial and graphic designer and has studied interior design at the Oslo Academy of Art. He refers to himself as a living synthesis between a writer, artist and an adman. In addition he runs a micro publishing house, designs covers for books and records and invents board games. For his first book of poetry, *Ja sisalikud vastasid* (And the Lizards Replied), in the form of a typographic handbook, he received in 2003 the National Estonian literature award. His other works include the collections of poetry *Kõige ilusam soda* (The Most Beautiful War, 2004) and *Mardikate määraja* (A Field Guide to Beetles, 2011), the collections of poetry and graphic art *Kokkusattumuste kaitseks* (In Defense of Coincidences, 2000) and *Su ööd on loetud* (Your Nights Are Numbered, 2008), as well as a collection of three short stories and graphic art titled *Pimeduse Vastu* (*Against the Darkness*, 1999). His poems have been translated into 12 European languages and published in poetry anthologies across the UK and the USA.

## *Säälpool jõge*

Mina pole ju käinud  
säälpool Jõgede Jõge,  
kus malts on kannikesed,  
nõges on roos.

Ja kus suits meierei  
ja krematooriumi korstnaist  
moodustab taevas  
kaks põimunud südant.

Mina pole ju käinud  
säälpool Jõge.

## *Eebenipimedusse!*

Vihmast kõlisevas kohvikus  
 Ljubljana kaldapealsel,  
 kurbade plekk-lohede taustal,  
 kahelpool märga lauda,  
 üle vaarikatee ja konjaki,  
 mina ja Unesnõiduja,  
 vihmast pekslevas kohvikus,  
 suus muinasjutt ajast,  
 mil lohede soomused  
 olid veel pehmed kui vein.  
 Ja Unesnõiduja kõneleb:  
 isa töötoas talveöösiti,  
 kui kell tolmu ja pimedust  
 löikas turbaks hiirtele,  
 hargnes üks ristmik -  
 neli ust oli neljas seinas,  
 neli koonduvat koridori.  
 Sina seisis põlvini vaibas,  
 õhk koosnes hüüumärkidest!  
 Läinuks vaid otse sa,  
 otse edasi, silm veel kus  
 luuderohtu ja monsteraid  
 aimas, aga ei seletanud.  
 Läinuks vaid otse, otse sa,  
 üksi eebenipimedusse!

Mina ja Unesnõiduja,  
 mantlid ikka raskemad veest,  
 vihmast kõlisevas kohvikus  
 Ljubljana kaldapealsel.

## ***Öö tõttab ütleva***

Öö tõttab ütleva:  
Maanteid keritakse kokku  
ja tuul puhub kääbastes  
põrmust puhtaks te luid.

Öö tõttab ütleva:  
Muld on kergeks jäänud  
ja miski ei kaalu enam,  
ei leping, ei mahlane krunt.

Öö tõttab ütleva:  
Hoidke, millest hoida on  
keset seda kaalutust —  
kasvõi teineteise käest.

Öö tõttab ütleva:  
Ostke veel, mida oskate,  
sest siis, kui saabun mina,  
on kingiks ja tasuta kõik.

## *Sellel kõige viimasel ringil*

Aga öeldud on,  
 (oli see nüüd aegade raamatus  
 või olin see tõesti mina ise),  
 aga öeldud on:  
 üksainus öö, üksainus elu,  
 üksainus armastus.  
 Ja nii kuni järgmise korrani.

Läbi šrapnellisaju  
 ja igavate verandaõhtute,  
 klubiööde järelmaitse,  
 mööda rohtunud rada  
 öökülma sepikotta,  
 nõobivalaja pannile,  
 kus deavuu ja sevüplee,  
 kus kõikevabastav töö,  
 vastava vihjega raudväraval.

Jah, läbi šrapnellisaju  
 kuni viimase ringini välja,  
 seal kõige lõpumas lõpus,  
 ausas laborivalguses,  
 kus seatud valmis tühja saali:  
 üks laud, kaks tooli,  
 üks vaade aknast mägedele.  
 Üks küsib, teine vastab.  
 Ja vandekohus vaatab  
 läbi pleksiklaasist lae.  
 Ja läänetaevas, näe,  
 on täis juba lahkuvaid laevu.

Just tolles tühjas saalis,  
 seal ja siis sa vasta nagu õpetasin:  
 üksainus öö, üksainus elu,  
 üksainus armastus.  
 Jah, ka sellel kõige viimasel ringil.

## *Na drugi strani reke*

Še nikoli nisem bil  
na drugi strani Reke Rek,  
kjer je kislica vijolica  
in so koprive vrtnice.

Kjer se iz dimnikov  
mlekarn in krematorijev  
dviguje dim, ki na nebu  
oblikuje dve prepleteni senci.

Še nikoli nisem bil  
na drugi strani Reke.

## *V ebenovinasto temo!*

V kavarni na ljubljanskem nabrežju  
 med škrebljanjem dežja,  
 z žalostnimi zmaji iz pločevine v ozadju,  
 na obeh straneh mokre mize  
 nad čajem iz malin in konjakom  
 midva z Zaklinjalcem sanj  
 v kavarni, ki jo biča dež,  
 usta polna časov iz pripovedk,  
 ko so bile luske zmajev  
 še vedno mehke kot vino.  
 Zaklinjalec sanj spregovori:  
 v očetovi delavnici ob zimskih nočeh,  
 ko je ura rezala prah  
 in temo v mišjo zemljo,  
 se je razcepilo križišče –  
 štiri vrata na štirih stenah,  
 štirje stekajoči se hodniki.  
 Ti si stal do kolen v preprogi,  
 zrak je bil gost od klicajev!  
 Ko bi šel vsaj naravnost,  
 naravnost naprej, bi oči še  
 slutile bršljan in monstere,  
 a jih ne bi razločile.  
 Ko bi šel vsaj naravnost naprej,  
 sam v ebenovinasto temo!

Midva z Zaklinjalcem sanj,  
 najina plašča še vedno težka od vode,  
 v kavarni na ljubljanskem nabrežju  
 med škrebljanjem dežja.

## *Noč hiti povedati*

Noč hiti povedati:  
ceste se zviijejo na kup  
in veter v gomilah  
spiha prah z vaših kosti.

Noč hiti povedati:  
prst je postala lahka,  
nič več nima teže –  
ne pogodba ne bujna trata.

Noč hiti povedati:  
primite se, česar se sredi  
te breztežnosti sploh lahko –  
pa čeprav le drug drugega za roko.

Noč hiti povedati:  
še naprej kupujte, kar lahko,  
ker ko pridem jaz,  
se bo vse delilo zastonj.

## *V zadnjem krogu*

In zapisano je  
 (pa naj bo v Svetem pismu  
 ali pa sem res zapisal jaz),  
 zapisano je:  
 le ena noč, le eno življenje,  
 le ena ljubezen.  
 In tako naprej do naslednjič.

Skozi točo šrapnela  
 in dolgočasne večere na verandi,  
 s priokusom po nočeh v klubih,  
 po zaraščeni poti  
 do kovačnice, hladne kot noč,  
 do gumbarjeve ponve  
 z dežavu in silvuple,  
 z osvobajajočim delom in  
 z ujemajočim napisom na železnih vratih.

Ja, skozi točo šrapnela  
 vse do zadnjega kroga  
 in tam, čisto na koncu,  
 je v močni laboratorijski svetlobi  
 pripravljena prazna dvorana:  
 ena miza, dva stola,  
 en razgled skozi okno na hribe.  
 Prvi sprašuje, drugi odgovarja.  
 Porota opazuje skozi strop  
 iz pleksi stekla.  
 Ali vidiš, zahodno nebo  
 je polno ladij, ki so že izplule.

Prav v tisti prazni dvorani  
 na licu mesta odgovarjaš, kot sem te učil:  
 le ena noč, le eno življenje,  
 le ena ljubezen.  
 Ja, tudi v zadnjem krogu.

## *That Side of the River*

I've never been that side  
of the River of Rivers  
where dock leaves are violets,  
and nettles are roses.

And where smoke from dairy  
and crematorium chimneys  
shapes in the sky  
two hearts entwined.

I have never been  
that side of the River.

---

## *Into the Ebony Darkness*

In a rain-rattling café  
on the Ljubljana embankment,  
with a backdrop of sad tin dragons,  
on either side of a wet table,  
over cognac and raspberry tea,  
me and the Bewitcher of Dreams,  
In the rain-lashed café  
our mouths filled with folktale  
days when dragon scales  
were still soft as wine.  
The Bewitcher of Dreams speaks:  
in my father's winter-night workshop  
when the hour sliced dust and dark  
into turf for the mice,  
a crossroads fanned out  
four doors in four walls,  
four converging corridors.  
You stood knee-deep in carpet,  
inhaling exclamation marks!  
If only you had gone straight  
straight on, your eye trained  
on ivy and monstera plants  
but not making them out.  
If only you'd gone straight, straight on,  
alone into the ebony darkness.

Me and the Bewitcher of Dreams,  
our coats still heavy with water,  
in the rain-rattling café  
on the Ljubljana embankment.

## *The Night Is Quick to Say*

The night is quick to say:  
The roads are all rolled up  
and the wind in the barrows  
whips the dust off your bones.

The night is quick to say:  
The soil has grown light  
nothing now carries weight  
no contract, no lush land.

The night is quick to say:  
Hold onto what you can  
amid this weightlessness  
even if only another hand.

The night is quick to say:  
Keep buying what you can  
for when I get there  
all will be given out free.

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*In the Very Last Circle*

And as it is said,  
(was it in the Good Book  
or was it really me),  
and as it is said:  
a single night, a single life,  
a single love.  
And so on until the next time.

Through a shower of shrapnel,  
and dull veranda evenings,  
an after-taste of club nights  
along an overgrown path  
to a night-cold blacksmith's  
to a button-moulder's pan  
to the all-liberating work  
with matching quote at the gate.

Yes, through a shower of shrapnel  
as far as the last circle  
there right at the very end  
in real laboratory light,  
an empty hall is laid out:  
one table, two chairs,  
one view of the mountains.  
One asks, the other answers.  
And the jury observes  
through a plexiglass ceiling.  
And the western sky, do you see,  
is full of already departing ships.

Right there in that empty hall,  
on the spot, you answer as I taught you:  
a single night, a single life,  
a single love.  
Yes, even in the very last circle.

*Translated by Miriam Mcilfatrick*



*Foto © Zsófia Raffay*

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# János Lackfi

János Lackfi se je rodil leta 1971 v Budimpešti na Madžarskem. Je pisatelj, pesnik in prevajalec: avtor osmih pesniških zbirk, dveh novel, romana, zbirke kratke proze, treh zbirk esejev, prevedel pa je tudi več kot dvajset književnih del. Izdal je tudi 15 knjig za otroke, od katerih sta bili dve nagrajeni z madžarsko nagrado za najboljšo otroško knjigo leta. Med letoma 1996 in 2003 je poučeval francosko književnost, svetovno književnost in kreativno pisanje na Katoliški univerzi Pétra Pázmányja. V letih 1996 in 1997 je bil sekretar madžarskega centra PEN, med letoma 2003 in 2011 pa član upravnega odbora Društva madžarskih književnih prevajalcev. Njegova dela so prevedena v 15 jezikov. Njegova zbirka humorističnih esejev o identiteti z naslovom *Milyenek a magyarok?* (Homo Hungaricus, 2012) je bila prodana v nakladi 16.000 izvodov. Za zasluge na področju madžarskega kulturnega življenja je bil leta 2013 odlikovan z nagrado »Prima Primissima«. Za svoje pesniške zbirke je prejel nagrade Tiborja Déryja, Gyula Illyésa in Attila Józsefa. Z ženo in petimi otroki živi v Zsámbéku.

János Lackfi was born in 1971 in Budapest, Hungary. He is a writer, poet and literary translator who has authored eight volumes of poetry, two novellas, a novel, a collection of short stories, three volumes of essays, and who has translated over twenty books. He has also published fifteen books for children, two of which received the Hungarian Children's Book of the Year award. He taught French literature, world literature, and creative writing at the Péter Pázmány Catholic University between 1996 and 2013. He was the secretary of the Hungarian PEN Club between 1996 and 1997 and a member of the board of the Hungarian Association of Literary Translators between 2003 and 2011. His works have been translated into fifteen languages. His collection of humorous identity essays *Milyenek a magyarok?* (Homo Hungaricus, 2012) has sold 16,000 copies. In 2013 he was awarded the "Prima Primissima" prize in recognition of his contributions to the cultural life of Hungary. His poetry has also won him the Tibor Déry, Gyula Illyés and Attila József prizes. He currently lives in Zsámbék, with his wife and five children.

## *Böngészés*

A múltkor lazításképpen a munkahelyi interneten kalandozva, félig-meddig véletlenül nagyon is érdekes honlapra bukkantam. Pulzusom felgyorsult, ahogy sorba rákattintgattam a képekre. Női agyagról készült fényképek minden mennyiségben. Titkárnők, pincérnők, iskolás lányok, nővérkék, tanár nénik, traktoristalányok, háziasszonyok agya. Női agyak sejtelmes bársony- és selyemleplekben vagy valami tenyérynyi kis sztreccsanyaggal takartan, néha csak a barázdák domborulata sejlik át a szöveten, máskor egész kendőzetlenül tárulnak elénk a formák. Agyak fényben és árnyékban, vízparton és konyhában, alkóvban, fürdőszobában és irodában, homályos művészfotókon, gyenge amatőrképeken vagy pengeéles technikájú felvételeken. Olykor két-három, szinte lüktető, erezett félteke is, egymás hegyén-hátán, ingerlő beállításokban. Máshol férfiagyak társaságában épp eszmét cserélnek szemérmetlenül, nyilvánosan. Lélegzetem elakadt, torkom kiszáradt, pulzusom felgyorsult, egészen kivert a verejték. Zajt hallottam, reszkető kézzel, kapkodva zártam be az ablakot, nehogy még valaki rajtakapjon. Közben az járt az eszemben, férfikollégáim a múltkor nagy röhögve emlegették, hogy van egy honlap, ahol női lelkeket mutogatnak, azt mondják, színesek, mályvaszínűek, olyanok, mint egy-egy szétterített szárnyú lepke.

## *Enni azért kell*

Beülök a vendéglőbe, kényelmesen letelepszem  
a kockás abroszos asztalhoz.  
Még nem tudom, mit fogok enni,  
de bízom szerencsecsillagomban.  
Olvasni kezdem az étlapot, ám orrcimpám  
egyszeriben megremeg, vadat szimatolok.  
Szatyromból óvatosan előhalászom rövidcsövű puskámat,  
némán lekushadok az asztal mögé,  
lőállásba helyezkedem.  
Valóban, a járókelők között gyanútlanul bóklászva,  
idegesen horkantgatva feltűnik egy szarvas.  
Pompás egyed, agancsa ágbogait saccolgatom,  
a legszebb férfikorban jár,  
látványos trófea lesz belőle.  
Hosszan célzok, megvárom,  
míg a babakocsis anyuka  
és a kézen fogva andalgó  
szerelmespár eltűnik a képből,  
és meghúzom a ravaszt.  
Remek lövés,  
szorongatom lelkendezve képzeletben saját kezem,  
az állat lába megroggyan, szeme ködösödik,  
a gyönyörű hím végül feldől, akár egy zsák.  
Egy nyugdíjas néni dohogva ugrik félre,  
gumivégű botjával dühösen rásóz a tetemre,  
kis híján őt is felborította szegény tehetetlen állat.  
Indián szökelléssel vetem rá magam  
a még rángatózó vadra, késemet belédöföm,  
kezemet horpaszán nyugtatva várom,  
míg tagjaiból kimegy minden izomfeszültség,  
a hústömeg végül élettelen.  
Egy csatornanyíláshoz vonzoló a dögöt,  
szépen kivéztetem,  
majd szakszerűen nekilátok a nyúzásnak,  
addig a legkönnyebb, amíg még meleg.  
Engedelmesen veti le bőrét, mint egy kezeslábast,  
a belsőséget egy narancssárga  
utcai szemetesbe suhintom,

nagyjából felmetélem a húst.  
Bocsánatkérően dadogva megszólítok egy kis ápolt hölgyet.  
Fejét csóválva méri végig könyékig véres karomat,  
mintha rossz kisfiú lennék, ki megint a koszban játszott.  
Vállat vonok szégyenkezve,  
mit tehetnék, enni azért csak kell, vagy nem?  
Kérésemre a kis nő mégiscsak előhúz retiküljéből  
pár papírzsebkendőt, meglegyint verbéna-illatuk.  
Jól-rosszul letörölgetem a ragacsos vért,  
intek a pincérnek, aki kiskocsit küldet a konyháról,  
beszállítják a húst,  
az étlapról kinézek valami köretet hozzá.  
Közben fél szemmel már egy tehenet keresek  
a járókelők között, tornásztatom ujjaimat,  
bemelegítek a fejéshez,  
kell majd a kávémba tej.

## *A keret*

Épp egy giroszt eszegettem,  
komótos lépteim vittek a tömegben,  
oldalamon fekete számítógépes táska lógott.  
Két elintéznivaló között a városban járva  
gyakran választom az étkezésnek ezt a kevéssé elegáns,  
ám annál fesztelenebb és mozgalmasabb módját.  
A szembejövők pillantása a kezemben lévő ételre esik,  
nagyot nyelnek.  
Időnként a girosznak leve csordul,  
ajánlatos ügyelni a ruhámra.  
Van, hogy arcomon is végigfut az öntet.  
Ha körülnézek,  
ilyenkor rosszálló tekintetekkel találkozom.  
És nagyon nehézkes mártásos kézzel  
zsebkendő után kotorászni a zsebemben.  
Aznap viszont jól zárt a celofán,  
amibe a giroszomat csomagolták,  
falatoztam hát, és kényelmesen szemlélődtem a tömegben.  
Vöröslő arcú alkoholisták  
keresték zihálva az első kocsmacégment.  
Világháborút is megélt nyugdíjas nénik  
lehajtott fejjel, cekkert cipelve igyekeztek  
szárazon megúszni az életüket.  
Emitt egy kisgyerek rángatta anyukája kezét,  
miközben a hölgy elmerülten beszélgetett valakivel.  
Ha ez így megy tovább, hamarosan sikerül elszabadulnia.  
Amott meg egy művészforma, félbolond alak tarka ruhában,  
színes sityakban, copfba font szakállal,  
vállán majdnem földig érő,  
hatalmas, aranyozott képkerettel,  
hóna alatt fakó ponyva.  
A keret üres, vászon nincs benne,  
mindig csak a mögötte lévő valóságot mutatja.  
Mindig annyit, amennyit a négyszög az utca életéből kimetsz.  
A művészféle rá is játszik erre.  
Odapróbálgatja a keretet az alkoholistára,  
a nénikére, a beszélgető anyukára, majd végül a kisfiúra,  
akinek végre sikerült elszabadulnia,

és most a számítógépes játékokat bámulja egy kirakatban.

A művészféle nem veszi észre, hogy látom, mit csinál.

Odalopózik a gyerek mögé, kicsit állítgatja a keretet,

majd mikor érzése szerint a kirakatot bámuló fiú alakja

épp a megfelelő kivágatba illeszkedik,

gyorsan fogja a fakó ponyvát, ráborítja a képre,

és sietősen odébb áll.

Egy darabig még követni tudom

távolodó alakját a tömegben.

Ekkor azonban az anyuka jajveszékelésére leszek figyelmes.

Beszélgetőtársával együtt a járókelőket faggatják,

nem látták-e valahol a kissrácot.

Az előbb még itt volt, mondják páran.

Nem is láttak itt gyereket, mondják mások.

A bolt kirakatánál nem áll senki.

Elgondolkodva harapok bele a giroszomba.

## *Brskanje*

Zadnjič sem med brskanjem po internetu  
bolj ali manj po naključju  
naletel na zelo zanimivo spletno stran.  
Ob klikih na slike mi je utrip poskočil, da le kaj:  
ničkoliko fotografij ženskih možganov.  
Možganov tajnic, natararic, šolarik, medicinskih sester,  
profesorik, traktoristk, gospodinj,  
prekritih s skrivnostnimi tančicami iz žameta,  
pa iz raztegljivega blaga, velikega kot dlan.  
Pri nekaterih so slutnje razbrale le nekakšne izbokline, brazde,  
pri drugih razgaljena obličja,  
razprostrta, razstavljena za vse.  
Možgani na svetlem in v senci,  
ob obrežjih, po kuhinjah, nišah, kopalnicah in pisarnah,  
na motnih umetniških fotografijah,  
na slikah neveščih slikarjev  
in na tistih, posnetih v tehniki, ostri kot britev.  
Včasih tudi dvoje, troje drgetajočih ožilij,  
ožilje prek ožilja,  
v dražljivih legah vsevprek in počez.  
In nekje so se v družbi moških možganov  
prav tedaj kresala mnenja,  
brez sramu, odkrito.  
Dih mi je zastal, grlo se je izsušilo,  
utrip se je pognal in znoj me je obilil.  
Zaslišal sem hrup,  
s tresočo roko sem zaprl okno,  
naglo, da me ne bi kdo zalotil.  
Ves čas sem razmišljal,  
kako so se zadnjič kolegi, moški,  
smejali in trdili, da poznajo spletno stran,  
ki razstavlja ženske duše,  
in to v barvah, slezastih barvah,  
duše, podobne metuljem z razprostrtimi krili.

## *Jesti pa je vendarle treba*

Podam se v gostilno, se udobno namestim  
pri mizi s kockastim prtom.  
Ne vem še, katero jed bom izbral,  
pa kaj: zanesem se na svojo srečno zvezdo.  
Čim se lotim prebiranja jedilnega lista, že mi zadrgetajo nozdrvi,  
vztrepetajo – zavoham divjačino.  
Iz torbe previdno privlečem na dan  
kratkocevno puško,  
počepnem za mizo, brezšumno,  
in že sem nared za strel.  
In glej, med ljudmi se pojavi  
nervozno smrkajoči srnjak,  
nič hudega ne sluti.  
Imeniten primerek: sodeč po njegovih rogovih je v najlepših letih,  
obeta najlepše trofeje.  
Skrbno merim, dolgo, počakam,  
da mamica z vozičkom in  
dva zasanjana zaljubljenca z roko v roki  
izginejo iz vidnega polja,  
in potlej pritisnem na petelina.  
Imeniten strel,  
in kar vidim,  
kako si ves navdušen stiskam lastni roki,  
srnjaku klecnejo noge, na oči mu lega mrak  
in prelepi samec se naposled prekucne,  
sesuje se kot vreča.  
Upokojenka jeznorito skoči vstran  
in s palico z gumijasto konico  
močno udari po mrcini,  
le trohe manj, pa bi nemočna žival  
tudi starko skorajda spodnesla.  
Z indijanskim skokom se vržem na divjad,  
ki še vedno trza, zarinem vanjo nož,  
z roko, ki počiva na njenem boku,  
pa počakam, da splahni napetost njenih mišic,  
telesna gmota ostane brez življenja.  
Mrcino zvlečem do kanala,  
izcedim ji kri, kot je treba,

nakar se strokovno lotim odiranja,  
ki gre najbolje od rok, dokler je še topla.  
Delo opraviš z lahkoto, potem pa  
drobovino mrcine zalučam  
kot pajaca v oranžnorumeni zaboj za smeti  
na robu ceste  
in kar takole, na grobo, razrežem meso.  
Zajeceljam opravičilo in ogovorim neznanko,  
skrbno negovano damo.  
Zmajuje z glavo in si ogleduje moji roki,  
krvavi do komolcev,  
kot da sem baraba,  
ki je spet nekaj zagodla.  
Skomignem z rameni, sramujem se,  
a kaj mi je storiti,  
jesti je vendarle treba, kajne?  
Na mojo prošnjo dama naposled privleče  
iz torbice na dan papirnat robec,  
mene pa oplazi vonj po verbeni.  
In tako se za silo vendarle znebim  
lepljive krvi,  
pomaham natararju, ki poskrbi za voziček,  
za meso, ki ga potem odpeljejo v kuhinjo,  
z jedilnega lista izbrskam primerno prilogo.  
Medtem pa se že z drugim očesom  
oziram okrog, da bi uzrl kako kravo,  
razgibavam prste,  
naj bodo nared za molžo,  
za kavo,  
ki je ne maram brez mleka.

## *Okvir*

Ko sem nekoč s črnim leptopom na ramenu  
 grizljal giros med potjo,  
 sem se z lahkotnimi koraki znašel v množici ljudi.  
 Kadarkoli hodim po mestu za tem in onim opravkom,  
 se rad odločim za tak, ničkaj eleganten način prehranjevanja,  
 ki pa je, roko na srce, praktičen, prežene vse skrbi.  
 Srečujem ljudi, njih poglede,  
 zapičene v mojo roko s hrano,  
 kar vidim jih, kako se jim le sline pocedijo.  
 Primeri pa se tudi, da se moča iz girosa razteče  
 in tedaj je prav, če človek popazi na obleko.  
 Zgodi pa se tudi, da mi brizgne v obraz,  
 in če se takrat ozrem naokoli,  
 zaznam poglede, ki zavračajo mojo nezgodo.  
 Pa še to, kako težko je tedaj s popacano roko  
 brskati po žepih in iskati robec.  
 Tistega dne pa je bil, k sreči, giros v celofanu  
 in je prav dobro tesnil.  
 Jedel sem torej brezskrbno in opazoval ljudi.  
 Zasopli rdečelični alkoholiki  
 so iskali odprto krčmo.  
 Upokojene tetke – ki so preživele svetovno morijo –  
 so se sklonjenih glav in s cekarji v rokah  
 hotele prebiti tudi skozi tale današnji čas.  
 Malo naprej je otrok vlekkel ročico iz roke svoje mame,  
 ki se je medtem neumorno pogovarjala z nekom.  
 Če bo ostalo pri tem, mu bo uspelo, lahko jo bo pobrisal.  
 In še malo naprej: nekakšen umetnik,  
 malce čez les, v pisanih oblačilih,  
 z barvitim pokrivalom, z brado, spleteno v cof,  
 z velikanskim, skoraj do tal segajočim  
 pozlačenim slikarskim okvirom  
 in z obledelo plahto pod pazduho.  
 Okvir brez platna  
 vselej kaže le resnico: tisto za njegovim hrbtom.  
 Vsakokrat le tolikšno, kolikršno si – četverokotno – izreže iz življenja.  
 In kvaziumetnik se odloči prav za tako igro.  
 Pomerja okvir, najprej na alkoholiku,

na tetki, na čvekavi materi in na fantku,  
ki se mu je naposled posrečilo pobegniti  
in si lahko zdaj po mili volji ogleduje računalnike v izložbi.  
Kvaziumetnik ne ve, da vidim, kaj počne.  
Prikrade se za otrokov hrbet, postavlja svoj okvir tako  
in spet drugače,  
in ko ga občutki prepričajo, da se fantkova drža  
ravno prav poda v kakem izrezu,  
na naglo pograbi obledelo plahto, jo razprostre čez sliko,  
se podviza in stopi bolj vstran.  
Nekaj časa še lahko sledim,  
kako se njegov lik izgublja v množici,  
a postanem pozoren na materine klice na pomoč.  
Skupaj s sogovornico vprašuje mimoidoče,  
ali niso kje videli malega pobiča.  
Malo prej je bil še tukaj, povedo nekateri,  
nobenega otroka nismo videli, porečejo drugi.  
Pred izložbo trgovine nihče ne stoji.  
Zatopljen v misli ugriznem v giros.

*Prevedel Jože Hradil*

## *Browsing*

The other day, while surfing on the internet at work  
as a bit of a break, more or less by chance  
I came across a very interesting home page.  
My pulse beat harder as I clicked in turn on the pictures.  
Photos of female brains of every conceivable description.  
Brains of secretaries, waitresses, schoolgirls, nurses,  
schoolmistresses, tractor-driving girls, housewives.  
Female brains covered by mysterious satin and silk veils  
or palm-sized stretch material, at times with no more than  
the curves of the convolutions being hinted  
at through the fabric, at other times the forms being spread  
quite nakedly before one.  
Brains in the light and the shade,  
on the sea shore and in the kitchen,  
in alcoves, in the bathroom and in the office,  
in misty art photographs, poor-quality amateur snapshots  
or razor-sharp exposures.  
In some cases two or three  
almost throbbing veined hemispheres,  
higgledy-piggledy, in alluring poses;  
in others, together with male brains,  
just in the act of exchanging ideas,  
brazenly, in full public view.  
I could not breathe, my throat was dry,  
my pulse raced, beads of sweat formed on my brow.  
I heard a noise so, hands trembling,  
I hastily closed the window lest  
anyone should catch me.  
Meanwhile it flashed through my mind  
that the other day my male colleagues made mention,  
with great sniggers, of there being a home page  
where they put female *souls* on display,  
in full colour, so it was said, mauve-coloured,  
each one like the outspread wings of a butterfly.

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*After All, One Has to Eat*

I take a seat in the restaurant,  
settling myself comfortably at one of the tables  
with a chequered tablecloth.  
I haven't decided what to eat  
but trust my lucky star is out today.  
I start to read the menu,  
when all at once my nostrils twitch:  
I catch a scent of game.  
I carefully fish out my sawn-off shotgun from my carrier bag  
and, without a sound, take cover behind the table  
and place myself in a firing position.  
And indeed, drifting, unsuspectingly,  
amid the passers-by, sniffing nervously, a stag appears.  
A splendid specimen,  
to make a guess from the tines on his antlers  
he's in the prime of life,  
he'll make a spectacular trophy.  
I take aim at length,  
wait until the young mother with the pram  
and the loving couple  
who are ambling dreamily hand in hand move out of frame,  
then I squeeze the trigger. A superb shot,  
in my imagination I enthusiastically shake my own hand,  
the quarry's legs buckle, the eyes mist over,  
and eventually the magnificent male topples over like a sack.  
A lady pensioner jumps aside with a loud grumbling  
and angrily starts lashing out at the body  
with her rubber-tipped walking stick  
as the helpless animal had all but knocked her over as well.  
With a Redskin hop, skip and jump I throw myself  
on the still twitching game, thrust my knife into it,  
and resting a hand on its flank,  
wait until all muscular tension has ebbed from its limbs  
and the hunk of flesh is finally lifeless.  
I drag the body over to a drain,  
make a neat job of bleeding it dry,  
then set about expertly skinning it  
since that is best done while the carcass is still warm.

It shucks its skin compliantly like overalls,  
I toss the entrails away into an orange street litter bin  
and roughly cut the meat up.  
I stutter apologetically to a small, trim dame.  
Shaking her head, she casts an eye over my arms,  
blood up to my elbows, as if I were a naughty boy  
for playing in the dirt yet again.  
I shrug my shoulders in embarrassment;  
what am I supposed to do,  
after all, one has to eat, doesn't one?  
In response to my question the little dame  
pulls out a couple of paper handkerchiefs from her handbag,  
a fragrance of verbena wafts over.  
I make a lousy job of mopping off the sticky blood,  
I beckon to the waiter to send out a trolley from the kitchen,  
and while they wheel the meat in  
I check the menu for a vegetable dish to go with it.  
Meanwhile I keep one eye open  
for a cow among the passers-by and flex my fingers,  
warming them up to do some milking;  
I'll need that later in my coffee.

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*The Frame*

I was just in the middle of eating a gyros,  
my leisurely steps carrying me along in the crowd,  
a black computer bag dangling on one shoulder.  
When I'm in town, in between two errands.  
I often choose this none-too-elegant  
but, for all that, more informal and busy way of eating.  
The eyes of oncoming passers-by slips to the food in my hand  
and they swallow mightily.  
At times the juice may trickle out of the gyros,  
so it's best to take care of what I'm wearing.  
The sauce may sometimes dribble down my cheeks,  
and if I take a look around,  
I encounter looks of disapproval.  
Besides which, it's a little tricky to fish for a hankie in the pocket  
when the hands are covered in sauce.  
That day, though, the cellophane bag  
into which my gyros had been packed was well sealed,  
so I tucked away and cast an indolent look over the crowd.  
Ruddy-faced alcoholics panting in a search for the first open bar.  
Old dames who must have lived through at least one world war  
had their heads hung low,  
carrying a shopping bag as they tried to get through life.  
This here's a little boy tugging at Mummy's hand  
as the lady is preoccupied by talking to someone else;  
if he goes on like this, he'll soon wrench free.  
Over there is an artist of some sort,  
a half-wit in a jazzy suit and a colourful titfer,  
his beard braided,  
carrying on his shoulders an enormous picture frame that  
almost reaches the ground, a faded canvas under his arm.  
The frame is empty, there is no canvas in it;  
all it shows is the reality behind it.  
Just as much as the rectangle will cut out of the life in the street.  
The artist type plays on this.  
He experiments with positioning the frame around the alcoholic,  
the old dame, the chatty Mum,  
and finally the little boy,  
who has at last succeeded in breaking loose

and right now is staring at a computer game in a shop window.  
The artist type hasn't noticed that I'm watching what he does.  
He steals behind the child, slightly adjusts the frame and then,  
when he feels that the figure of the boy  
staring into the shop window exactly fits the frame,  
he quickly grabs the faded canvas,  
spreads it over the picture,  
and hastily steps back.  
I can follow his departing figure for a while in the crowd,  
but it is then that I become aware of the Mummy's shriek of alarm.  
She and her interlocutor question the passers-by  
as to whether they've seen the kid anywhere.  
He was here just a moment ago, several of them say.  
Not seen any child at all, say some others.  
There is no-one standing by the shop window.  
I take a pensive bite from my gyros.

*Translated by Tim Wilkinson*





*Foto © Gaël Turine*

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# *Fiston Mwanza*

## *Mujila*

Fiston Mwanza Mujila se je rodil leta 1981 v Lubumbašiju v Demokratični republiki Kongo. Med študijem na univerzi v Lubumbašiju se je udeleževal različnih literarnih dejavnosti, s katerimi je kasneje nadaljeval v prestolnici Kinšasi ter v tujini v okviru festivalov in rezidenc. Trenutno zaključuje doktorski študij na Karlovi in Francevi univerzi v Gradcu. Piše poezijo, kratke zgodbe in gledališke igre. Njegova gledališka besedila, kot denimo *Eine Fahrt ans Mittelmeer* (Potovanje po Sredozemlju, 2011), *Gott ist ein Deutscher* (Bog je Nemec, 2012) in *Mücken sind Kernobst / Requiem für eine Revolution* (Komarji so pečkati sadeži / Rekviem za revolucijo, 2013), so bila uprizorjena v Nemčiji in Avstriji. Izdal je tudi tri pesniške zbirke: *Poèmes et rêvasseries* (Pesmi in sanjarjenja, 2008) in *Craquelures* (Razpoke, 2011) v francoskem ter dvojezično zbirko v francoskem in nemškem jeziku *Le Fleuve dans le Ventre / Der Fluß im Bauch* (Reka v trebuhu, 2013). Njegova proza je bila objavljena tudi v »zaporniški« antologiji *Nach dem Sturm* (Po nevihti, 2010). Leta 2009 je prejel zlato medaljo za književnost na 6. frankofonskih igrah v Bejrutu (2009). Med letoma 2009 in 2010 je nosil naziv mestnega pisatelja v Gradcu.

Fiston Mwanza Mujila was born in 1981 in Lubumbashi, Democratic Republic of Congo. While studying at the University of Lubumbashi, he partook in various literary activities, and he has continued to do so at festivals and in residencies in the capital of Kinshasa and abroad. He is currently completing his PhD studies at the Karl-Franzens University in Graz. He writes poetry, short stories and plays. His theatre texts, such as *Eine Fahrt ans Mittelmeer* (A Journey Across the Mediteranian, 2011), *Gott ist ein Deutscher* (God is German 2012) and *Mücken sind Kernobst / Requiem für eine Revolution* (Midges are Pip Fruit/ Requiem for a Revolution, 2013), have been staged in Germany and Austria. He has also published three collections of poetry: *Poèmes et rêvasseries* (Poems and Daydreams, 2008), *Craquelures* (Cracks, 2011), and the bilingual collection in French and German *Le Fleuve dans le Ventre / Der Fluß im Bauch* (River in the Belly, 2013). His prose was also featured in the "prisoners" anthology *Nach dem Sturm* (After the Storm, 2010). He received the Gold Medal for Literature at the 6th Francophone Games in Beirut in 2009. He was named Writer of the City of Graz between 2009 and 2010.

### **Solitude 61**

dans mon ventre se convulse un fleuve,  
bougre et fainéant, sale et immense, lugubre et vilain,  
un fleuve en état (avancé) de dysenterie...

### **Solitude 71**

nervosité de chien (?)  
le fleuve s'ennuie à longueur de journée  
il pleurniche sans savoir pourquoi trop  
il pleurniche depuis Babel, depuis ya Noé et son déluge  
depuis le prophète Ezéchiel, depuis la sœur Abigaël...  
sa morve décrit une longévité absurde...

### **Solitude 52**

nervosité de chien (?)  
et la farce qui dégèle  
entre deux rictus  
je bazarde mon corps au premier venu  
en arrière-plan de ce ciel qui dégainé sa bave  
enfin bref, je m'en vais aboyer avec les chiens  
l'instant de l'éclipse solaire de Katako-Kombe II

### **Solitude 73**

nervosité de chien (?)  
et je revendique ma léprosit    
et je revendique mon droit de vomir  
et je revendique mes origines russes  
et je revendique les extraits de mon corps  
de mon corps d  membr    
comme il   tait au commencement...

## Solitude 38

on n'égosillera pas le Christ deux fois de suite  
 ceux qui espèrent en faire leur fonds de commerce  
 attendront longtemps  
 longtemps avant de perdre dents et poils pubiens  
 longtemps avant de perdre leur sperme et leurs envies  
 de mettre du feu aux livres de Genèse et de l'Épître  
 de Saint Paul aux Corinthiens

## Solitude 64 ou *la nausée précède l'essence...*

Je suis enceinte depuis 17 ans, 36 mois et 2 jours. Je fais l'amour avec le ciel. J'attends un mioche du ciel. L'enfant qui sortira de mon ventre ou le fleuve qui naîtra de mes tripes ou l'enfant-fleuve que crachera mon corps-saligaud viendra avec sa viande remplir mes longues nuits d'insomnie... Il répondra au nom de Mzete ya mbila bazo kata ezo kola. Je pourrais alors me targuer (à qui veut l'entendre) d'être le père et la mère de cette progéniture-floue, de cette progéniture-scolopendre, de cette progéniture-crevaison et inutilement grotesque.

## Solitude 57, *die Poesie der Verzweiflung ou les vociférations d'un corps vide...*

...je cherche les débris de mon corps étendus sur les plages du désespoir, jambe gauche n'existant que sur papier, ventre et bas-ventre à l'emporte-pièce, mains puant la marchandise et mes aboiements n'arrivant même pas aux chevilles de ce ciel privé d'électricité, c'est-à-dire que je triche la vie qui me tient en tenailles au niveau des mâchoires, c'est-à-dire que je sers de déco à mon destin en sac poubelle, destin-batracien, destin-kipelekese, destin-tchanga medesu...

...peut-être qu'il me faut (dans l'espoir d'un quelconque salut) geindre et geindre en ré-mineur tel la dernière chèvre de ma grand-mère: beum, beum, beum...

...et dire qu'il n'y a point d'euthanasie pour les récalcitrants et ivrognes de mon espèce! et dire qu'il n'y aura point deux déluges successifs pour m'emporter dans ma bave, cela revient à dire que ya Noé ne viendra pas deux fois, qu'on ne fera plus entrer dans l'arche sept couples de tous les animaux purs, le mâle et la femelle, cela revient à dire que les eaux du fleuve Zaïre, ebale ezanga mokuwa, ne viendront plus lécher nos désirs de luxe et autres débauches dans les nuits étoilées de quartiers chauds de Kinshasa et d'Amsterdam...

...et entretemps, sans dieux et sans animal de compagnie, dépourvu du sel de la vie, mon corps-scolopendre traîne à même les plages du désespoir, en quatrième de couverture une douzaine de mes propres dents arrachées de force par des lémures et autres charognards de ce ciel privé de mazout...

...il me reste qu'à bêler tel Tshela, la dernière chèvre de ma grand-mère Julienne mua Mwanza, tel Tshela en mezzo-soprano: beum, beum, beum...

## *Ville de chien*

*Pour saxophones, percussions, batteries, violoncelle,  
accordéon, piano et vibraphone  
Éléments visuels, concerts Louis Armstrong et John Coltrane  
Éléments visuels, l'Est du Congo  
Éléments visuels, les rues de Lagos  
Éléments visuels, Saint-Petersbourg, hiver 42  
Éléments visuels, les bordels de Bahia et de Katmandou  
Éléments visuels, Allemagne/Argentine, finale coupe monde 1990  
Éléments visuels, Huitième round  
Mohamed Ali contre George Foreman  
Kinshasa-Léopoldville 1974*

la ville est un crayon qui rédige des salves d'accidents  
et ses désinvoltures rouillent les désirs  
d'un peuple salaud  
d'un peuple misère de merde  
d'un peuple phacochère  
buveur de sang et coureur d'asile politique  
19 heures 10  
19 heures 20  
19 heures 35  
19 heures 38  
19 heures 57  
19 heures 67  
19 heures 77  
19 heures 82  
19 heures 94 virgule trente-deux ans  
au coin des rues «va te faire foutre» et «je t'emmerde»  
une bande de chiens enragés dépeçant  
un corps vide  
rue «ta gueule», un homme et une femme  
dévorent les fruits défendus  
rue «les bêtes sauvages», un prophète, barbu jusqu'aux  
dents, aboyant qu'au commencement était la dysenterie  
rue «tais-toi sinon je te casse la gueule»  
un politicien radotant une de ses meilleures  
fables  
20 heures 46 verset 17

la pluie  
les rues inondées  
les baraques à l'emporte-pièce  
une église transformée en boîte de nuit  
une boîte de nuit en cybercafé  
un cybercafé en pharmacie  
une pharmacie en librairie  
une librairie en bordel boutique boulangerie lingerie charcuterie!  
les habitants de la ville sont des villageois  
trimbalant leurs destins maudits sous une pluie  
des mots sans cervelle ni barbecue  
des guimbardes broyant du noir  
des femmes aux seins grosses-tomates  
des hommes vêtus de honte chômeurs en pensée  
en parole par action et par omission  
merdeux bricolant aux divinités supérieures  
des prières sans orgasme  
des vendeurs à la criée  
des musiciens par inadvertance  
des prostituées et leurs tarifs  
des potentiels clients libido au zénith  
désirs masturbatoires décharges électriques  
catharsis  
les oiseaux dissipent l'évasion des prophètes  
trente-deuxième jour  
des maisons qui se suivent mais qui ne se ressemblent pas  
des pas de danse des butineurs des breuvages insolites  
ruminant des sortilèges  
comme si le continent effrité bazarrait sa brosse à dents  
des moulins à vent  
des chèvres  
des poules mouillées  
des militaires et leur folie  
des sacs-poubelles  
des vaches en rut  
des guimbardes  
des chariots  
des brouettes  
des crochets  
des banderoles

des calebasses  
des machines à coudre  
des marteaux  
des préservatifs  
et des bières  
et des bières  
et des bières  
venant, ou de Luanda  
ou de Kigali  
ou de Ngandajika  
ou de Musumba  
ou de Berlin  
ou de Lima  
ou de Mbuji- Mayi  
ou de Cotonou  
ou de Douala  
ou de Dar-es Salam  
ou de Clignancourt  
ou de Bulawayo  
ou de Brazza  
ou Brooklyn  
ou de Lagos  
ou, ou, ou, ou, ou, ou  
des balivernes  
des ventilateurs  
des lampions  
des musiques croisées  
des regards acerbes  
des odeurs nauséabondes  
des rires sardoniques  
des prophéties de basse-cour  
des destins bâclés  
nous les salauds  
et seul Dieu sait  
si nous avons été réellement créés  
à son image

### **Samota 61**

v mojem trebuhu se v krčih zvija reka  
klinčeva in lena, ogromna in zasvinjana, zlovešča in podla,  
reka v (zadnjem) stadiju griže

### **Samota 71**

pasja(?) razdraženost  
reka se dolgočasi ves dolgi dan  
cmerika pa ne ve dobro zakaj  
cmerika od Babilona naprej, od Noetove barke  
od preroka Ezekielja, od sestre Abigajile ...  
njen smrkelj se vleče nesmiselno dolgo ...

### **Samota 52**

pasja(?) razdraženost  
in farsa ki odtaja  
med dvema skremžama  
s prvim ki pride zbarantam svoje telo  
in za ozadje nebo ki potegne svojo slino  
skratka, lajat grem s psi  
za hip sončnega mrka Katako-Komba II

### **Samota 73**

pasja(?) razdraženost  
in terjam nazaj svojo gobavost  
in terjam pravico do bruhanja  
in terjam svoje ruske korenine  
in terjam ekstrakte svojega telesa  
svojega razkosanega telesa  
kot je bilo na začetku...

**Samota 38**

ne bo Kristus razkričan dvakrat zapored  
 tisti ki bi radi iz njega naredili vzajemne sklade  
 se bodo lep čas načakali  
 dokler ne izgubijo zob in sramnih dlak  
 dokler ne izgubijo sperme in poželenja  
 in vržejo v ogenj knjige Geneze in Pisma  
 svetega Pavla Korinčanom

**Samota 64 ali *gnus pride pred bistvom***

Noseča sem 17 let, 36 mescev in 2 dni. Ljubim se z nebom. Z nebom pričakujem pamžolina. Otrok, ki bo prišel iz mojega trebuha, ali reka, ki se bo rodila iz mojega droba, ali otrok-reka, ki ga bo izpljunilo moje svinjsko telo, bo s svojim telesom zapolnil moje dolge nespečne noči ... Slišal bo na ime Mzete ja mbila bazo kata ezo kola. In lahko se bom postavljala (če bo kdo hotel slišati), da sem oče in mati te zalege-mlahaste, te zalege-stonožne, te zalege-prazne gume in groteskne brez potrebe.

**Samota 57, *die Poesie der Verzweiflung ali vreščanje praznega telesa***

... iščem ostanke svojega telesa, razmetane po nabrežjih brezupa, leva noga obstaja le na papirju, trebuh in podtrebušje na prebijaču, dlani, smrdeče po trgovski robi, in moj lajež, ki ne seže niti do gležnjev tega neba brez elektrike, kar pomeni, da goljufam življenje, ki me drži v primežu nekje pod čeljustjo, kar pomeni, da sem v okras svoji usodi v smetarski vreči, usodi-dvoživki, usodi-kipelkese, usodi čanga-medesu ...

... nemara bi moral (upajoč na kdove kakšno odrešenje) vekati in vekati v de molu kot zadnja babičina koza: beum, beum, beum ...

... in reči, da ni nobene evtanazije za trmeže in pijandure moje sorte! in reči, da ne bo drugega zaporednega potopa, ki bi me odnesel na moji slini, kar z drugimi besedami pomeni, da Noe ne bo prišel dvakrat in ne bo popeljal na barko po sedem parov čistih

živali, samcev in samic, kar spet pomeni, da vode reke Zaire, ebale ezanga mokuva, v toplih zvezdnatih nočeh ne bojo več prihajale oblizovat naših slastnih poželenj in drugih razvratnosti v tople četrti Kinšase in Amsterdama ...

... in medtem se, brez božanstev in živali za spremstvo, in brez soli življenja, moje telo-stonožno plazi po nabrežjih brezupa, na zadnji strani ducat mojih zob, ki so jih na silo izpulili lemuri in drugi krokarji tega neba, ki nima mazuta ...

... samó še blejam lahko, tako kot Čela, zadnja koza moje babice Julijane mua Mvanza, kot Čela v mezzosopranu: beum, beum, beum ...

## *Pasje mesto*

*Za saksofone, tolkala, bobne, violončelo, bobne, klavir in vibrafon*

*Vidni učinki, koncerti Louisa Armstronga in Johna Coltrana*

*Vidni učinki, vzhod Konga*

*Vidni učinki, ulice Lagosa*

*Vidni učinki, Sankt Petersburg, zima 42*

*Vidni učinki, bordeli Bahie in Katmanduja*

*Vidni učinki, Nemčija : Argentina, finale svetovnega prvenstva 1990*

*Vidni učinki, osma runda Mohamed Ali proti Georgeu Foremanu,*

*Kinšasa-Léopoldville 1974*

mesto je svinčnik ki zapisuje salve nezgod  
in njegove predrznosti prekrivajo z rjo poželenja

barabskega ljudstva

ljudstva drekaste bede

ljudstva merjasca

pivca krvi in hlastača po političnem azilu

19 deset

19 dvajset

19 petintrideset

19 sedeminpetdeset

19 sedeminšestdeset

19 sedeminsedemdeset

19 dvainosemdeset

19 štiriindevetdeset vejica dvaintrideset let

na križišču ulic »jebi se« in »klinc te gleda«

trop steklih psov razkosava

prazno telo

na ulici »drži gobec« moški in ženska

goltata prepovedane sadeže

na ulici »banda ušiva« laja prerok, z brado do zob, da je bila na začetku griza

na ulici »tiho sicer te razbijem« blebeče politik eno svojih najboljših povestic

20 šestinštirideset verz 17

dež

poplavljene ceste

barake navrtane

cerkev spremenjena v nočni lokal

nočni lokal v cybercafé

cybercafé v lekarno

lekarna v knjigarno  
knjigarna v bordel barvarno branjarijo pozamentarijo  
mesarijo!  
prebivalci mesta se imenujejo mestjani  
svoje preklete usode vlačijo pod dežjem  
besede brez mozga na žaru  
stare kripe predirajo temo  
ženske z joški-paradajzi  
moški oblečeni v sram brezposelneži v misli  
besede dejanja in opustitve  
drekači ki z višjimi božanstvi barantajo  
za molitve brez orgazma  
vpijati dražbarski  
glasbeniki po pomoti  
prostitutke in njihove tarife  
morebitni klienti z libidom na višku  
masturbatorska poželenja električne razbremenitve  
katarze  
ptiči raztresajo bežanje prerokov  
dvaintrideseti dan  
hiše ki si sledijo a si niso podobne  
plesni koraki nabiralcev nenavadnih medic  
ki prežvekujejo praznoverja  
kot bi zmrvljena celina zamešetarila svojo zobno ščetko  
mlini na veter  
koze  
polite kure  
vojaki in njihova norost  
vreče za smeti  
pójave krave  
stare gare  
vozički  
samokolnice  
vitrihi  
transparenti  
kalebase  
šivalni stroji  
tolkači  
kondomi  
in piva

in piva  
in piva  
ki pridejo ali iz Luande  
ali iz Kigalija  
ali iz Ngandajike  
ali iz Musumbe  
ali iz Berlina  
ali iz Lime  
ali iz Mbuji-Maji  
ali iz Cotonouja  
ali iz Duale  
ali iz Dar-es Salama  
ali iz Clignancourta  
ali iz Bulawaya  
ali iz Brazza  
ali Brooklyna  
ali Lagosa  
ali, ali, ali, ali, ali  
bedastoče  
ventilatorji  
lampijoni  
križanke z notami  
jedki pogledi  
vonjave za bruhanje  
sardonični smehovi  
prerokbe z dvorišča  
skrpučane usode  
mi sami lopovi  
in edino Bog ve  
ali smo bili res narejeni  
po njegovi podobi

*Prevedel Aleš Berger*

### **Solitude 61**

in my stomach convulses a river,  
lazy and bugged, dirty and mammoth, gloomy and nasty,  
a river in an (advanced) state of dysentery...

### **Solitude 71**

the dog's jitteriness (?)  
the river's bored the whole day through  
it snivels but doesn't really know why  
it's snivelled since Babel, since "ya" Noah and his flood,  
since the prophet Ezekiel, since the sister Abigail...  
its snot traces an absurd longevity...

### **Solitude 52**

the dog's jitteriness (?)  
and the farce that thaws  
between two snarls  
I flog my body to the first-to-come  
in the background of this heaven that draws spittle  
and so, in short, I'm going to bark with the dogs  
the instant of the solar eclipse of Katako-Kombe II

### **Solitude 73**

the dog's jitteriness (?)  
and I have recourse to my leprosy  
and I have recourse to my right to vomit  
and I have recourse to my Russian roots  
and I have recourse to the bits of my body  
as it was in the beginning...

**Solitude 38**

they won't shout themselves hoarse for Christ twice in a row  
 those who hope to make a racket out of it  
 will wait a long time  
 a long time before losing their teeth and pubic hair  
 a long time before losing their sperm and their desire  
 to burn the books of Genesis and the Epistle  
 of Saint Paul to the Corinthians

**Solitude 64 or *nausea precedes essence...***

I've been pregnant for 17 years, 36 months and 2 days. I make love to the sky. I'm expecting a sky-urchin. The child to exit my belly or the river to spill from my entrails or the child-river to crackle from my filth-body will come with its meat to fill my long nights of insomnia... He will be called Mzete ya mbila bazo kata ezo kola. Then I can boast (but who's listening?) of being the father, the mother, of this progeny-blur, of this progeny-centipede, of this progeny puncture that's needlessly grotesque.

**Solitude 57, *die Poesie der Verzweiflung or vociferations of an empty body...***

...I'm looking for the widespread debris of my body flung over the beaches of despair, left leg existing only on paper, cookie-cutter gut and lower-gut, reeking hands the merchandise and my barking not even reaching the ankles of this electricity-poor sky, that is to say, I cheat the life that keeps me wrenched at jaw-level, that is to say, I serve as deco for my destiny in a trash bag, amphibian-destiny, kipelekese-destiny, Tchanga medesu-destiny...

...maybe I should (in the hopes of some salvation or other) whine and whine in D minor like my grandmother's last goat: beum, beum, beum...

...and say there's no euthanasia for  
recalcitrants and drunkards like me! and say there won't  
be two successive floods to carry me off in my  
spittle! meaning to say, that "ya" Noah will not come a second  
time, thou shalt not be brought into the arc, seven couples  
of every sort of pure animal, male and female, meaning  
to say that the waters of the Congo River, ebale ezanga  
mokuwa, will no longer come to lick our desire for luxury and  
other debauchery in the starry nights of the red light hoods of  
Kinshasa and Amsterdam...

...and in the meantime, without gods and without pets,  
lacking the salt of life, my centipede-body drifts about  
even on the beaches of despair, on the book's back-panel,  
a dozen of my own teeth ripped forcefully out by  
lemurs and other scavengers of this sky bereft of heating oil...

...and all I can do is bleat like tshela, my grandmother's last  
goat, julienne mua mwanza, like tshela in mezzo-soprano: beum,  
beum, beum...

## ***Dog Town***

*For saxophones, percussion, drums, cello,  
 accordion, piano and vibraphone  
 Visual Elements, Louis Armstrong and John Coltrane concerts  
 Visual Elements, Eastern Congo  
 Visual elements, the streets of Lagos  
 Visual Elements, St. Petersburg, Winter '42  
 Visual Elements, the brothels of Bahia and Kathmandu  
 Visual Elements, Germany/Argentina, 1990 World Cup final  
 visual elements, eighth round Muhammad Ali vs. George Foreman,  
 Kinshasa/Leopoldville 1974*

the town is a pencil that composes accident-volleys  
 and its casualness rusts the desires  
 of a bastard people  
 of a shit-miserable people  
 of a warthog people  
 bloodsuckers and political asylum runners  
 19 hours 10  
 19 hours 20  
 19 hours 35  
 19 hours 38  
 19 hours 57  
 19 hours 67  
 19 hours 77  
 19 hours 82  
 19 hours 94 comma thirty-two years  
 at the corner of “go fuck yourself” and “just blow me”  
 a pack of rabid dogs rips away  
 an empty body  
 “fuck you” street, a man and a woman  
 devouring forbidden fruits  
 “wild beasts” street, a prophet, bearded to the  
 teeth, barking that in the beginning was the dysentery  
 “shut up or I’ll bust your mouth” street  
 A politician drivels one of his finest  
 fables  
 20 hours 46, verse 17  
 rain

flooded streets  
cookie-cutter barracks  
a church transformed into a nightclub  
a nightclub into a cybercafé  
a cybercafé into a drugstore  
a drugstore into a bookshop  
a bookshop into a brothel boutique baker lingerie *butcherie!*  
this town's dwellers are village-dwellers  
lugging their damned destiny under a rain  
of words without brains or barbecue  
of old cars brooding  
of large tomato-breasted women  
of men dressed in shame jobless in thought  
in word by action and by omission  
shit tinkerers to higher beings  
of prayers without orgasm  
of sellers at auction  
of musicians by inadvertence  
of prostitutes and their rates  
of potential libido-zenith clients  
masturbatory desires electric shock  
catharsis  
the birds scatter the escaping of the prophets  
thirty-second day  
of houses that line up but do not look alike  
of dance steps of diggers of uncommon concoctions  
like the crumbling continent was flogging its toothbrush  
of windmills  
of goats  
of soaked chickens  
of soldiers and their madness  
of garbage bags  
of cows in heat  
of wheelbarrows  
of spades  
of banderoles  
of pumpkin gourdes  
of sewing machines  
of hammers  
of condoms

and of beers  
and of beers  
and of beers  
coming from Luanda  
or from Kigali  
or from Ngandajika  
or from Musumba  
or from Berlin  
or from Lima  
or from Mbuji-Mayi  
or from Cotonou  
or from Douala  
or from Dar es Salaam  
or from Clignancourt  
or from Bulawayo  
or from Brazza  
or from Brooklyn  
or from Lagos  
or, or, or, or, or, or  
of twaddle  
of lanterns  
of crossover music  
of scathing glances  
of malodourous odours  
of sardonic laughter  
of backyard prophecies  
of destinies botched  
we the bastards  
and God only knows  
if we really were created  
in his image

*Translated by Jason Blake*



*Foto © Radoslav Ratković*

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# Andrej Nikolaidis

Andrej Nikolaidis se je rodil leta 1974 v Sarajevu v Bosni in Hercegovini v črnogorsko-grški družini. Do šestega leta starosti je živel v Ulcinju v današnji samostojni Republiki Črni gori, kamor se je vrnil leta 1992 po izbruhu vojne v Bosni in Hercegovini. Od leta 1994 piše prispevke za neodvisne in liberalne regionalne medije in članke za revije o kulturi. Je romanopisec, pisec kratkih zgodb in svetovallec črnogorskega državnega zbora za področje kulture. Med njegova najbolj znana dela sodijo romani *Oni!* (2001), *Mimesis* (2003), ki je v slovenskem prevodu Aleša Čara leta 2006 izšel pri Študentski založbi, *Sin* (2006), za katerega je prejel nagrado Evropske unije za književnost (2011), *Dolazak* (Prihod, 2009) in njegovo najnovejše delo *Odlaganje. Parezija* (Odložitev. Parezija, 2012). Mnogi ga uvrščajo med najvplivnejše intelektualce mlajše generacije na območju nekdanje Jugoslavije. Znan je predvsem kot protivojni aktivist, zagovornik pravic manjšin in vnet bорец proti policijskemu nasilju. Piše tudi kolumne za tednik *Monitor* in časopise, kot so *Vijesti* (Črna gora), *Dnevnik* (Slovenija), *Slobodna Bosna* (Bosna in Hercegovina), *E-novine* (Srbija) in *Koha Ditore* (Kosovo).

Andrej Nikolaidis was born in 1974 in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina into a mixed Montenegrin-Greek family. Until the age of six, he lived in the city of Ulcinj in today's sovereign Republic of Montenegro, where he returned to in 1992 after war had erupted in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Since 1994 he has been writing pieces for regional independent and liberal media and articles for cultural magazines. He is a novelist, short story writer, and cultural advisor to the Montenegrin parliament. He is best known for the novels *Oni!* (Them, 2001), *Mimesis* (2003) (which was translated into Slovenian by Aleš Čar and published by the Študentska založba Publishing House in 2006), *Sin* (*The Son*, 2006) (for which he received the European Union Prize for Literature in 2011), *Dolazak* (*The Coming*, 2009) and his most recent *Odlaganje. Parezija* (*Till Kingdom Come*, 2012). He is considered by many to be one of the most influential intellectuals of the younger generation in the former Yugoslavian region and is particularly known for his anti-war activism, minority rights activism, and as an avid protester against police violence. He is also a columnist for the weekly magazine *Monitor* and for publications such as *Vijesti* (Montenegro), *Dnevnik* (Slovenia), *Slobodna Bosna* (Bosnia-Herzegovina), *E-novine* (Serbia), and *Koha Ditore* (Kosovo).

## Sin

(odlomak iz romana)

Bio je prvi sumrak. Sunce je ponovo zalazilo iza Stričevog maslinjaka, kako smo zvali brdo sa desetak korijena masline, koje nam je, tih pedeset hektara makije pune poskoka i divljih svinja, zaklanjalo pogled na more. Otac je tvrdio da je jednom vidio *nešto sa onog svijeta*, tako je rekao, kako slijeće iza tog brda. Nikada ga nisam uspio ubijediti da je to bilo sunce. Iz popodneva u popodne sjedjeli smo na terasi i čekali suton. Šutke smo gledali sunce kako zalazi, kako se gubi iza siluete brda koje oduvijek stoji između mene i svijeta. Kada bi svjetlost zgasnula, utac bi ustao, autoritativno rekao *ne, nipošto, to nije bilo sunce*. Potom bi nestao u kući. Nadalje su samo tonovi Bacha odavali da još uvijek postoji, da kao i svake večeri leži u mraku spavaće sobe, paralisan depresijom koja ga zlostavlja već dvije decenije.

Te večeri, brdo je gorjelo. Umjesto svježeg vjetra s mora, u lice me je tukla vrešina šume u plamenu. Vatra će ponovo odnijeti sav očev trud, pomislio sam. Poslije svakog požara, policija je obilazila teren i pokušavala pronaći trag koji bi ih doveo do počinioca. Nikada, treba li reći, nisu otkrili ništa. Ni komad stakla, ni šibicu, kamoli tragove piromana. Nikada ni neće otkriti ko nam pali brdo, kad vam kažem, kako bi i mogli otkriti, kada ovaj oganj dolazi s onoga svijeta, ponavljao je otac.

Kada je brdo prvi put gorjelo, on je to shvatio kao znak od Boga. Čitav život mi je prošao, a da se nisam ni okrenuo na maslinjak koji mi je stric ostavio. Sada više nema maslinjaka. Ima samo moje obaveze prema toj zemlji. Tako je rekao moj otac sklon fatalizmu, kao i svi u ovoj mahnitoj, proklesoj porodici.

Ogradio je čitavo brdo. Probijao se kroz izgorjelu šumu, korak po korak, lomio kamen i u stijenu, kao u srce vampira, zabijao glogove kočeve. Onda je na kočeve kačio bodljikavu žicu koja mu je drala meso na rukama. Mjesecima se kući vraćao crn od glave do pete, kao rudar koji je upravo izašao iz najdubljeg kopa. To i jeste bio: rudar. Ušao je u srce svojih uspomena. Nije on krčio šumu: on je kopao svoju nutrinu, lomio je taj kamen koji ga je gnječio, uklanjao je lavinu koja ga je prekrila i živog sahranila. Mocar i garav se vraćao kući, sve dok jednoga dana nije saopštio da je njegov posao završen. Imanje je bilo ograđeno i očišćeno. Nove suvomeđe podignute, nove masline zasađene. Poveo nas je na terasu, mene i majku, i po

ko zna koji put nam pokazao Stričev maslinjak. Rodio sam ga iz plamena, rekao je moj otac.

Kada je brdo izgorjelo po drugi put, opet je postavio ogradu i zasadio masline. Povrh svega, izgradio je i štalu. Onda je iz Austrije doveo koze. U svojoj radišnosti išao je tako daleko da je čak i čuvao koze. Te godine bio je pastir. Preko dana bi sa kozama lutao brdom. Predveče bi ih odveo u štalu, na spavanje. Ispaša je ove godine savršena, govorio je, iz spržene zemlje izlaze mladice, stoga moje koze jedu najbolju hranu. Ograđene su, bezbjedne od šakala, konačno su na suvom. Kao u hotelu s pet zvjezdica, ponavljao je. Majka je držala da zna korijen očeve posvećenosti kozama. Stric je, tvrdila je da se toga sjeća iz babinih priča, bio grudobolan. Sa grudoboljom je i umro, rekla je majka. Posljednje godine života dugovao je kozama, rekla je. Neka žena iz Šestana donosila mu je mlijeko. Zahvaljujući tom mlijeku živio je i nakon što su ga doktori otpisali. Bio je sam, bez žene i poroda, pričala je majka. Imao je samo babu, ženu pokojnog brata, imao je tvog oca i te koze gore u Šestanima. Kod babe i oca je živio, zahvaljujući kozama je živio, rekla je majka.

Čovjek iz rodne Crmnice odlazi u Ameriku. Napuš ta svoje selo bježeći od gladi, samo da bi stigao u New York, velegrad u kojem će tri naredne godine gladovati. Spava u napuštenim skladištima. Na pijacama krade povrće, da bi se prehranio. Ponekad ubije psa–lutačicu, i tada Gospodu zahvaljuje na vještini ubijanja koju je stekao loveći ptice na Skadarskom jezeru. Već nakon nedjelju dana znao sam da ću uspjeti, znao sam da ću preživjeti, pričao je kasnije bratovoj ženi i njenom sinu. Usred New Yorka živio sam kao usred gore, govori im. Dječak ga netremice gleda dok govori o psećoj koži od koje je načinio cipele. Nikada taj dječak nije vidio oca, ali ga zamišlja sličnog stricu, s kratkim sijedim brkovima, kako u cipelama koje mirišu na – možda baš pseću – kožu ulazi u njihovu kuhinju, kako grli majku i njega, kako mu, onako kako čine stričevi, u džep tutne nešto novca za slatkiše, kako uveče, *kao stric*, pripovijeda sve one uzbudljive avanture koje je proživio.

Čovjek u Americi stekne imetak, ali umre prepuklog srca. Nikada se nije ženio, zato je nesretan umro, dječak čuje majku kako govori. Sve što sam uradio, sav put koji sam prošao, sve je uzalud jer umirem bez sina, tako je pred smrt rekao tvoj stric, rekla mu je majka, rekao mi je otac. Sve što je imao ostavio je porodici svoga brata. Da se stric nije vratio duže bi živio, do smrti je tvrdila moja majka, gledao je tvoga oca i patio za svojim nerođenim sinom, imala je običaj

da kaže, to ga je na koncu ubilo. Čovjek se čitav život muči da bi umro sam kao pas. Sav imetak ostavi ženi svoga brata. Spasi je od siromaštva u kojem je, nakon muževe smrti, bila osuđena da podiže dijete. Čitavu mladost sam jeo stričev trud, hranio sam se njegovim znojem i mukom, tako je govorio moj otac.

Čovjek se muči i onda umre. Eto čitave priče o svakom od nas, eto potpune biografije čitavog ljudskog roda. Sahranjen je prije pedeset godina. Sve što je od njega ostalo noćas gori.

Sada je sve gotovo, mislio sam dok sam gledao plamen kako se diže u noćno nebo. Šuma je ponovo gorjela, po treći put u deset godina. Vatra će napokon poraziti oca. On više nema snage da imanje ponovo diže iz pepela. Otkako je majka umrla, kroz nametnutu samoću na koju nije bio spreman, ojačala je depresija. Gotovo da je sasvim prestao izlaziti iz kuće. Po čitav dan je samo sjedio u zamračenom salonu. O čemu je razmišljao, pitao sam se i bilo mi je svejedno. Samo sam se nadao da razmišlja, da barem misli uspijevaju da probiju glatke, visoke zidove depresije koja ga je okružila.

Te noći je brdo gorjelo, ali on nije izašao pred kuću, ni da osmotri vatru koja je gutala sav njegov trud. Sa balkona svoje kuće gledao sam terasu njegove, bez nade da će se ukazati, da će kročiti kroz vrata iza kojih je riješio da umre. Njegova žena je umrla, moja je otišla. Dva čovjeka, svaki u svojoj kući, koje čak ni stotinjak metara udaljeni požar nije mogao ujediniti, makar u pogledu na vatru u kojoj nestaje njihovo imanje.

Brdo u plamenu je zvučalo kao pucketanje stare ploče. Kao šum na kaseti. Kao nešto što će ukloniti pritisak na dugme *Dolby*. Plamen se, međutim, nezaustavljivo širio ka podnožju strme padine. Uključio sam lokalni radio. Javljao je da su *prve kuće već evakuisane*. Iza prvih kuća su, naravno, druge kuće. A onda moja. Užasnula me je pomisao da je čitav komšiluk ponovo *udružio rad* i svim snagama pokušava da zaustavi požar. A zapravo smetaju vatrogascima da rade svoj posao. Mogao sam da zamislim kako me ogovaraju. Samo on nije došao, vidio sam ih kako šapuću, pa njihovo gori a njega nema, pa zar mi da gasimo njihovo, pitaju se. I pri tom ignorišu činjenicu da spašavaju svoje kuće, ne moj maslinjak. Da moj maslinjak gase samo zato što se boje da će plamen zahvatiti njihove kuće. *Moj maslinjak*, koji uostalom i nije moj.

Vlada je, javili su na radiju, sve kanadere prodala Hrvatskoj, zato što su procijenili da im nije potrebna flota aviona za gašenje požara. To je bilo na proljeće. Već u prvim danima juna primorje je

zaplajeno. I još gori. Lastva iznad Tivta, Budva, Petrovac, Možura, sve do Skadarskog jezera. Sada gori i Ulcinj, plamen se sa Stričevog brda proširio do prvih kuća Limana. Zidine Starog grada su u opasnosti, javio je radio.

Zato što je Vlada prodala avione, požar gase helikopterima. U nečem što liči na vreće vuku vodu koju ispuštaju na vatru. U trenutku kada voda padne po tlu, dim i para zaklone pogled na ljepotu vatre. Sve nestaje u sivilu i narednih minut–dva potrebno je plamenu da ponovo uspostavi vladavinu nad imanjem moga oca.

Ubrzo shvatam da mi je prizor dosadan. Sada su tu već tri helikoptera. Jasno je da će poraziti vatru – još jedan trijumf tehnike. Nema tu više ničeg za mene, ničeg tamo gdje se bore tehnika i priroda. Prosto ne znam što je od to dvoje monstruoznije – priroda ili tehnika kojom je pokušavaju nadvladati. Prije nego se okrenem i vratim u sobu, pogledam očevu kuću. Svjetla su ugašena, ali znam da ne spava.

## Sin

(odlomek iz romana)

Začelo se je mračiti. Sonce je spet zahajalo za stričevim oljčnim nasadom, kakor smo rekli hribu z desetimi oljčnimi koreninami, ki nam je s petdesetimi hektarji makije, polne modrasov in divjih prašičev, zastiral pogled na morje. Oče je trdil, da je nekoč za tem hribom videl pristajati *nekaj z onega sveta*. Tako je rekel. Nikdar ga nisem uspel prepričati, da je bilo to sonce. Popoldne za popoldnevom smo sedeli na terasi in čakali na večerni mrak. Molče smo opazovali sonce, kako zahaja, kako izginja za silhueto hriba, ki ves čas stoji med menoj in svetom. Ko je svetloba presahnila, je oče vstal, avtoritativno rekel *ne in ne, to ni bilo sonce*. Potem je izginil nekje v hiši. Od tistega trenutka dalje so ga izdajali samo zvoki Bacha – da še naprej obstaja, da tako kot vsak večer leži v temi spalnice, odrevenel od depresije, ki ga ima v krempljih že dve desetletji.

Tisti večer je gorel hrib. Namesto svežega morskega vetra mi je v obraz sekala vročina gorečega gozda. Ogenj bo spet odnesel ves očetov trud, sem pomislil. Po vsakem požaru je policija pregledala teren in poskušala najti sled, ki bi jih pripeljala do storilca. Nikoli, če je to sploh treba reči, niso našli ničesar. Ne koščka stekla ne vžigalice, kaj šele piromanovih sledi. Tistega, ki nam zažiga hrib, ne bodo nikoli našli, če vam pravim: le kako bi ga lahko našli, če pa ta ogenj prihaja z onega sveta, je ponavljal oče.

Ko je hrib gorel prvič, je to sprejel kot božje znamenje. Minilo je celo življenje, ne da bi sploh pogledal oljke, ki mi jih je zapustil stric. Zdaj oljk ni več. Le še odgovornost, ki jo imam do te zemlje. Tako je govoril moj oče, ki je bil kot vsi drugi v tej blazni, prekleti družini nagnjen k fatalizmu.

Ogradil je cel hrib. Ped po ped se je prebijal skozi zgoreli gozd, razbijal kamenje in v skalo kot v vampirjevo srce zabijal glogove kole. Potem je na kole pripel bodečo žico, ki mu je parala kožo na rokah. Mesece dolgo se je domov vračal črn od glave do pet, kot rudar, ki je pravkar prišel na plano iz najglobljega kopa. Saj to je tudi bil: rudar. Spustil se je v srce svojih spominov. Ni krčil gozda: kopal je po svoji notranjosti, razbijal kamen, ki ga je tlačil, odstranjeval plaz, ki ga je prekril in živega pokopal. Moker in umazan se je vračal domov, vse dokler nekega dne ni oznanil, da je njegovo delo končano. Imetje je bilo ograjeno in zaščiteno. Novi suhi zidovi postavljeni, nove oljke posajene. Z mammo naju je odpeljal na teraso in nama kdo

ve katerikrat pokazal stričev oljčni nasad. Rodil sem ga iz ognja, je rekel moj oče.

Ko je hrib zgorel drugič, je znova postavil ograjo in zasadil oljke. Za nameček je postavil še hlev. Potem je iz Avstrije pripeljal koze. V svoji delovni vnemi je šel tako daleč, da je koze celo pasel. Tisto leto je bil pastir. Podnevi je s kozami blodil po hribu. Pred večerom jih je odgnal spat v hlev. Paša je letos popolna, je govoril, iz pregrete zemlje poganjajo mladike, zato moje koze jedo najboljšo hrano. Ograjene so, varne pred šakali, končno so na suhem. Kot v hotelu s petimi zvezdicami, je ponavljal. Mama naj bi vedela, zakaj je bil oče tako predan kozam. Stric – trdila je, da se tega spominja iz babičinih zgodb – je bil tuberkulozen. Za tuberkulozo je tudi umrl, je rekla mama. Za zadnja leta svojega življenja se lahko zahvali kozam, je rekla. Neka ženska mu je s Šestanov prinašala mleko. Po zaslugi tega mleka je živel še potem, ko so ga zdravniki že odpisali. Bil je sam, brez žene in potomstva, je pripovedovala mama. Imel je samo babico, ženo pokojnega brata, imel je tvojega očeta in te koze gor v Šestanih. Živel je pri babici in očetu, živel je po zaslugi koz, je rekla mama.

Človek iz rojstne Crmnice odide v Ameriko. Na begu pred lakoto zapusti svojo vas, samo da bi prišel v New York, vele mesto, v katerem bo naslednja tri leta stradal. Spi v zapuščenih skladiščih. Za preživetje na tržnicah krade zelenjavo. Včasih ubije potepuškega psa in takrat se Gospodu zahvali za večšino ubijanja, ki jo je osvojil med lovom na ptice na Skadarskem jezeru. Že po enem tednu sem vedel, da mi bo uspelo, vedel sem, da bom preživel, je pozneje pripovedoval bratovi ženi in njenemu sinu. Sredi New Yorka sem živel kot sredi gore, jima pravi. Deček, ne da bi trenil, gleda vanj, ko jima pripoveduje o pasji koži, iz katere si je naredil čevlje. Ta deček nikoli ni videl očeta, vendar si predstavlja podobnega stricu, s kratkimi sivimi brki, kako obut v čevlje z vonjem po – morda prav pasjem – usnju vstopa v njuno kuhinjo, kako objema mamo in njega, kako mu, kot to počno strici, v žep stisne nekaj denarja za sladkarije, kako zvečer, *kot stric*, pripoveduje o vseh tistih vznemirljivih avanturah, ki jih je doživel.

Mož si v Ameriki ustvari imetje, a umre z zlomljenim srcem. Nikoli se ni poročil, zato je umrl nesrečen, sliši deček govoriti mamo. Vse, kar sem naredil, celotna pot, ki sem jo prehodil, vse je zaman, saj umiram brez sina, tako je pred smrtjo govoril tvoj stric, kot mu je povedala mama, mi je rekel oče. Vse, kar je imel, je zapustil družini svojega brata. Če se stric ne bi vrnil, bi živel dlje, je do smrti trdila moja mama, pred očmi je imel tvojega očeta in žaloval za svojim

nerojenim sinom, je imela navado reči, to ga je nazadnje dotolklo. Človek celo življenje trpi in na koncu umre sam kot pes. Celotno premoženje zapusti ženi svojega brata. Reši jo revščine, v kateri je bila po moževi smrti prisiljena vzgajati otroka. Celo mladost sem jedel stričev trud, se hranil z njegovim znojem in trpljenjem, tako je govoril moj oče.

Človek se napreza in potem umre. To je cela zgodba o vsakem izmed nas, to je popolna biografija celega človeštva. Pokopan je bil pred petdesetimi leti. Vse, kar je ostalo za njim, nocoj gori.

Zdaj je vsega konec, sem pomislil, ko sem opazoval, kako se plamen pne proti nočnemu nebu. Gozd je spet gorel, tretjič v desetih letih. Ogenj bo naposled premagal očeta, saj nima več moči, da bi iz pepela ponovno zgradil imetje. Po tem, ko je umrla mama, je zaradi vsiljene samote, na katero ni bil pripravljen, postajal čedalje bolj depresiven. Hiše skoraj ni več zapuščal. Cele dneve je preždel v zatemnjenem salonu. Le o čem premišljuje, sem se spraševal in bilo mi je vseeno. Upal sem le, da premišljuje, da bodo vsaj misli prebile gladke, visoke stene, s katerimi ga je obzidala depresija.

Tiste noči je gorel hrib, njega pa ni bilo iz hiše, niti toliko, da bi pogledal ogenj, ki je požiral ves njegov trud. Z balkona svoje hiše sem opazoval teraso njegove, brez upanja, da se bo prikazal, da bo stopil skozi vrata, za katerimi se je odločil umreti. Njegova žena je umrla, moja je odšla. Dva moža, vsak v svoji hiši, ki ju niti sto metrov oddaljeni požar ni mogel združiti, še ob pogledu na ogenj, v katerem se izgublja njuno imetje, ne.

Hrib v plamenih je bil slišati kot prasketanje stare plošče. Kot šum na kaseti. Kot nekaj, kar bo odpravil pritisk na gumb *Dolby*. Ogenj pa se je neustavljivo širil proti vznožju strmega pobočja. Vklupil sem lokalni radio. Poročal je, da so *prve hiše že evakuirane*. Za prvimi hišami so seveda druge hiše. In nato moja. Zgrozil sem se ob misli, da je cela sooseska spet *združila delo* in poskuša z vsemi močmi zaustaviti požar. Dejansko pa ovirajo gasilce pri njihovem delu. Lahko sem si predstavljal, kako me opravljajo. Samo njega ni, sem jih videl šepetati, njihova zemlja gori, njega pa ni, a naj mi gasimo njihovo, se sprašujejo. In pri tem zanemarjajo dejstvo, da rešujejo svoje hiše, ne pa mojega oljčnega nasada. Da moj oljčni nasad gasijo samo zato, ker se bojijo, da ne bi ogenj zajel njihovih hiš. Moj *oljčni nasad*, ki sicer sploh ni moj.

Vlada, so poročali na radiu, je vsa letala Canadair prodala Hrvaški, saj so ocenili, da ne potrebujejo letalske flote za gašenje

požarov. Bilo je spomladi. Že v prvih dneh junija pa je primorje zagorelo. In še gori. Lastva nad Tivtom, Budva, Petrovac, Možura, vse do Skadarskega jezera. Zdaj gori še Ulcinj, ogenj se je s stričevega hriba razširil do prvih hiš na Limanu. Obzidje Starega grada je v nevarnosti, je poročal radio.

Ker je vlada prodala letala, požar gasijo s helikopterji. V nekaj, podobno vrečam, zajemajo vodo in jo spuščajo na ogenj. Ko voda prileti na tla, dim in para zastreta pogled na lepoto ognja. Vse izgine v sivini in ogenj porabi kakšno minuto, da spet prevzame nadzor nad očetovim imetjem.

Kmalu ugotovim, da me prizor dolgočasi. Zdaj so tu že trije helikopterji. Na dlani je, da bodo premagali ogenj – še eno zmagoslavje tehnike. Tu ni več ničesar zame, ničesar tu, kjer se bojujeta tehnika in narava. Preprosto ne vem, kaj od obojega je bolj pošastno – narava ali tehnika, s katero jo skušajo premagati. Preden se obrnem in vrnem v sobo, pogledam očetovo hišo. Luči so ugasnjene, a vem, da ne spi.

*Prevedel Urban Vovk*

## *The Son*

(excerpt from the novel)

The first shades of night were falling. The sun was setting once more behind my great-uncle's olive grove, which is what we called the hill laden with rows of overgrown olive trees. In fact, it was fifty hectares of viper- and boar-infested scrub blocking our view of the sea. My father claimed he had once seen 'something other-worldly' come down to land behind the hill. I never managed to convince him that it was just the sun. Evening after evening, we sat on the terrace waiting for darkness to fall. We watched in silence as the sun slowly disappeared behind the silhouette of the hill, which had always stood between me and the world. When the light was gone, my father would get up, state resolutely, 'No way, that wasn't the sun!' and disappear into the house. From then on, the only sign of his existence would be strains of Bach which escaped from the dark of the bedroom, where he lay paralysed by the depression which had abused him for two decades.

That evening the hill caught on fire. Instead of feeling a breeze from the sea, I was hit in the face by the heat of the burning forest. The fire would erase all my father's labours once more, I thought. After each blaze, the police scoured the terrain searching for evidence which would lead them to the culprit. Needless to say, they never found anything: not a single piece of broken glass or a match, let alone a trace of the firebug. 'They'll never find out who sets fire to our hill, I tell you. How can they when the fire comes from the other world?' my father repeated.

When the hill burned the first time, he saw it as a sign of God: 'My whole life had passed by without me even taking a proper look at the olive grove my uncle left me. Now there's no olive grove left – just my obligation to the land,' my father said in the fatalism so typical of this crazy, blighted family.

He built a fence around the entire hill. He worked his way through the charred forest step by step, breaking stones and driving hawthorn-wood stakes into the rock, as if into the heart of a vampire. Then he tied barbed wire to the stakes, which tore into the flesh of his hands. For months he came home black from head to toe like a coal miner who had just come up from the deepest pit. And that's what he was: a miner. He delved into the heart of his memories. He wasn't clearing the charcoaled forest but digging at what was inside him, breaking

the boulder which oppressed him, shovelling away the scree which had buried him alive. He came home all wet and sooty for months, until one day he announced that his work was done. The property was fenced in and cleared. He had built new dry stone walls and planted olive saplings. He took me and my mother onto the terrace and showed us my great-uncle's olive grove for the umpteenth time. 'I've resurrected it from the flames,' my father said.

When the hill burned the second time, he installed a new fence and planted the olive trees again. As if that was not enough work, he also built a barn. Then he brought in goats from Austria. His diligence went so far that he even minded them.

That year he was a goatherd. During the day he would roam over the hill with the goats; in the early evening he would bring them back to the barn for the night. 'The pasture is excellent this year –,' he said, 'fresh growth is coming up from the scorched earth, and so the goats are eating the best food. Now they're fenced in, safe from the jackals, and have a nice dry place to sleep: like a five-star hotel,' he was fond of saying.

My mother thought she knew the root of my father's devotion to the goats. She claimed to remember from my grandmother's stories that my great-uncle had tuberculosis. 'He died of it in the end, too, but he owed the last years of his life to the goats,' my mother said. 'A goatkeeper came from Šestani and brought him milk. He lived on even after the doctors had written him off, thanks to that milk. He had no wife or children, only your grandmother – the wife of his deceased brother, your father, and those goats up in Šestani. He lived with your grandmother and your father, and the goats helped him survive,' my mother told me.

Born in the coastal range of Crmnica, my great-uncle had left for America. He fled his impoverished village for New York, only to go hungry in the big city for the next three years. He slept in neglected warehouses and stole vegetables from the markets to feed himself. Occasionally he would kill a stray dog, and then he thanked the Lord for the skills with knife and stick he had learned hunting birds on Lake Skadar. 'After the first week I knew I'd succeed. I knew I'd survive,' he later told his brother's wife and her son. 'I eked out a lonely living in the middle of New York as if I was up in the wilds of Montenegro,' he told them. The boy stared, riveted, while he spoke about the dog skin he made shoes from. The boy had never seen his own father, but he imagined he must have looked like this

uncle with the short grizzled moustache who now came into their kitchen in shoes of strong-smelling leather (maybe even dogleather?), hugged his mother and him, slipped some money for sweets into his pocket like uncles do, and in the evening told them tales of his adventures. What an uncle, what a man!

He made it good in America but died of a broken heart, my grandmother told my father, who later told me: 'He never married and therefore died unhappy. "Everything I've done and all the roads I've travelled have been in vain because I'm dying without a son," he said before he died.' My mother, while she was alive, maintained he would have lived longer if he'd stayed in America: 'But he came back, saw your father, and fretted for the son he'd never had – that's what killed him in the end.'

He slaved away all his life, only to die in misery. He left all his worldly goods to his sister-in-law. That saved her from the penury she faced after her husband's death and would have had to raise her child in. 'All my young years I ate the fruits of my uncle's labour; I fed on his sweat and suffering,' my father said.

The man from Crmnica laboured, suffered and died. That's the whole story about each and every one of us: the complete biography of the human race. He was buried fifty years ago, and what's left of him is going up in flames tonight.

*Now it's all over*, I thought as I watched the flames rising into the night sky. The hill was burning for the third time in ten years. The fire would be my father's final defeat. He no longer had the strength to raise the property from the ashes again.

After my mother died, the enforced loneliness he was ill-prepared for exacerbated his depression. He hardly ever left the house any more. He would just sit in the darkened living room all day. *What was he thinking about*, I asked myself, but in fact I didn't care. I just hoped he *was* thinking and that at least his thoughts managed to break through the tall, smooth walls of depression which surrounded him.

That night the hill was on fire, but he didn't go out in front of the house even just to watch the flames which were swallowing up all his labours. From the balcony of my house I watched the terrace of his, without hope that he would appear and maybe even step through the door he had decided to die behind. His wife had died, and mine had left me. Two men, each in his own house, whom not even a fire blazing a hundred metres away could unite, not even just to watch it devour their property.

The burning hill sounded like the crackle of an old record. Or the hiss of a cassette. Something you could get rid of by pressing the Dolby button. But now the flames spread out of control down the slopes of the hill. I turned on the local radio. They reported that the first houses had been evacuated. Behind the first houses, of course, were more houses. And then mine. I was horrified by the thought that the whole neighbourhood had again pooled its efforts and was doing its utmost to stop the fire. And in doing so was obstructing the fire brigade in doing its job. I could just imagine the neighbours gossiping about me. *He's the only one who's not here*, I could hear them whisper to each other. *It's their property that's burning and he's not here. Why do we have to put out their fire?* they asked themselves, ignoring the fact that they were out there protecting their houses, not my olive grove. They were only fighting the fire in my olive grove because they feared it could encroach on their houses. 'My olive grove', which wasn't mine anyway.

They said on the radio that the government had sold all its Canadair aircraft to Croatia because it had assessed that the country didn't need a fleet of water bombers. That was in the springtime. The coastal area had been set alight in the first days of June and was still burning – from Lastva above Tivat to Budva, Petrovac, Možura and all the way to Lake Skadar. Now Ulcinj was ablaze too: the flames had spread from my great-uncle's hill to the first houses in the suburb of Liman. The walls of the Old Town were also at risk, the radio reported.

Since the government had sold the aeroplanes, the fire was being fought with helicopters. They were hauling up water in what looked like sacks and dropping it on the fire. The moment the water fell on the ground, smoke and steam obscured its elemental beauty. Everything vanished in grey, but the flames only needed another minute or two to re-establish their reign over my father's property.

Soon I found the scene boring. Three helicopters were now in operation and it was plain to see that they would defeat the fire – one more triumph of technology. There was nothing left for me where technology and nature were pitted against each other. I simply don't know which is more monstrous – nature or the methods people employ in order to dominate it. Before turning and going back into the room, I glanced over to my father's house. The lights were off, but I knew he wasn't asleep.

*Translated by Will Firth*



*Foto © Igor Todorovski*

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# Tomislav Osmanli

Tomislav Osmanli se je rodil leta 1956 v Bitoli v Makedoniji. Diplomiral je na Pravni fakulteti Univerze sv. Cirila in Metoda v Skopju. Je prozaiist, esejist, dramatik, pisec scenarijev, medijski teoretik, novinar ter filmski in gledališki kritik. Svoj prvi scenarij *Луѓе без адреса* (Ljudje brez naslovov), za katerega je prejel drugo nagrado na anonimnem natečaju za scenariste Makedonske državne TV, je napisal leta 1976. Med njegova številna dela, ki jih je objavil od takrat, sodijo besedila za gledališče, kot na primer *Салон Бумс* (Salon cveti, 1986), lutkovna igra *Двајца во Еден* (Dva v raju, 1995) ter *Апокалиптична комедија* (Apokaliptična komedija, 1999), scenariji za celovečerce – kot sta *Свездите на '42-та* (Zvezde '42-ega, 1984) in *Ангели на отпад* (Angeli smetišč, 1995) – ter za kratke filme in televizijske dokumentarce, zbirke filmskih scenarijev, kot na primer *Скопски диптих* (Skopski diptih, 1991), več zbirk esejev in kratkih zgodb, strokovnih del ter romana *Дваесет и првиот* (Enaindvajseti, 2009), za katerega je leta 2009 prejel nagrado Makedonije za najboljši roman, in *Зад аголот* (Za vogalom, 2012). Njegova dela so prevedena v devet jezikov. Živi v Skopju, kjer dela kot odgovorni urednik kulturno-umetniškega programa pri zasedbni televizijski postaji TV Telma.

Tomislav Osmanli was born in 1956 in Bitola, Macedonia. He obtained a degree from the Faculty of Law at the Ss. Cyril and Methodius University of Skopje. He is a writer of prose fiction, an essayist, playwright, screenwriter, media theoretic, journalist, and film and theatre critic. He wrote his first screenplay, *Луѓе без адреса* (People without Address), which won the second prize at the anonymous screenplay competition of the Macedonian national TV, in 1976. The numerous works he has since published include plays such as *Салон Бумс* (The Salon Booms, 1986), the puppet play *Двајца во Еден* (*Two in Eden*, 1995), and *Апокалиптична комедија* (*Apocalyptic Comedy*, 1999), screenplays for feature films, such as *Свездите на '42-та* (The Stars of '42, 1984), and *Ангели на отпад* (Angels of the Dumps, 1995), short films and TV documentaries, books of film screenplays such as *Скопски диптих* (The Skopje Diptych, 1991), various books of essays and short stories, non-fiction books, as well as the novels *Дваесет и првиот* (The Twenty-First, 2009), which won the Macedonian Novel of the Year Award (2009), and *Зад аголот* (Around the Corner, 2012). His works have been translated into nine languages. He lives in Skopje, where works as the editor-in-chief of the arts-and-culture programming with the independent television station TV Telma.

## Базен

Константин З. го мачат силни главоболки. Понекогаш му се чини дека главата му се наоѓа во обрач кој постојано се стега, сè додека не експлодира. Според старото правило дека клинот со клин се избива, кога ќе го почувствува неподносливото стегање во внатрешноста на черепот, Константин З. ја врзува главата со свирена ешарпа што потоа силно ја затегнува, и онака врзан околу, во последно време проќелавената глава, врвејќи покрај огледалото со консола во кое го следа својот комичен одраз со шарпата чии краеве му паѓаат на рамениците, мрцлаво влечејќи ги пантофлите по паркетот од неговата службена квартира, оди до високите прозорци ги навлекува тешките драперии и кога во просторот ќе зацари смирувачката темница, легнува во празниот брачен кревет од својата спална соба и конечно почнува да се опушта.

З. не е самец, иако тука, во Скопје, живее самечки живот. Испратен по деликатна задача во овој град, тој во Софија ги остави колегите од Министерството, пријателите, своите подостарени родители, софијанци во неколку генерации на кои времето покрај годините им придобавало и старечка завист и цинизам, но пред сè, својата жена и, дојден во овој град што е сè уште паланка во споредба со царска Софија, покрај со проблемите на работата, непрекинато се оптоварува со продолженото останување на неговата Лила во Софија. Лила нема потекло од престолнината. Таа е дојдена со мајка ѝ, една самохрана жена од Казанлџк, којашто почина веднаш по нивната свадба и за чиешто потекло не успеа да дознае ништо подетално и покрај неколкуте обиди што дискретно ги спроведуваше преку своите колеги од Министерството.

Пред два месеца Лила требаше да му се придружи тука, и да му ја скрати многумесечната осаменост, но таа веќе по трет пат му најавува дека сè уште не ги решила прашањата со одржувањето на нивниот комфорен апарман, па уште извесно време ќе остане во Софија. Го терети, значи, грижата за неа, помислата како таа врви без него во овие тешки воени времиња, особено зашто знае дека таму нема некого што би ѝ понудил каква годе помош до колку таа ѝ биде нужна. Неговите никогаш не ја засакаа, па така никогаш и не се зближија со неа, ниту пак ја прифатија. Нив ги слуша еднаш во месецот, неа, преку отежнатата, воено одржувана телефонија во неговата канцеларија – секој втор ден. Освен тоа, него го разјадува и помислата потекната од едно

матно, никогаш неразјаснето сомневање, дека Лила нешто пред неговото заминување од нивниот дом во престолнината, почна да го изневерува.

Откако се зедао, тие двајцата водеа удобен живот. Таа беше заангажирана дома, кадешто се хранеа секој ден освен во недела кога одеа на семеен ручек кај неговите и во понеделниците кога обично ручаа самите во некој од подобрите ресторани, зашто нивната домашна помошничка тогаш имаше слободен ден. Лила, молчалива и исполнета со женска таинственост, го привлекуваше и сега колку и порано, и тој ѝ се посвети исцело. Немаа деца, но колку што почнуваше да го товари него, толку таа околност кај неа не оставаше речиси никаков белег. Со време почна да се преиспитува дали можеби проблемот не е кај него и дали нивната бездетност не е последица на повторената гонореја, што ја закачи на едно исто место: еднаш како студент, уште при првото телесно искуство во една сомнителна јавна куќа во прикрајците на градот во која го пречека пристарена нападно нашминкана дебелникава анимаирка што ја доби за евтина цена, и којашто не му го покажа жолтиот картон со седмично извршениот лекарски преглед (и кој, впрочем, во тоа време ни самиот не знаеше да го побара); и втор пат, со една млада бринета на која, пак, жолтиот картон ѝ беше сосем исправен. Неговиот љубовен живот се делеше на два дела, на неколкукратите посети на две други јавни куќи, потоа на неколку младешки љубовни авантури - и на животот со Лила. Се чувствувааше зависен од неа, од нејзиното молчаливо присуство кога беше со неа, било дома, било на неколкуте типични места во градот, од нејзиниот цврст чекор кога го држеше под рака при прошетките по паркот, од нејзиното тело што доаѓаше до полн израз кога се свиваше со невиден занес додека неуморно водеа љубов во издолжените софиски попладниња.

Константин З. заработуваше добро, воедно бележејќи и солиден раст по стрмната хиерархија на мемлосаната, веќе пристарена администрација во неговото министерство, навивајќи со сета сила за оние министри-президенти што на најистакнатото место во владиниот кабинет се менуваа, по некогаш со вртоглаво темпо, и коишто во помладите како него гледаа нова енергија погодна за какво-такво освежувања во стариот бирократски поредок на државата воопшто и посебно на неговото Министерство. Чекајќи ги, значи, тие моменти во својата служба, Константин З. ќе исчекореше напред, за потоа неговото административно

напредување да бележи извесна стагнација, сè до новата политичка прилика. Во тие исчекорувања и застои на неговата бирократска кариера, помина повеќе од половината на неговиот работен век и четврт век од бракот со Лила, кога започна војната и кога кабинетот на Првиот министер го именува на високо место во Комесаријатот за Еврејски прашања, а потоа и за делегат на тој комесаријат, деташиран во новите предели на новата мисија во Скопје.

Грижите на работата во Комесаријатот му го толчат мозокот и штом ќе има малку послободно време мислите му се ројат како пчели во темна кошница и тогаш почнуваат неговите неиздржливи главоболки. Фала му на бога во последно време работата му го ангажира и слободното време, така што главоболките не се јавуваат како порано. Константин З., имено, во овој миг работи на еден голем и изискателен проект на новата влада, имено на “конечното решение” што е циничен германски суфемизам за истребувањето на Евреите од просторот на штотуку ослободените Нови предели. Како што се приближува крајот на 1942 работите околу проектот добиваат забрзување, а неговиот ангажман е целосен. Главоболките речиси сосем исчезнуваат. Проектот на кој Константин З. се ангажира сега личи на локомотива во полно движење којашто и тој ја ложи, и кое движење, како впрочем кога е човек на било какво авантуристичко патување, му го одржува психолошкиот тонус цврст, а возбудите на кои патем наидува, воедначениот, монотон живот му го прават значително повозбудлив.

Кога дојде тука, на крајот од минатата година, неговата влада веќе ги беше донела подготвителните прописи: значи, на 14 јули 1941 година го обезбеди Законот за еднократен данок на еврејските имоти што Константин З. го сметаше за добар пропис зашто само во Скопје им донесе богатство од 45 милиони лева, за жал еднократен прилив; потоа на 4. октомври Законот за забрана на вршење трговска и индустриска дејност на Евреите што не доднесе ништо; на 1 ноември со најтешкиот пропис, Законот за заштита на нацијата. Потоа следеа нови прописи, педантно го класира во главата законодавството од својот домен Константин З., делегатот на Комесаријатот за Еврејски прашања останат, распетлан во елекот и со пијалокот што снисходливо му го наточи помошникот и чашката што ја вртеше пред себе среде уморно издолжените сенки во својата конечно стивната скопска канцеларија.

Константин З. не ги сака Евреите, но не е ни за “конечното решение” кое го смета за претерано и во секој случај - бесполезно.

Тоа е еден атавизам што во современа Германија доби нова ирационална идеолошка обнова.

Како што почнуваа да се донесуваат првите прописи со кои им се стеснуваат граѓанските права на Евреите, така и нему почнуваа да му се јавуваат негови пријатели, некои со кои и студирал заедно на универзитетот, тогаш немајќи ни елементарен поим дека се со еврејски происход. Особено не оние побележити познајници чии семејства и лично ги познаваше како заслужни за различни домени од општествениот живот на Отечеството, некои и како луѓе заслужни во последните војни што нивната заедничка татковина ги водеше од почетоците на ова изразито немирно столетие. Се чувствуваше неугодно при тие средби, некои од кои изнесуваа, како аргументи за притисоците и непријатностите што им се приредуваа, запрепаствувачки придонеси кон заедничкото, имено негово и нивно порано благодарно отечество. Не му беше јасно зошто тој растечки притисок воопшто ѝ е нужен на неговата земја. Разбираше дека во Германија притисокот врз Евреите од шлагер на острастените национал-социјалисти, брзо се преобразуваше во строг марш врз судбините на неаријците врз кои се преземаа актите на сè поизразено државно насилие, но не разбираше што Софија има со тоа, особено зашто во германскиот модел меѓу неаријците се подразбираа Бугарите меѓу другите Словени. Нему, да речеме, повеќе му се допаѓаше пристапот на Италија, кадешто Евреите беа притиснати кон маргините на општеството и замолчани, не и правно, стопански и фактички прогонувани.

Затоа на Константин З. му се допадна мерката на неговиот министер-претседател Филов, кога е донесен прописот за задолжително обележување на лицата од еврејски происход, кој налагаше, оние меѓу нив што се заслужни за него да носат шестоаголни ѕвезди со бела боја и значително помали димензии, наместо покрупните и жолти наменети за одбележување на останатите Евреи. Тој пропис му се допаѓаше зашто му даваше и нему можност да се правда и му ја смируваше совеста пред недоверчивите погледи и замолкот на пријателите што таа политика не ја одобруваа, но во напливот на суровите времиња не се ни осмелуваа да ја коментираат.

Но, во политиката, а особено во администрацијата ништо не е подложено на личните желби и мерки на бирократите, особено во вакви вознемирени, диви времиња. Како способен бирократ Константин З. стигнува да биде на сите страни. Бара прецизни пописи на населението од критичната категорија. Ги вкрстува

податоците за Евреите на подрачјето со оние од архивите на поранешната југословенска власт. Агилно дејствува во Скопје, а постојано патува за Битола, на пати и за Штип. Скопје и Битола го иритираат. Таму има премногу работа, а бројот на населението од интерес за неговиот домен таму е најголем, додека традициите, според тоа и критичните врски со останатото население, најдлабоки. Штип технички му се допаѓа повеќе, местото е помало, помирно, полесно за обработка зашто се работи за неколку стотини лица од критичната популација. Кога се иссилува пред решителната акција одново да оди таму, командантот на местото му зборува како се надева дека наскоро лично ќе го покани во новиот базен на локалната бања во која термалните води имаат потврдена лековитост, срдечно го тупка по рамото и се смее со полните заруменети образи што откриваат страствен пијач, додавајќи дека, дури тоа нему и да не му е потребно, особено со оглед на претстојната работа, добро ќе му дојде малку релаксација.

“Кежовица, му вели тој, само Кежовица е за вас господин З.! Оваа бања прави чуда”.

Константин З., кој го презира и Скопје и Битола, и сите градови на новите предели, за оваа касаба, лесна за техничка обработка, има поеднакво и неподелено мислење, па го гледа командантот со празен поглед, технички заблагодарувајќи му се на предварителната покана што брзо ја запрета и ја отфрли меѓу неважните податоци во свеста.

Во март З. ја доби наредбата за пристапување кон “конечното решение” во шифрирана депеша. Откако единаесеттиот ден од месецот во раните утрински часови беше спроведена рацијата во трите места кадешто живееше еврејско население, според прецизниот план, лицата од еврејски происход како што службено ги именуваа, без оглед на полот, здравствената состојба и возраста, беа донесувани и, според прецизниот план и инструкции и конфинирани во големата зграда на скопскиот тутунски монопол. Иако со Лила се немаше чуено веќе цела недела, тие денови не успевајќи да ја најде дома, ниту пак да прими нејзин повик, Константин З. сепак имаше причина да биде исклучително задоволен. Татко му вети дека ќе провери како е жена му и тоа значително го успокои. Од друга страна немаше ни време за приватниот живот. Тие денови се прибираше дома доцна, на спиење од само неколку часа. Акцијата беше напдно ефикасно и

успешно изведена и Константин З. се соочи со првите пофалби усно или телефонски искажани од повисоките инстанци. Математички изразено, нејзината ефикасност изнесува 98 отсто објаснуваше тој со строг службен тон. Толку, имено, изнесува процентот на 7.315-те лица од цела една етничка група, приведена и затворена во големата индустриска зграда во градот Скопје, од неодамна подготвена на новата намена и обиколена со висока ограда од стотици метри бодлив тел. Константин З. се чувствуваше семоќен, гледаше во огромното сиво здание на поранешниот монопол и сам си го поставуваше прашањето: дали некој друг успеал цел еден етникум да затвори во една единствена зграда? Тоа фалбено прашање не се осмелуваше да го постави пред надлежните, иако, помислуваше, не би било лошо тоа и да го стори откако целата операција ќе биде сосем завршена.

Затворениците на монополот тука останаа десет дена, во кои Константин З. не почиваше на ловориките од комплиментите за успешно завршената акција, туку се грижеше во тој дух да се приведе кон крајот деликатниот зафат за кој всушност и беше испратен тука. Не ги слушаше гласовите на тие луѓе чии деца плачеа, чии жени се довикуваа со сè поочајни гласови, чии мажи сиркаа преку бодливата ограда, ден низ ден сè повеќе замолчуваа и се молеа и кога молчеа; иако тие слики и гласови допираа до него, зашто знаеше дека неговата работа привршува, дека е слаб на човечките несреќи и дека поради сето тоа е сосем возможно одново да му се вратат силните мигрени.

Почнувајќи од 22 па сè до 29 март, скопскиот монопол почна да се празни во три наврати. Три железнички транспорти со издолжени композиции формирани главно од товарни вагони, Евреите од новите предели беа дефинитивно транспортирани на север. Константин З. ја знаеше дестинацијата на ови композиции, концентрациониот логор Треблинка. Точно во тоа време неговите од Софија му соопштија дека Лила го напуштила нивниот заенички дом, според нивни информации со некој помлад офицер. Татко му ова го проследи со коментарот дека тој уште кога за прв пат ја видел знаел дека таа вртиопашка отсекогаш била подготвена на такво нешто, но тој да не се грижи, туку по завршената работа да се врати во Софија, не во оној брлог во кој живееше со неа, туку во својот вистински, дедовски дом па тогаш “ќе се најде некое ново и умно решение”.

За Константин З. сè стана безумно. На 30 март му се вратија главоболките. Најнапред најавени од остар писок во главата,

уште понеснослив од оној од локомотивите што го означуваа успешниот крај на неговата мисија, само таков што не сакаше да престане. Целиот тој ден остана дома, затворен во спалната соба, свиткан преку очите со цврсто стегнатата свилена шарпа, и легнат на празниот кревет со едната рака испружена на страната кадешто обично лежеше Лила. Во главата му се јавуваа гласовите на луѓето насобрани во оние десетина дена од преполната зграда на скопскиот монопол. На работа дозна дека тој зафат на жртвувањето на Евреите од новите предели државата мораше да ја стори и дека Отечеството тој налог го дава за да ги спаси своите домородни Евреи, два пати повеќе на број. Кога го пребираше во главата таа информација почувствува посилно стегане во главата. Му се крена утробата и тој брзо стана, додека под черепот му светкаше. Дишеше длабоко и бурно и така го смири неволниот нагон што неконтролирано, до болка му го стегаше желудникот, но не и чувството на потполна излажаност, не и впечатокот дека заедно со трите транспорта и неговиот живот е заминат во некоја непозната и дефинитивно изгубена насока.

Од сонот го тргна звонењето на специјалниот телефон. Со напор се крена и отиде до него. Од зад прозорецот навлегуваше првоаприлското сонце. Беше тоа командантот од Штип кој со онаа иста ведра срдечност што тогаш му предизвикуваше презир, а сега, за чудо, спасоносна пријатност, му соопшти дека базенот во бањата Кежовица е готов и дека, според ветувањето, тој еве лично го кани господинот делегат да дојде на заслуженото релаксирање во неговите лековити термални води. Константин З. му се пожали на силните главоболка што го мачат, а командантот му рече дека токму заради тоа и треба да дојде.

“Кежовица, му повтори простосрдечниот офицер, само Кежовица е за Вас господин З.!”

Така во следната слика го наоѓаме Константин З. како плива по новиот базен на штипската бања Кежовица, борејќи се со обновеното чувство на покајување што дошол во оваа паланка и во оваа бања, обидувајќи се да го избегне подгледнувањето кон дното на новиот базен, на кое се наоѓаат големи правоаголни мермерни плочи издлабени со стотици аглести знаци. Иако не умее да ги прочита, Константин З. знае што тие означуваат: тоа се еврејски записи на имињата и презимињата, епитетите, датумите на раѓањата и на смртта и епитафските пораки на надгробните

споменици од луѓе закопани, некои и претврени во прав и пепел, на штипските еврејски гробишта, од тој бизарен мермерен мајдан на завршени човечки судбини, од тој неколку стотици години стар скаменет дел од штипското градско сеќавање од каде се земени старите надгробни плочи на вознемирените покојници и се вградени во основата на базенот од Кежовица, бањата со лековити термални води.

Тие води не му помагаат на Константин З.. Навистина малку го релаксираат додека плива и додека неговото стежнато тело лебди над плочите од дното на базенот, додека тромаво се лизга над имињата, судбините и сенките на покојниците, обидувајќи се да не гледа во нивните симболи, во знаците неизбришливо издлабени врз стариот мермер на дното, што, како за инает, водата ги мие, ги увеличува како под лупа, ги прави појасни и поблиски, скоро тутнувајќи му ги пред стегнатите очи и чело на покајаниот делегат на Комесаријатот за еврејски прашања кој пливајќи се обидува да ја намали напнатоста што ја чувствува низ целото тело и да го одложи надоѓањето на нервниот слом.

## *Bazen*

Konstantina Z. mučijo hudi glavoboli. Včasih ima občutek, da je njegova glava v obroču, ki se nenehno zateguje, vse dokler ne počí. Po starem pravilu, klin se s klinom izbija, si Konstantin Z., vsakič ko začuti pritisk v notranjosti lobanje, glavo ovije v svilen šal, ga zategne, kolikor je mogoče, in se z ovito, zadnje čase že precej plešasto glavo zavrti pred ogledalom na podstavku, v katerem sledi svojemu komičnemu odsevu s šalom z robovi, ki mu segajo do ramen, pri čemer lenobno podrsava s copati po parketu svojega službenega domovanja, potem stopi do visokih oken, jih zastre s težkimi draperijami in ko se v sobi razleže pomirjujoča tema, leže v prazno zakonsko posteljo v svoji spalnici in se končno začne sproščati.

Z. ni samski, čeprav tu, v Skopju, živi samsko življenje. Ko so ga poslali na občutljivo nalogo v Skopje, v Sofiji za seboj ni zapustil samo sodelavcev z Ministrstva, prijateljev, svojih ostarelih staršev, starih Sofijčanov, že več generacij, ki so jim leta poleg starosti prinesla tudi starčevsko zavist in cinizem, ampak predvsem svojo ženo, in ko je prišel v to mesto, ki je bilo v primerjavi s kraljevsko Sofijo samo mestece, se je poleg svojih službenih težav ves čas obremenjeval tudi z mislimi, da je za dolgo obdobje Lilo pustil samo v Sofiji. Lila ni prihajala iz prestolnice. S svojo materjo samohranilko, ki je kmalu po njuni poroki umrla, je prišla iz Kazanlaka, o njenih koreninah je vedel bore malo, čeprav je nekajkrat poskušal diskretno izvedeti kaj več od svojih kolegov z Ministrstva.

Že pred dvema mesecema bi se mu tu morala pridružiti Lila in mu tako skrajšati večmesečno osamljenost, a mu je že tretjič naznanila, da še vedno ni rešila vprašanja glede vzdrževanja njunega komfortnega stanovanja in da bo še nekaj časa ostala v Sofiji. Skrb zanjo ga je obremenjevala, težila ga je misel, da je sama v težkih vojnih časih, še posebej, ker je vedel, da tam ni nikogar, ki bi ji nudil kakršno koli pomoč, tudi če bi jo še kako potrebovala. Njegovi je niso nikoli vzljubili, nikoli se niso zblížali, niti sprejeli je niso. Njih pokliče enkrat na mesec, njo pa, prek slabih vojaških telefonskih zvez v svoji pisarni, vsak drugi dan. Poleg tega ga razjeda tudi misel, ki temelji na nejasnem, nikoli razčiščenem sumu, da ga je Lila, nedolgo preden je zapustil njun dom v prestolnici, prevarala.

Odkar sta se vzela, sta živela udobno. Ona se je ukvarjala z domačimi opravili, doma sta se tudi vsak dan prehranjevala, razen ob nedeljah, ko sta hodila na družinsko kosilo k njegovim, in ob

ponedeljkih, ko sta po navadi jedla v eni izmed boljših restavracij, ker je imela njuna gospodinjska pomočnica dela prosti dan. Molčiča in z žensko skrivnostnostjo prežeta Lila ga je privlačila toliko kot prej, zato se ji je popolnoma predal. Otrok nista imela in čeprav je njega to težilo, ni imela ta okoliščina nanjo nobenega vpliva. Sčasoma se je začel spraševati, ali ni morda težava pri njem, ali ni morda vzrok njegove jalovosti ponovljena gonoreja, ki jo je dvakrat staknil na istem mestu, prvič kot študent med prvo telesno izkušnjo v neki sumljivi javni hiši na obrobju mesta, kjer ga je pričakala prezgodaj ostarela, vpadljivo naličena debeluška, ki jo je dobil za nizko ceno in ki mu ni pokazala rumenega zdravstvenega kartona, v katerem naj bi bil vpisan tedenski zdravniški pregled (za katerega takrat sploh ni vedel, da jo mora vprašati), in drugič od mlade temnolaske, katere rumeni zdravstveni karton je bil popolnoma v redu. Njegovo ljubezensko življenje se je delilo na dva dela: na nekajkratne obiske v še dveh drugih javnih hišah, ki jim je sledilo nekaj mladostniških avantur, in na življenje z Lilo. Počutil se je odvisnega od nje, od njene molčeče prisotnosti, kadar je bil z njo doma ali pa na tistih nekaj tipičnih krajih v mestu, od njenega čvrstega koraka, ko ga je med sprehodom v parku držala pod roko, od njenega telesa, ki je prišlo do popolnega izraza, ko se je zvijalo v nevidnem zanosu med neumornim ljubljenjem v podaljšanih sofijskih popoldnevih.

Konstantin Z. je dobro zaslužil in se obenem solidno vzpenjal po strmi hierarhični lestvici ostarele, že skoraj strohnele uprave na svojem ministrstvu ter vneto navijal za ministrske predsednike, ki so se na najpomembnejšem položaju v vladnem kabinetu menjavali z bliskovitim tempom in ki so v mladih, kot je bil on, videli novo energijo, ki bo v že precej zakrnelo birokratsko ureditev države prinesla osvežitev, še posebej na njihovem ministrstvu. V takšnih trenutkih je Konstantin Z. v svoji službi vedno naredil korak naprej, potem je vselej, kar se napredovanja v upravi tiče, sledilo obdobje mirovanja, vse do nove politične priložnosti. Več kot polovico njegovega delovnega staža in četrtno zakona z Lilo so predstavljala njegova administrativna napredovanja in mirovanja, ko pa je izbruhnila vojna, ga je kabinet ministrskega predsednika imenoval na visoko mesto na Komisariatu za judovska vprašanja in pozneje za delegata v omenjenem komisariatu ter ga poslal v nove kraje na novo poslanstvo v Skopje.

Delovne skrbi na Komisariatu so mu začele rahljati možgane in vsakič, ko je imel kaj časa zase, so mu misli rojile kot čebele v panju in takrat se ga je lotil neznošen glavobol. Hvala bogu mu je zadnje

čase delo jemalo tudi prosti čas in je bilo zato glavobolov manj kot prej. Pravzaprav je Konstantin Z. takrat delal na velikem in zahtevnem projektu nove vlade, in sicer na »končni rešitvi«, kar je bil ciničen nemški evfemizem za iztrebljanje Judov s pravkar osvobojenih novih predelov. Bolj ko se približeval konec leta 1942, bolj so bila dela na projektu v polnem razmahu in popolnejša njegova predanost. Njegovi glavoboli so skoraj popolnoma izginili. Projekt, ki se mu je Konstantin Z. posvečal, je bil podoben lokomotivi, ki vozi s polno paro, na kateri je bil on kurjač in katere vožnja je bila podobna avanturističnemu potovanju, zato mu je zagotavljal stabilno psihično zdravje, vznemirjenja, ki jih je doživljal, pa so njegovo monotono, ustaljeno življenje naredila razburljivo.

Ko je lani konec leta prišel sem, je njegova vlada že sprejela pripravljene predpise, tako je štirinajstega julija 1941 sprejela Zakon o enkratnem davku na judovsko premoženje, kar je bil po mnenju Konstantina Z. dober predpis, saj jim je samo v Skopju prinesel več kot petinštirideset milijonov levov priliva, na žalost samo enkrat, četrtega oktobra je sledil zakon, ki je Judom prepovedoval opravljanje trgovske in industrijske dejavnosti, ki ni nič prinesel, ter prvega novembra najhujši predpis, Zakon o zaščiti naroda. Potem so sledili še drugi novi predpisi, zakonodajo na svojem področju pa je Konstantin Z., delegat Komisariata za judovska vprašanja, skrbno razvrščal v svoji glavi, ko je sedel neurejen v brezrokavniku, s pijačo v roki, ki mu jo je uslužno natakal njegov pomočnik, in vrtel kozarec pred seboj sredi senc, ki so se utrujene raztezale v njegovi končno spokojni skopski pisarni.

Konstantin Z. ni maral Judov, a se kljub temu ni strinjal s »končno rešitvijo«, ki se mu je zdela pretirana in v vsakem primeru nekoristna. To je eden od atavizmov, ki je v sodobni Nemčiji doživel nerazumen ideološki preporod.

Ko so začeli sprejemati prve predpise, ki so Judom omejevali državljske pravice, so se mu takoj začeli oglašati prijatelji, z nekaterimi je skupaj študiral na univerzi, ki se jim takrat še sanjalo ni, da so judovskega porekla. Še posebej ne pomembnejšim znancem, ki so prihajali iz družin, za katere je sam vedel, da so veljale kot zaslužne na veliko področjih družbenega življenja v domovini, nekateri so bili celo zaslužni v zadnjih vojnah v njihovi skupni domovini na začetku tega zelo nemirnega stoletja. Ob takšnih srečanjih se je počutil nelagodno, še posebej, ko so nekateri na podlagi izjemnih prispevkov k skupni, njegovi in njihovi, hvaležni domovini argumentirano protestirali proti pritiskom in nevšečnostim, ki so jih bili deležni.

Ni mu bilo jasno, čemu je prav njegova država morala vršiti takšen pritisk. Razumel je, da se je v Nemčiji pritisk na Jude, ki so ga vršili goreči nacionalni socialisti, bliskovito sprevrgel v strog pohod na nearijce, proti katerim so se vršila dejanja nenehno rastočega državnega nasilja, ni pa mogel razumeti, kaj ima s tem opraviti Sofija, saj so bili po nemškem modelu nearijci tudi Bolgari in drugi Slovani. Njemu je bil denimo ljubši italijanski pristop, kjer so Jude potisnili na rob družbe in jih utišali, vendar jih niso pravno, gospodarsko ali dejansko preganjali.

Zato je bil Konstantinu Z. všeč ukrep njegovega ministrskega predsednika Filova, ki je sprejel predpis o obveznem popisu oseb judovskega porekla, ki je določal, da morajo Judje, ki so bili kakor koli za kar koli zaslužni, nositi šesterokrake zvezde bele barve, znatno manjše od velikih in rumenih, namenjenih za označevanje ostalih Judov. Ta predpis mu je bil všeč, ker je tudi njemu dajal možnost, da opraviči svoja dejanja in pomiri svojo slabo vest pred sumničavimi pogledi in molčečnostjo prijateljev, ki takšne politike niso odobraval, a si je zaradi surovih časov niso drznili komentirati.

Toda v politiki, še posebej v upravi, ni prav nič podvrženo osebnim željam in ukrepom birokratov, še posebej ne v takšnih razburljivih, divjih časih. Kot uspešnemu birokratu je Konstantinu Z. uspevalo biti na vseh koncih. Naročal je točne popise prebivalstva kritične kategorije. Usklajeval je podatke o Judih na svojem področju s tistimi, ki jih je arhivirala prejšnja jugoslovanska oblast. Vestno je deloval v Skopju, pogosto pa je potoval tudi v Bitolo in včasih tudi v Štip. Skopje in Bitola sta mu šla na živce. Tam je imel veliko dela, saj je bilo prebivalstvo, ki je spadalo v njegovo delovno področje, v teh krajih najštevilčnejše in so bile tako tradicije in s tem posledično kritične naveze z ostalim prebivalstvom tam najbolj zakoreninjene. Tehnično mu je bil Štip ljubši, mesto je bilo majhno, mirnejše, lažje za obdelavo, saj je bilo tam samo nekaj sto oseb iz kritične populacije. Ko se je pred rešitvijo zadeve odločil iti še enkrat tja, mu je komandant mesta rekel, da upa, da ga bo lahko kmalu povabil v nov bazen v lokalnih toplicah, kjer imajo termalne vode dokazano zdravilno moč, pri čemer ga je prisrčno potrepljal po rami in se mu nasmehnil s pordelimi lici, ki so odražala njegovo strastno pijančevanje, in dodal, da četudi tega ne potrebuje, mu malo sprostitev ne bi škodilo, glede na delo, ki ga čaka.

»Kežovica,« mu je rekel še, »Kežovica je pravi kraj za vas, gospod Z., te toplice delajo čudeže.«

Konstantin Z., ki je preziral Skopje in Bitolo in vse ostale kraje v novih predelih, je imel o tem mestecu, kjer je bila tehnična obdelava lahka, enako mnenje, zato je zrl v komandanta s praznim pogledom in se mu kot avtomat zahvalil za prikladno povabilo, ki si ga je takoj izbrisal iz glave oziroma ga vrgel med nepomembne podatke v svoji zavesti.

Marca je Z. s šifrirano depešo dobil ukaz, da opravi »končno rešitev«. Ker je bila enajstega dne v mesecu v zgodnjih jutranjih urah po natančnem načrtu in navodilih opravljena racija v vseh treh mestih, v katerih je živelo judovsko prebivalstvo, so osebe judovskega porekla, kot so jih službeno imenovali, ne glede na spol, zdravstveno stanje ali starost pripeljali in pridržali v veliki stavbi skopskega tobaknega monopola<sup>1</sup>. Čeprav se z Lilo že ves teden nista slišala, saj mu je ni uspelo dobiti doma pa tudi sama ga ni poklicala, je imel Konstantin Z. vseeno prilžnost, da je bil zelo zadovoljen. Oče mu je obljubil, da bo preveril, kako je z njegovo ženo, kar ga je precej pomirilo. Po drugi strani pa za zasebno življenje tako ali tako ni imel časa. Akcija je bila izvedena popolno in učinkovito in Konstantin Z. je bil deležen prvih pohval bodisi ustnih bodisi telefonskih, ki so prihajale z najvišjega vrha. S strogo službenim tonom je bila matematično izražena učinkovitost akcije 98-odstotna. Tolikšen je bil namreč odstotek 7315 ljudi od cele etnične skupine, ki so bili privedeni in zaprti v veliki industrijski stavbi v mestu Skopje, nedavno preurejeni za nove namene in obdani z več sto metrov dolgo visoko ograjo iz bodeče žice. Konstantin Z. se je počutil vsemogočnega, opazoval je sivo poslopje bivšega monopola in si sam postavil vprašanje, ali je še komu drugemu uspelo zapreti vso etnično skupnost v eno samo stavbo. Tega hvalisavega vprašanja si ni upal zastaviti nadrejenim, čeprav je pomislil, da ne bi bilo slabo, da stori tudi to, ko bo cela operacija končana.

Zaporniki so tam ostali deset dni, v tem obdobju pa Konstantin Z. zaradi uspešno opravljene akcije ni sedel na lovorikah, marveč je v istem duhu poskrbel, da se do konca izvede delikatni ukrep, zaradi katerega je bil poslan v te kraje. Ni poslušal glasov ljudi, katerih otroci so jokali, kako so žene v še večjem obupu klicale druga drugo, ko so njihovi možje stali za bodečo žico in postajali iz dneva v dan bolj molčeči in molili, tudi ko so molčali; četudi so ti prizori

<sup>1</sup> Državno podjetje z izključno pravico predelovati in prodajati tobak (op. prev.).

in glasovi prihajali do njega, se ni zmenil zanje, saj je vedel, da gre njegovo delo proti koncu, da je občutljiv za človekovo nesrečo, da je povsem mogoče, da se mu bodo po vsem tem spet vrnila hude migrene.

Od 22. do 29. marca so skopski monopol izpraznili v treh fazah. S tremi dolgimi železniškimi kompozicijami, ki so jih večinoma sestavljali tovorni vagoni, so Jude iz novih predelov dokončno prepekljali na sever. Konstantin Z. je vedel za končni cilj teh kompozicij, koncentracijsko taborišče Treblinka. Prav v tistem času so ga njegovi domači iz Sofije obvestili, da je Lila zapustila njun skupni dom, po njihovih informacijah je odšla z nekim mlajšim častnikom. Oče je novico pospremil s komentarjem, da je že prvič, ko jo je videl, vedel, kakšne sorte ptičica je, da je bila ves čas zmožna storiti kaj takšnega, da pa naj ne skrbi, po končanem delu naj se vrne v Sofijo, vendar ne v brlog, kjer je živel z ono, ampak v pravo stanovanje starih staršev, potem pa bodo že našli novo, pametno rešitev.

Za Konstantina Z. je vse postalo brezumno. Tridesetega marca so se mu vrnili glavoboli. Naznanil jih je kratek pisk v glavi, nezno-snejši od piska lokomotive, ki je naznanjal uspešen konec njegovega poslanstva, pisk, ki ni hotel ponehati. Ves dan je ostal doma, zaprt v spalnici, čez oči si je položil in močno zategnil svilen šal in ležal na postelji, z eno roko na strani, kjer je po navadi ležala Lila. Po glavi so se mu začeli poditi glasovi ljudi, ki so jih v tistih desetih dnevih privedli v stavbo skopskega monopola. Na delu je izvedel, da je bila država primorana izvesti ukrep žrtvovanja Judov iz novih predelov, da je takšen nalog izdala očetnjava, da bi rešila svoje domorodne Jude, ki jih je bilo dvakrat toliko. Ko je v svoji glavi prebiral to informacijo, je v njej začutil močno napetost. Obrnil se mu je želodec, zato je hitro vstal, pod lobanjo se mu je zaiskrilo. Globoko in burno je dihal, da bi pomiril nepričakovani krč, ki mu je nekontrolirano, do bolečine stiskal želodec, ni pa mogel pomiriti občutka popolne prevaranosti in vtisa, da se je s tistimi tremi transporti tudi njegovo življenje odpravilo v neko neznano in dokončno izgubljeno smer.

Iz sna ga je prebudilo zvonjenje posebnega telefona. Le stežka je vstal in se odpravil do njega. Skozi okno je prihajalo prvoaprilsko sonce. Bil je komandant iz Štipa, ki mu je z venomer enako vedro prisrčnostjo, ki jo je včasih tako preziral, zdaj pa je bila to zanj, začuda, odrešilna prijaznost, sporočil, da so toplice v Kežovici nared in, kot mu je bil obljubil, zdaj gospoda delegata vabi, naj pride na zaslužen sprostitev v njegove zdravilne termalne vode. Konstantin

Z. se mu je potožil zaradi močnih glavobolov, ki so ga trpinčili, komandant pa mu je odgovoril, da mora priti prav zaradi tega.

»Kežovica,« mu je ponovil dobrohotni častnik, »za vas je samo Kežovica.«

Tako v naslednjem prizoru vidimo Konstantina Z., kako plava v novem bazenu v štipskih toplicah Kežovica, kjer se bori z znova vzbujenim čustvom obžalovanja, da je prišel v to mestece in toplice, in se izogiba pogledati na dno novega bazena, kjer ležijo velike, pravokotne marmorne plošče, v katere je vrezanih na stotine oglatih znakov. Čeprav jih ne zna prebrati, Konstantin Z. ve, kaj pomenijo, da so to zapisi judovskih imen in priimkov, epiteti, datumi rojstev in smrti in epitafi na nagrobnikih, nekateri so postali prah in pepel na štipskem judovskem pokopališču, bizarni marmornati kamnolom zavrnjenih človeških usod, nekaj sto let star okamneli del štipskega mestnega spomina, kjer so vznemirili pokojnike, ko so jim odvzeli stare nagrobne plošče, da so jih vgradili v temelje bazena iz Kežovice, toplic z zdravilnimi termalnimi vodami.

Te vode Konstantinu Z. ne pomagajo. Res je, da ga malo sprostijo, ko plava in njegovo težko telo lebdi nad ploščami na dnu bazena, ko počasi drsi nad imeni, usodami, sencami pokojnikov in poskuša, da bi se izognil pogledu na njihove simbole, na znake, ki so bili neizbrisljivo vklesani v stari marmor na dnu, ki ga kot nalašč umiva voda in ga povečuje kot pod povečevalnim steklom in dela znake jasnejše, bližje, jih skoraj približa namrščenim vekam in čelu skesanega delegata Komisariata za judovska vprašanja, ki poskuša s plavanjem zmanjšati napetost, ki jo čuti po celem telesu, in prelaga prihod živčnega zloma.

*Prevedel Aleš Mustar*

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## *The Swimming-Pool*

Konstantin Z. is tormented by splitting headaches. Sometimes it feels as though his head is being held in a hoop that will tighten around it until it explodes. Following the old rule of thumb that fire is fought with fire, whenever he feels the unbearable tightening inside his skull Konstantin Z. wraps a silk scarf around his head and ties it as tight as he can and with his increasingly bald head thus wrapped, glimpsing his comical reflection with the scarf ends falling to his shoulders as he passes by the console mirror, he sluggishly drags his slippered feet over the parquet of his official quarters, goes to the high windows and draws the heavy curtains, and when the calming darkness settles in the room he lies down on the empty double bed in his bedroom and finally starts to relax.

Konstantin Z. is not single, although here, in Skopje, he lives a bachelor's life. Sent on a delicate mission to this city, he has left his colleagues in the Ministry in Sofia, his friends and his elderly parents, who come of a long line of Sofians on whom time has bestowed not only advanced years but the cynicism of old age as well; and, above all, his wife, so that here in this city which in comparison with imperial Sofia is still a provincial town, he is preoccupied not only by the problems encountered at work, but by his Lila's prolonged lingering in Sofia as well. Lila does not come from the capital. She came there with her mother, a self-supporting woman from Kazanl'k who died soon after their wedding, and of whose antecedents he could learn nothing, despite the several inquiries he had attempted through his colleagues in the Ministry.

Lila had been supposed to join him here two months ago and end his long solitude, but instead she is now telling him for the third time that she has not yet solved the problems of keeping up their house there, and will have to stay on in Sofia. He is thus burdened by worrying about her, by the thought of her being without him in this time of war, especially because he knows that she has nobody there who would give her any help she might need. His family never took to her, so they never drew closer to her, nor have they ever accepted her in any more intimate way. He talks with them once a month, and every second day with her, on the crackling telephone line installed in his office by the army. Besides, a thought is eating at him, born of the vague and never-dispelled suspicion that some time before he left their home in the capital Lila had become involved in an affair.

Both of them had led a comfortable life since they got married. She kept herself busy at home, where they had their meals every day except on Sundays when they went for lunch with his family, and on Mondays, their maid's days off, when they would usually lunch together in one of the better restaurants. Silent and charged with feminine mystery, Lila attracted him now as much as ever, and he was entirely devoted to her. They did not have children, and hard as it was for him, it appeared not to trouble her at all. Over time, he had begun to wonder whether the problem lay with him, and whether their childlessness might not be the result of his repeated gonorrhoea, twice contracted at one and the same source: once as a student, during his first ever physical experience with a woman in a questionable brothel on the outskirts of the city where he was welcomed by a prematurely ageing, heavily made-up fatty whom he'd got on the cheap, who did not show him the yellow card confirming she had undergone her weekly medical (which at the time he had not known he was supposed to ask for); and the second time he contracted it from a young brunette, even though her yellow card had been perfect. His love life had been divided into two parts, firstly his few visits to brothels, followed by several youthful adventures, and the other – his life with Lila. He felt dependent on her, on her silent presence when he was with her, whether at home or in some well-known place in the city, on her firm gait when they walked arm in arm in the park, on her body, at its best when coiling in utter ecstasy during their untiring lovemaking on prolonged Sofia afternoons.

Konstantin Z. was earning well, and at the same time rising solidly up the steep hierarchical ladder of the moribund, already decaying administration in his ministry, fervently supporting the ministers who changed with sometimes dazzling speed in the leading positions in the cabinet and saw in younger people like him a new energy ready to bring some kind of freshness to the old bureaucratic order of the state in general and his ministry in particular. So, welcoming such moments in his office, Konstantin Z. would always take a step forward, and then his administrative career would fall again into a period of certain stagnation, until the next political opportunity. More than half of his working years and a quarter of a century of his marriage had passed in these successive moments of ascent and stagnation in his bureaucratic career when the war started, and the Prime Minister's Cabinet appointed him to a high

position in the Commissariat for Jewish Affairs and then, as delegate of that Commissariat, posted him to the new mission in Skopje.<sup>1</sup>

The anxieties of work in the Commissariat pound in his brain, and whenever he has a minute to himself his thoughts start swarming like bees in a dark beehive and it is then that his unbearable headaches begin. Thank God, work has recently been taking his free time as well, so the headaches are not as frequent as before. Konstantin Z. has, in fact, been working on a large and demanding project devised by the new government, namely on the “final solution”, a cynical German euphemism for the elimination of the Jews from the recently-liberated new territories. As 1942 nears its end, work on the project gains momentum and requires his total involvement. His headaches have almost completely disappeared. The project Konstantin Z. is working on now resembles a locomotive at full speed, stoked by him, whose motion, like any adventurous journey, keeps him psychologically toned up, and the excitement he meets along the way makes his conventional and monotonous life considerably more thrilling. When he came here, towards the end of the last year, his government had already approved the preparatory documents: on 14<sup>th</sup> July 1941 the law on the single tax on Jewish property had been enacted, and Konstantin Z. considered it to be a good regulation because it generated a fortune of 45 million leva in Skopje alone, though unfortunately only as one-off revenue. Then, on 4<sup>th</sup> October, the law on banning Jews from conducting trade and industrial business activities was passed, which brought in nothing; on 1<sup>st</sup> November the hardest regulation was adopted, the Law on the Protection of the Nation. Other new legislation followed, as Konstantin Z., the Delegate of the Commissariat for Jewish Affairs now meticulously reviews the legislation in his area of work, sitting with his waistcoat unbuttoned and the drink his assistant has servilely poured him, turning the glass in front of him, amidst the wearily elongated shadows in his finally quiet office in Skopje.

Konstantin Z. does not like the Jews, but he is not in favour of the “final solution” either, for he sees it as excessive and, in any case, useless. It is an atavism seeing a new, irrational ideological renewal in modern Germany.

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<sup>1</sup> Skopje is the capital of Macedonia, at that time under the Bulgarian monarchy's fascist occupation, conducting the administrative preparations for the collecting, confining and transporting of the Macedonian Jews to the Nazi death camps.

As the first regulations restricting the civil rights of Jews began to be adopted, so he started receiving calls from his friends, some of whom he had studied with at the university, while having no idea at the time that they were of Jewish origin. Especially those more outstanding friends whose families he personally knew to be meritorious in a variety of areas of social life in the fatherland, and some even as praiseworthy participants in the wars their common country had been fighting since the beginning of this particularly turbulent century. He was uneasy during such meetings when people would sometimes support their arguments against the pressures and difficulties they were encountering with the facts of their outstanding contributions to their shared fatherland, for which they had once earned its gratitude. He could not understand why his country needed to apply that growing pressure in the first place. He knew that in Germany the pressure on the Jews was rapidly mutating from the tune of zealous national socialists into a harsh march on the destiny of the non-Aryans, against whom measures of constantly-increasing state terror were being undertaken, but he did not understand what Sofia had to do with it, especially since the German model saw the Bulgarians, along with the other Slavs, as non-Aryans. He preferred, for example, the approach taken by Italy, where the Jews were pushed to the margins of society and silenced, but were not legally, economically or explicitly persecuted. That is why Konstantin Z. liked the measure adopted by his prime minister Filov in the law on compulsory identification of persons of Jewish origin, according to which the more meritorious Jews were to wear white six-pointed stars of much smaller dimensions than the bigger yellow stars by which all the other Jews were to be marked. He liked this regulation because it gave him the opportunity to justify himself and appease his conscience in face of the suspicious looks and silence of his friends who did not approve of this policy but in these times of escalating cruelty dared not comment on it.

But in politics, and particularly in administration, things are not subject to the personal wishes and measures of bureaucrats, especially in troubled and savage times like these. As an able bureaucrat, Konstantin Z. manages to be everywhere at the same time. He demands precise lists of the population in the critical category. He sets the data on the Jews in the territory against the data in the archives of the former Yugoslav authorities. He acts deftly in Skopje, and constantly travels to Bitola, sometimes to Štip as well. Skopje and

Bitola irritate him. There is too much work to be done there, and the number of the population of interest to his field of work is highest in these two places, while their traditions, and thus their critical bonds with the rest of the population, are the deepest. Technically, Štip is more to his liking. The place is smaller, quieter and easier to process, as there are just a few hundred persons in the critical population. When he forced himself to go there once again before the decisive action, the town Commandant kept talking about how he hoped before long to invite him personally to the new swimming-pool in the local spa, where the thermal waters had proven curative properties, patting him heartily on the shoulder, laughing with his full pink cheeks that spoke of a passionate drinker, and adding that, even if he might not need it, some relaxation would do him good, particularly in view of the forthcoming job to be done.

“Kežovica,” he tells him, “Kežovica is the right place for you, Mr. Konstantin Z.! This spa works miracles!”

Konstantin Z., who despises not only Skopje and Bitola, but all the towns of the new territories, holds the same undivided opinion on this technically easily processed provincial town, so he stares at the commandant with an empty look, formally thanking him for the opportune invitation, which he quickly dismisses from his mind, discarding it among other unimportant information.

In March he received orders to get the “final solution” underway. Since the early hours of the eleventh day of the month, following a precise plan, round ups had been carried out in the three towns where the Jewish population lived and, in accordance with the meticulous plan and instructions, these persons of Jewish origin, irrespective of age, were being brought to and confined in the large building of the Skopje tobacco factory, the Monopol. Despite the fact that he had not spoken with Lila for a whole week, failing to find her at home, nor received any calls from her, Konstantin Z. had reason to be extremely content. His father had promised to check on his wife, and that had calmed him down considerably. And, anyway, he had no time for a private life. He was getting home late these days, for barely a few hours of sleep. The operation was carried out highly efficiently and successfully and Konstantin Z. received his first praise from the higher echelons, both directly by word of mouth and on the phone. Mathematically speaking, he was explaining in a strictly official tone, it had been 98 percent efficient. That

was, namely, the percentage of the entire ethnic group represented by the 7,315 persons who had been rounded up and confined in the big industrial building in the city of Skopje, recently adapted for its new purpose and encircled by a high fence of hundreds of metres of barbed wire. Konstantin Z. felt all-powerful and, looking at the huge grey edifice of the former Monopol, asked himself if anyone had ever before managed to incarcerate an entire ethnic group in one single building. He did not, however, venture to pose this praiseworthy question to his superiors although, he sometimes thought, it might not be such a bad idea, once the whole operation was completed.

The Monopol prisoners remained there for ten days, during which Konstantin Z. did not rest on the laurels of the compliments on his successfully-accomplished operation, but rather took care to complete the delicate operation he had in fact been sent here to accomplish in the same spirit. He did not listen to the voices of those people whose children were crying, whose womenfolk were calling to each other in ever more desperate voices, whose men stared through the barbed wire, growing increasingly silent with each passing day and praying even when they did not speak, although the sights and sounds reached him, because he knew that his work here was coming to its end, and that he was sensitive to human miseries and it was therefore quite possible his fierce migraines would return.

Starting on March 22<sup>nd</sup> and lasting till March 29<sup>th</sup> the evacuation of the Skopje Monopol was carried out in three phases. Three long railway transports composed mainly of cattle trucks transported the Jews definitively to the north. Konstantin Z. knew the destination of those trains, the Treblinka concentration camp. And it was at just this time that his family in Sofia told him that Lila had left their home with, as they had been informed, a young officer. His father sent this news with the comment that from his very first sight of her he had known the slut was capable of something like that, and he was not to worry, but finish his work there and return to Sofia, not to the pigsty where he had lived with her, but to his real, his grandparents' home, and then "some new and sensible solution would be found".

Everything became meaningless for Konstantin Z. On 30<sup>th</sup> March his headaches returned, announced by a shrill whistling in his head, one more unbearable than that of the locomotives signalling the successful end of his mission, and one that would not cease.

He stayed at home all that day, shut in the bedroom, with the silk scarf tied tightly across his eyes, lying on the empty bed with his arm stretched over the half where Lila used to lie. He could hear in his head the cries of the people crowded together for those ten days in the overflowing building of the Skopje Monopol. He learned at work that this operation of sacrificing the Jews from the new territories was something the state had to do, and that the fatherland had issued the order so as to save their own Jews, who numbered twice as many. At the thought of this piece of information he felt a stronger spasm in his head. He felt sick to the stomach and stood up quickly, lights flickering under his skull. He took heavy, deep breaths, subduing the involuntary spasm that cramped his stomach in severe pain, but could not ease the feeling of utter deception, the impression that together with the three convoys his life, too, had set off in some unknown and definitively lost direction.

He was awakened by the ringing of the special phone. With a great effort he got up and went to it. The sun of the first day of April was pouring through the window. It was the Commandant from Štip, speaking with that same cheerful cordiality that had, at the time, aroused in him such disdain, but now, surprisingly, brought life-saving comfort, to tell him that the swimming-pool in the Kežovica Spa was ready and, as promised, he was phoning personally to invite the delegate to come for some well-deserved relaxation in its curative mineral waters. When Konstantin Z. thanked him and complained about the headaches that were killing him, the Commandant replied that that was precisely why he should come to the spa.

“Kežovica,” the well-meaning officer repeats, “Kežovica is the right place for you, Sir!”

Thus it came about that, in the next frame, we find Konstantin Z. as he swims in the Kežovica Spa pool in Štip, struggling with a returning sense of regret for having come to this provincial town and to this spa, trying hard to avoid looking at the bottom of the new pool with its rectangular marble slabs engraved with hundreds of angular signs. Although he cannot read them, Konstantin Z. knows what they are: Jewish inscriptions of names and family names, epithets, dates of birth and death and epitaphs on the tombstones of buried people, some of them long since turned into dust and ashes in the Štip Jewish cemetery, that bizarre quarry of completed human

destinies, that centuries-old, petrified part of Štip's urban memory, whence the old tombstones of the troubled departed had been taken away to be built into the bottom of the pool of Kežovica spa with its curative thermal waters.

These waters do not help Konstantin Z. Yet they do relax him a little, as he swims and his heavy body floats above the slabs on the bottom of the pool, as he glides sluggishly above the names, fates and shadows of the dead, trying not to look at their symbols, at the signs indelibly engraved in the old marble below him which the water is washing and, as if to spite him, enlarging like a magnifying glass, making the signs clearer and closer, almost forcing them in front of the tightly shut eyes and furrowed brow of the remorseful delegate of the Commissariat for Jewish Affairs who keeps on swimming, trying to ease the tension he feels throughout his entire body and to delay the advent of a nervous breakdown.

*Translated by Peggy Reid and Ljubica Arsovska*





*Foto © Radu Sandovici*

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# Ioana Pârvulescu

Ioana Pârvulescu se je rodila leta 1960 v Braşovu v Romuniji. Študirala je na Filozofski fakulteti Univerze v Bukarešti. Pisateljvati je začela po romunski revoluciji leta 1989. Je pisateljica, esejistka, prevajalka in publicistka. Leta 1993 je postala urednica literarne revije *România literară*, v kateri je 18 let redno objavljala tedenske kolumne. Bila je pobudnica in urednica zbirke *Cartea de pe noptieră* (Knjige za na nočno omarico) pri založbi Humanitas. Trenutno je profesorica moderne romunske književnosti na Filozofski fakulteti Univerze v Bukarešti. Objavila je več kot deset knjig in prevedla dela Mauricea Nadeauja iz francoščine ter Angelusa Silesiusa in Rainerja Marie Rilkeja iz nemščine. Najbolj znana je po delih, kot sta romana *Viaţa începe vineri* (Življenje se začne v petek, 2009), ki je bil leta 2011 preveden v švedščino in 2013 odlikovan z nagrado Evropske unije za književnost, in *Viitorul începe luni* (Prihodnost se začne v ponedeljek, 2012) ter esejistični zbirki *Întoarcere în Bucureştiul interbelic* (Vrnitev v medvojno Bukarešto, 2003) in *În intimitatea secolului 19* (Sredi vrveža 19. stoletja, 2005).

Ioana Pârvulescu in 1960 was born in Braşov, Romania. She attended the Faculty of Letters at the University of Bucharest. Her literary life began after the Romanian Revolution of 1989. She is a writer, essayist, translator and publicist. In 1993, she became the editor of *România literară*, a literary magazine in which she also published a weekly column for 18 years. She launched and coordinated the *Cartea de pe noptieră* (Night Table Books) collection at the Humanitas Publishing House. She is currently a Professor at the Faculty of Letters at the University of Bucharest, where she teaches modern Romanian literature. She has published over ten books and translated works by Maurice Nadeau from French, and Angelus Silesius and Rainer Maria Rilke from German. She is best known for her novels *Viaţa începe vineri* (*Life Begins on Friday*, 2009), which has been translated into Swedish (2011) and awarded the European Union Prize for Literature in 2013, and *Viitorul începe luni* (*The Future Begins on Monday*, 2012), as well as the collections of essays *Întoarcere în Bucureştiul interbelic* (*Return to Interwar Bucharest*, 2003) and *În intimitatea secolului 19* (*In the Thick of the 19th Century*, 2005).

## *Viața începe vineri*

(fragment de roman)

*Lui Bogdan, în orice lume s-ar afla*

*Pentru că ceea ce vrei este viața aceea, și asta,  
și alta – le vrei pe toate.*

(Miguel de Unamuno, iulie, 1906)

### *Vineri 19 decembrie. O zi cu evenimente*

1.

Îmi place să citesc în trăsură. Mama mă ia la rost, papă, care nu uită nici în familie că-i Domnul doctor Leon Margulis, medic primar cu cabinet în dosul Teatrului Național, zice că-mi stric ochii și-o să nasc copii cu vederea slabă. Însă eu sunt încăpățânată și tot îmi iau cartea cu mine. Pe vremea lor or fi avut mai mult timp de citit și de multe altele, dar noi, cei mai tineri, trebuie să ne chivernisim bine orele. Abia așteptam să văd ce mai face Becky din *Vanity Fair*. Deși, la drept vorbind, cred că eu semăn mai mult cu proasta de Amelia, și-o să iubesc toată viața cine știe ce ticălos. Azi n-am avut noroc cu cititul. Mai întâi pentru că-mi înghețau mâinile. Apoi, de cum ne-am suit în trăsură, mama și papa l-au tocat mărunț-mărunț, cum toacă bucătăreasa noastră pătrunjelul, pe necunoscutul cules de Petre din zăpadă, azi-dimineață, aproape de pădurea Băneasa, în câmp, la lacuri. A fost dus în arest la Prefectura de Poliție. Mama, care e la zi cu absolut totul, zice că-i scăpat de la balamuc, că sigur a înnebunit de prea multă învățătură. Și s-a uitat amenințător la mine: „Așa o să pățești și tu dacă citești toată ziua!“ Apoi s-a uitat la papa: „E timpul ca Iulia să se gândească la un bărbat cumsecade cu care să se mărite!“ Papa l-a consultat pe străin la rugămintea lui Costache, prietenul nostru de la Poliție, și zice că nu-i vagabond, chiar dacă e îmbrăcat cu niște haine neînchipuit de ciudate. O fi clown, la circ. Altfel curat, nici un cusur „fiziologic“, în afară de faptul că, într-adevăr, vorbește uneori în dodii. Dar, dacă-i nebun, e unul cultivat, „rotunjește frumos vorbele“. Însă când papa l-a întrebat dacă n-are tuberculoză omul s-a uitat la el batjocoritor, părea scos din fire, și i-a răspuns jignitor: „Ești un actor de două parale!“ Papa a replicat, serios, cum e el în orice situație: „Domnule, vă rog, nu sunt actor, ci medic!“ A adăugat că plămânii îi sună puțin înfundat, e foarte palid, dar boală serioasă nu-i găsește. Atunci bărbatul s-a calmat și i-a spus că vrea

să fumeze, papa, care e contra acestui obicei, i-a adus totuși tutun fin și foiță de pe masa lui Costache, dar zice că, după o căutătură sălbatică, arestatul i-a întors pur și simplu spatele. Nu-i un om bine crescut! I-au reținut valiza pentru cercetări, o cutie argintie, ca un *safe*, și asta arată c-ar putea să fie vreun falsificator de bani, dar lui i-au dat drumul după numai o oră de arest și un scurt interogatoriu luat de conu Costache. Când s-a văzut liber, a șters putina imediat. Însă îl urmărește discret cel mai bun vizitiu al Poliției.

„Câți ani are?” a pus mama întrebarea ei favorită.

„A declarat 43, păi asta ar însemna cu patru mai puțin ca mine, dar eu zic că minte, nu-i dau mai mult de 30-35. Zice că-i gazetar și că-i născut aici. Dan Kretzu. M-a mirat că se poartă ras complet, cum vezi doar la actorii care joacă rol de muiere. Hm!” Și papa și-a mângâiat fuiorul firav de barbă blonzie ca mătasea porumbului, suferința lui de-o viață.

„O să aflăm mai multe mâine, la cină, că l-am invitat pe conu Costache.”

Papa a observat că sunt aprinsă la față și mi-a pus imediat mâna pe frunte, să vadă dacă n-am febră. Pentru el totul are cauze concrete, trupești, să n-audă de suflet. [...]

#### 4.

Poate că tot ce a fost și o să fie este acum, în prezent. Poate că ce a fost este ce va mai fi. Înainte de a-mi pune orice întrebare, încercați să vă obișnuiți cu vocea mea, o voce de om despărțit de o lume pe care ajunsese s-o cunoască destul de bine, și căzut într-una necunoscută și de neînțeles. Poate că trăim, fără s-o știm, chiar în clipa asta nesfârșită, în mai multe lumi deodată. Poate că vocea care vă vorbește acum și care se zbate printre vocile de aici ca un pește în plasa pescarului, vocea asta care se află în orașul nașterii ei și-n țara ei, mai singură decât orice voce de om prizonier în țară străină, vorbește chiar acum cu ființe pe care n-aveți cum să le vedeți. Sau poate că eu, izvorul vocii, m-am stins deja, ca soarele care tocmai a apus, dar voi mă auziți încă, acolo, în lumea voastră cu soare la zenit, acolo, în camera voastră caldă, sau afară, într-un parc verde sau alb, pe o bancă. Sau poate că, tocmai când nu mă puteți auzi, când dormiți fără vise sau când țipați ca nebunii unii la alții, sau când vă plictisiți de moarte, așteptând doar să treacă timpul, tocmai atunci se petrec, aici, lucrurile esențiale. Sau poate că n-am să ajung niciodată la voi și nici asta nu mă mai întristează. Dar uite că îmi ridic în sfârșit

vocea la cer, și mă rog și pentru voi, cei de departe, și pentru mine, mă rog aici, la icoana asta de argint, din a cărei platoșă se vede, neajutorat, un cap mic de femeie și-un cap și mai mic de copil ; [...] Te rog, Îndurătorule, îndură-te. Cândva, sunt sigur, o să vin cumva la voi și-o să mă auziți iar. Încerc să vă văd de aici, din rama zilei mele de-acum și, dacă tăceți o clipă, cum tac apele adânci din fântâni, poate-o să auziți ce îmi spun mie însumi, pentru că vorbesc pentru mine și numai cu mine. Sunt singur: eu cel care fac și eu cel care mă judec. Eu sunt cel care vorbește și eu cel care tace și ascultă:

Mereu e altfel decât credem, dragă Dan. Ai căzut din viață-n viață. Când am deschis ochii, am văzut mult cer albastru și mulți copaci îmbrăcați în chiciură. Sute de gămlii care zburau la câte-o adiere. Aerul mă strângea. Eram culcat pe spate. Mi-am cufundat ochii în cer, cu o mirare de orășean. Deodată am auzit un zgomot ca de apă care curge din țeava robinetului. Venea din imediata apropiere, din dreapta. Am întors capul fără să-l ridic și nu mi-a venit să cred. Nu încăpea nici o îndoială: lângă mine era un cal care dăduse drumul unui jet teribil de puternic de urină, ca o coloană. În jurul coloanei se încolăceau aburi. Părea că nu se mai oprește, iar jos, în zăpadă, se făcuse o adâncitură rotundă. Calul era înhămat la o sanie încărcată cu bucăți mari de gheață și câțiva butuci.

Totul era liniștit, încremenit chiar, albul din jur, soarele, o tăcere cum n-am mai auzit, fiindcă și tăcerile se aud. Animalul și-a cufundat botul într-un sac agățat de propriul grumaz și a început să mestece. Coadă o avea legată într-un imens nod lucios.

„Sus, băiete, că te brinde noabtea în zăbadă. Cin’ te-o fi lăsat să mori aci, că nu-i bicior de om, cât vezi cu ochii?”

Era un bărbat negricios, cu palme uriașe, în care ținea o toporișcă. M-am speriat. Valiza era la câțiva metri și am vrut să mă scol s-o iau. M-am clătinat, îmi înghețaseră picioarele.

„Nu te ții be bicioare? Da’ grozavi brieteni tre’ să ai, că te-au lăsat să-ngheți aci, beat, îmbrăcat ca o sberietoare, și-n cabu’ gol.”

Când nu înțelegi nimic, nu-ți rămâne decât să taci. Vorbea el, dar parcă avea tot timpul gura plină. Bărbatul a aruncat toporișca în sanie, lângă un târnăcop și-o lopată, a dezlegat sacul de pe grumazul calului și mi-a întins o mână roșie și aspră. Îi lipsea jumătate din degetul arătător, care se încheia cu un moț, ca o pungă strânsă la gură.

„Suie sus, că te duc înapoi în oraș și mă cinstești cu doi lei și-un bahar de vin. Îți luăm și cutia... Uite, trage șuba asta beste tine. Ești în stare să te ții? Am tăiat niște bușteni, am luat și gheață, din drum, de la lac, da’ tre’ să ascut târnăcobu’.” M-au trecut sudorile.

Când vorbea, îi ieșeau aburi din gură. A apucat hățurile, iar calul și-a mișcat vioi fundul. Sania s-a întors pe urmele ei, ca pe niște șine. Pădurea a rămas în urmă, iar nesfârșirea albă a câmpului însorit s-a deschis înainte. Sclipea toată de picături, ca marea. N-am apucat, așadar, să plec din țară nici acum. Ce se întâmplă? Unde-a dispărut totul? De unde-a apărut totul? [...]

„Mie-mi zice Betre...“ a spus omul, „mama era venită din Rusia.“

„Petre?“

„Da, Betre, Betre,“ a țipat el, de parcă aș fi fost surd.

Aștepta reciprocitate. Plictisit de tăcerea mea, a trecut la interogatoriul direct.

„Matale din ce familie ești? De unde?“

Am răspuns fără tragere de inimă: „Bucureștean. Crețu.“

„Rudă cu spițerul Kretzu, ăla cu mustăți roșcovane? Da' matale cine ți-a ras mustățile?“

N-am mai răspuns. Nimic nu se potrivea cu nimic.

## *Življenje se začne v petek*

(odlomek iz romana)

*Bogdanu, na katerem koli svetu že je*

*Ker je to, kar si želiš, tisto,  
to in ono življenje – rad bi imel vse.*  
(Miguel de Unamuno, julij 1906)

### *Petek, 19. december. Dan, poln dogodkov*

1.

Rada berem v kočiji. Mama me začne pri priči oštevati. Papá, ki niti v svoji družini ne pozabi, da je gospod doktor Leon Margulis, primarij, ki ima ordinacijo za Narodnim gledališčem, pravi, da si bom pokvarila vid in rodila slabovidne otroke. Jaz pa sem trmasta in kljub temu vzamem s seboj knjigo. V njihovih časih naj bi imeli več časa za branje in tudi za druge reči, mi, mlajši, pa si moramo dandanes bolje razporediti svoj čas. Komaj sem čakala, da izvem, kaj počne Becky iz romana *Vanity Fair*. Čeprav, roko na srce, mislim, da sem bolj podobna trapasti Amelii, da bom vse življenje ljubila kakšnega ničvredneža. Danes z branjem nisem imela sreče. Prvi razlog je bil ta, da sem imela premražene roke, drugi pa, da sta mama in papá, potem ko smo se povzpeli na kočijo, dobro preresetala – kot naša kuharica rešeta žito – neznanca, ki ga je Petre danes zjutraj našel v snegu, na polju v bližini gozda Băneasa pri jezerih. Odpeljali so ga na policijsko prefekturo in ga pridržali. Mama, ki je čisto o vsem na tekočem, pravi, da je pobegnil iz norišnice, da je gotovo ponorel od preveč učenja, in me pri tem pomenljivo pogleda: »Tudi tebe bo doletelo kaj takšnega, če boš ves dan brala.« Potem je pogledala papana: »Čas je že, da Iulia razmisli o primernem moškem, s katerim se bo poročila!« Na prošnjo Costacheja, našega prijatelja s policije, je oče neznanca pregledal in rekel, da ni potepuh, čeprav nosi nezamisljivo čudna oblačila. Morda je cirkuški klovn. Drugače pa je čist, nobene »fiziološke« pomanjkljivosti nima, razen tega, da včasih v resnici govori tja v en dan. Če je norec, potem je izobražen, »lepo obrača besede«. Ko pa ga je papá vprašal, ali nima morda tuberkuloze, ga je moški porogljivo pogledal, videti je bilo, kot da se bo razpočil, in mu žaljivo odgovoril: »Kot igralec nisi vreden počenega groša!« Oče mu je, kot je bilo v njegovi navadi, resno odgovoril: »Gospod,

lepo vas prosim, nisem igralec, ampak zdravnik!« in še dodal, da v pljučih sliši rahlo pridušen zvok, da je zelo bled in da kakšne resnejše bolezni ni odkril. Takrat se je moški pomiril in mu rekel, da bi rad kadil, in papá mu je, čeprav je bil nasprotnik tovrstnih razvad, s Costachejeve mize prinesel fin tobak in papirček in še dodal, da mu je aretiranec, potem ko mu je namenil divji pogled, kratko malo obrnil hrbet. Ni imel ravno lepih manir! Kovček so mu zasegli zaradi preiskave, pravzaprav je bila to srebrna škatla, podobna sefu, kar je dalo slutiti, da bi lahko bil ponarejevalec denarja, vendar so ga že po uri pridržanja in kratkega zaslišanja, ki ga je opravil Costache, izpustili. Ko je videl, da je svoboden, je takoj odnesel pete. Toda skrivaj mu sledi najboljši kočijaž s policije.

»Koliko je star?« je mama postavila svoje najljubše vprašanje.

»Rekel je, da triinštirideset, kar pomeni, da jih ima štiri manj kot jaz, toda mislim, da laže. Jaz mu jih ne bi dal več kot trideset ali petintrideset. Pravi, da je novinar in da se je tu rodil. Dan Kretzu. Čudi me, da je ves pobrit, na kaj takšnega naletiš samo pri igralcih, ki igrajo ženske vloge. Hm!« Pri tem si je pogladil redko svetlo bradico, ki je bila videti kot koruzni laski, zaradi česar je trpel vse življenje.

»Jutri pri večerji zvemo kaj več, povabil sem gospodiča Costacheja.« Papá je opazil rdečico na mojem obrazu, zato mi je pri priči položil roko na čelo, da bi videl, ali imam vročino. Zanj so imele vse stvari konkreten, telesni vzrok, o duši ni bilo govora. (...)

#### 4.

Morda vse, kar je bilo in kar bo, obstaja tudi zdaj. Morda tisto, kar je bilo, postane to, kar bo. Preden mi postavite katero koli vprašanje, se poskusite privaditi na moj glas, na glas človeka, ki se je ločil od sveta, ki ga je dovolj dobro spoznal, in padel v nek neznan, nerazumljiv svet. Morda, ne da bi vedeli, živimo prav v tem neskončnem trenutku, v več svetovih hkrati. Morda se glas, ki vas zdaj nagovarja in se bori med tukajšnjimi glasovi kot riba v mreži, glas, ki se nahaja v mestu svojega rojstva, v svoji državi, ki je bolj osamljen od glasu katerega koli zapornika v tuji deželi, prav zdaj pogovarja z bitji, ki jih ne morete videti. Morda sem jaz, izvor glasu, že ugasnil, kot sonce, ki je pravkar zašlo, a me še vedno slišite, tam v vašem svetu s soncem v zenitu, v vaši topli sobi, ali pa zunaj, na klopi, v zelenem ali belem parku. Morda se ravno takrat, ko me ne morete slišati, ko spite brez sanj ali kot nori kričite drug na drugega ali ko se na

smrt dolgočasite in samo čakate, da mine čas, zgodijo bistvene stvari. Morda nikoli ne pridem do vas in niti to me ne žalosti več. Toda glej, zdaj končno dvigujem svoj glas do nebes in molim tudi za vas, ki prihajate od daleč, in tudi zase, molim tu, pred srebrno ikono, s ščitom, na katerem se vidi nebogljen majhna ženska glava in še manjša otroška glava (...) Usmiljeni, prosim, usmili se. Včasih sem prepričan, da bom nekako že prišel do vas, da me boste spet slišali. Poskušam vas videti od tu, iz okvira svojega zdajšnjega dneva, in če boste za trenutek utihnili, kot molčijo globoke vode v vodnjakih, boste morda slišali, kaj si govorim, saj govorim samo zase in samo sam s sabo. Sam sem: jaz sem tisti, ki ustvarja, in tisti, ki si sodi. Jaz sem tisti, ki govori, in tisti, ki molči in poslušša.

Dragi Dan, vedno je drugače, kot si mislimo. Iz enega življenja si padel v drugo. Ko sem odprl oči, sem zagledal široko modrino neba in veliko dreves, odetih v ivje. Na tisoče igelnih konic je poletelo ob vsakem pišu vetra. Zrak je pritiskal name. Ležal sem na hrbtu. Z meščanskim občudovanjem sem pogled potopil v nebo. Naenkrat sem zaslišal zvok, podoben šumenju vode, ki teče iz pipe. Prihjal je iz neposredne bližine, z desne. Obrnil sem glavo, ne da bi jo dvignil, in nisem mogel verjeti svojim očem. Nobenega dvoma ni bilo: ob meni je stal konj, ki je spustil grozljivo silovit curek urina kot hudournik. Iz curka so se dvigale meglice pare. Videti je bilo, da temu ne bo konca, spodaj v snegu pa se je oblikovala okrogla luknja. Konj je bil vprežen v sani, natovorjene z velikimi kosi ledu in nekaj hlodi.

Vse je bilo mirno, pravzaprav okamnelo, belina, sonce, tišina, ki je še nisem slišal, tišino namreč lahko slišiš. Žival je potopila gobec v vrečo, zavezano okrog svojega vratu, in začela žvečiti. Njen rep je bil spleten v ogromen lesketajoč voz.

»Na noge fant, da te noč ne ujame v tem snegu. Kdo te je bustil tukaj umret? Žive duše ni tukaj, do koder ti seže bogled?«

To je bil črnikav moški z ogromnimi dlanmi, v katerih je držal sekiro. Ustrašil sem se. Kovček je ležal nekaj metrov stran, hotel sem vstati in ga vzeti, a sem se opotekel, ker sem imel prezeble noge.

»Te noge ne držijo, kaj? Imaš ba res dobre brijatelje, da so te bustili zmrzovati tukaj, bijanega, oblečenega kot btičje strašilo in go-loglavega.«

Ko ničesar ne razumeš, je najbolje, da molčiš. Govoril je že, toda videti je bilo, da ima ves čas polna usta. Moški je sekiro vrgel na sani zraven krampa in lopate, odvezal vrečo s konjevega vratu in mi podal rdečo in hrapavo roko. Pol kazalca mu je manjkalo, namesto konice je imel nekakšen voz, podoben tistemu na zavezani mošnji.

»Skoči gor, nazaj v mesto te odbeljem, ti ba mi boš blačal glažek ali dva. Tudi tvojo škatlo bova vzela ... Na, s temle kožuhom se bokrij. Te noge držijo? Nekaj hlodov sem bosekal, tudi led sem vzela, sbotoma, z jezera, kramb bi moral nabrusiti.« Spreletel me je srh.

Ko je govoril, se mu je kadilo iz ust. Prijel je za vajeti in konj je živahno premetaval zadnjico. Sani so zapeljale po svojih sledih kot po tirih. Gozd je ostal zadaj, pred nama se je razprostirala neskončna belina s soncem obsijanega polja. Kapljice so se lesketale kot morje. Vse do danes se mi še ni uspelo odpraviti izven meja države. Kaj se dogaja? Kam je vse izginilo? Od kod se je vse vzelo? (...)

»Meni bravijo Betre,« je rekel možki, »moja mama je bila iz Rusije.«

»Petre?«

»Ja, Betre, Betre,« je kričal, kot da bi bil jaz gluhi.

Pričakoval je vzajemnost. Ker mu je moja tišina začela presedati, je začel z neposrednim zasliševanjem.

»Čigav ba si? Od kod brihajaš?«

Ravnodušno sem mu odgovoril: »Bukareščan. Crețu.«

»Da nisi sorodnik od abotekarja Kretzuja, tistega z rdečimi brki? Kdo je ba tebi obril brke?«

Nisem mu odgovoril. Nič ni šlo skupaj.

*Prevedel Aleš Mustar*

## *Life Begins on Friday*

(excerpt from the novel)

For Bogdan, in whichever world he might be

*Because what you want is this life,  
both this one and that one – you want them all.*  
(Miguel de Unamuno, July 1906)

### *Friday, 19 December. An eventful day*

1.

I like to read in the carriage. Mama takes me to task; Papa, who never forgets, not even *en famille*, that he is Dr Leon Margulis, primary physician with a surgery behind the National Theatre, says that I will ruin my eyes and give birth to nearsighted children. But I am obstinate and still bring a book with me. Back in their day they probably had the time to read and do lots of other things, but we youngsters have to dole out our hours with care. I could hardly wait to find out what Becky would get up to next in *Vanity Fair*. Although truth to tell, I think that I am more like that silly Amelia, and I shall end up loving some rascal all my life. Today I had no luck with my reading. Firstly, because my hands were frozen. And then, no sooner did we climb into the carriage than Mama and Papa, chopping the subject as finely as our cook does the parsley, began to dissect the case of the unidentified man Petre found lying in the snow this morning, in a field near the Băneasa woods and lakes. He was taken to the Prefecture of Police and placed under arrest. Mama, who is up to date on absolutely everything, says he is a fugitive from the madhouse and that he must have been driven insane by too much learning. And here she gave me a minatory look: “It is high time that Iulia decided on a decent man to marry.” Papa examined the stranger at the request of Costache, our friend from the Police, and said that he was not a vagrant, despite his wearing unbelievably odd clothes. Perhaps he is a clown from the circus. He is otherwise clean and has no “physiological” flaws apart from the fact that he does sometimes talk in a garbled way. If he is a madman, then he is a cultivated madman; he “couches his words nicely”. But when Papa asked him whether he had tuberculosis, the man gave him a scornful look, as if infuriated, and answered cuttingly: “You’re a two-bit actor!” Papa replied, as gravely as he does whatever the

situation: “Sir, if you please, I am not an actor, but a physician!” He added that his lungs sounded a little congested, that he was very pale, but that he could not find any serious illness. The man calmed down and said that he would like to smoke. Papa, who is against the habit, nonetheless brought him some fine tobacco and rolling papers from Costache’s desk, but said that the man under arrest, after giving him a savage glance, quite simply turned his back on him. He is ill bred! They retained his valise for examination, a silver box, like a safe, which indicates that he might be a money forger, but they released him after keeping him under arrest for only an hour and following a brief interrogation by Costache. On finding himself free, he straightaway made himself scarce. But the best coachman in the Police was assigned to follow him unobtrusively.

“How old is he?” asked mother, her favourite question.

“He declares himself forty-three. Well, that would mean he was four years younger than me, but I say he’s lying. I reckon he is no older than thirty or thirty-five. He says that he is a journalist and that he was born here. Dan Kretzu. What surprised me was that he is completely shaven. You see the like only with actors who play the rôles of women. Hmm!”

“We shall find out more tomorrow, at dinner, because I have invited Mr Costache.”

Papa noticed that my face was flushed and immediately put his hand to my forehead to see whether I had a temperature. As far as he is concerned, all things have solid, bodily causes. He will not hear of the soul. [...]

#### 4.

Perhaps all that has been and will be exists now, in the present. Perhaps what has been will exist again. Before you ask me any question, try to accustom yourselves to my voice, the voice of a man sun-dered from a world he had come to know quite well and cast into a world unknown and incomprehensible. Perhaps we live, without knowing it, in this endless moment, in many different worlds at once. Perhaps the voice that speaks to you now and which struggles among the voices here, like a fish in a fisherman’s net, this voice that finds itself in the city and the land of its birth, a voice lonelier than the voice of any man held prisoner in a foreign land, is speaking this very moment to beings you are incapable of seeing. Or perhaps I, the source of the voice, have already faded like the sun that has just

set, but you will still be able to hear me there in your world where the sun is at its zenith, there in your warm room, or outside, in a green or white park, sitting on a bench. Or perhaps when you will no longer be able to hear me, when you will be sleeping a dreamless sleep or bawling at each other like men possessed, or when you will be bored to death, waiting only for the time to pass, perhaps precisely then will the essential things take place here. Or perhaps I shall never reach you, and nor does this sadden me. But behold I raise my voice to the heavens at last and I pray both for you, those afar, and for myself, I pray here, before this silver icon, from within whose silver cladding are visible, helplessly, the small head of a woman and the small head of a child; [...] I pray Thee, Merciful One: have mercy. Sometime, I am sure of it, I shall somehow come to you and you will hear me again. I try to see you, from the frame of my present day and if you fall silent for a moment, as silent as the deep waters of wells, perhaps you will hear what I say to myself, because I talk to myself and only to myself. I am sure of it: I who make and I who judge myself. I am the one who speaks and I am the one who keeps silent and listens:

It is always different than we think, dear Dan. You have been cast from life to life. When I opened my eyes, I saw wide blue sky and many trees clad in hoarfrost. Hundreds of pinpoints took flight at each gust of wind. The air clasped me. I was lying on my back. With a city-dweller's wonderment, I plunged my gaze into the sky. All of a sudden I heard a sound like water flowing from a tap. It came from nearby, to my right. I turned my head without raising it and I could not believe what I saw. There was no doubt about it: next to me a horse had released a gushing torrent of urine. Steam wafted around the jet. It seemed unending, and a round hollow had formed in the snow. The horse was harnessed to a sleigh laden with blocks of ice and a few logs.

There was complete silence, a petrified silence, all around was whiteness, sun, a silence such as I had never heard before, because even silence is audible. The beast thrust its muzzle into the bag hanging from its neck and began to chomp. Its tail was tied in a huge glossy knot.

"On your feet, lad, or else nightfall will catch up with you here in the snow. Who can have left you here to berish, where there's not another berson as far as the eye can see?"

He was a swarthy man, with huge hands, in which he was holding an axe. I took fright. The valise was a few feet away and I struggled

to get up, to go to it. I tottered. My legs were frozen.

“Can’t you bick yourself ub? Some friends you’ve got, leaving you here bissed, to freeze in the snow, dressed like a scarecrow and without so much as a cab on your head.”

When you understand nothing, all you can do is keep silent. He was talking, but it was as if his mouth were full. He untied the horse’s nosebag and stretched out a horny red hand to me. Half his index finger was missing and it ended in a knot, like the neck of a pouch pinched with a drawstring.

“Jumb ub, I’ll take you back to town and you’ll bay me a cub of wine. Let’s fetch that box of yours... Bull this sheebskin over your shoulders. Can you stand ub?”

As he spoke, steam poured from his mouth. He grasped the reins, and the horse gave its rump a lively shake. The sleigh glided back along its own tracks, as though along rails. It left the forest in its wake, and before it spread the endless white sunlit plain. Everything glistened with droplets, like the sea. And so, not even now had I managed to leave the country. What was happening? Where had everything vanished? Whence had everything appeared? [...]

“Betre is my name,” said the man. “My mother was from Russia.”

“Petre?”

“Yes, Betre. Betre!” he shouted, as if I were deaf.

He was expecting me to reciprocate. Bored of my silence, he broached me directly:

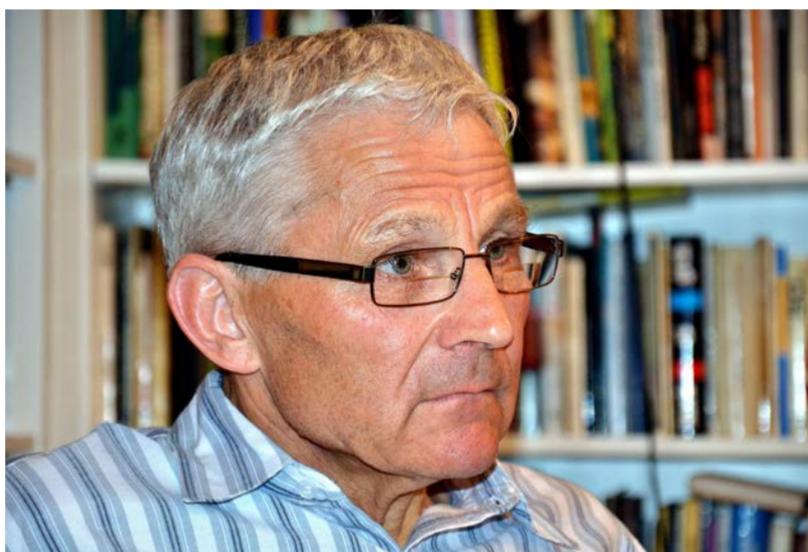
“What’s the name of your family? Where’re you from?”

I answered unenthusiastically: “Bucharest. Crețu.”

“A relative of Kretzu the abothecary, with the ginger moustaches? And who was it shaved your moustaches off?”

I made no reply. Nothing matched up with anything else.

*Translated by Alistair Ian Blyth*



*Foto © Ivo Frbežar*

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# Tone Peršak

Tone Peršak se je rodil leta 1947 v zaselku Ločki vrh v Slovenskih goricah. Diplomiral je na Akademiji za gledališče, radio, film in televizijo (smer režija) in na Filozofski fakulteti (smer primerjalna književnost in literarna teorija) v Ljubljani. Deloval je kot gledališki režiser v Sloveniji, Bosni in Hercegovini in Makedoniji, bil pa je tudi asistent in docent na AGRFT, državni poslanec ter župan občine Trzin. Piše kratko prozo, kot so *Novelete* (1981) in *Ljubljanske novele* (1989), romane, kot *Vrh* (1986), *Sredobežnost* (2008) in *Usedline* (2013), s katerim je bil letos nominiran za nagrado Kresnik za najboljši slovenski roman leta, gledališke igre, kot *V umetni svetlobi* (1970) in *Peter in Pavel* (1988), radijske igre, kot *Aprilska sonata* (1998) in *Postaja Ober ...* (2008), ter televizijske igre, kot sta *Odmor* (1981) in *Podnajemniki* (1985). Ukvarja se tudi s pisanjem esejistike, za kar je leta 2012 prejel nagrado na natečaju revije *Sodobnost*. Kot gledališki publicist je objavil dve samostojni knjigi in bil leta 1989 odlikovan z nagrado Borštnikovega srečanja. V preteklosti je med drugim deloval tudi kot predsednik Društva slovenskih pisateljev in predsednik slovenskega centra PEN. Trenutno je predsednik odbora »Pisatelji za mir« mednarodnega centra PEN.

Tone Peršak was born in 1947 in the hamlet Ločki vrh in Slovenske gorice, Slovenia. He graduated from the Academy for Theatre, Radio, Film and Television – AGRFT (as a theatre director) and from the Faculty of Arts (Comparative Literature and Literary Theory) in Ljubljana. He was active as a theatre director in Slovenia, Bosnia and Macedonia, as an assistant lecturer at AGRFT, a member of the Slovenian National Assembly and as the mayor of the Municipality of Trzin. He has written collections of short prose, such as *Novelete*, (*Novellettes*, 1981) and *Ljubljanske novele* (*Ljubljana novellas*, 1989), novels, such as *Vrh* (*Summit*, 1986), *Sredobežnost* (*Centrifugal Force*, 2008), and *Usedline* (*Sediments*, 2013), which was shortlisted for the Kresnik Award for the best Slovene novel of the year; plays, such as *V umetni svetlobi* (*In the Artificial Light*, 1970) and *Peter in Pavel* (*Peter and Paul*, 1988), radio plays, such as *Aprilska sonata* (*April Sonata*, 1998) and *Postaja Ober ...* (*Ober Station*, 2008), and TV plays, such as *Odmor* (*Recess*, 1981) and *Podnajemniki* (*Tennants*, 1985). He is also well known as an essayist, and he won the *Sodobnost* Essay Contest Prize in 2012 which is awarded by the leading Slovenian magazine for literature and culture. He has published two books as a theatre publicist, for which he was also honoured with the Slovenian “Borštnikovo srečanje” National Theatre Festival Award in 1989. He is a former president of the Slovene Writers’ Association and was also head of the Slovenian PEN Centre. He currently serves as the chair of the international PEN Writers for Peace Committee.

## *Usedline*

(odlomek iz romana)

### *Smrtna ura*

Zgodba pove samo to, da se je puška sprožila.

Po nesreči? Namenoma? To je vedel samo človek, ki jo je imel v rokah. Če je vedel? Morda je res storil, kar si je bil želel storiti, četudi ni storil po premisleku in načrtu.

Začetki skoraj vseh zgodb, katerih poglavitno gibalno je strast, so nejasni in poslušalec ali bralec preprosto mora verjeti, da je bilo tako, kot pripoveduje zgodba, in da drugače niti ni moglo biti.

Bilo je, pravijo, le nekaj dni po rojstvu in vsega dan ali dva po krstu. In tisto leto je bila huda zima in snega je bilo do kolen in še čez. Svet je bil videti čist, nedolžen in spokojen, kot da vse spi, mirno in brez zle misli, kot v časih, ko še nihče ni vedel za izvirni greh in strast. Ena sama bleščeča bela lepota! In ravno zato je komaj kdo verjel, da se je bil možki res odpravil na lov, ko si je obesil puško čez ramo in se odpravil v mrzli popoldan ... Ko se je zmračilo, se je prišel pogret v kočo, kjer naj bi tedaj že nekaj dni živeli trije: v svoji hiški Jurament, v prednji sobi porodnica in dojenček.

Kdo je bil možki s puško? In kaj je bilo med njim in porodnico, nihče ne pove. A da je nekaj moralo biti, je gotovo. Menda je neznan lovec pred tem pogosto prihajal v kočo in menda je bil besen, ko je izvedel za otroka. Ni pa bil oče, kajti to naj bi bil nekdo drug, neki ravno tako neznan možki iz ene od grab v okolici. Kaj vse se je napletlo med temi ljudmi! Med moškimi, ki naj bi bil oče in naj bi, najbrž z ženo in otroki, živel nekje v bližini, onim drugim moškimi, ki je tisti večer prišel s puško v kočo in je tudi imel ženo in otroke nedaleč odondod, porodnico, ki ni imela nič razen otroka, in otrokom, ki edini ni mogel biti še za nič kriv, pa naj bi bil že tisti večer izroččen smrti.

Zgodba pove le to, da je možki s puško sedel ob peči in se zelo dolgo povsem vsakdanje pogovarjal s porodnico, ki je z dojenčkom ležala v toblu, dandanes že neznanem kosu pohištva, ki je svojčas po kmečkih hišah čez dan služil kot miza, čez noč, ko so sneli ploščo, kot postelja in po potrebi kot mrtvaški oder, po pogrebu pa kot glavna miza za sedmino. In tako se je rado zgodilo, da je človek vse svoje dni preživel in odživel ob istem toblu: v njem je bil spočet, v njem rojen, ob njem je jedel in v njem spal, v njem umrl, na njem

ležal kot mrlič in ob njem so svojci zapili svojo žalost ter se nazadnje že pijani zravšali za dediščino.

Moški je govoril, se šalil in čistil puško. Nato je treščilo in šibre so zvrtele veliko luknjo v stranico ter se zarile v štrozak pod porodnico in dojenčkom ...

Vse drugo je nejasno. Gotovo je le to, da se je puška sprožila in da bi mati in otrok umrla, če bi bil strelec meril le za pedenj višje, kajti potem bi glavčina šiber zadela mater, nekaj šiber pa dojenčka. S tolikšne bližine bi bile smrtonosne; za komaj rojenega otroka bi že ena sama šibra zadoščala.

Krogle in šibre ... Mati je pozneje velikokrat pripovedovala zgodbe o kroglah in šibrah. Uboji, naj bo z noži, puškami ali sekirami, so bili v njenem rodu tako rekoč razvada ... Njeno teto Evo je mož ustrelil, ko se je v nedeljo opoldne vračala od maše. Pričakal jo je pri studentu v grapi, kjer je pešpot zavila v hrib proti domačiji, in jo ustrelil. Pa še povedal ji je bil že pred tem, da jo bo. Menda je čestokrat brkljal z roko po žepu, polnem krogel, da je zlovešče škrebetalo, in ko ga je teta Eva vprašala, kaj tako škreblija, ji je odvrnil, da si to njena smrt brusi zobe. In pri tem se je smejal. Nato je vedno še večkrat poškrebljal s krogli v žepu in jo vsakič znova opomnil, da si njena smrt že spet brusi zobe. In tisto nedeljo jo je ustrelil.

Neka ženska, ki si je izmišljala pesmi in napeve, je potem zložila pesem o Evi in njenem možu, morilcu, ki so jo ženske v tistih krajih še dolgo pele ob zimskih večerih med luščenjem bučnih semen ali kakšnim podobnim opravilom.

Tako je pripovedovala mati in videti je bilo, kot da želi povedati, da so bili vsi ljudje iz njenega rodu posebneži, morda celo obsedenci, ki nikakor niso zdržali skupaj in so se še na svatbah pobijali med seboj; celo najožji sorodniki. In v vseh teh zgodbah je bilo zaznati tudi neke vrste ponos. Tudi v zgodbi o sinu nekega strica, ki je na mrzli zimski dan z nožem zaklal tasta, ko sta se srečala v ozki gazi in se mu tast ni hotel umakniti iz gazi v celec.

Gotovo je bil za to krvavo smrt v belem snegu še kak globlji razlog, toda podoba zabodenega starca in luže krvi na lesketajočem se pomrznjenem snegu v sončnem in mrzlem zimskem popoldnevu je tako čudovita, da je nihče ni želel pokvariti s kakšno dodatno razlago, zakaj se je to gorje moralo zgoditi. Mati je vedela samo to, da je nečak tistega dne že od jutra pil žganje in se pridušal, da bo na ta dan moral nekoga zaklati ...

Čudno je pripovedovati zgodbe, ki naj bi se res zgodile. Dogodki v zgodbah, ki si jih izmisliš, so bolj jasni, pregledni in logični. Pri resničnih ostaja vse nepregledno, skoraj nerazložljivo. Takšni dogodki so kot podobe, slikane na skale in zidove. Še človek, ki je bil udeležen v njih, kmalu ne ve nič več kot oni, ki zgodbo samo poslušajo. Navsezadnje vidiš še sam sebe v takšnem dogodku kot nekoga drugega in celo čудиš se lahko, kako more kdo storiti ali reči kaj takega, kar si bil storil ali rekel ti sam. Še sam bi rad pomočil prst v rano, ki je ni več, če je sploh kdaj bila in če ni spomin le domišljajska predstava, porojena iz slučajnega stika dveh tokov nepovezanih podob znotraj omrežja nevronov.

Kako je bilo s tistim strelcem? Je bila puška sprožena namenoma in v koga je bila namerjena? V mater? V dojenčka? Mati je vedno trdila, da so bile šibre namenjene njej, a da je prst božje previdnosti potisnil cev navzdol, da bi otrok ne ostal brez matere. Kaj več o tej zadevi ni hotela nikdar povedati. Tudi zato ne, da bi podoba v otrokovem spominu lahko ostala živa. Podoba dolgega, svetlečega se, s prasketajočo avro obdanega prsta, ki seže skozi majhno okno kot žarek mesečine in potisne cev navzdol ...

Ničesar več ni nikoli povedala. Ne tega, kdo naj bi bil moški s puško, in ne, zakaj naj bi streljal, če je res streljal z namenom, da bi jo ubil. Ob vprašanju, ali je morda v resnici hotel ubiti le nevščnega otroka, pa se je vedno zježila, češ da je takšno sumničenje čista neumnost ...

V tem času zgodba o strelu v temni koči daleč tam na vzhodu sredi zime in o božjem prstu, ki je morda bil le žarek mesečine, deluje kot povest, ki naj gane bralca, zaljubljenega v stare čase. Četudi ni moglo biti v vsem tem nič takega, kar bi kazalo na kakršnokoli usodno dimenzijo, in se je z ljudmi samo igralo naključje.

## *Sediments*

(excerpt from the novel)

### *The Hour of Death*

The story says only that the shotgun went off.

By accident? Intentionally? Only the man who had it in his hands knew that. But did he know? Maybe he really did do what he had wanted to do, even if he didn't do it according to reason and plan.

The beginnings of almost all stories whose main drive is passion are unclear and the listener or reader simply has to believe that's the way it was and that it couldn't have been any other way.

It was, they say, just a few days after the birth and at most a day or two after the baptism. And that year there was a horrible winter and the snow was up to and even over their knees. The world looked pure, innocent and calm, as if everything was sleeping, peacefully and without an evil thought, like back in the days when nobody knew what original sin and passion were. A single gleaming white beauty! And that's why hardly anyone believed that the man had really set out to go hunting when he slung his shotgun over his shoulder and set out into the cold afternoon... When dusk fell he came to warm himself up in the hut where by then, it is said, three others had already been living for a couple of days: Jurament, in his little hovel; in the front room, the new mother and the baby.

Who was the man with the shotgun? And what was it between him and the new mother? Nobody will say. But it must have been something, that's for certain. Perhaps the unknown hunter had gone often to the hut and perhaps he was enraged when he discovered the child. He wasn't the father – that was said to be another, another just-as-unknown man from one of the nearby gorges. The shenanigans these people get up to! Between that man who, it is said, was the father and who, it is said, lived nearby, probably with a wife and kids, and that other man who entered the hut that night and who also had a wife and children not far from there, and the new mother, who had nothing except for a child, and the child, who could not have been to blame for anything but who, it is said, was summoned by death.

The story says only that the man with the shotgun was sitting next to the stove and had been talking for quite a long time with the new mother, who was lying with the baby in the *tobl*, which these days is a no-longer-known piece of furniture that in its time served farmhouses the day over as a table and at night, when the board

was taken out, as a bed and if necessary as a deathbed and after the funeral as the main table for the wake. And it often happened that a man would spend all his life and take leave of life by the same *tobl*; would be conceived in it, born in it, fed near it, would sleep in it, die in it, lie on it once a corpse, and the relatives would drink their sorrow by it and, finally, drunkenly fight over the inheritance.

The man talked, joked and cleaned his shotgun. Then there was a racket and pellets drilled a large hole in the side of the bed and penetrated into the mattress beneath the new mother and the baby...

Everything else is unclear. Certain is only that the shotgun went off and that the mother and child would have died if the shooter had aimed a smidgen higher, because then most of the pellets would have struck the mother, and some pellets would have hit the baby. From such a close distance that would have been deadly; for a newborn baby a single pellet would have sufficed.

Bullets and pellets... Later, mother would often tell me stories about bullets and pellets. Homicide, be it by knife, gun or axe, was in their genes, habit so to speak... Her aunt Eva was shot by her husband as she was heading back from mass one Sunday noon. He waited for her by the spring in the gorge, where the footpath turned into the hill towards the homestead, and he shot her. He'd even told her beforehand that he would do it. Supposedly he often ran his hand through his pocket full of bullets, rustling them to make an ominous noise, and when Aunt Eva asked him what was rustling he replied that it was death whetting his teeth for her. And he would laugh as he said this. And then he would always anew rustle with the bullets in his pocket and each time remind her anew that her death was once again whetting its teeth. And that Sunday he shot her.

Some woman who made up songs and ditties then came up with a song about Eva and her husband the murderer, and the women in that area would sing it for a long time on winter eves while hulling pumpkin seeds, or doing some such chore.

That's how mother told it and it seemed as if she wanted to say that all the people from her family were peculiar ones, maybe even maniacs, who could never stand together and who killed each other at weddings; even the closest of relatives. And in all of these stories there were signs of a certain pride. Even in the story about the son of some uncle who, one cold winter day, slaughtered his father-in-law with a knife when the two came across each other in a narrow snow-path and the father-in-law didn't want to step from the snow-path and into the deeper snow.

For certain there was some deeper reason for that bloody death in the white snow, but the image of the stabbed old man and the puddles of blood in the glistening snow in the sunny and cold winter afternoon is so marvellous that nobody wanted to bother themselves with any additional explanation about why that woe had to be. Mother knew only that the nephew had been drinking brandy since morning and swore upon his soul that that day he had to slaughter somebody...

It's strange to tell stories that are said to have really happened. The events in stories you make up are more clear, transparent and logical. With real ones everything remains so intransparent, almost inexplicable. Such events are like images painted on rocks and walls. Even the person who was part of them soon no longer knows more than the ones who are just listening to the story. In the end you see yourself in such an event as somebody else and you might even wonder how somebody could do or say something like that, as if you had done or said it yourself. You would like to thrust one of your own fingers in the wound which is no more, if it ever had been, as if memory is not just an imaginary conception, born of a coincidental contact between two currents of unconnected figures within a network of neurons.

What was going on with that shooter? was the shotgun intentionally fired? who was it aimed at? At the mother? The baby? The mother always claimed that the pellets were intended for her but that the finger of Divine Providence pushed the gun barrel down so that the child would not be motherless. She never wanted to say more than that about this affair. Not even to keep the image alive in the child's memory. The image of a long, shining, finger surrounded by a fuzzy aura reaching through the small window, a ray of moonlight pushing the gun barrel down...

More she never said. Not who the man with the shotgun was, not why he might have shot, or whether he really did shoot with the intention of killing her. When asked whether perhaps he really had wanted to kill the bothersome child, she always grew angry, saying that such suspicions were pure nonsense...

At times the story about the shooter in the dark hut far off in the east in the middle of winter and about the finger of God, which was perhaps just a ray of moonlight, functions like a tale that would move a reader in love with the old times. Even if there can't have been anything here pointing to any kind of fatal dimension and it was just chance toying with the people.



*Foto © Valentina Petrova*

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# Alek Popov

Alek Popov se je rodil leta 1966 v Sofiji v Bolgariji. Najbolj znan je po svojem satiričnem romanu *Мисия Лондон* (*Misija London*, 2001), prevedenem v 15 jezikov. Delo je v slovenskem prevodu Eve Šprager leta 2014 izšlo pri Cankarjevi založbi. Film, posnet po predlogi romana, je postal najbolj gledan celovečerec v Bolgariji v zadnjih 20 letih. Njegov drugi roman *Черната кутия* (*Črna skrinjica*, 2009) je leta 2007 – dve leti pred izidom – prejel nagrado Eliasa Canettija, leta 2013 pa še nagrado Sklada Elizabete Kostove za najboljši sodobni bolgarski roman. Omenjeno delo je bilo prevedeno v nemščino, srbsčino, turščino, poljščino in italijanščino, izid dela v angleškem prevodu pa je predviden decembra 2014. Njegov tretji roman *Сестри Палавееви* (*Sestri Palaveevi*) je prejel nagrado Helikon za najboljše bolgarsko prozno delo leta. Alek Popov je objavil več zbirk kratke proze in zbirko esejev. Piše tudi scenarije za filme in gledališke igre. Je član odbora bolgarskega centra PEN, uredništva literarne revije *Granta Bulgaria* in dopisni član Bolgarske akademije znanosti in umetnosti.

Alek Popov was born in 1966 in Sofia, Bulgaria. He is best known for his satirical novel *Мисия Лондон* (*Mission London*, 2001), which has been translated into 15 languages. The Slovenian translation by Eva Šprager was published by the Cankarjeva založba Publishing House in 2014. The film adaptation of the novel became the most frequented Bulgarian movie of the last 20 years. His second novel, *Черната кутия* (*The Black Box*, 2009), was awarded the Elias Canetti Prize in 2007 (two years before its publication), and the Elizabeth Kostova Foundation Award for the best Bulgarian contemporary novel of the year in 2013. The novel has been translated into German, Serbian, Turkish, Polish and Italian, with the English translation due to be published in December 2014. His third novel, *Сестри Палавееви* (*The Palaveevi Sisters*, 2013), was awarded the Helikon Award for best Bulgarian prose book of the year. Alek Popov has published several collections of short stories and books of essays; he also writes screenplays and plays. He serves on the board of the Bulgarian PEN Center, is part of the editorial body of the literary magazine *Granta Bulgaria*, and is a corresponding member of the Bulgarian Academy of Science in the field of art.

## Мисия Лондон

(Откъс от романа)

1.

Коста Баничаров седеше във вътрешния двор на къщата на Хайд Парк Гейт и броеше самолетите, прелитащи над Саут Кензингтън. Беше меко пролетно утро с непостоянна облачност. Форзицията в ъгъла на двора ярко цъфтеше. Коста Баничаров седеше на стълбите, бос, по дънки и потник. До крака му имаше полупразна бутилка „Бекс“, а между пръстите му догаряше забравена цигара. Самолетите прелитаха приблизително на всеки две минути. Грохотът на двигателите им се влачеше дълго след като отминат, докато се слее неусетно с шума на новите прииждащи машини. Беше изброил повече от двадесет. Звукът им напомняше приборя на море. Прозорците на къщата зееха. Течението довяваше ухаение на стари фасове. Тънките пердета се мятаха като воали на пианя актриса. В трапезарията на първия етаж още личаха следите от снощния гуляй. Наближаваше единайсет, но Коста не бързаше да разтребва. Имаше цял следобед на разположение.

Междувременно бяха минали още три самолета.

Настойчив звън го изкара от блаженото равновесие. Отначало Коста си рече, че няма сила, която да го накара да отвори. После омекна, съзнавайки, че подобни настроения са грешни и вредни за трудовата му биография. Натика фасата в процепа между плочките и неохотно се надигна. Зашляпа през фоайето. Грамадното кристално огледало неприязнено отрази мършавата му фигура и побърза да я изхвърли извън пределите на позлатената си рамка. Последваха нови, кратки и резки позвънявания.

- Сега, сега - измърмори Коста и добави наум: - Да ти го начукам!

На прага стърчеше висок мрачен господин със зеленикав шлифер, с куфар в ръка. Зад гърба му едно черно лондонско такси правеше сложни маневри, за да се измъкне от тясната уличка. Няколко секунди двамата се изучаваха подозрително.

- Кого търсите? - попита Баничаров на български.

Повяхналото лице на господина се оживи от кисела усмивка.

- Аз съм новият посланик - рече той и се втрени в босите му нозе.

- А вие кой сте?

- Ами, аз такава... - заекна Коста. - Аз съм готвачът.

„Бившият готвач!“, прониза го болезнено предчувствие.

- Много добре - кимна посланикът. - Мога ли да вляза?

Коста се отдръпна механично; лъхна го необясним хлад, когато мъжът мина покрай него. Плахата надежда, че това е някаква дебелашка шега, скроена от българските имигранти, с които напоследък се бе сближил, започна да се изпарява. Мъжът остави куфара си на пода, огледа се и гнусливо повдигна вежди. Готвачът почувства, че трябва да каже нещо, преди онзи да го е казал.

- Очаквахме ви след два дни - рече той с лек укор.

- Личи си - язвително подхвърли посланикът, като надзърна в трапезарията.

- Ако знаехме, че идвате днес... - поде готвачът.

- Промених плановете си - прекъсна го другият.

„Тогава се сърди на себе си, тъпако!“, помисли си Коста Баничаров.

За всички тия години, прекарани край трапезите на големците, готвачът беше развил особен психологически нюх. Той тутакси надуши, че новият му шеф спада към обширното и богато разклонено семейство на административните кретени. Но имаше и нещо друго, нещо отвъд стъкления му глупашки поглед, което го правеше непредсказуем и опасен. Изведнъж Коста си даде сметка, че тоя тип възнамерява да се засели тук. Нещо повече, сега това беше неговото жилище, а той - Баничаров щеше да му слугува. Това му се стори безкрайно несправедливо.

Малкият син на Баничаров изпълзя нагоре по стълбите, които водеха към сутерена, обитаван от семейството на готвача. Хлапакът беше измамил бдителността на майка си, което го караше да тържествува. Гъгнейки си нещо свое, детето се изправи и чевръсто затопурка към масичката под огледалото. Върху нея се мъдреше една крехка вещ, която отдавна дразнеше първичните му инстинкти. Баничаров беше тренирал разни спортове на младини, но с времето беше загубил предишната си пъргавост. Малчуганът се вкопчи в ръба на масичката и рязко я наклони. Порцелановата кошничка, заведена под инвентарен номер 73, се разби на пода с апокалиптичен звън.

- Тък-тък! - избърбори весело малкият.

- Ще ти дам аз едно „тък-тък“! - изръмжа Коста Баничаров, като сподави инстинктивния си порив да го перне по тиквата.

Посланикът го гледаше с отровна физиономия.

- Детска му работа - измънка неубедително готвачът. Грабна детето под мишница и се надвеси през перилото.

- Норке! - извика той.

Отговор не последва.

- Ноорке! - повтори той - Ела веднага!

- Заври си го в дрисливия задник! - обади се дрезгав глас.

2.

Кметът на Провадия развъртя енергично крановете на топлата и студената вода и се остави душа да го облее от глава до пети. Водата плющеше в широкото му татарско лице, биеше по мощните му рунтави гърди и се стичаше с весели подскоци по титаническото му шкембе. Кметът на Провадия се чувстваше превъзходно, въпреки тънката пелена на сутрешния махмурлук, която все още обгръщаше мозъка му. Изпълваше го съзнание за изпълнена мисия. Беше посетил този тайнствен и далечен остров, който навремето бе владял половината свят. Беше разгледал дворците и магазините. Беше опознал положението на народа. Беше си направил съответните изводи и можеше смело да каже, че вече има представа за състоянието на реформата в тази развита западна страна. Беше доволен, че не е загубил ума си пред блясъка и суетата на Оксфордстрийт. Но още по-доволен бе, че си заминава днес за родната Провадия - град със славно минало и плодородна земя.

- Ола-ла! - провикна се той с цяло гърло. - Ла-ла-лаааа!

Водата шуртеше от всички страни като водопад и създаваше у кмета усещане за безметежност и душевна пълнота. Постепенно мътилката в главата му се разреждаше и добиваше кристална яснота.

- Лалаа-лала-лала-лалаа! - продължи да си припява той, сапунисвайки интензивно късата си прическа.

Той не забеляза и не можеше да забележи тънкия мокър език, който се плъзна под вратата на банята и бавно започна да се просмуква в мокета.

Посланикът взе кувара си и се запъти към втория етаж, без да отрони дума. Съдейки по зеленикавото му лице, Коста Баничаров заключи, че магията на любовта от пръв поглед не се е състояла. Перспективите изглеждаха още по-мрачни.

Беше стигнал до средата на стълбата, когато спря и се послуша.

- Там има някой - рече посланикът, сочейки с пръст нагоре.

- А, господин кметът... - отвърна готвачът; по тонът му можеше да се предположи, че става дума за домашен любимец, който обитава резиденцията от незапомнени времена.

Малчуганът се извиваше в ръцете му с неподозирана сила, дъреше и хапеше. Той го стисна още по-здраво и процеди шепнешком:

- *Лайненце непрокопсано, на майка си се метнало!*

- Кмет?! - неспокойно изрече посланикът.

- Кметът на град Провадия - уточни готвачът с известно съчувствие.

- И как е попаднал тук... този човек от Провадия? - гнусливо се осведоми онзи.

- Настаниха го - рече Баничаров. - Нямамо място в хотела. Днес си заминава.

Посланикът не каза нищо. Беше вперил очи в пътеката, която подгизваше зловещо, сякаш се намираше на борда на Титаник. Над главата му се разнесоха шляпане и ругатни. Кметът на Провадия изникна на горната площадка, загърнат небрежно с тясна кърпица, изпод която стърчаха херкулесовските му атрибути.

- Скивай ги тъпите англичани! - развика се той. - Една дупка на банята не се сетили да пробият! Една проста дупчица! Колко му е! Дупка! Канал!

Той сви пръстите си на кръг и надзърна в отвора, за да демонстрира очевидността на този нелеп пропуск. В полезрението му внезапно попадна мрачния господин, който изучаваше с болезнено изражение мократа пътека.

- Добър ден - рече кметът и стрелна с очи Баничаров. - Нов гост, а?

- Това е новият посланик - рече готвачът без излишен ентузиазъм.

- Ха така! - гръмко избоботи кметът на Провадия. - Честито!

Господинът видимо се стресна.

- Много ми е приятно да се запознаем! - извика голият мъжага с татарско лице. - Ще ме прощавате за вида. Хубаво стана, че се видяхме. За съжаление, аз днеска си тръгвам, иначе щях да ви разкажа повече за тия лицемери. Искам да запомните само едно. Няма демокрация в Англия. Това не е истинска демокрация!

По лицето на посланика се изписа нескрита паника.

- Няма какво повече да ви обяснявам - отсече кметът. - Сам ще се убедите. И не забравяйте да им напомните за банята. Мокет сложили, а канал забравили! Още на първата официална среща. И за клозета! Старите българите са изобретили водния клозет, знаете ли? И аз не го знаех, но наскоро едни археолози идваха при мен да ми докладват. Открили го при разкопките. Цели 600 години преди европейците! В град Провадия!

Доволен от ефекта, който видимо произведеха думите му върху важния господин, кметът на Провадия се надвеси през перилата и се провикна към Баничаров:

- Братко, остана ли още от оназ вкусната пача?

- Остана - рече готвачът. - Да я притопля ли?

- Ще хапнете ли малко пача с една ледена бира? Полезно е за закуска - любезно се обърна кметът към посланикът.

- Едва ли - сковано поклати глава оня. Ъгълчето на устните му злобно потрепери. - Смятам да се поразходя. Не ме чакайте за вечеря. Разтребете тази кочина! - последните думи бяха към Баничаров.

Врътна се рязко и побегна към изхода, като заряза куфара си на стълбите. Преди да прекрачи прага, се закова в антрето и пискливо изкрещя:

- 93!

- Какво му става на това момче?... - повдигна рамене кметът на Провадия.

## *Misija London*

(odlomek iz romana)

1.

Kosta Baničarov je sedel na notranjem dvorišču hiše na Hyde Park Gatu in štel letala, ki so krožila nad South Kensingtonom. Bilo je prijetno, zmerno oblačno pomladansko jutro. Forzicija v kotu dvorišča je živo cvetela. Kosta Baničarov je sedel na stopnicah, bos, v kavbojkah in spodnji majici. Med noge je odložil polprazno steklenico becksa, med prsti pa mu je ugašala pozabljena cigareta. Letala so se pojavljala približno vsaki dve minuti. Rjovenje motorjev se je razlegalo še dolgo potem, ko je letalo izginilo, dokler se ni neopazno ztilo s hrupom novih prihajajočih mašin. Naštel jih je več kot dvajset. Njihov zvok je spominjal na bučanje morja. Okna na hiši so bila široko odprta. Prepil je prinašal vonj po starih čikih. Tanke zavese so poplesavale kot pajčolan pijane igralke. V jedilnici v pritličju so se še zmeraj videle sledi sinočnjega veseljačenja. Ura je bila že skoraj enajst, toda Kosti se ni mudilo pospraviti. Na voljo je imel še ves popoldan.

Vmes so priletela še tri letala.

Vztrajno zvonjenje ga je vrglo iz blažene uravnovešenosti. Sprva si je Kosta rekel, da ni sile, ki bi ga prisilila odpreti vrata. Potem je popustil, zavedajoč se, da so podobna razpoloženja neprimerna in škodljiva za njegov delovni življenjepis. Zatlačil je čik v špranjo med ploščicami in nejevoljno vstal. Odšlapal je skozi preddverje. Ogromno kristalno ogledalo je sovražno odzrcalilo njegovo mršavo postavo in jo kar se da hitro vrglo iz svojih pozlačenih okvirjev. Še nekajkrat je kratko, ostro pozvonilo.

»Tako, takoj,« je zamrmral Kosta in dodal sam zase: »Jebem ti mater!«

Na pragu je stal visok, mračen človek v zelenkastem plašču in s kovčkom v roki. Za njegovim hrbtom je črn londonski taksi izvajal zapletene manevre, da bi se izvlekel iz ozke uličice. Nekaj sekund sta se možka sumljivo opazovala.

»Koga iščete?« je v bolgarščini vprašal Baničarov.

Gospodov uveli obraz je oživel v kislem nasmešku.

»Jaz sem novi veleposlanik,« je rekel in strmel v Kostove bose noge. »Kdo ste pa vi?«

»Mmm, jaz torej ...« je zajecjal Kosta. »Jaz sem kuhar.«

'Bivši kuhar!' ga je spreletela boleča slutnja.

»Zelo dobro,« je pokimal veleposlanik. »Lahko vstopim?«

Kosta se je avtomatično umaknil; ko je šel moški mimo njega, ga je objel nerazložljiv hlad. Plaho upanje, da je to kosmata šala, ki so si jo privoščili z njim bolgarski emigranti, s katerimi se je v zadnjem času zbližal, je začelo izpuhtevati. Moški je odložil kovček na tla, pogledal naokoli in z gnusom privzdignil obrvi. Kuhar se je zavedel, da mora nekaj reči, preden spregovori oni.

»Pričakovali smo vas šele čez dva dni,« je rekel nekoliko očitajoče.

»Ja, to se vidi,« je sarkastično pripomnil veleposlanik, ko je poškilil proti jedilnici.

»Če bi vedeli, da prihajate že danes ...« je začel kuhar.

»Spremenil sem načrte,« ga je prekinil.

'Potem se pa nase jezi, bedak!' je pomislil Kosta Baničarov.

V vseh teh letih, ki jih je kot kuhar preživel okoli miz velikih živin, je razvil poseben psihološki čut. Takoj je zavohal, da spada novi šef v široko in bogato razvejano družino administrativnih kretenov. Toda v njem je bilo še nekaj drugega, nekaj za tem steklenim bebavim pogledom, zaradi česar je bil nepredvidljiv in nevaren. Kar naenkrat se je Kosta zavedel, da se namerava ta tip tu naseliti. Še več, zdaj je bil to njegov dom, on pa, Baničarov, mu bo moral služiti. In to se mu je zazdelo neskončno nepošteno.

V tistem se je po stopnicah, ki so vodile v klet, kjer je živela kuharjeva družina, priplazil najmlajši sin Baničarova. Pokavec je prinesel okoli sicer oprezno mamo in to mu je vtilo občutek zmagoslavja. Brbotaje nekaj svojega se je postavil na noge in hitro odracal proti mizici pod ogledalom. Na njej je ponosno stal krhek predmet, ki je že dolgo vznemirjal njegove prvobitne instinkte. Baničarov se je v mladosti ukvarjal z različnimi športi, toda s časom je izgubil prejšnjo okretnost. Paglavec je že zagrabil rob mizice in jo z vso silo nagnil. Porcelanasta košarica, evidentirana z inventarno številko 73, se je z apokaliptičnim zvenom razbila na tleh.

»Tup-tup!« je mali veselo začeblljal.

»Ti bom že pokazal 'tup-tup'!« je zarenčal Kosta Baničarov in zatrl nagonsko željo, da bi mu primazal zaušnico.

Veleposlanik ga je gledal s strupenim izrazom.

»Otročarije,« je neprepričljivo zamrmral kuhar. Zagrabil je otroka, ga stisnil pod pazduho in se sklonil čez ograjo.

»Norka!« je zavpil.

Odgovora ni bilo.

»Norkaaa!« je ponovil. »Tako pridi!«

»Vtakni si ga v usrano rit!« se je oglasil hripav glas od spodaj.

2.

Župan Provadije je živahno zavrtel pipo s toplo in hladno vodo in pustil, da ga tuš zalije od glave do pet. Voda ga je bičala po širokem tatarskem obrazu, po močnih kosmatih prsih in se stekala v veselih kaskadah po ogromnem vampu. Župan Provadije se je počutil odlično kljub tanki mreni jutranjega mačka, ki je še vedno ovijala njegove možgane. Prežemal ga je občutek, da je izpolnil nalogo. Obiskal je ta skrivnostni in daljni otok, ki je pred časi vladal polovici sveta. Ogleдал si je palače in trgovine. Seznanil se je s položajem navadnih ljudi. Prišel je do ustreznih ugotovitev in pogumno bi lahko trdil, da se je seznanil z reformami v tej razviti zahodni državi. Bil je zadovoljen, da mu je uspelo ohraniti trezno glavo kljub blišču in nečimrnosti Oxford Streeta. Še bolj pa je bil zadovoljen zaradi dejstva, da danes potuje nazaj v svojo rodno Provadijo – mesto s slavno zgodovino in plodno zemljo.

»Ola-la!« je zapel na ves glas. »La-la-laa-aa!«

Voda je škropila z vseh strani kot slap in vzbujala v županu občutek popolnega miru in duševne izpolnjenosti. Motnost v glavi je postopno postajala vse redkejša in prepuščala mesto kristalni jasnosti.

»Lalaa-lala-lala-lalaa!« je pel dalje in si intenzivno šamponiral kratko postržene lase.

Niti opazil ni, in zaradi šampona sploh ni mogel opaziti, kako je tanek moker jezik spolzel pod vrati kopalnice in se začel počasi vpijati v tapison.

Veleposlanik je vzel kovček in se brez besed odpravil v prvo nadstropje. Po njegovem pozelenem obrazu je Kosta Baničarov sodil, da se magija ljubezni na prvi pogled ni zgodila. Napovedi pa so bile videti še bolj mračne.

Veleposlanik je bil že sredi stopnic, ko se je ustavil in prisluhnil.

»Nekdo je tam,« je rekel in s prstom pokazal navzgor.

»Aha, gospod župan ...« je odgovoril kuhar; iz njegovega glasu je bilo mogoče razbrati, da gre za hišnega ljubljjenčka, ki prebiva v rezidenci že od pamtiveka.

Malček se je nepričakovano močno zvijal v njegovih rokah, praskal in grizel. Baničarov ga je še močneje stisnil in šepetaje siknil:

»Uranec mali ničvredni, prav tak si kot mama!«

»Župan?« je nemirno rekel veleposlanik.

»Župan mesta Provadije,« je kuhar razumevajoče pojasnil.

»In kaj počne tu ... ta človek iz Provadije?« se je z odporom pozanimal oni.

»Vzeli smo ga pod streho,« je rekel Baničarov. »V hotelih ni bilo prostora. Danes se vrača domov.«

Veleposlanik ni rekel ničesar, le strmel je v preprogo, ki je postajala zmeraj bolj mokra, kot da bi prekrivala krov Titanika. Iznad njegove glave sta se zaslišali čofotanje in zmerjanje. Župan Provadije se je prikazal na zgornjem podestu, brezbrizno ovit z ozko brisačko, izpod katere so viseli njegovi herkulski atributi.

»Ej, tile neumni Angleži!« je začel vpiti. »Niti ene luknje se niso spomnili narediti v kopalnici! Ene navadne luknje! Kot da bi bil tak problem! Luknja! Kanal!«

S prsti je naredil krog in pogledal skozi odprtino, da bi nazorno pokazal, kako absurdna je ta pomota. Nenadoma se je v njegovem vidnem polju pojavil mračen gospod, ki je s trpečim izrazom preučeval mokro preprogo.

»Dober dan,« je rekel župan in vrgel pogled proti Baničarovu. »Nov gost, a?«

»To je novi veleposlanik,« je rekel kuhar brez odvečnega navdušenja.

»A tako,« je gromko zaropotal župan Provadije. »Čestitam!«  
Gospod je bil očitno šokiran.

»Zelo me veseli, da sva se spoznala!« je vzkliknil goli dedec s tatarskim obrazom. »Oprostite mi za ta moj videz. Zelo dobro je, da sva se srečala. Na žalost danes potujem, sicer bi vam lahko kaj več povedal o teh hinavcih. Samo eno si morate zapomniti – v Angliji ni demokracije! To ni prava demokracija!«

Na veleposlanikovem obrazu se je izrisala neprikrita panika.

»Ne bom vam več razlagal,« je zabrusil župan. »Saj se boste sami prepričali. In ne pozabite jih opozoriti na kopalnico. Položili so tapison, na kanal pa pozabili! In to takoj na prvem uradnem srečanju. In za stranišče! Veste, da so stari Bolgari izumili angleško stranišče? Tudi sam nisem vedel, dokler niso pred kratkim prišli k meni neki arheologi in mi to povedali. Odkrili so ga pri izkopavanju. Celih 600 let pred Evropejci! V mestu Provadiji!«

Zadovoljen, da so njegove besede očitno učinkovale na pomembnega gosta, se je župan Provadije nagnil čez ograjo in zaklical proti Baničarovu:

»Ej, prijatelj, je ostalo še kaj tiste okusne svinjske žolce?«

»Ja, je,« je rekel kuhar. »Jo pogrejem?«

»Boste tudi vi prigriznili malo žolce, z enim ledenim pivom? Zdrav zajtrk,« se je župan ljubeznivo obrnil k veleposlaniku.

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»Ne verjamem,« je hladno odkimal oni. Kotiček njegovih ustnic je zlobno trzal. »Grem na sprehod. Ne čakajte me z večerjo. In pospravite ta svinjak!« Zadnje besede so bile za Baničarova.

Hitro se je obrnil in pobegnil proti vratom, kovček pa pustil kar na stopnicah. Preden je prestopil prag, se je v preddverju nenadoma ustavil in piskajoč zakričal:

»93!«

»Kaj je s tem fantom? ...« je pomislil župan Provadije in skomignil z rameni.

*Prevedla Eva Šprager*

## *Mission: London*

(excerpt from the novel)

1.

Kosta Pastricheff was counting the aeroplanes flying over South Kensington. It was a delicate spring morning only slightly overcast. The forsythia in the corner of the garden was covered in bright blooms. Kosta was sitting on the stairs, barefoot, in just jeans and a jumper. An empty bottle of Becks lay at his feet and between his fingers a forgotten cigarette still burned. Planes were flying overhead about every two minutes. The drone of each lingered until it merged with the noise of the next flight. He had counted over twenty. The sound reminded him of the wash of the sea. The windows of the house were wide open. A strong breeze carried with it the fragrance of old fags, swirling the thin curtains around like the veils of a drunken actress. In the dining room on the ground floor, there remained the detritus of the previous night's party. It was getting on for eleven but Kosta was in no hurry to tidy up. He had the whole afternoon at his disposal.

Meanwhile, another three planes flew over.

A persistent ringing brought him out of his blissful equanimity. At first, Kosta told himself that there was no power that could make him open the door. Then he softened, realizing that such moods are bad for one's curriculum vitae. He pushed the fag-butt into a gap between the tiles and unwillingly dragged himself to his feet. He trundled across the foyer. The enormous crystal mirror balefully reflected his figure as it hurried to expel his scrawny reflection from its gold-plated frame. There were new, short and fast rings.

"Coming, coming..." muttered Kosta and thought to himself, "Fuck you!"

A tall gloomy gentleman, wearing a greenish raincoat, suitcase in hand, jutted from the doorstep. Behind him, a black-cab was executing complicated manoeuvres to get out of the narrow little street. For a few seconds they inspected each other suspiciously.

"Who you are looking for?" asked Kosta in Bulgarian.

A bitter smile lit up the gentleman's worn face.

"I am the new Ambassador," he said, gazing at the bare feet. "And who are you?"

"Umm, me, well..." stuttered Kosta, "I'm the cook". (The ex-cook – the painful premonition transfixed him.)

"Very well" nodded the Ambassador. "Might I come in?"

Kosta mechanically moved out of the way; he felt an inexplicable chill as the man passed him. His faint hope that this was a practical joke arranged by the Bulgarian immigrants he had been hanging out with recently, slowly started to evaporate. The man put his suitcase on the floor, looked around and raised his eyebrows in disgust. The cook felt he had better say something first.

“We weren’t expecting you for another two days.” There was just a hint of reproach in his voice.

“It shows.” The Ambassador’s response was cutting, after a glance into the dining room.

“If we’d known you were coming today...”

“I changed my plans.”

Then blame yourself thought Kosta.

From all those many years spent around the dining-tables of his so-called superiors, the cook had developed a special psychological intuition. Instinctively he knew that his new boss belonged to that extensive and many-branched family - that of jobsworth cretins. But, there was something else, something behind this man’s idiotic glassy look, which made him unpredictable and dangerous. Suddenly, Kosta realized that this guy intended to settle here. Even more, now this was his home and he - Kosta - was about to become his servant. And that seemed infinitely unjust to him.

Kosta’s little son crawled up the stairs from the basement, which was occupied by the cook’s family. The child had escaped his mother’s attention and he was jubilant. Mumbling his baby talk, the child stood up and waddled adroitly towards the little table beneath the vast mirror. A frail object on the table had been annoying his primitive instincts for a long time. Kosta had unfortunately lost his former agility, gained through various sports in his youth. The little one grasped the table’s corner and quickly tilted it. The little porcelain basket, inventory number 73, crashed to the floor with an apocalyptic tinkle.

“Ding-ding” mumbled the little one happily.

“I’ll give you a ding-ding!” Kosta growled, suppressing his instinctive urge to bash him on the head.

The Ambassador looked on with a poisoned face.

“Child’s play,” muttered the cook unconvincingly. He grabbed the child with one arm and leaned over the balustrade. “Nora!” he shouted. There was no answer. “Norraaaa!” he repeated. “Come here at once!”

“Get stuffed up your shitty ass!” a harsh voice replied.

2.

The Mayor of Provadia energetically turned on the hot and cold taps and let the shower pour over him from head to toe. The water slapped his wide Tartar face, smacked his massive, hairy chest and bounced over his titanic belly. The Mayor of Provadia was in a tip-top mood, despite the slight hangover-haze wrapped around his brain. With the completion of his mission his self importance was in full flood. He had visited that mystic, faraway island that had once controlled a third of the world. He had done the museums and the shops. He had seen how the people over there lived. He had drawn the necessary conclusions and could bravely declare that he now had an idea of how the reforms were going in that developed western country. He was pleased that he had not lost his mind amidst the splendour and vanity of Oxford Street.

But what made him even happier was the fact that today he was going back to his hometown, Provadia – town of glorious history and fertile land.

“Ola-la-la” he sang full throatedly. “La-la-laaaa”

The water gushed from all directions like a waterfall and a feeling of satisfaction and calm suffused the Mayor’s soul. “Lalaa-lala-lalaa-lalaaa!” he continued his little singsong, while thoroughly soaping his short hair.

He did not notice, could not have noticed the slim tongue of water that had begun to slide under the door and soak the carpet.

Meanwhile the Ambassador took his suitcase and headed for the first floor without a word. Judging by his greenish face, Kosta concluded that the magic of love at first sight had failed. The prospects looked ever grimmer.

Halfway up the stairs the Ambassador stopped and listened.

“There is somebody up there.” The Ambassador pointed up the stairs.

“Ah, the Mayor...” From the tone of the cook’s voice one might presume that this was some sort of pet who had been in the residence for as long as anyone could remember.

The child, twisting in his hands with unexpected strength, started tearing and biting. The cook squeezed him tightly and hissed through his teeth: “You shitty little good for nothing, you’re just like your mother!”

“Mayor?!” asked the Ambassador anxiously.

“The Mayor of Provadia.” The cook identified him with a hint of condolence.

“And how does he happen to be here this ... man from Provardia?” asked the Ambassador queasily.

“They accommodated him. There was no space in the hotel.”

The Ambassador said nothing. He stared at the carpet, which was malignantly soaking up water, as though on board the Titanic. He heard the slap of feet and swearing overhead. The Mayor of Provardia sprang out onto the upper landing, wrapped nonchalantly in a small towel beneath which his Herculean attributes bulged.

“Look at those stupid English!” he started shouting. “They forgot to make one little hole in the bathroom floor! One simple little hole! What’s the big deal? A hole! A waste-pipe!”

He rolled up his fingers to make a little hole and looked though it to demonstrate the obviousness of that idiotic omission. Immediately his eyes lit upon the gloomy gentleman, who was inspecting the wet path on the carpet with a pained look on his face.

“Good morning,” said the Mayor and threw a quick glance at Kosta.

“This is the new Ambassador,” said the cook without too much enthusiasm.

“Brilliant!” boomed the Mayor in his loud voice. “Congratulations!”

The gentleman visibly jumped.

“I am very pleased to meet you!” shouted the big man with the Tartar face. “Excuse my appearance. It’s really good we’ve met. It’s a shame I’m going back today, otherwise I could tell you more about these hypocrites. But, I want you to remember one thing: there is no democracy in England! This is not a real democracy!”

Signs of real panic appeared on the Ambassador’s face.

“There is no need for me to explain that to you, of course,” continued the Mayor brusquely. “You’re going to see it for yourself. And don’t forget to remind them about the bathroom. They put in a carpet and forgot the pipe! You must tell them at the first official meeting! And about the W.C.: Did you know that the ancient Bulgarians invented the water closet? I didn’t know myself but, recently, some archaeologists came to report to me. They found it in the diggings. A whole 600 years before the Europeans! In the town of Provardia!”

Happy with the effect that his words had visibly had on the important man, the Mayor of Provardia leaned over the banister and shouted to Kosta:

“Mate, is there any more of that tasty pig’s-trotter jelly?”

“There is’ said the cook ‘Do you want me to reheat it?’”

“Will you have some pig’s-trotter jelly for breakfast with a nice ice-cold beer?” The Mayor turned affably to the Ambassador. “A very healthy way to start the day.”

“Hardly” the man nodded his head stiffly. The corner of his mouth trembled malevolently. His last words were to Kosta: “I intend to go for a walk. Do not expect me for dinner. And clean out this pigsty!”

He turned sharply and ran to the doorway, leaving his suitcase on the stairs. Just in front of the doorstep, he stopped, stood rigidly in the entrance and shouted in a squeaky voice: “93!”

“What is wrong with that lad...?” The Mayor of Provadia shrugged.

*Translated by Daniela & Charles Gill de Mayol de Lupé*





*Foto © Žiga Mihelčič*

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# Stanislava Repar

Stanislava Repar se je rodila leta 1960 v Bratislavi na Slovaškem. Je slovaška in slovenska pesnica, pisateljica, prevajalka, literarna kritičarka in znanstvenica, urednica in založnica. V Bratislavi je magistrirala iz filozofije in estetike ter doktorirala iz literarnih ved. Leta 2001 se je preselila v Ljubljano, kjer dela pretežno za založbo KUD Apokalipsa in mednarodni projekt Revija v reviji. Kot docentka literature je v letih 2010–2012 honorarno predavala na Univerzi v Novi Gorici. Piše v slovaščini in slovenščini. Je avtorica 12 knjig poezije, proze, esejev in študij; zadnji sta pesniška zbirka *Tichožitia* (Tiha žitja, 2011) in znanstvena monografija *Úzkost' dokorán* (Tesnoba na stežaj, 2012). Leta 2013 je bila v Cankarjevem domu v Ljubljani premierno uprizorjena njena monodrama *Slovenka na kvadrat*; nastala je na podlagi istoimenske proze (v slovenščini 2009, 2013, v slovaščini 2011). Je prevajalka 16 knjižnih naslovov – nazadnje je v slovaščino prevedla izbrane pesmi Srečka Kosovela in kratko antologijo sodobne filozofske misli na Slovenskem. Je članica in soustanoviteljica več pomembnih literarnih in znanstvenih združenj ter dobitnica dveh pomembnih literarnih in literarnokritičkih nagrad na Slovaškem. Njena dela so prevedena v 16 jezikov.

Stanislava Repar was born in 1960 in Bratislava, Slovakia. She is a Slovak-Slovenian poet, writer, translator, literary critic, researcher, editor and publisher. She earned a Master's degree in Philosophy and Aesthetics and a PhD in Literature in Bratislava. She moved to Ljubljana in 2001, where she mostly works for the KUD Apokalipsa Publishing House and the International Project Review within Review. As an associate professor she was a part-time literature lecturer at the University of Nova Gorica between 2010 and 2012. Writing in both Slovak and Slovenian, she is the author of 12 collections of poetry, prose, essays and academic papers. Her most recent works are the collection of poetry *Tichožitia* (Still Lives, 2011) and the scientific monograph *Úzkost' dokorán* (Anxiety Wide Open, 2012). Her monodrama *Slovenka na kvadrat* (*She Twice Over*) was premièred at the Cankarjev dom Theatre in Ljubljana in 2013; it is based on the same titled prose (2009 and 2013 in Slovenian, 2011 in Slovak). She has translated 16 books, most recently, selected poems by Srečko Kosovel and a short anthology of contemporary philosophical thought in Slovenia into Slovak. She is a member and co-founder of a number of influential literary and scientific societies and the recipient of two important Slovakian awards for literature and literary criticism. Her works have been translated into 16 languages.

## *Vesanie na zvony*



keď (ma) (srdce) zabolí  
pristúpi ku mne, povie:  
samota

samota je pohyb, čo nás vedie  
priamo do stredu bytia

povie: je terčom a je šípom  
rozpínajúcim sa a hasnúcim  
v oku, za čelom

povie: je srdcom ničoty  
prístupovou cestou  
k večnosti

okolo nás sa trúšia biele pávy  
našľapujú krvavou nôžkou

po perí, trpnu hlasom



*(o pochode žien na versailles, I.  
– barbare, andrine a hannah)*

prišli sme vo vajci, ale  
vo vajci neumrieme

vajce sa rozlúči  
odgúľa na vršok

(venušino pokušenie:  
a parobok na pahorok?)

preklzavanie k podstatám

ech, v svätom sme  
svetom?



(o pochode žien na versailles, II.  
– *barbare, andrine a hannah*)

antigony, ifigénie, heleny a iné užitočné deje

stojíme – zázračná priepasť nám leží  
pod nohami, zívajúca  
ako nebeská báh

nakoniec skočíme do toho  
odzväňajúceho prázdna

nami sa brodí lesopúšť, snehopláň  
hrobosen, v nás poskočí

božské dietatko

vybuchujeme ušľachtilo telami  
(vo vajičku nebo)



(o pochode žien na versailles, III.  
– *barbare, andrine a hannah*)

(ale avant-garda si nás kontroluje  
stráži) – neustráži, neustrážia  
neustrážime: *baby, ožime!*

a vajce vo vajci (sveta): ešte dlííího  
triedi hmatateľné perspektívy, až kým  
z poslednej poslednej ne-vy-šparchá, ne-  
vy-štúra svoj zlatý terčík bez tiaže... nepre-  
hovorí k nám, ktorí sa varíme, olupujeme me-  
dzi sebou, vysokou rečou a piskľavým pyskom –

pk!-puknutím:

na začiatku a na konci  
všetkého je  
len

*všadeprítomná neviditeľnosť!*



fíííha!

pukanica: puk

a pukanie, pukovanie

upukaná pukavka v puklom

prepukávaní; pretrieskavaní: a tresk

a *pk* (pik-pok) a *ck* (ako keď hviezda padá)

citoslovcia ontického? notácia nanebovstúpenia?



*punce, opasne ste!*

(shakespearove sestry  
v divokom virtuáli?)

babizne, snovateľky  
nebezpečných viet  
čo by sa milovali  
textotvorbou?)

povedala, stíchla  
 rozmazaná machuľa  
 na displeji, cítim ju, ako  
 dýcha, čaká ortieľ-neortieľ

ko-misie: kompetentnej? večnej?

ako prepadáva nádeji-beznádeji  
 ako z nej viera-neviera  
 čnie-a-zase-nečnie

ako má celý tento ružový svet v paži

vidím jej nepoddajné vlasy; zažiť  
 hlas – hrmí, hladí, nezmyselne  
 verne argumentuje, v ráži

revolučne bezúhonná, len sa nezaplietť  
 s kontaminovanou zberbou o-k-o-l-o  
 tobôž keď kultúra ľahla  
 p-o-p-o-l-o-m

– aj tak tá majú, nataša, pod sklíčkom  
 hlavičku odtrhnú – vylúpnu malíčkom

ruku si na srdce položiť: polo-žiť  
 l-o-n-o-m zmiast'  
 odkloniť

odloniť

## *Obešanje na zvon*



ko (me) (srce) zaboli  
stopi do mene in reče:  
osamljenost

osamljenost je gib, ki nas pelje  
naravnost v sredino biti

reče: je tarča in je puščica  
ki se raztezata in ugašata  
v očesu, za čelom

reče: je srce nič  
dostop do  
večnosti

okoli naju vse več belih pavov  
s krvavo nožico  
stopicajo

po perju; po glasu  
otrpnejo



*(o pohodu žensk na versailles, I.  
– barbari, andrini in hannah)*

v jajcu smo prišle, vendar  
v jajcu ne umremo

jajce se bo poslovilo in  
odkotalilo na vršiček

(venerina skušnjava:  
pa biček na griček?)

spodrsavanje v bistveno

eh, šele v posvečenem smo  
posvet(e)ne?



(o pohodu žensk na versailles, II.  
– barbari, andrini in hannah)

antigone, ifigenije, helene in druga koristna dejanja

stojimo – čudotvorno žrelo nam leži  
pod nogami, zeva  
kot nebeški obok

za konec se predamo  
odzvanjajoči praznini

nas prečka, prebrodi gozdna puščava  
snežna planjava, v nas poskoči

božje detece

eksplodiramo s telesi, žlahtno  
(v jajčecu nebo)



(o pohodu žensk na versailles, III.  
– barbari, andrini in hannah)

(vendar nas avant-garda straži  
in nadzira) – ne bo ji uspelo, ne  
njim ne nam: *babnice, razpelo!*

in jajce v jajcu (sveta): še dooooolgo  
razporeja otipljive perspektive, dokler  
iz zadnje zadnje ne-iz-ruje in ne-iz-vrta  
svoje zlate breztežne sredice ... in za nas  
ki se kuhamo, medsebojno lupimo, ne spre-  
govori z visoko besedo in pikrim piskom,

z osramočenimi ustni – pa s pk!-pokanjem:

na začetku in na koncu  
vsega je  
le

*vseprisotna nevidnost!*



glej ga!

pokavica: pok

pa pokanje, pokovanje

izpokana pokačica v pokajo-

čem odpokavanju; skozi-treščanju:

in *pk* (pik-pok) in *st* (kot zvezda, ko pada)

onomatopeja ontičnega? notacija vnebovzvetja?



*punce, opasne ste!*

(shakespearove sestre  
v divjem ritualu?)

babnice, ustvarjalke  
nevarnih izjav, ki bi se  
morda kmalu zaljubile  
v ubesedovanje?)

je rekla, obmolknila  
razmazan tintni madež na  
displeju; čutim jo, kako diha  
pričakuje (kvazi)razsodbo

ko-misije: pristojne?  
z večnostjo ubrane?

kako po njej stikata brezup  
in zopet upanje

kako v njej vera-nevera  
zdaj pada, zdaj pa se dviga

in kako jo briga za ta rožni svet  
(v njenih letih)

gledam te neubogljive lase, doživeti  
njen glas – grmi, boža, na vest trka  
zvesta je, neupogljiva in mrka

revolucionarno brezmadežna, sicer  
se ji okužena sodrga v resnici smili  
še toliko bolj, ker so upepelili  
skupaj z žensko uro  
tudi kulturo

– vseeno te, nataša, vržejo pod lupo  
glavico odtržejo, odvržejo truplo

roko si na srce položiti:  
(s)polo-žiti, v spol  
ožiti, od biti

odbiti

*Prepesnila avtorica*

## *Hanging on a Bell*



when (the heart) hurts (me)  
he'll come up close to me and say:  
solitude

solitude is the movement that leads us  
straight to the centre of being

and say: it's the target and it's the arrow  
spreading out and expiring  
in the eye, behind the brow

and say: it's the heart of nothingness  
the access road  
to eternity

round us white peacocks pace  
they stamp with little bloody feet

upon feathers, petrified at a voice



*(the women's march on versailles, I.  
– for barbara, andrina and hannah)*

we came in the egg, but  
in the egg we will not die

the egg will take its leave  
roll away onto a height

(lust of venus:  
and a mountaincock hoist to the mount?)

gliding towards the fundamentals

ech, in the holy are we  
wholly?



*(the women's march on versailles, II.  
– for barbara, andrina and hannah)*

antigones, iphigenias, helens, and other utilities

we stand – a marvellous abyss lies  
right by our feet, gaping  
like the dome of heaven

ultimately we leap into that  
pealing void

wading through us is forest-wild, snow-expanse,  
dream-of-the-grave, in us

a divine child

will leap, bodily we nobly explode  
*(in the egg heaven)*



*(the women's march on versailles, III.  
– for barbara, andrina and hannah)*

(but the avant-garde keeps an eye on us  
it guards) – does not guard, do not guard  
we do not guard: *girls, let's come to life!*

and the egg in the (world's) egg: such a lo-o-o-ong time  
keeps sorting tactile perspectives, till  
from the last of the very last it rakes out, scr-  
apes out its weightless gold disk... add-  
ressing us who are cooking and peeling by our-  
selves, with lofty speech, piercing lip-service –

crk!-cracking:

at the beginning and at the end  
of everything is  
only

*ubiquitous invisibility!*



yeeaaaach!

cracker: crack

and crackling, crackbursting

breach broken in breakthrough

outburst; bust to splinters: and split through

and *brk* (brik-brok) and *st* (as when a star falls)

interjections of the ontic? notation for assumption to heaven?



*punce, opasne ste!*

(shakespeare's sisters  
wild and virtual?)

hags, spinners  
of dangerous sentences  
who would make love  
intertextual?)

she spoke, fell silent,  
the blurred smudge  
on the screen, i feel her, how  
she breathes, awaits the judge  
who'll give the sentence/non-sentence

of the com-mission: famed for competence?

how she succumbs to hope/despair  
how her belief/unbelief  
is towering but here and there  
not towering

how she has all this rosy world up to here

i see her unsuppressible hair; feel  
how her voice thunders, caresses, with senseless  
integrity of argument, zeal

of revolutionary innocence, only not to be mixed up  
with the tainted rabble round,  
above all when culture lay  
flat on the ground

– and yet, natasha, now they've got you under glass,  
you're in the pull-or-peel-her-head-off class

slap a hand on your heart: hard living  
l-a-p whirling  
shiftingslip

delip

*Translated by John Minahane*



*Foto © Jan Rasch*

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# Jaroslav Rudiš<sup>✓</sup>

Jaroslav Rudiš se je rodil leta 1972 v Turnovu na Češkoslovaškem. Je romanopisec, avtor stripov, gledaliških in radijskih iger ter scenarijev. Za svoj romaneskni prvenec *Nebe pod Berlinem* (Nebo pod Berlinom) je leta 2002 prejel nagrado Jiříja Ortna za mlade avtorje. Po stripovski trilogiji o Aloisu Neblu, ki jo je ustvaril skupaj z ilustratorjem Jaromírom Švejdíkom, imenovanim Jaromír 99 (in je izhajala na Češkem v letih 2003, 2004 in 2005), je bil leta 2011 posnet animirani film, ki je 2012 prejel Evropsko filmsko nagrado za najboljši animirani celovečerec. Filmska priredba njegovega romana *Grandhotel* je nastala leta 2006. Njegova najnovejša romana sta *Konec punku v Helsinkách* (Konec punka v Helsinkih, 2010) in *Národní třída* (Narodna cesta, 2013). Njegova dela so prevedena v nemščino, poljščino, francoščino, švedščino, italijanščino, ukrajinščino, srbsščino in finščino. Rudiš živi na Češkem in v Nemčiji ter ustvarja tako v češkem kot nemškem jeziku.

Jaroslav Rudiš was born in 1972 in Turnov, Czechoslovakia. He is the author of novels, graphic novels, as well as plays for theatre, radio and the screen. In 2002 he was awarded the Jiří Orten Prize for young writers for his first novel *Nebe pod Berlinem* (The Sky under Berlin). In 2011 the Alois Nebel graphic novel trilogy, which he co-authored with the illustrator Jaromír Švejdík (aka Jaromír 99), and which was published in the Czech Republic in 2003, 2004, and 2005, was made into an animated film. The film won the European Film Award 2012 for the Best Animated Feature Film. A film adaptation of his novel *Grandhotel* was released in 2006. His latest novels are *Konec punku v Helsinkách* (The End of Punk in Helsinki, 2010) and *Národní třída* (The National Street, 2013). His novels and graphic novels have been translated into German, Polish, French, Swedish, Italian, Ukrainian, Serbian and Finnish. Rudiš lives in the Czech Republic and in Germany and writes in Czech and German.

## Konec světa

„Sbírá semínka.“

„Cože dělá?“

„Sbírá semínka.“

„A proč?“

„Chystá se na konec světa.“

Marta s Klárou se dlouho neviděli. Jsou spolužačky z gymnázia z malého města v pohraničí. Pak je ale nasála, přežvýkala, podusila, osmažila a už nikdy nepustila Praha. Marta vystudovala kulturologii a dějiny umění, Klára dějiny umění a anglistiku. Obě měly velký plány. A teď se vedle sebe potí v sauně.

„Konec světa. Přijde to prý zase v prosinci, ale teď jako doopravdy. Já si myslela, že jen trochu blbne, že to jsou všechno jen ty jeho klasický fórky, to jeho hahahihahahaho, ale on celý léto lítal po polích a lesích a sbíral semínka,“ říká Marta.

„Jaký semínka?“

„No semínka těch nejdůležitějších bylin a rostlin a taky stromů. Má všechny druhy obilí, všechny luštěniny.“

„A proč si to nekoupil normálně v obchodě?“

„Honza říká, že to není ono, že tohle jeho ruční sbírání je první krok k návratu v přírodě, první krok k novému začátku, co přijde, jestli teda někdo bude mít kliku a konec světa přežije.“

„Konec světa, to je přece úplná blbost.“

„No jo no.“

„Nikdy bych do něj neřekla, že ulítne na takových věcech.“

„No, já taky ne.“

„Jinak přece moc neblbne, ne?“

„No občas se vykalí nebo vyhulí, ale jinej se zas třeba porve, že jo.“

„Honza se ale přece taky dřív rval.“

„Dřív jo. Teď už míň, teď už je v klidu, teď se Honza rve, jen když jde o život. A když pije panáky.“

„A pije panáky?“

„Někdy.“

Marta s Klárou se právě přehouply přes třícítku a mezitím postavily a zase zbořily pár vztahů, jak to tak chodí, divoká Klára jich zvládla o pár víc. Marta pracuje v marketingu francouzské chemické firmy a chodí už pár let s programátorem Honzou, Klára překládá návody na vysavače a ledničky a nechodí s nikým. Svého megachla-

pa, jak jim říká, zatím nepotkala. Měla zatím štěstí prý jen na samé zerochlapy. Je bezradná, zoufalá a tak nyní o to víc hledá otce svého dítěte. Říká, že hledá dárce spermií, nic víc. Říká to trochu jako vtip, ale Marta ví, že to zas tak vtipné není.

„A děti teda s tebou Honza chce mít?“ ptá se Klára.

„Jednou asi jo, já asi taky, ale nijak na to netlačíme. Jestli nepřijde ten konec světa a on se tím hulením úplně neodpálí, tak to uděláme.“

„Furt teda hulí?“

„No trochu.“

„Hulení není dobrý na spermie, řekni mu to. Hulení zpomaluje.“

„On říká, že zrychluje.“

„Zpomaluje.“

„On říká, že zrychluje.“

„Já hulila jednou a někdy mám pocit, že jsem zpomalená ještě teď.“

„On říká, že hulení sice někdy zpomaluje, ale že spermie zrychluje, že to je dokázaný. Američtí vědci to zjistili, víš, čet to někde na netu. A taky říká, ty máš na saunu, já mám trávu. Každý musí v týhle šílený době relaxovat. Má pro případ konce světa samozřejmě taky uschovaný semínka trávy. Až to přijde, chce sedět někde na kopci, hulit a dívat se na nebe a na to, jak přichází ten zánik. Taky už má na tu chvíli nachystanou poslední větu.“

„Poslední větu?“

„Takový slogan jako. Poslední slova. Motto. A pak už nic, jen ten konec světa.“

„A to jeho motto zní jako jak?“

„Byl jsem tady.“

„Jako kde?“

„Tady všude. Na zemi a tak. Chce si to nechat rychle ještě vytetovat. A když ten konec světa přežije, zachrání z těch semen civilizaci.“

„Byl jsem tady... Marto, asi bych z toho měla trochu strach. Nehulí Honza nějak moc?“

„Takovej jejich IT standard.“

„IT standard?“

„Tak to mu říká. Kafe z automatu. Hulení. Počítačový hry. Benefity. Kapitálový životní pojištění. Bagety. To je všechno IT standard. Ale zas lepší než ty panáky, po trávě se nerve, to se svalí a usne.“

„Já bych měla strach.“

„No já taky mám strach. On už si taky koupil letenku do Peru. Chce ten konec světa zažít přímo na Machu Picchu. Právě tam.“

„A tobě letenku nekoupil?“

„Chtěl mi ji koupit, ale já jednak nesnáším lítání a taky nehulím a taky mi to přijde celý maličko ujetý.“

„Je to ujetý.“

„Já vím.“

„Ale co dneska není ujetý.“

„Právě. Víš, co je teď jeho největší problém? Jak do Peru propašovat trávu. Víš, má stíhu, že ho seberou už v Praze na letišti. A když ne tam, tak v Amsterdamu na přestupu.“

„Ty vole, já bych o něj měla strach. Někdy mám pocit, že chlapům dneska fakt už jenom hrabe.“

„Hrabe i ženským.“

„Jo, ale ženským hrabe jen z chlapů. Oni jsou tak nejistý ve svých rolích, že blbnou.“

„No, dřív to bylo možná lepší. Chlap na lovu nebo ve válce, ženská v jeskyni. Všechno bylo danný.“

„Ale já nechci být v jeskyni.“

„No já taky ne. Ale někdy mě napadá, jestli to nebylo lepší, být v jeskyni a starat se o oheň.“

„Oni mají strach ze silných holek, jako jsme my, to je celý.“

„Možná jo.“

„Myslím, že je spousta úplně nablblých chlápků a mamánků, ale jen pár tak skvělých holek, jako jsme my dvě. Ale nás dnešní chlapi nechtěj vidět. Oni by nejradši spali s vlastníma matkama. Takže tím pádem ještě víc myslí na blbosti jako konec světa a vymýšlejí poslední slova. Byl jsem tady... Ty vole, chlapi už nikdo nezachrání. Pořád si chceš Honzu vzít?“

„Tak jsme zasnoubený, že jo.“

„To nic neznamená. Můžete zase být rychle odsnoubený. Svatba je jenom drahej omyl. Já chci dítě, ale žádnou svatbu, nepotřebuju nudného manžela v bačkorách, kterýho pak budu muset celej život obskakovat a být jeho služka v nějaký panelákový jeskyni. Fakt ne.“

„To on nechce, abych byla jeho služka. Umí se o sebe postarat.“

„Bude to chtít. Všichni to nakonec chtěj. Uvidíš.“

„Už nemůžu. Jdem ven?“

„Jo.“

Jdou do sprchy, pak skočí do bazénku s ledovou vodou. Horko a zima a zima a horko. Vypnou se a zase zapnou. Pak se dívají na svoje těla a Marta řekne, pořád máš krásný prsa, ty moje už jsou trochu

pytlíky od mlíka. A Klára řekne, co blbneš, máš taky pořád krásný prsa a seš pořád štíhlá a máš taky krásnej zadek, ne jak ten můj, už trochu povislej.

A pak se pohladí.

A pak si dají pusy.

A pak na chvíli zavřou oči na lehátku v temné odpočívárně.

Na pár minut usnou.

„Marto?“ řekne do ticha Klára.

„No?“

„Myslíš, že ten konec světa fakt přijde?“

„Nevím.“

„Víš, jak nemůžu otěhotnět, jak mi to furt nevychází s chlapama. Tak mě teď úplně blbě nepadlo, jestli to s tím třeba nějak nemůže souviset. Že se to všechno klepe, že to je předzvěst nějakýho zániku.“

„To je blbost. Uvidíš, že pak to přijde raz dva.“

„Raz dva konec světa? Nebo že budu raz dva v tom, že najdu toho svýho megachlapa?“

„Že budeš v tom. Že se zamiluješ. Že se do tebe někdo zamiluje. Uvidíš, že to jednou klapne. Nemusí to bejt zrovna megachlap. Stačí normální hodnej obyčejnej chlap. Takovej IT standard prostě.“

„Ty Honzu pořád hodně miluješ, že jo?“

„Asi jo.“

„I když to je vyhulenej byl-jsem-tady magor.“

„Jo.“

„I když se občas porve.“

„No jo.“

„Hezký.“

„Koupil si do Peru zpáteční letenku, takže to s tím koncem světa asi nebude taky žhavý.“

„Ty vole, škoda, že nejseš chlap, bych si tě vzala. Tebe bych klidně obskakovala do konce života, klidně v nějaký jeskyni.“

Na chvíli se chytanou za ruce.

Pohladí se.

„Jo?“

„Jo.“

„Dej mi pusy.“

„Jo.“

## Večírek zhrzených srdcí

Ta holka na baru září. Nechává se objímat a sama taky objímá, nechává si dávat pusy a sama taky pusy dává, vždycky na tvář, vždycky třikrát, snad jako ve Francii, nebo v Itálii, nebo někde jinde. Usmívá se a rozbaluje malé dárky. Je krásná a opálená z letní pláže. Na sobě má lehké modré šaty. Není nalíčená. To není nikdy.

„Ahoj, tak ty seš tady taky?“ zdraví Honza Káju. V ruce drží mojito.

„No, jasný, pozvala mě,“ říká Kája a čekuje mobil. „To je divný...“

„Co?“

„Že se tady nechytám, že tady není žádnéj signál. To je divný s tím signálem, ne, všude je dneska signál, ale tady se nechytám...“

„Já se chytám,“ podívá se Honza na svůj mobil.

„Já ne.“

„Dáš si něco k pití?“

„Jo.“

„Taky mojito?“

„Jo.“

Honza jde k baru a přinese dva drinky.

Přitůknou si.

„Tak tě tady vítám.“

„Ahoj.“

„Vítám tě na večíрку zhrzených srdcí.“

„Ty taky?“

„Jo.“

„To jsem nevěděl.“

„No jo no. Ale v pohodě,“ říká Honza.

Najatý DJ pouští první skladbu. Rozbliká se barevná hudba. Dívka začíná tančit. Jako první si ji k sobě tiskne hubený hezoun v úzkých džínách s knírkem.

„Znáš ho?“ ptá se Honza a nervózně cumlá brčko.

„Ne,“ říká Kája.

„Podle mě je stejně teplej.“

„Ty ji furt miluješ, že jo?“

„A ty ne?“

„Ne.“

„A proč seš teda tady?“

„Protože to je kamarádka.“

„Jo, to mi taky nabízela.“

Honza dopíjí jedním tahem mojito a objednává si další.

„A co jinak?“ ptá se Kája.

„Jinak všechno v pohodě. Ale divný, že tady nejsou skoro žádný holky, ne? Že nemá žádný kamarádky. Jenom samý zhrzený milenec.“

Dívají se na ní. Je pořád krásná. Pořád krásně tančí. Pořád má ty krásné dlouhé nohy. Kroutí se v bocích. Pod jemnou látkou jsou vidět její malá krásná ňadra. A bradavky.

„Ty vole,“ říká Honza. „Já jí to řeknu.“

„A co jí jako chceš říct?“

„Prostě jí to řeknu.“

„Tak jí to řekni.“

„V pohodě.“

„To vidím.“

„Víš, co se mi stalo? Já jí napsal dopis, dlouhej, vyznání takový, psal jsem to celou noc. Poslal jsem jí to mailem, a víš co se stalo?“

„Napsala ti, že takový dopis nikdy ještě nedostala, ale že bohužel...“

„Ne, horší, ona si to vůbec nepřečetla.“

„Aha.“

„Já skončil ve spamu, to mi pak řekla.“

Honza si nese další mojito.

„Ale v pohodě,“ říká.

Kolem postávají samí chlápci, co ji také milovali, nebo spíše pořád ještě milují. V ruce drží drinky, povídají si spolu a s ní, házejí fůrky. A dívají se na její nohy. Na její krásné rozvlněné tělo.

„To je hrozný, jak kolem ní poletují jako čmeláci. Nebo spíš jako trubci. Jako blbci.“

„Taky si poletoval.“

„Taky vím, o čem mluvím. Ale v pohodě.“

Jiní chlápci jsou trochu splihlí a zranění, drží se drinků a snaží se marně zapomenout.

A ona?

„Na třicet nevypadá,“ říká Honza a dopíjí v rychlosti další mojito. „Nejhorší je, že ona bude i ve čtyřiceti krásná. V padesáti taky. V šedesáti už bude babička, ale taky krásná.“

„To bude.“

„Ty její oči.“

„Jo.“

„A je pořád sama, víš to?“

„Ne.“

„Prý je takhle spokojená.“

„Já jsem sám taky docela spokojenej.“

„Ona si jen ráda hraje. Nechává se obletovat, přísaje si tě, je ti s ní fajn. Vysaje z tebe všechny fórky, všechny historky. A pak hned opouští. Ona ráda mučí.“

„Nechce se vázat no.“

„Ona ani neopouští, protože ona ani nepřipouští.“

„Ne?“

„Nebo tě snad nechala připustit?“

„Jo.“

„Jo?“

„Jo.“

„Fakt jo? A jaký to bylo.“

„No jaký... Vlastně normální.“

„Ty vole, já jí to prostě řeknu.“

„A co jí chceš jako říct?“

„No pravdu. Jaká je. To ji řeknu. Jak nás mučí.“

„Nikoho nemučí. Ty se chceš nechat mučit.“

„Já jí to řeknu, jak mi je. Řeknu jí to o tom spamu. To je přece strašný, skončit ve spamu.“

„Hoď se do klidu. Jsou to tři roky.“

„Čtyři roky.“

„To máš jedno.“

„Čtyři roky ve spamu! Co to je sakra za pitomý hry?“

„No jo, no.“

Holka září a tančí. Kníráče dávno vystřídal další zhrzený milenec.

„Patnáct. Ty vole, je tady patnáct chlapů,“ říká Honza. „A kdo ví, kolik jich ještě přijde.“

„Tak to nepočítej, ne? Buď v pohodě.“

„Já jsem v pohodě,“ říká Honza a cucá nervózně brčko.

„To teda vidím.“

Otevřou se dveře.

„Šestnáct,“ řekne Honza.

Ve dveřích baru stojí čtyřicátník v elegantním saku s velkou květinou. Jde k dívce, dá jí pusu na tvář. Ta ho pohladí.

„Ne, já jí to prostě řeknu. Mě nikdo mučit nebude.“

„To je divný,“ říká Kája.

„Kolik nás tu je co, jeden větší pitomec než druhej, všichni jsme jí naletěli.“

„Ne, s tím mobilem, všude se chytám, ale tady se fakt nechytám. Žádný signál. Ty se chytáš?“ ptá se Kája a dívá se na mobil, ale Honza nevnímá.

„Šestnáct zničených chlapů, co se do ní zamilovali,“ říká Honza.

„Chytáš se tady?“ ptá se Kája znova, ale Honza neposlouchá.

„A ty dvě tři holky, co jsou tady, jsou podle mě lesby, co jí taky milovaly.“

„Proč to sakra dělá?“ říká Honza a jde k baru. „Nevíš, jestli je všechno na baru na ní? Psala to v tom pozvánkovém mailu, nebo to všechno platí zhrzený srdce? By mohla zatáhnout rundu, ne, po tom všem?“

„Nevím.“

„V pohodě. Já se chytám,“ čekne Honza mobil.

„Já ne. Divný.“

„Já mám plno. Já se chytám. Asi máš divnej mobil.“

Dívka tancuje s dalším zlomeným srdcem. Je krásná.

Honza přináší mojito. Vypije ho na jeden záta. Kolem prochází kníráč. Na sobě má uplý svetýrek, jaký nosil jeho táta. Když je blízko u Honzy, Honza do ně trochu strčí.

„Co je?“ podívá se na něj kníráč.

„V pohodě,“ řekne Honza.

Kníráč jde na záchod.

„Jsem říkal, že je teplej. Kdyby nebyl teplej, tak se porve.“

„Už bys neměl pít,“ řekne Kája.

„Já ji to řeknu.“

„Neblbni. Je to její večírek, nekaž jí to. Je to fajn holka.“

„Fajn holka...“

Honza vrazí Kájovi do ruky prázdnou skleničku a vyráží k dívce. Kája ho chytá, sklenička letí na zem. Pár lidí se otočí. Kája táhne Honzu zpátky. Honza vyráží jednomu ze zhrzených milenců z ruky drink. Další střepy, další pohledy. Mojito se rozlévá po starých parketách.

„V pohodě, omlouvám se, kamarád má trochu depku,“ řekne těm klukům Kája.

„Já nemám žádnou depku, kurva,“ řekne Honza. „Nech mě. Já jí to prostě řeknu. A pak všem rozbiju hubu.“

Kája ho chytí. Snaží se ho držet.

„Neblbni, ty vole.“

Honza se vytrhne.

„Jsem v pohodě.“

Kája sleduje Honzu, jak jde kolem všech zhrzených milenců a vrčí jim do tváře. Občas do někoho vrazí ramenem. Uhýbají mu z cesty. Kája vidí, jak jde ke krásné dívce slavící dnes třicetiny. Něco jí zprudka říká. Dívka se na něj vážně a starostlivě dívá, pak se na něj usměje, pohladí ho, obejmě a dá mu pusu na tvář. A ještě jednu a ještě jednu. Jako ve Francii. Jako v Itálii. Nebo tam někde. A pak s ním začne tančit.

## *Konec sveta*

»Semena zbira.«

»Kaj dela?«

»Zbira semena.«

»Zakaj?«

»Pripravlja se na konec sveta.«

Marta se s Klaro dolgo ni videla. Skupaj sta hodili na gimnazijo v majhnem mestu na obmejnem področju. Potem pa ju je posesala Praga, ju pogoltnila in prebavila in ju ni več spustila. Marta je doštudirala kulturologijo in zgodovino umetnosti, Klara zgodovino umetnosti in anglistiko. Obe sta imeli velike načrte. Zdaj pa se skupaj potita v savni.

»Konec sveta. Zgodil naj bi se decembra, a zdaj pa zares. Mislila sem, da je samo malo odbluzil, da so vse to samo te njegove klasične finte, te njegove hahahihahahahe, on pa je res celo poletje letal po poljih in gozdovih in zbiral semena,« reče Marta.

»Katera semena?«

»No, semena vseh najpomembnejših zelišč in rastlin in tudi drevov. Ima vse vrste žitaric, vseh stročnic.«

»In zakaj si to ni normalno kupil v trgovini?«

»Honza je rekel, da se to ne sme, da je to njegovo poletno zbiranje prvi korak k vrnitvi v naravo, prvi korak k novemu začetku, ki pride, če bo seveda kdo imel to srečo, da bo konec sveta sploh preživel.«

»Konec sveta, to je vendar popolna neumnost.«

»Ja, seveda.«

»Nihče mu tega ne bi prisodil, da bo tripal na takih stvareh.«

»Tudi jaz tega nisem vedela.«

»A drugače je normalen?«

»Samo včasih si kaj naredi ali se zakadi, a tudi drugi včasih znorijo in se na primer stepejo, ne?«

»Honza se je vendar prej tudi rad pretepal.«

»Prej ja. Zdaj že manj, zdaj je bolj miren, zdaj se pretepa samo, če gre za življenje. In če ima preveč alkohola v krvi ...«

»In se rad zapija?«

»Včasih.«

Marta in Klara sta ravnokar dosegli trideset let in pred tem sta imeli kar nekaj fantov, s katerimi sta se tudi uspešno razšli, divja Klara jih je uspela imeti nekaj več. Marta dela v marketingu francoskega kemičnega podjetja in že nekaj let hodi s programerjem Honzom, Klara prevaja navodila za sesalce in hladilnike in ne hodi z nikomer.

Svojega supertipa, kot ga imenuje, še ni našla. Do zdaj je imela to nesrečo, da je srečavala same luzerje. Ne ve, kaj bi, je že obupana in zdaj še bolj intenzivno išče očeta svojega otroka. Pravi, da išče darovalca spermij, nič več. To pravi, kot bi se zafrkavala, a Marta dobro ve, da to misli zares, ne za šalo.

»In Honza hoče imeti otroke s tabo?« jo vpraša Klara.

»Enkrat že, tudi jaz bi jih imela, vendar se nama sploh ne mudi. Če ne bo prišel ta konec sveta in če se s tem zakajanjem čisto ne uniči, se bova že potrudila.«

»A se skozi zakaja?«

»Samo včasih.«

»Kajenje ni dobro za spermije, povej mu to. Kajenje trave upočasnjuje stvari.«

»On pravi, da vse pospešuje.«

»Jaz sem se samo enkrat zakadila, in včasih imam občutek, da sem še zdaj.«

»On pravi, da zakajanje sicer včasih upočasnjuje, a spermije nasprotno pospešuje, da je to dokazano. Ameriški znanstveniki so to dokazali, veš, našel je to nekje na spletu. Pravi mi tudi, ti imaš savno, jaz imam travo. Vsi se moramo v tej naši nori dobi relaksirati. Za konec sveta si je za vsak primer shranil tudi semena trave. Ko bo to prišlo, hoče sedeti nekje na hribu, kaditi travo in zreti v nebo in v to, kako prihaja konec. Za to priložnost ima tudi že pripravljen zadnji stavek.«

»Zadnji stavek?«

»Takšen slogan pač. Zadnje besede. Moto. In potem nič več, samo konec sveta.«

»In ta njegov moto zveni kako?«

»Tukaj sem bil.«

»Kot kje?«

»Tukaj povsod. Na zemlji in tako naprej. Na hitro si ga hoče tudi vtetovirati. In če bo konec preživel, bo zaradi teh semen rešil civilizacijo.«

»Tukaj sem bil ... Marta, jaz bi se tega malo bala. A se Honza ne zakaja preveč?«

»To je takšen IT standard.«

»IT standard?«

»Tako temu reče. Kavica iz avtomata. Zakajanje. Računalniške igre. Ugodnosti. Naložbeno življenjsko zavarovanje. Sendviči. To je vse IT standard. Je pa to boljše kot ta zapijanja, po travi ni agresiven, pade v posteljo in zaspi.«

»Jaz bi se kljub temu malo bala zanj.«

»Tudi jaz se bojim. Tudi si je že kupil letalsko vozovnico za Peru. Hoče konec sveta doživeti prav na Machu Picchu. Prav tam.«

»In za tebe letalske karte ni kupil?«

»Hotel mi jo je kupiti, a jaz ne prenašam letenja, in sploh se mi zdi vse malo bolno.«

»Res je bolno.«

»Ja, vem.«

»Kaj pa danes ni bolno. Saj je vse malo čudno.«

»Res je. Si predstavljaš, kaj je zdaj zanj največji problem? Kako bi pretihotapil to travo v Peru. Veš, boji se, da mu jo vzamejo že na letališču v Pragi. In če ne tam, pa potem v Amsterdamu, kjer prestopi.«

»Pizda, jaz bi se bala zanj. Včasih imam občutek, da so vsi današnji tipi nekam odštekani.«

»Tudi ženske niso nič boljše.«

»Ja, a ženske znorijo zaradi tipov. Oni so tako negotovi v svojih vlogah, da se jim zavrti v glavah.« »Ja, prej je bilo to morda bolje. Tip je bil na lovu ali v vojski, ženska v jami. Vse je bilo točno določeno.«

»A jaz nočem biti v jami.«

»Pravzaprav jaz tudi ne. Samo včasih me obide, da če ni bilo bolje biti v jami in skrbeti za ogenj.«

»Moški se bojijo močnih žensk, kot sva midve, to je ves problem.«

»Menda res.«

»Mislim, da je povsod polno čisto zmešanih tipov in tudi teh, ki so pod copato, a je samo malo super punc, kot sva midve. A današnji tipi tega nočejo videti. Mamini sinčki. Najraje bi spali z lastnimi mamami. Zaradi tega še več mislijo na nore stvari, kot je konec sveta, in si izmišljajo zadnje besede. Bil sem tukaj ... Pismo, moški so izgubljeni. In ti kljub temu hočeš vzeti Honza za moža.«

»Saj sva zaročena, a ne.«

»To še nič ne pomeni. Zaroka se lahko zelo hitro konča. Poroka je samo draga napaka. Jaz na primer hočem otroka, a nobene poroke, ne rabim dolgočasnega moža v copatah, ki mu bom potem morala celo življenje streči in biti njegova služkinja v blokovski jami. Res ne.«

»On noče, da bi bila njegova služkinja. Zna poskrbeti sam zase ...«

»Kasneje bo hotel. Na koncu vsi to hočejo. Boš že videla.«

»Ne morem več. A greva ven?«

»Ja.«

Gresta pod tuš, potem skočita v bazen z ledeno vodo. Vročina in mraz in vročina. Vključita se in spet izključita. Potem opazujeta

lastni telesi in Marta ji reče, še vedno imaš krasne prsi, ti moji sta preveč mlekarni. In Klara reče, ne trapaj, še zmeraj imaš krasne prsi in še vedno si vitka in imaš krasno rit, ne kot jo imam jaz, že malo upadlo.

In potem se pobožata.

In se poljubita.

In potem za trenutek zapreta oči na ležišču v tamkajšnjem počivališču.

Za nekaj trenutkov zaspita.

»Marta?« reče v tišino Klara.

»Ja?«

»Misliš, da bo konec sveta res prišel?«

»Ne vem.«

»Veš, saj sama vidiš, skoz ne morem zanositi, skoz imam probleme s tipi. Pa sem pomislila, če to nekako ni odvisno od tega. Da je povsod vse narobe, da je to znamenje nekega konca.«

»Neumnost. Boš že videla, to bo prišlo ena dva.«

»Ena dva bo konec sveta? Ali pa se mi bo ena dva zgodilo, da bom našla svojega super tipa?«

»Da se ti bo to zgodilo. Da se boš ena dva zaljubila. Da se bo nekdo zaljubil vate. Boš že videla, enkrat ti bo uspelo. Ni treba, da bo to super tip. Zadostuje normalen, navaden moški. Takšen IT standard.«

»Ti imaš Honza še vedno zelo rada, a ne?«

»Morda ja.«

»Čeprav je zakajen – bil sem tukaj – kreten.«

»Ja.«

»In čeprav se včasih stepe z nekom?«

»Ah, ja.«

»Saj je to čisto v redu.«

»Za Peru si je kupil letalsko karto tudi za nazaj, to pomeni, da konec sveta še ni tako aktualen.«

»Pizda, škoda, da ti nisi moški, takoj bi se poročila s tabo. Tebi bi brez problemov stregla celo življenje, zaradi mene lahko tudi v jami.«

Za trenutek sta se objeli z rokami.

Pobožali sta se.

»Res?«

»Res.«

»Daj mi poljubček.«

»Ja.«

## *Zabava zapuščenih src*

Dekle pri baru žari. Dovolj, da jo objemajo in sama tudi objema, dajejo ji poljube in tudi sama jih daje, vedno na lice, vedno trikrat, menda tako dajejo v Franciji ali Italiji ali kje drugje. Smeje se in sprejema majhna darila. Lepa je in zagorela od poletnega sonca. Na sebi ima lahko modro obleko. Ni namazana. To ni nikoli.

»Zdravo, a ti si tudi tukaj?« pozdravi Honza Kaja. V roki drži mohito.

»Ja, jasno, povabila me je,« reče Kaja, a preverja mobilca. »To je čudno ...«

»Kaj?«

»Da ga ne dobim, da ni nobenega signala. Čudno je to s tem signalom, a ne, danes je že povsod signal, in tukaj ga ne dobim ...«

»Jaz ga dobim,« preverja Honza svoj telefon.

»Jaz ne.«

»Boš kaj popil?«

»Ja.«

»Tudi mohito?«

»Ja.«

Honza gre k baru in prinese dva drinka.

Nazdravita si.

»Pozdravljen tukaj.«

»Živjo.«

»Pozdravljam te na zabavi zapuščenih src.«

»Ti tudi?«

»Ja.«

»Tega nisem vedel.«

»Kaj se da naredit. Nič hudega,« reče Honza.

Najeti DJ zavrti prvo skladbo. Z lučmi začne utripati barvna glasba. Dekle zapleše. Kot prvi se nanjo nalepi suh lepotec z brki v ozkih kavbojkih.

»A ga poznaš?« ga vpraša Honza in nervozno srka iz slamice.

»Ne,« reče Kaja.

»Po mojem je tako in tako gej.«

»Ti jo imaš še zmeraj rad, a ne?«

»Ti ne?«

»Ne.«

»In zakaj si tukaj?«

»Ker je moja prijateljica.«

»Ja, to mi je tudi ponujala.«

Honza z enim gibom spije mohito in si naroči še enega.

»In kako se imaš drugače?« ga vpraša Kaja.

»Dobro, brez problemov. A ni to čudno, da tukaj ni skoraj nobene punce, ne? Da nima nobene prijateljice. Same odpadle fante.«

Gledata jo. Še vedno je tako lepa. Še vedno tako super pleše. Še vedno ima tako lepe dolge noge. Pozibava se v bokih. Pod nežno tkanino je videti njene krasne prsi. In bradavice.

»Pizda,« reče Honza. »Jaz ji bom to rekel.«

»In kaj ji to hočeš reči?«

»Preprosto ji bom to rekel.«

»Pa ji dej.«

»Sto procenten.«

»To vidim.«

»Veš, kaj se mi je zgodilo? Napisal sem ji pismo, dolgo, izpovedal sem se ji, celo noč sem to pisal. Poslal sem ji po mailu in si predstavljaj, kaj se je zgodilo?«

»Napisala ti je, da takšnega pisma še nikoli ni dobila, a na žalost ...«

»Ne, še huje, ona ga sploh ni prebrala.«

»Aha.«

»Jaz sem končal v spamu, to mi je potem rekla.«

Honza si prinese še en mohito.

»Vse je v redu,« reče.

Okrog pohajajo samo fantje, ki so jo tudi imeli radi in jo morda še vedno imajo radi. V rokah držijo drinke, pogovarjajo se z njo, se hecajo z njo. In ji gledajo noge. Njeno krasno, valovito telo.

»To je grozno, obletavajo jo kot čebele. A bolj kot kreteni. Kot norci.«

»Tudi ti si jo obletaval.«

»Zato tudi vem, kaj govorim. Brez panike.«

Drugi fantje so malo zamorjeni, polni bolečine, držijo se pijače in poskušajo to pozabiti.

In ona?

»Ne izgleda, da jih ima že trideset,« pravi Honza in hitro popije še en mohito. »Najhujše je, da bo ona tudi pri štiridesetih lepa. Pri petdesetih tudi. Pri šestdesetih bo že babica, a še vedno lepa.«

»Seveda bo.«

»Ah, te njene oči.«

»Ja.«

»In je še vedno sama. A to sploh veš?«

»Ne.«

»Menda ji tako ustreza.«

»Meni tudi ustreza, da sem sam.«

»Ona vse to jemlje kot igro. Pusti te, da jo obletavaš, potem pa te prisesa. Počutiš se dobro z njo. Pobere ti vso energijo, vse tvoje zgodbe. Potem pa te pusti. Rada muči ...«

»Noče imeti stalnega frajerja, ne.«

»Ona te ne spusti, saj ti nikoli ne dovoli, da bi se ji preveč približal.«

»Ne?«

»Ali pa je tebi izjemoma dovolila?«

»Je.«

»Je?«

»Je.«

»Ne zafrkavaj? In kako je to bilo?«

»Kako ... Pravzaprav čisto normalno.«

»Ej, jaz ji bom vse to povedal kar naravnost.«

»Kaj pa ji pravzaprav hočeš povedati?«

»Resnico, ne. Kakšna je zares. To ji bom rekel. Kako nas muči.«

»Nikogar ne muči iz nuje. Ti si se sam pustil mučiti.«

»Povedal ji bom, kako mi je. Povedal ji bom o tem spamu. To je pa res grozno, da sem končal v spamu.«

»Pomiri se. Saj je bilo to pred tremi leti.«

»Štirimi.«

»To je pa menda res čisto vseeno.«

»Štiri leta v spamu! Kaj so to za ene nore igre?«

»Ah, ja.«

Punca žari in pleše. Brkača je že davno zamenjal naslednji zapuščen ljubimec.

»Petnajst. Pismo, tukaj je petnajst tipov,« reče Honza. »In kdo ve, koliko jih še pride.«

»Pa jih ne šteje več, ne? Pomiri se.«

»Sem čisto miren,« reče Honza in živčno sesa iz slamice.

»Vidim to.«

Vrata se odprejo.

»Šestnajst,« reče Honza.

Med vrati bara stoji štiridesetletnik v elegantni obleki z veliko rožo. Gre k dekletu, da ji poljub na obraz. Ta ga poboža.

»Ne, povedal ji bom. Mene že ne bo nobeden mučil.«

»Čudno je vse to,« reče Kaja.

»Samo poglej, koliko nas tu je, en večji norec kot drugi, vse je okrog prinesla.«

»Ne, na tem mobilu povsod dobim signal, samo tukaj ne. Nobe-nega signala. Ti ga dobiš?« ga vpraša Kaja in gleda mobilca, a Honza ga presliši.

»Šestnajst uničenih tipov, ki so se zaljubili vanjo,« reče Honza.

»A ga ti dobiš?« ga vpraša Kaja še enkrat, a Honza ga ne posluša.

»In te dve puncici, ki sta tukaj, po mojem mnenju sta lezbijki, ki sta jo tudi imeli radi.«

»Zakaj mi, pizda, to dela?« reče Honza in gre k baru. »A morda veš, če gre vse na baru na njene stroške? Tako je napisala v povabilu po mailu, ali pa za to vse plačajo zapuščena srca? Lahko bi nam plačala vsaj eno večjo rundo, ne, po vsem tem?«

»Ne vem.«

»V redu. Sem ga že dobil,« preveri Honza mobilca.

»Jaz ne. Čudno.«

»Jaz imam vse črte. Imam poln signal. Ta tvoj mobilc je malo čuden.«

Dekle pleše s še enim zlomljenim srcem. Tako lepa je.

Honza prinaša mohito. Izpije ga na eks. Mimo njega se sprehodi bradač. Na sebi ima pulover, kot ga je nosil njegov tata. Ko se približa Honzu, ga ta malo odrine.

»Kaj je?« ga pogleda brkač.

»Brez panike,« reče Honza.

Brkač gre na stranišče.

»Saj sem vedel, da je gej. Če ne bi bil ta topel, bi se že stepel.«

»Raje več ne pij,« reče Kaja.

»Povedal ji bom to.«

»Ne nori. To je njena zabava, ne uničuj ji tega. Saj je fajn punca.«

»Fajn punca ...«

Honza potisne Kaju v roko prazen kozarec in se začne približevati dekletu. Kaja skuša prijeti kozarec, a se mu izmuzne in se raztrešči po tleh. Nekaj ljudi se obrne. Kaja vleče Honza nazaj. Honza izbije enemu od opuščenih fantov iz roke pijačo. Črepinje povsod, povsod pogledi. Mohito se razliva po starem parketu.

»Vse je v redu, opravičujem se, prijatelj je malo depresiven,« reče Kaja tem fantom.

»Ti kurba, nisem depresiven,« mu reče Honza. »Pusti me. Moram ji to povedati in potem vsem razbijem gobce.«

Kaja ga ulovi. Poskuša ga zadržati.

»Stari, ne nori.«

Honza se mu izvije.

»Saj sem v redu.«

Kaja zasleduje Honza, ko gre mimo vseh opuščenih ljubimcev in jim kriči v face. Včasih se v koga zaleti z ramo. Vsi se mu umikajo. Kaja vidi, kako gre k lepemu dekletu, ki danes proslavlja trideset. Nekaj ji histerično razlaga. Dekle ga gleda resno in zaskrbljeno, potem pa se zasmije, ga poboža, objame in poljubi na eno lice. In še na drugo in še enkrat. Kot v Franciji. Kot v Italiji. Ali tam nekje. Potem pa z njim zapleše.

*Prevedla Alenka Jensterle Doležal*

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## *The End of the World*

“He’s collecting seeds.”

“What’s he doing?”

“Collecting seeds.”

“Why?”

“He’s getting ready for the end of the world.”

Marta and Klára haven’t seen each other for a long time. They were at school together in a small town by the border. But then Prague sucked them in, chewed them up, stewed them, fried them, and never let them go. Marta got a degree in culture studies and art history, Klára in art history and English. They both had big plans. And now they are sitting next to one another in the sauna, sweating.

“The end of the world. It’s supposed to be coming again in December, but this time for real. I thought he was just talking rubbish, that it was just his usual joking around, his idea of a laugh, but he spent the whole winter roaming the fields and the forests collecting seeds,” says Marta.

“What sort of seeds?”

“Seeds from the most important herbs and plants, and trees, too. He’s got all the types of grain, all the legumes.”

“And why didn’t he just buy them in the shop like everyone else?”

“Honza says that it’s not the same, that gathering them by hand is the first step towards going back to nature, the first step towards the new beginning that will come if someone gets lucky and survives the end of the world.”

“The end of the world, that’s just a load of rubbish.”

“Yep.”

“I would never tell him that he’s losing his mind over these things.”

“Neither would I.”

“Other than that he doesn’t misbehave too much, right?”

“Well sometimes he gets drunk or stoned, but other people fight, at least he doesn’t do that.”

“But Honza used to fight too, though.”

“He did. Less so now, now he’s calmed down, now Honza only fights when it’s a matter of life and death. And when he drinks shots.”

“And he drinks shots?”

“Sometimes.”

Marta and Klára had just passed the 30 mark and in the meantime had built up and then demolished again a couple of relationships, as things tend to go. Wild Klára had managed a couple more than Marta. Marta works in the marketing department of a French chemical firm and has been seeing Honza, a programmer, for a couple of years. Klára translates instruction manuals for vacuum cleaners and fridges and is not seeing anyone. She hasn't met her superguy, as she calls them, yet. So far she's apparently only had luck with the not-so-super guys. She is baffled and despairing. So she is now looking for the father of her child all the more frantically. She says that she's looking for a sperm donor, nothing more. She says it a little jokingly, but Marta knows that it isn't really such a joke.

"Does Honza want to have kids with you?" asks Klára.

"I think so, one day. And I do too, I think, but we're not forcing it. If the end of the world doesn't come and he doesn't completely smoke himself into oblivion, then we'll do it".

"He still smokes?"

"A bit."

"Tell him getting stoned isn't good for sperm. Getting stoned slows them down."

"He says it speeds them up."

"It slows them down."

"He says it speeds them up."

"I got stoned once and sometimes I get the feeling that I'm still slowed down."

"He says that getting stoned does sometimes slow things down, but with sperm, it speeds it up, that it's been proven. American scientists discovered it, he read it somewhere on the internet. And he also says, you have the sauna, I have my grass. Everyone needs to relax in these crazy times. He's got his marijuana seeds stored up too in case the end of the world comes, of course. When it comes, he wants to be sitting somewhere on a hill, smoking and looking at the sky and watching the end arrive. He's already got his last sentence ready for when the time comes."

"Last sentence?"

"Sort of like a slogan. Last words. A motto. And then nothing, just the end of the world."

"And how does his slogan go?"

"I was here."

"Where?"

“Everywhere. Like on the earth. He wants to get a tattoo done of it soon, too. And when he survives the end of the world, he will save civilization using those seeds.”

“I was here...Marta, I'd be a bit scared about that. Honza isn't smoking a bit too much, is he?”

“It's their IT standard.”

“IT standard?”

“That's what he calls it. Coffee from a machine. Getting stoned. Computer games. Benefits. Capital life insurance. Baguettes. It's all IT standard. But it's better than drinking. On grass he doesn't fight, he collapses and falls asleep.”

“I'd be worried.”

“I am worried. He's already bought his ticket to Peru. He wants to see the end of the world at Machu Picchu. Right there.”

“He hasn't bought you a ticket?”

“He wanted to buy me one, but I hate flying though and besides I don't smoke and besides it all strikes me as a little insane.”

“It is insane”

“I know.”

“But what isn't insane these days.”

“Exactly. You know what his biggest problem is now? How to smuggle the grass to Peru. You know he's paranoid that they'll arrest him in Prague at the airport. And if not there, then when he's catching his connecting flight in Amsterdam.”

“I'd be worried about him. Sometimes I get the feeling that all guys do these days is freak out.”

“Women freak out too”

“Yeah, but women only freak out over guys. They're so insecure in their roles that they lose it.”

“Maybe it was better before. The man out hunting or fighting, the woman in the cave. It was all so straightforward.”

“But I don't want to be in a cave.”

“Neither do I. But sometimes I wonder if it wasn't better to be in a cave tending to the fire.”

“They're frightened of strong girls like us, that's all.”

“Maybe.”

“I think there are a ton of completely idiotic guys and mummies' boys, but only a couple of amazing girls like us two. But guys today don't want to see us. They'd rather sleep with their own mothers. And so they spend even more time thinking about stupid things like

the end of the world and what their last words are going to be. I was here...God, guys these days are beyond hope. Do you still want to marry Honza?"

"We're engaged."

"That doesn't mean anything. You could be unengaged again in no time. A wedding is just an expensive mistake. I want a baby, but no wedding. I don't need a boring husband in slippers I'd have to wait on my whole life and be his servant in some high-rise cave. No way."

"He doesn't want me to be his servant. He knows how to take care of himself."

"He will want it. Everyone wants it eventually. You'll see."

"It's getting too much for me. Shall we go out?"

"Yep."

They go into the shower, then jump into the ice-cold pool. Hot and cold and cold and hot. Off and then on again. Then they look at their bodies and Marta says, you've still got gorgeous breasts, mine are already a bit like bags of milk. And Klára says, what are you on about, you've still got gorgeous breasts and you're still thin and you've got a gorgeous bum, not like mine, it's already a bit saggy.

And then they stroke one another.

And then they kiss each other.

And then they close their eyes for a moment on the sofa in the dark lounge.

They fall asleep for a couple of minutes.

"Marta?" says Klára in the silence.

"Yeah?"

"Do you think the end of the world is really going to come?"

"Don't know."

"You know how I can't get pregnant, how it keeps not working out with men. Something completely silly just occurred to me, that maybe it might have something to do with that. That it's all a sign, that it's an omen of some sort of doom."

"Rubbish. You'll see, it'll happen just like that."

"Just like that the end of the world? Or just like that I'll be pregnant, that I'll find my super-guy?"

"That you'll get pregnant. That you'll fall in love. That someone will fall in love with you. You'll see, it'll happen one day. Doesn't have to be a super-guy. A normal, nice, ordinary guy will do. Just an IT standard sort of guy."

“You still really love Honza, right?”

“Yeah, I think so.”

“Even though he’s a stoned ‘I-was-here’ freak?”

“Yep.”

“Even though he gets angry sometimes?”

“Yep.”

“Nice.”

“He’s bought a return ticket to Peru, so he can’t be *that* into this end of the world business.”

“It’s a shame you’re not a guy, I’d marry you. I’d happily wait on you for the rest of my life in some cave.”

They take one another’s hand for a moment.

They stroke one another.

“Yeah?”

“Yeah.”

“Give me a kiss.”

“Yeah.”

## *Heartbreak Party*

The girl at the bar is glowing. She lets herself be embraced and embraces others, she lets herself be kissed, and kisses others. Always on the face, always three times, like in France, or Italy, or somewhere else. She smiles and unwraps small presents. She is beautiful and tanned from the summer beach. She's wearing a light blue dress. She isn't wearing any make-up. She never does.

"Hi, so you're here too?" Honza greets Kája. He's holding a mojito.

"Sure, she invited me," says Kája and checks his phone. "Strange..."

"What?"

"That I'm not getting any reception here, there's no signal. It's strange, no? There's reception everywhere these days, but not here..."

"I've got reception," Honza looks at his phone.

"I haven't."

"Do you want something to drink?"

"Yeah."

"You want a mojito too?"

"Yeah."

Honza goes to the bar and brings back two drinks.

They clink glasses.

"Welcome."

"Hi."

"Welcome to the heartbreak party."

"You too?"

"Yeah."

"I didn't know."

"Yep. But it's OK," says Honza.

The hired DJ puts on the first record. Colourful music blinks into life. The girl starts to dance. A skinny handsome man in tight jeans with a moustache is the first to pull her over to him.

"You know him?" asks Honza and nervously sucks on his straw.

"No," says Kája.

"I think he's gay anyway."

"You still love her, right?"

"And you don't?"

"No."

"Then why are you here?"

"Because she's a friend."

“Yeah, she offered to be my friend too.”

Honza finishes his mojito in a single swig and orders himself another.

“And otherwise?” asks Kája.

“Otherwise everything’s OK. But it’s weird that there are almost no girls here, no? That she doesn’t have any female friends. Just these broken-hearted lovers.”

They look at her. She’s still beautiful. Still dances beautifully. Still has those beautiful long legs. She winds her hips. Under the silken material you can see her small beautiful breasts. And nipples.

“Right,” says Honza. “I’m going to tell her.”

“What do you want to tell her?”

“I’m just going to tell her.”

“Then tell her.”

“It’s OK.”

“I can see that.”

“Do you know what happened to me? I wrote her a letter, a long one, a sort of confession, I was up all night writing it. I sent it by email, and do you know what happened?”

“She wrote to you to say that she never got your email, but that unfortunately...”

“No, worse. She didn’t read it at all.”

“Aha.”

“I ended up in spam, she told me afterwards.”

Honza gets himself another mojito.

“But it’s OK,” he says.

Single men who also loved her, or rather still love her, are standing around. They are holding drinks, chatting with one another and with her, tossing out quips. And they are looking at her legs. At her beautiful curvy body.

“It’s awful, how they’re swarming around her like bees. Or more like drones. Like idiots.”

“I used to swarm too.”

“I know what I’m talking about too. But it’s OK.”

The other men are a little melancholy and wounded, they’re holding drinks and trying in vain to forget.

And her?

“She doesn’t look thirty,” says Honza and quickly finishes another mojito. “The worst thing is that she’ll also be beautiful at forty. And at fifty. At sixty she’ll already be a granny, but still beautiful.”

“She will.”

“Those eyes.”

“Yep.”

“And do you know she’s still single?”

“No.”

“Apparently she’s happily single.”

“I’m also quite happy to be single.”

“She just likes to play around. She lets herself be seduced, gets her teeth into you, and you’re happy with her. She sucks all the jokes, all the stories out of you. And then just ups and leaves you. She likes to torture people.”

“She doesn’t want to commit.”

“She doesn’t even let you go, because she hasn’t even let you in.”

“No?”

“Or maybe she let you...?”

“Yeah.”

“Yeah?”

“Yeah.”

“Really? And how was it?”

“How was it..? Completely normal actually.”

“Right, I’m just going to tell her.”

“And what do you want to tell her?”

“The truth. How she is. I’ll tell her. How she tortures us.”

“She’s not torturing anyone. You want to let yourself be tortured.”

“I’ll tell her what it’s like for me. I’ll tell her about that spam. It’s awful to end up in spam.”

“Calm down. It’s been three years.”

“Four years.”

“Same difference”

“Four years, in spam! What the hell sort of stupid game is that?”

“Right.”

The girl glows and dances. Another broken-hearted lover long ago replaced the moustache guy.

“Fifteen. Christ, there are fifteen guys here,” says Honza. “And who knows how many more are on their way.”

“So don’t count, right? Be cool.”

“I am cool,” says Honza and nervously sucks on his straw.

“I can see that.”

The door opens.

“Sixteen,” says Honza.

At the door to the bar stands a forty-year-old in a smart jacket holding a large flower. He goes up to the girl, kisses her on the face. She strokes him.

“No, I’m just going to tell her. Nobody’s going to torture me.”

“That’s weird,” says Kája.

“How many of us are there here, one a bigger fool than the next, we all fell for it.”

“No, with this phone, I get reception everywhere, but not here. No signal. Are you getting any reception?” asks Kája and looks at his phone, but Honza doesn’t notice.

“Sixteen broken-hearted guys who have fallen in love with her,” says Honza.

“Are you getting any reception here?” asks Kája again, but Honza isn’t listening.

“And the two or three girls that are here, I reckon they’re lesbians who’ve loved her too.”

“Why the hell is she doing this?” says Honza and goes over to the bar. “Do you know if everything at the bar is on her? Did she put it in that invitation email, or are the broken hearts paying for everything? She could stretch to a round, no? After all that’s happened.”

“I don’t know.”

“OK. I’ve got reception,” Honza checks his mobile.

The girl dances with another broken heart. She is beautiful.

Honza brings over a mojito. He downs it in one gulp. The moustache guy walks by. He’s wearing an old-fashioned sweater, like his father wore. When he passes Honza, Honza gives him a little shove.

“What the..?” the moustache guy looks at him.

“It’s OK,” says Honza.

The moustache guy goes into the toilet.

“I said he was gay. If he wasn’t gay, he’d have fought back.”

“You shouldn’t drink,” says Kája.

“I’ll tell her.”

“Don’t be stupid. It’s her party, don’t spoil it for her. She’s a nice girl.”

“A nice girl...”

Honza shoves the empty glass into Kája’s hand and heads off towards the girl. Kája grabs him, the glass flies to the ground. A couple of people turn round. Kája drags Honza back. Honza knocks a drink out of the hand of one of the broken-hearted lovers. More broken glass, more looks. The mojito spills over the old parquet floors.

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“It’s OK, I’m sorry, my friend is a little depressed,” says Kája to those boys.

“I’m not fucking depressed,” says Honza. “Leave me alone. I’ll just tell her. And then I’ll give everyone a smack in the mouth.”

Kája grabs him. He tries to hold him back.

“Don’t be stupid, you idiot.”

Honza breaks free.

“I’m OK.”

Kája follows Honza as he goes around all the broken-hearted lovers and growls at them in the face. From time to time he rams into someone with his shoulder. They get out of his way. Kája sees him go up to the beautiful girl celebrating her thirtieth birthday. He says something brusquely to her. The girl looks at him earnestly and tenderly, then smiles at him, strokes him, hugs him and kisses him on the face. And again and again. Like in France. Like in Italy. Or somewhere. And then she starts to dance with him.

*Translated by Anna Lordan*



*Foto © Sarah Jane Eyre*

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# Roman Simić

## Bodrožić

Roman Simić Bodrožić se je rodil leta 1972 v Zadru na Hrvaškem. Diplomiral je iz španskega jezika in književnosti ter primerjalne književnosti na Univerzi v Zagrebu. Bil je urednik priznane hrvaške literarne revije *Quorum*, pred 13 leti pa je postal direktor mednarodnega hrvaškega literarnega festivala evropske kratke zgodbe »Festival evropske kratke priče«. Objavil je pesniško zbirko *U trenutku kao u divljini* (V trenutku kot v divljini, 1996), za katero je prejel drugo nagrado Goran na natečaju za poezijo, in zbirke kratkih zgodb *Mjesto na kojem ćemo provesti noć* (Kraj, na katerem bova prenočila, 2000), *U što se zaljubljujemo* (V kaj se zaljubljam, 2005), za katero je istega leta prejel nagrado časnika *Jutarnji list* za najboljšo hrvaško zbirko proze, in *Nahrani me* (2012), za katero je leta 2013 prejel nagrado Kiklop za najboljšo hrvaško zbirko proze. Ena od zgodb iz omenjene zbirke je bila nagrajena z nagrado Ranka Marinkovića za najboljšo kratko zgodbo. Njegove knjige so prevedene v pet jezikov, njegova besedila pa so objavljena tudi v več antologijah. Roman Simić Bodrožić živi v Zagrebu, kjer dela kot urednik pri založbi Fraktura.

Roman Simić Bodrožić was born in 1972 in Zadar. He holds a degree in Spanish Language and Literature and Comparative Literature from the University of Zagreb. He served as the editor of the renowned Croatian *Quorum* literary magazine, and has, for the past 13 years, been the director of the international Croatian "Festival evropske kratke priče" (Festival of the European Short Story). He has published the collection of poetry *U trenutku kao u divljini* (In the Moment Like in the Wilderness, 1996), which was a runner-up for the Goran Poetry Prize, and the collections of short stories *Mjesto na kojem ćemo provesti noć* (Where We Shall Spend the Night, 2000), *U što se zaljubljujemo* (With What We Fall in Love, 2005), which won the prize for the best Croatian book of fiction awarded by the newspaper *Jutarnji list* that same year, as well as *Nahrani me* (Feed Me, 2012), which won in 2013 the "Kiklop" prize for the best Croatian book of fiction. One of the stories from the collection was also awarded the "Ranko Marinković" Prize for the best short story. His books have been translated into five languages, and his texts have been included in several anthologies. Roman Simić Bodrožić lives in Zagreb, where he works as an editor for the Fraktura Publishing House.

## Dvoje djece

Imao sam dvoje djece i nisam mogao misliti. Dvoje djece, dvoje djece, od jutra do večeri, od sumraka do zore, iza njih nije ostajao ni kamen na kamenu, taktika spaljene zemlje, prah i pepeo! Dvoje djece, tamnokosi anđelčiči, dečko i curica. Bila su to djeca ljubavi, ali to se više nije spominjalo, moja žena najmanje. Bila je to dobra žena, prilično zgodna, dobro ušćuvana, ali bilo joj je dosta svega: rekao bih i da je ponekad žalila, duboko žalila zbog koječega, no barem se trudila ne davati mi to otvoreno do znanja. Ja se nisam mogao suzdržati. Žalio sam se, nepromišljeno. Dvoje djece, dvoje djece, ponekad bih prevršio mjeru, a ni ona se baš nije razbacivala razumijevanjem; na svako moje prenemaganje samo bi promrmljala, *a meni se nakon trudnoće smanjio mozak*, to je bio njezin odgovor na sve - podatak je pronašla u knjizi slavne neurologinje, knjizi koju nije pročitala do kraja, ali i ono što je pročitala bilo je dovoljno za ključni argument svih naših rasprava. Pretpostavljao sam da smanjenje ne može biti trajno, ali do tog dijela ionako ne bismo dolazili; moja žena svoju bi rečenicu uvijek izgovorila svečano i nekako konačno, tako da je zvučalo kao presuda, a ona kao invalid-veteran domovinskog rata; kao da je nešto zauvijek izgubila, ali više niti mari, niti se sjeća što je to nešto bilo.

Bio je to gerilski rat, borba za svaki pedalj terena! Kad bih odlazio iznijeti smeće ili platiti račune, pogledala bi me zavidno i rekla *blago tebi, ti izlaziš*. Jednom kad sam se spremao na sprovod kolege s posla, gotovo plačući je prošaptala, *molim te, mogu li ja umjesto tebe, hitno trebam među ljude* - toliko očajna je bila, ili toliko pametna, ta moja žena, ljubav moga života.

*Nevjerojatno što čovjeku može učiniti malo neobaveznog seksa*, govorila bi preko telefona svojoj manje iskusnoj sestri, ali i predobro smo znali da nam nitko nije bio kriv. Voljeli smo se, završili jedno na drugom, odmahnuili rukom na prezervativ i napravili to dvoje djece; toliko sam još i mogao razumjeti, ali sve ovo - sve što se dogodilo nakon toga - na to se doista nije dalo pripremiti! Da potaknem misli, ponekad bih pušio, grickao orašasto voće, a ponekad samo izjurio i skakutao ispred zgrade. Tamo je bio i taj vječno prazni kineski dućan, Xia-Ping promet - tako se zvao, a iz njega bi provirio kozičavi Kinez i rekao *bok, sused, bok, sused*, odvratio bih ja, i mi bismo se nasmiješili jedan drugome - naizgled, to je bilo sve, ali ti su me susreti snažili, svjedočili solidarnost, bistrili mi glavu. No ni to nije moglo

potrajati: uskoro me počela moriti pomisao da u Xia-Pingovom smijehu postoji neko skriveno značenje, u tom smijehu koji je dolazio iz najmnogoljudnije zemlje i pripadao ljudima koji su se generacijama borili protiv viška djece i manjka razmišljanja. *Ima nečeg zloknog u njemu*, povjerio sam se ženi, *Xia-Ping promet tjera me da se zamislim*. Ali naravno, žena je samo odmahнула rukom i požalila se na smanjene kapacitete; bilo je subota, jedanaest navečer, a iz dječje sobe još je dopirao hihot. Zatim se začuo vrisak, a onda zvuk nečeg plastičnog što snažno udara o parket. Ne, definitivno. Nisu nam trebali razgovori o Kinezima. Trebali su nam vikendi bez incidenata.

Ne mogu reći da su ta djeca bila zla, bila su samo dobro raspoređena. Kad se drugo rodilo, prvo je imalo dvije; kad je drugo napunilo godinu, drugo je imalo tri, pa onda 2:4, 3:5, neumoljivom logikom dalje, perspektiva je bila zastrašujuća, ali od toga se nije dalo pobjeći. A nisu bila čak ni zahtjevna, ta naša djeca, zapravo, tražila su samo uobičajeno: hrani, kupaj, preoblači, čuvaj, razdvajaj, uspavluj, nunaj, pjevaj, razgovaraj, pregovaraj, prijeti, tuci, očajavaj, informiraj se, vodi u vrtić, vodi u šetnju, spremaj u auto, veži u sjedalicu, vodi liječniku, i kako onda da čovjek razmišlja, kako da misli, Xia-Ping se samo smješкао, bio je mudar i imao je promet, čak i kada nije imao prometa.

A naši prijatelji? Da, imali smo i prijatelje. Već neko vrijeme dijelili smo ih na dvije skupine. Na one s djecom i one bez njih. Naravno, podjela nije bila bez ostatka, npr.: prijatelje s kućnim ljubimcima bili smo skloni smatrati posebnom vrstom prijatelja s djecom, dok je zaseban slučaj bio par ženinih kolega s faksa koji je u hladnjaku uzgajao bakterijsku kulturu i od nje pravio kefir. Smatrali su je (kulturu) živim bićem, pričali o njoj, svake je večeri cijedili i zalijevali mlijekom i, uopće, poklanjali joj više pažnje nego što su neki legitimni članovi prve skupine posvećivali svojoj djeci. No prijatelji bez djece, ljubimaca i bakterijskih kultura bili su priča za sebe. Nije ih bilo malo, čisti generacijski prosjek, a svaki je imao trideset i pet godina i priču. Uglavnom onu o usavršavanju. Jedan je bio profesor i usavršavao se u znanosti, drugi je pokrenuo biznis i usavršavao se u zgrtanju novca, a treći je bio nezaposlen i usavršavao se u zdravom životu. *Nemaju djece, mogu misliti, ali nisu smislili ništa pametno*, govorila je moja žena. Nisu joj bili dragi, ti naši prijatelji bez djece, vodili su moderan život, sebični onoliko koliko smo mi samo sanjali da bismo mogli biti. *Oni i njihove razglednice iz egzotičnih zemalja*, mogao sam je zamisliti kako grinta, samo da smo ih dobivali, ali

nismo, što nas je i tjeralo da se pitamo: *što rade ti ljudi na putovanju ako ne pišu razglednice, na što troše vrijeme?*

Ponekad sam se pitao hoću li uspjeti zadržati ženu, toliko smo iscrpljeni bili. Znam, voljeli smo se, ali nismo baš putovali, trenirali ili imali hobije – imali smo djecu, dvoje djece, i bilo nam je dosta svega. Tražili smo izlaz, da, tako smo provodili vrijeme. Privremeno olakšanje donosio je moj prijatelj s četvoro djece i ženom čiji se mozak vjerojatno smanjio na veličinu zrna graška. Posjećivali smo se i vodili razgovore koji nisu nalikovali ni na što. Sa šestero djece oko sebe bilo je nemoguće misliti, a kamoli razgovarati. Na višestruko složene rečenice već odavno nitko nije trošio daha. Samo smo se smješkali i izmjenjivali sućutne poglede, svi osim prijateljeve žene. Ona čak ni za to nije imala snage. Voljeli smo te prijatelje, premda o njima nismo znali gotovo ništa. Druženje nije obaralo s nogu, ali kad bismo se rastajali, osjećao sam kako nam se raspoloženje popravlja; bili smo ponovno u sedlu, u usporedbi s onim što je zadesilo te ljude naše dvoje djece više se nije činilo kao prevelika pokora! Uopće, tih dana bilo je i kiše i sunca, sve se znalo promijeniti u trenu. Jednom sam je recimo zatekao da plače, ali brzo sam šmugnuo u hodnik, za suze više nisam imao hrabrosti. Ipak, prislušivati sam mogao sasvim dobro. Iz onog što se dalo razabrati, vijest je bila bomba: njezina donedavno manje iskusna sestra bila je trudna, a moja ju je žena tješila. *Smanjio mi se mozak*, govorila je, *da nije, ne bih to mogla podnijeti*. Zvučalo je kao da se smije, a opet, tamo odakle sam ja slušao, lako je mogla i plakati. *Već sto godina nisam poslušala cd, ni pročitala knjigu, ni zaplesala, ni nalakirala nokte... stid me kako izgledam... sve do čega mi je bilo stalo sada gledam kroz dalekozor... Ali kad god ih vidim kako spavaju, ili čujem kako dišu, ili im udahnem miris, ili ih zagrlim, ili ih naprosto gledam kako rastu i mijenjaju se... Srce mi je puno*. Da, tako je rekla, dobro sam čuo. *Puno*. *Ne znam kako drugačije da ti kažem*. Činilo se da plače, a opet, tamo odakle sam ja slušao, lako se mogla i smijati. *I to je sve: život ti je prazan, ali srce ti je puno*.

Tako je govorila moja žena. Bila je to dobra žena, velikodušna i mudra žena, a s njezinim mozgom sve je bilo u redu. Ako i nije, čvrsto sam vjerovao da će se ubrzo vratiti na staro. Zajedno sa svime ostalim, svime do čega nam je nekada bilo stalo a sada smo morali gledati kroz dalekozor. Nisam mogao biti siguran u to, ali za neke stvari jednostavno trebaš biti vjernik, a meni nikad nije bio problem moliti; nikad, sve dok sam imao zašto. Ovaj put, bilo je to

nas četvero: moja žena i ja, i naše dvoje djece, dvoje djece, ponekad nisam mogao misliti, život mi je bio prazan, ali srce mi je bilo puno. Na kraju svakog dana, nazovite me ludim, ali želio sam da potraje vječno.

## *Dva otroka*

Imel sem dva otroka in nisem mogel misliti. Dva otroka, dva otroka, od jutra do večera, od mraka do zore, za njima so ostajale ruševine, taktika požganega ozemlja, prah in pepel! Dva otroka, temnolasa angelčka, fantek in punčka. Bila sta otroka ljubezni, ampak to se ni več omenjalo, moja žena najmanj. Bila je dobra žena, precej čedna, dobro ohranjena, ampak bilo ji je vsega dovolj: rekel bi tudi, da je včasih obžalovala, globoko obžalovala marsikaj, vendar se je vsaj trudila, da mi tega ne bi dala odkrito vedeti. Sam se nisem mogel zadržati. Pritoževal sem se, nepremišljeno. Dva otroka, dva otroka, včasih sem pretiral, sama pa tudi ni bila ravno polna razumevanja; ob vsakem mojem pretvarjanju je samo zamrmrala, *meni pa so se po nosečnosti zmanjšali možgani*, to je bil njen odgovor na vse – podatek je našla v knjigi slavne nevrologinje, v knjigi, ki je ni prebrala do konca, vendar je tudi tisto, kar je prebrala, zadostovalo za ključni argument vseh najinih razprav. Domneval sem, da zmanjšanje ne more biti trajno, ampak do tega dela tako ali tako nisva prišla; moja žena je svoj stavek vedno izrekla svečano in nekako dokončno, tako da je bil slišati kot sodba, sama pa kot invalid veteran domovinske vojne; kakor da bi kaj za vedno izgubila, vendar ji ni več mar, pa tudi ne spomni se več, kaj je to bilo.

To je bila gverilska vojna, boj za vsako ped ozemlja! Kadar sem nesel smeti ali šel plačat položnice, me je zavistno pogledala in rekla, *blagor ti, ven greš*. Nekoč, ko sem se odpravljal na pogreb kolega iz službe, je skoraj jokaje zašepetala, *prosim, a lahko grem jaz namesto tebe, nujno moram med ljudi* – tako obupana je bila, ali tako pametna, ta moja žena, ljubezen mojega življenja.

*Neverjetno, kaj lahko človeku naredi malo neobveznega seksa*, je rekla svoji manj izkušeni sestri po telefonu, vendar sva še predobro vedela, da ne moreva nikogar kriviti. Ljubila sva se, končala drug na drugem, glede kondoma odmahnila z roko in naredila ta dva otroka; toliko sem še lahko razumel, ampak vse tisto, vse, kar se je zgodilo po tem – na to se resnično ni dalo pripraviti! Da bi vzpodbudil misli, sem včasih kadil, jedel oreščke, včasih pa samo zdrvel ven in poskakoval pred stavbo. Tam je bila tudi tista vedno prazna kitajska trgovina, *Xia-Ping promet* – tako se je imenovala, iz nje je pokukal kozavi Kitajec in rekel, *živjo, sosed, živjo, sosed*, sem rekel in nasmehnila sva se drug drugemu – na videz je bilo to vse, ampak ta srečanja so me krepila, pričala o solidarnosti, mi bistrila glavo.

Vendar to ni moglo trajati: kmalu me je začela mučiti misel, da je v Xia-Pingovem smehu nekakšen skrivni pomen, v tistem smehu, ki je prihajal iz dežele z največ prebivalci in je pripadal ljudem, ki so se dolge generacije borili proti presežku otrok in manku razmišljanja. *Nekaj zloveščega je v njem*, sem zaupal ženi, *Xia-Ping promet me sili k premišljevanju*. Ampak žena je seveda samo odmahnila z roko in potožila o zmanjšanih zmogljivostih; bila je sobota, enajst zvečer, iz otroške sobe pa je še vedno prihajalo hihitanje. Nato se je zaslišal krik, zatem pa zvok nečesa plastičnega, kar je močno zaropotalo po parketu. Ne, definitivno. Nisva potrebovala pogovorov o Kitajcih. Potrebovala sva konce tedna brez incidentov.

Ne morem reči, da sta bila otroka zlobna, bila sta samo dobro razporejena. Ko se je rodil drugi, je bil prvi star dve leti; ko je drugi dopolnil eno leto, je bil prvi star tri leta, nato 2:4, 3:5, z neizprosno logiko naprej, perspektiva je bila grozljiva, ampak pred tem se ni dalo pobegniti. Pa tudi zahtevna nista bila, ta najina otroka, pravzaprav, zahtevala sta samo običajno: hrani, kopaj, preoblači, pazi, ločuj, spravi v posteljo, zibaj, poj, pogovarjaj se, pogajaj se, grozi, tepi, obupuj, informiraj se, pelji v vrtec, pelji na sprehod, posedi v avto, priveži v otroškem sedežu, pelji k zdravniku, in kako naj potem človek premišljuje, kako naj misli, Xia-Ping se je samo smehljaj, bil je moder in imel je promet, tudi kadar ni imel prometa.

Kaj pa najini prijatelji? Da, imela sva tudi prijatelje. Že nekaj časa sva jih delila v dve skupini. Na tiste z otroki in tiste brez otrok. Delitev seveda ni bila popolna, npr.: prijatelje z domačimi ljubljenci sva imela za posebno vrsto prijateljev z otroki, poseben primer pa je bilo nekaj ženinih kolegov s faksa, ki so v hladilniku gojili bakterijsko kulturo in iz nje pridobivali kefir. Imeli so jo (kulturo) za živo bitje, pripovedovali so o njej, jo vsak večer odcejali in zalivali z mlekom in ji nasploh posvečali več pozornosti, kot so je nekateri legitimni člani prve skupine posvečali svojim otrokom. Prijatelji brez otrok, ljubljencev in bakterijskih kultur pa so bili zgodba zase. Ni jih bilo malo, povsem generacijsko povprečje, vsak pa je imel petintrideset let in zgodbo. V glavnem tisto o izpopolnjevanju. Eden je bil profesor in se je izpopolnjeval v znanosti, drugi se je začel ukvarjati z biznisom in se je izpopolnjeval v grmadenju denarja, tretji pa je bil brezposeln in se je izpopolnjeval v zdravem življenju. *Nimajo otrok, jasno, ampak nič pametnega si niso izmislili*, je rekla moja žena. Niso ji bili ljubi, ti najini prijatelji brez otrok, živeli so moderno, sebični v meri, o kakršni sva midva samo sanjarila, da bi lahko bila.

*Oni pa njihove razglednice iz eksotičnih dežel, sem si jo lahko predstavljal, kako benti, če bi jih le dobivala, vendar jih nisva, kar naju je tudi sililo, da se vprašava, kaj počnejo ti ljudje na potovanju, če ne pišejo razglednic, za kaj porabijo čas?*

Včasih sem se vprašal, ali mi bo uspelo obdržati ženo, tako izčrpana sva bila. Vem, ljubila sva se, nisva pa ravno potovala, vadila ali imela konjičkov – imela sva otroka, dva otroka, in bilo nama je vsega dovolj. Iskala sva izhod, da, tako sva preživljala čas. Občasno olajšanje je prinašal moj prijatelj s štirimi otroki in ženo, katere možgani so se najbrž zmanjšali na velikost zrna graha. Obiskovali smo se in se pogovarjali; ti pogovori niso bili podobni ničemur. S šestimi otroki okrog sebe je bilo nemogoče misliti, kaj šele se pogovarjati. Že zdavnaj smo nehali uporabljati večkratno zložene povedi. Samo smehljali smo se in se sočutno pogledovali, vsi razen prijateljeve žene. Ta še za to ni imela moči. Rada sva imela ta prijatelja, četudi o njiju nisva vedela skoraj nič. Nista bila ne vem kakšna družba, ampak ko smo se poslovili, sem čutil, da se najino razpoloženje popravlja; znova sva bila v sedlu, v primerjavi s tistim, kar je zadelo ta dva, se najina dva otroka nista več zdela kot prevelika pokora! Nasploh je bilo tiste dni deževno in sončno, vse se je znalo v hipu spremeniti. Nekoč sem jo denimo našel jokati, vendar sem hitro šmugnil v hodnik, za solze nisem imel več poguma. Na ušesa pa sem lahko zelo dobro vlekel. Iz tistega, kar se je dalo razbrati, sem lahko sklepal, da je novica bomba: njena do pred kratkim manj izkušena sestra je bila noseča, moja žena pa jo je tolažila. *Možgani so se mi zmanjšali*, je rekla, *če se mi ne bi, tega ne bi mogla prenesti*. Slišati je bilo, kot da bi se smejala, ampak od tam, kjer sem bil in poslušal, bi lahko tudi jokala. *Že sto let nisem poslušala cedeja, prebrala knjige, plesala, si nalakirala nohtov ... sram me je, kako izgledam ... vse, kar maram, zdaj gledam skozi daljnogled ... Ampak vedno, ko vidim, kako spita, ali slišim, kako dihata, ali vdihnem njun vonj ali ju objamem ali ju preprosto gledam, kako rasteta in se spreminjata ... imam polno srce*. Da, tako je rekla, dobro sem slišal. *Polno. Ne vem, kako naj ti povem drugače*. Zdelo se je, da joče, ampak od tam, kjer sem bil in poslušal, bi se lahko tudi smejala. *In to je vse: življenje imaš prazno, ampak srce imaš polno*.

Tako je rekla moja žena. Bila je dobra žena, velikodušna in modra žena, z njenimi možgani pa je bilo vse v redu. Če pa ni bilo, sem bil trdno prepričan, da bo kmalu spet po starem. Skupaj z vsem drugim, z vsem, kar sva nekoč marala, zdaj pa sva morala gledati skozi daljnogled. O tem nisem mogel biti prepričan, ampak glede

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nekaterih stvari preprosto moraš biti vernik, meni pa ni bilo nikoli težko moliti; nikoli, če sem le imel za kaj. Tokrat smo bili to mi štirje: moja žena in jaz in najina dva otroka, dva otroka, včasih nisem mogel misliti, življenje sem imel prazno, ampak srce sem imel polno. Ob koncu vsakega dneva, recite, da sem nor, pa sem si želel, da bi trajalo večno.

*Prevedla Đurđa Strsoglavec*

## *Two Children*

I had two children and I could not think. Two children, two children, from morning to night, from dusk till dawn, behind them not one stone left upon another, scorched-earth tactics, dust and ashes! Two children, dark-haired angels, a boy and a girl. They were love children, but no one mentioned this anymore, my wife least of all. She was a good woman, pretty, well preserved, but she was fed up with it all: I'd say sometimes she even had regrets, deep regrets about all sorts of things, but at least she tried not to make it too obvious to me. But I couldn't hold back. I complained, thoughtlessly. Two children, two children, sometimes I went too far, and she wasn't exactly full of understanding, to each of my groans she retorted with a mutter, *and my brain shrank after the pregnancy*, it was her answer to everything – she'd found this piece of information in a book by a famous neurologist, she'd never finished the book, but what she had read was enough for the argument to end all our arguments. I presumed that this shrinkage wouldn't be permanent, but we never got to that part anyway, my wife would speak her sentences with a certain solemnity to them, finality even; they sounded like a verdict and she seemed like a crippled Homeland War veteran; as if she had lost something forever, but no longer cared or remembered what this something was.

It was a guerilla war, a fight for every inch of the territory! When I went out to take out the garbage or pay bills, she'd look at me with envy and say, *lucky you, going out*. Once as I was getting ready for a funeral, a colleague from work had died, she whispered, almost in tears, *please, can I go instead of you, I really need to go out among people* – so desperate she was, or so smart, that wife of mine, love of my life.

*It's incredible what a bit of casual sex can do to a person*, she'd tell her younger, less experienced sister over the phone, but we knew too well that we had no one to blame but ourselves. We loved each other, ended up on top of each other, snubbed the condom, and made those two children; that much I could understand, but all this – the stuff that followed – no one could prepare you for that!

To get my thoughts in gear, sometimes I'd smoke, nibble on seeds and nuts, or I'd just run out and hop about outside our building. There was this always empty Chinese shop - Xia-Ping Commerce - that's what it was called, and a pock-faced Chinese guy would peek

out and say *hi, nabe; hi, nabe* I'd say back at him, and we'd smile at each other. On the surface of things, it was all there was to it, but these meetings empowered me, they testified to solidarity, helped me clear my head. But this, too, could not last: soon I was plagued by the notion of a hidden meaning behind Xia-Ping's laughter; this laughter coming from the world's most populous nation, belonging to the people who fought the surplus of children and shortage of thought for generations. *There is something sinister about him*, I complained to my wife, *Xia-Ping Commerce makes me ponder*. But my wife, naturally, just shrugged it off and complained about the reduced capacities; it was Saturday, 11 pm, and we could still hear giggles from the children's room. Then there was a scream, and a heavy thud of something plastic hitting the parquet floor. No, definitely not. The last thing we needed was conversations about the Chinese. What we needed were incident-free weekends.

And I can't say that these children were mean, they were merely well-distributed. When the second was born, the first one was two; when the second turned one, the other one was three, and then 2:4, 3:5, a merciless logic; it was a scary prospect, but you couldn't escape it. And they weren't even that demanding, those children of ours, in fact, they required only the usual: to be fed, bathed, to have their clothes changed, to keep an eye on them, to break them up, to put them to sleep, to lull them, to sing to them, to talk to them, to negotiate, threaten, beat them, despair, get informed, take them to the day-care, take them out for a walk, put them in the car, strap them up in the seat, take them to the doctor, and how is one to contemplate then, how can one think at all, Xia-Ping was just smiling, he was wise and he knew his business, even when it seemed there was no business at all.

And our friends? Yes, we also had friends. For some time now we had divided them into two groups. Those with children, and those without. Of course, this division was not without remainder, for example, we tended to see our friends with pets as a special kind of friends with children, and there was also a particular case of a couple of my wife's friends from college who grew bacterial culture in their fridge and made kefir from it. They considered it (the culture) a living thing, they talked about it, every evening they drained it and watered it with milk and generally gave it more attention than some legitimate members of the first group devoted to their children. But friends without children, pets or bacterial cultures were a different

story. They were more than a few, a pure generation average: thirty-five years of age and a story to tell. Most often a story about specialization. One was a college professor and was specializing in scholarship, another one had started a business and was specializing in making loads of money, and the third one was unemployed and was specializing in healthy living. *They don't have kids, they can think, but I don't see they came up with anything clever*, my wife used to say. She didn't like them, these friends of ours without children, they were living a modern life, more selfish than we could ever dream of being. *To hell with them and their postcards from exotic countries*, I could imagine her complain, as if we received any, which we didn't, and this made us ask: *what do these people do on their travels when they are not writing postcards, how do they spend their time?*

Sometimes I had to ask myself if I was going to keep my wife, that's how exhausted we were. I know, we loved each other, but we didn't travel, exercise or have hobbies – we had children, two of them, and we were fed up with everything. We were looking for a way out, yes, that's how we were spending our time. A temporary relief would come in the shape of a friend of mine with four children and a wife whose brain must have shrunk to the size of a pea. We visited each other and engaged in conversations that led nowhere. With six kids around us it was impossible to think, let alone talk. We stopped wasting our breaths on complex sentences a long while ago. We only smiled at each other and exchanged glances filled with compassion, all of us except my friend's wife. She simply had no strength left in her. We loved those friends of ours although we knew next to nothing about them. Our socializing would not sweep anyone off their feet, but when time came to say our goodbyes, I felt our mood improve; we were back in the saddle; compared to what had happened to those people our two children no longer seemed like too great a penance! In general, back in those days there were both rain and sun, the weather could turn at any moment. Once, for example, I found her crying, but I just quickly slipped away into the hall, I had no courage left for the tears. Still, with eavesdropping I had no problems. From what I managed to make out, the news was a real bomb: her sister, younger and so much less experienced until a short while ago, was pregnant, and my sister was comforting her. *My brain had shrunk*, she said, *if it hadn't, I wouldn't be able to bear it*. It sounded as if she was laughing, but, then again, from where I was listening, she may as well have been crying. *I haven't*

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*listened to a CD for ages, I haven't read a book, or danced, or done my fingernails... I'm embarrassed of how I look... everything I cared about is so far now, I can only see it through binoculars... But when I see them sleep, or when I hear them breathe, or when I take in their smell, or when I put my arms around them, or when I just watch them grow and change... My heart is full. Yes, that's what she said, I heard it fine. Full. I don't know how else to say it. It seemed she was crying, but, then again, from where I was listening, she could have just as easily been laughing. And that's it: your life is empty, but your heart is full.*

That's what my wife said. She was a good wife, a generous and wise woman, and everything was all right with her brain. And even if it wasn't, I was convinced that soon everything would be just the way it had been before. Together with everything else, everything we used to care about and now we had to watch through the binoculars. There was no way to be sure, but sometimes you just have to have faith, and for me praying was never a problem, never, just as long I had something to pray for. This time, it was the four of us: my wife and I, and our two children, two children, sometimes I couldn't think, my life was empty, but my heart was full. At the end of the day, each day, call me crazy if you want, but I looked back and wanted it to last forever.

*Translated by Mima Simić*



*Foto © Roland Tasbo*

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# Visar Zhiti

Visar Zhiti se je rodil leta 1952 v Durrësu v Albaniji. Po končanem študiju na učiteljskišči v Skadru je poučeval v gorskem mestu Kukës. Je znan albanski pisatelj, pesnik, esejist, prevajalec in publicist. Po izbruhu t. i. čistke liberalcev v Tirani je bil leta 1979 aretiran in prepeljan v delovno taborišče, kjer je preživel sedem let. Leta 1991 se je preselil v Milano, leta 1993 pa je s štipendijo sklada Heinricha Bölla obiskal Nemčijo. Leta 1994 je odpotoval v ZDA. Po vrnitvi v Albanijo je delal kot novinar in založnik, leta 1997 pa je bil imenovan za kulturnega atašeja na Veleposlaništvu Republike Albanije v Rimu. Leta 2013 je bil tudi albanski minister za kulturo. Med njegova pomembna dela sodijo: *Hedh një kafkë te këmbët tuaja* (Pred noge ti zalučam lobanjo, 1994), zbirka »zaporniških pesmi«, in *Si shkohet në Kosovë* (Kod vodi pot do Kosova, 2000), pesmi o kosovskem trpljenju, zbirki kratke proze *Këmba e Davidit* (Davidova noga, 1996) in *Shekull tjetër* (Prihodnje stoletje, 2008) ter romana *Funerali i pafundmë* (Neskončni pogreb, 2003) in *Në kohën e britmës* (V hrupnem času, 2009). Za svoje delo je prejel številne nacionalne in mednarodne nagrade, med drugimi italijansko nagrado za poezijo »Leopardi d'oro« (1991), prestižno nagrado Ade Negri (1997), nagradi za življenjsko delo v Italiji in Albaniji, leta 2012 pa je bil odlikovan tudi z albanskim predsedniškim redom Velemojster dela. Je član Mednarodne akademije umetnosti Alfonso Grassi in Evropske akademije znanosti in umetnosti. Njegova dela so bila prevedena v več kot deset jezikov.

Visar Zhiti was born in 1952 in Durrës, Albania. After studying at a teacher training college in Shkodra, he taught in the mountain town of Kukës. He is a well-known Albanian writer, poet, essayist, translator and publicist. He was arrested in 1979 after the outbreak of the so-called Purge of the Liberals in Tirana and taken to a labour camp, where he spent seven years of his life. He moved to Milan in 1991, visited Germany on a Heinrich Böll Foundation scholarship in 1993, and left for the United States in 1994. On his return to Albania, he worked as a journalist, publisher and was appointed cultural attaché to the Albanian Embassy in Rome in 1997. He served as the Albanian Minister of Culture in 2013. His highly acclaimed works include *Hedh një kafkë te këmbët tuaja* (I Cast a Skull at Your Feet, 1994), which is a collection of "prison poems", and *Si shkohet në Kosovë* (Where is the Road to Kosovo, 2000), which consists of poems about the Kosovar plight, the collections of short stories *Këmba e Davidit* (David's Leg, 1996) and *Shekull tjetër* (Next Century, 2008), as well as the novels *Funerali i pafundmë* (Infinite funeral, 2003) and *Në kohën e britmës* (At the Time of the Noise, 2009). The numerous national and international awards he has received for his work include the Italian "Leopardi d'oro" prize for poetry (1991), the prestigious "Ada Negri" award (1997), "career awards" in Italy and Albania; he has also been decorated with the Albanian presidential order "Grandmaster of Work". He is a member of the International Academy of Art "Alfonso Grassi" and the European Academy of Sciences and Arts. His works have been translated into over 10 languages.

## *koha*

se si më rrëshqet nëpër gishta  
pa ma vënë unazën e saj

dhe unë mbetem veç i dashuruari

## *Gjërat e vogla*

Vetëm me një gjethe  
di të flas për pyllin

dhe vetëm një yll  
të thotë se s'je vetëm.

një këpucë e humbur  
të zgjon rrugë pafund.

Ndize një cigare  
nga paketa e Prometeut.

## *Dielli i dytë*

Shumë gjak  
është derdhur mbi këtë botë,  
por akoma s'e kemi krijuar diellin e gjakut.

Dëgjo, miku im,  
këto fjalë që dridhen:  
një diell i dytë do të lindë  
nga gjaku ynë  
në formën e zemrës



## *Dashuri*

Sa larg është nata ime  
prej natës tende!  
Netë të tjera ngrihen midis si male të pakapërcyeshëm.

Dërgova rrugën për ty. Dot nuk të gjeti. U lodh  
dhe u kthye prapë tek unë.  
Nisa kaprollin e këngës sime. Por  
e qëlluan gjahtarët dhe i plagosur u kthye  
prapë tek unë.  
Era s'di nga shkohet. E ngatërruan pyjet  
dhe shpellat e dhimbjes dhe u kthye prapë tek unë.  
E verbër.

Bie shi i rrëmbyer shprese.

Nesër kur të zbardhë, a ta hedh ylberin  
që ty të të kërkojë? Por ai, naiv si gëzimi,  
vetëm një mal mund të kapërcejë.

Vetë po nisem nëpër natë dhe vetëm.  
Do të kërkoj, do të kërkoj, do të kërkoj  
si dora që endet nëpër dhomë, në errësirë  
për të gjetur qiririn e shuar.

*(Qafë-Bar, 1983)*

## *Abys*

Atdheu: jeton  
me të vdekurit  
dhe vdes mes të gjallëve

ndonjëherë.

## *Si shk-oh-et në Kosovë*

– Ti, kalë i bardhë, Pegasi im,  
si shkohet në Kosovë, tregomë!  
Malli më ka marrë pa qenë kurrë.

– përtej varrit të atit tënd  
varret e tjerë u rritën dhe u bënë male.  
Pas maleve ka varre prapë si retë  
nëpër luginë.  
Shtegtojnë varret në qiejt e ulët  
dhe ta ngatërrojnë udhën.  
Avionët kthehen pas të hutuar  
nëpër mjegull nate.  
Karvanët e veturave janë kthyer në shkëmbinj  
si kuajt e krushqve në mallkimin e lashtë.  
O Zot! Dardhat dimërore dhe mëllenjat  
janë bërë fushë me ofshama  
të gjuhës sime!

– Ti, yll blu i fatit mbi ballë të Atdheut,  
si shkohet në Kosovë, tregomë!  
– Kur të kesh një plagë tjetër të re në trup,  
ndiq udhën e rrëkesë së gjakut,  
që gjithmonë arrin para meje  
dhe më pret atje – gurgullimë jete.

Marr dy pishtarë të shuar dardanë,  
i ngjyey në gjakun tim  
dhe ndriçoj udhën. Ndizen krahët,  
flakët bëhen flatra,  
unë bëhem shqiponjë prej dheu  
dhe ndiej ciklonet e stepave  
si duan të ma brejnë emrin prej guri.

## *Një nuse ushqen foshnjën mes të ikurve*

Gjiri i zhveshur  
pëllumb mbi varre

të vdekurit  
janë gjallë

duar skeletesh shtrëngojnë  
gjirin më të madh se paqja

qumësht thithin tragjeditë  
me buzët e jetës

rritet shekulli bashkë me foshnjën  
nga ai gji i bardhë...

## *Në detin e Homerit*

Shkoj shpesh  
buzë detit  
dhe hedh këpucët në ujë.

Nuk e di si ndodh,  
Po ja që këpucët e mia  
zmadhohen e zmadhohen  
e bëhen anije  
për të kthyer Uliksat  
nëpër shtëpira.

I zbathur u dal përpara  
që të përqafohemi.

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**čas**

kako mi polzi med prsti  
in mi nanje ne natakne prstana

jaz pa kar ostajam njegov ljubimec

**Male stvari**

List ti pove  
vse o gozdu,

zvezda te prepriča,  
da nisi sam.

Zapuščen čevelj  
vznemiri neskončno poti.

Prižgi cigareto  
iz Prometejeve škatlice.

**Drugo sonce**

Veliko krvi  
je bilo prelite na tem svetu,  
a še nismo naredili sonca iz krvi.

Poslušaj, prijatelj,  
te drhteče besede:  
iz naše krvi bo rojeno  
drugo sonce  
s podobo srca.



## *Ljubezen*

Kako daleč je moja noč  
 od tvoje noči!  
 Ostale noči se dvigajo med njima kot neprehodne planine.

Pote sem poslal pot. A te ni našla.  
 Utrudila se je in vrnila k meni.  
 Poslal sem srnjaka svoje pesmi. Ampak  
 lovci so ga ustrelili, ranjen  
 se je vrnil k meni.  
 Ne vem, kam se bo obrnil veter. Izgubil se je  
 v gozdu in v votlinah bolečine in se vrnil k meni.  
 Slep.

Pada dež, oropan upanja.

Naj jutri ob svitu pošljem pote  
 mavrico? Prostoščna kot radost  
 lahko prečka eno samo planino.

Sam bom odšel sredi noči.  
 Iskal bom, iskal, iskal  
 kot roka, ki tipa v temi sobe,  
 da bi našla ugasnjeno svečo.

*(V kaznilnici Qafë-Bari, 1983)*

## *Abyssus*

Domovina: živi  
 med mrtvimi  
 in umira med živimi

včasih.

## *Kako se pride na Kosovo*

– Beli konj, moj Pegaz,  
povej, kako se pride na Kosovo?  
Čutim domotožje, čeprav nisem bil nikoli tam.

– Onstran groba tvojega očeta  
so zrasi novi grobovi in se spremenili v planine.  
Za planinami so drugi grobovi, kot oblaki  
med dolinami.

Grobovi se dvigajo v nizko nebo  
in ti zamešajo poti.

Letala se zbegana vračajo,  
v nočni megli.

Karavane avtomobilov so se spremenile v pečine  
kot konji v svatbeni povorki, začarani z davnim urokom.

O Bog! Zimske hruške in kosi  
so postali polja v kletvicah  
mojega jezika!

– Azurna zvezda usode na čelu naroda,  
povej, kako se pride na Kosovo?

– Ko bo na tvojem telesu nova rana,  
pojdi v smeri krvi,  
ki pride vedno pred menoj  
in me tam čaka – žuboreče življenje.

Vzamem ugasli Dardanovi bakli  
in ju namočim v svojo kri,  
da si osvetlim pot. Moje roke gorijo,  
plameni postanejo krila  
in jaz orel iz zemlje,  
in čutim, kako poskušajo stepski cikloni  
izbrisati moje ime, vrezano v kamnu.

## *Mlada ženska doji otroka med pregnanci*

Gola dojka  
golobica med grobovi

mrtvi  
so živi

koščene roke se oklepajo  
dojke večje od miru

nesreče sesajo mleko  
z ustnicami življenja

stoletje odrašča kot otrok  
ki se hrani z belo dojko ...

## *V Homerjevem morju*

Večkrat grem  
na obalo  
in v morje vržem čevlje.

Ne vem, zakaj,  
a moji čevlji  
rastejo in rastejo  
in postanejo ladje,  
da bi se lahko Odiseji  
vrnili domov.

Golonog stopim v vodo, da bi jih  
pričakal in objel.

*Iz angleščine prevedel Milan Dekleva*

*time*

and how it slips through my fingers  
without putting its ring on them

and I remain simply its lover

*The Little Things*

Only with a leaf  
Can I talk of the forest,

Only a star  
Can ensure you are not alone.

An abandoned shoe  
Rouses endless roads.

Light a cigarette  
From Prometheus' pack.

*Second Sun*

So much blood  
Has been spent in this world,  
But we have not yet built a sun of blood.

Listen, my friend,  
To these trembling words:  
A second sun will be born  
    of our blood  
    in the form of a heart.



## *Love*

How far my night is  
    from your night!  
Other nights rise between them like impassable mountains.

I sent the road out for you. But you could not be found.  
It grew weary and returned to me.  
I sent out the roebuck of my song. But  
The hunters shot it and, wounded,  
    it returned to me.  
I don't know which direction the wind took. It got lost  
In the forest and in the caverns of pain, and returned to me,  
    blind.

Rain is falling, robbed of hope.

Tomorrow when day breaks, shall I send out a rainbow  
To look for you? But, as naive as joy itself,  
It can only cross one mountain.

I shall set out in the night myself.  
I shall search, I shall search, I shall search  
Like a hand groping in the darkness of a room,  
    to find an extinguished candle.

*(Qafë-Bari prison camp, 1983)*

## *Abyss*

Our country lives  
Among the dead  
And dies among the living

Sometimes.





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**Gostje**

**Vilenice 2014**

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*Vilenica*

*Guests 2014*

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*Foto © Danny Palmerlee*

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# Patrick deWitt

Patrick deWitt se je rodil leta 1975 na otoku Vancouver v provinci Britanska Kolumbija v Kanadi. Pozneje je živel v Kaliforniji in Washingtonu v ZDA. Je kanadski romanopisec in scenarist. Njegovo prvo delo *Ablutions* (Obredno umivanje, 2009) je prejelo nagrado urednikov ameriškega časopisa *New York Times*. Njegova druga knjiga *The Sisters Brothers* (Brata Sisters, 2011) je bila nominirana za nagradi »Man Booker« (2011) in »Scotiabank Giller« (2011), prejela pa je nagradi Pisateljskega sklada Rodgers za prozo (2011) in kanadsko nacionalno nagrado »Governor General's Award« za prozo v angleškem jeziku (2011). Z Esijem Edguyanom sta bila edina avtorja, ki sta se leta 2011 uvrstila na sezname kandidatov za vse štiri omenjene nagrade. Leta 2012 je roman *The Sisters Brothers* prejel tudi nagrado Stephena Leacocka in bil isto leto nominiran še za nagrado Walterja Scotta za zgodovinsko prozo. Patrick deWitt je tudi avtor scenarija za celovečerni film *Terri* (2011), ki ga je režiral Azazel Jacobs. Trenutno živi v Portlandu v zvezni državi Oregon (ZDA).

Patrick deWitt was born in 1975 on Vancouver Island, British Columbia, Canada and later lived in California and Washington in the USA. He is a Canadian novelist and screenwriter. His first book, *Ablutions* (2009), was named a *New York Times* Editors' Choice book. His second book, *The Sisters Brothers* (2011), was shortlisted for the 2011 Man Booker Prize, the 2011 Scotiabank Giller Prize, and won the 2011 Rogers Writers' Trust Fiction Prize as well as the 2011 Canadian national Governor General's Award for English language fiction. He was one of two Canadian writers, alongside Esi Edugyan, to make all four award lists for the mentioned prizes in 2011. The novel *The Sisters Brothers* also won the 2012 Stephen Leacock Award and was a shortlisted nominee for the Walter Scott Prize for historical fiction that same year as well. Patrick deWitt also wrote the screenplay for the feature film *Terri* (2011), directed by Azazel Jacobs. He currently lives in Portland, Oregon (USA).

## *There Is a Man Who Is Following Me*

I. There is a man who is following me. I don't know why he's doing this. I don't know who he is. I've never spoken with him, and have no plans to speak with him. He has been following me for more than seven years.

II. It's not possible to name the exact date he began to follow me because I live in a bustling metropolitan city, and it took some time (a month? six months?) to single out his face (furry, ruddy, frequently sweaty) in the teeming crowds I immersed myself in daily. Then, when he emerged as an individual to me, naturally I took him for a citizen of the neighborhood, one of fifty people I recognized by sight but never acknowledged or was acknowledged by.

At a certain point, though, I began to notice him more frequently. Whereas before I typically saw him at my corner bodega or the local library, now he was on the uptown subway, and then inside the actual building where I worked. I found this curious, but only in a passing way. There is something about city life which numbs us to coincidence, numbs us to everything, in fact. But, wait. Let me return to the beginning.

III. I was linked romantically to a very pretty woman named Audrey, who I was coming to realize was not stable. There had been clues supporting this, but these were vague enough that I didn't identify most of them until after the fact. Here is one such clue: Standing together on the subway platform, moments before entering the train car, she looked at me blankly and said, "All aboard the raping metal cock." Audrey was on several medications, her bathroom cupboards filled with orange, semi-transparent bottles, many of these decorated with a skull and crossbones on their label face, wine glasses scored with dramatic red "paint brush" slashes (she drank a bottle of wine each night, sometimes more). One evening we had a political argument, far too dull to recount here but which I won handily. This loss sat bitterly with Audrey, and as I lay sleeping she came at me with a heavy kitchen tool, a mortar or tenderizer, dashing this across my face and shattering the bridge of my nose. I found myself kneeling beside the bed catching palmfuls of bathwater-warm blood and saying, "Whad? Whad?" She dropped the implement down the trash chute in the kitchen (it ricocheted off the chute's metal walls:

*BANG Bang bang bang bang*), then returned to the bedroom and called 911, telling the dispatcher there was an intruder in her home, subdued and ready for pickup. I walked past her to the bathroom, dumping out the blood and washing my hands, then my face, then the sink. Audrey stood in the doorway, smiling at me with troubled, pulsing stars in her eyes.

IV. The policemen weren't unfriendly, they were bemused, had arrived bemused, stifling laughter, actually. Their eyes were red-rimmed and I suspected they'd just come from an impromptu post-bust squad car party. I confided in them my suspicions about Audrey's mental state – she was sitting on the bed, eating grapes – and they nodded mock-seriously, turning me around three full times, Pin-the-Tail-on-the-Donkey-style, before putting the handcuffs on. They said they didn't believe I wasn't an intruder and I gestured with my chin to the cup on the counter. "Look at my toothbrush," I told them. They also didn't believe I was the victim. "Look at my face." The policemen found something comedic in these two directives, and they parroted my words back and forth to each other: "Look at my toothbrush!" "Look at my face!" "Look at my toothbrush!" "Look at my face!" Their laughter was loud enough that Audrey's neighbor banged on the adjoining wall, threatening to call the cops, which was surprisingly effective – the policemen were perfectly tranquil after this. As the three of us left the apartment, Audrey said, "See you in the morning, honey." But I didn't see her in the morning. I didn't see her at all. When she tried to bail me out I refused, and this, along with my flattened nose and the bib of dried blood ringing the neck of my T-shirt, won me the temporary respect of my cellmates. I say "temporary" because when my mother bailed me out an hour later (the prison guard announced it was my mother bailing me out), they recanted their praise and called me bad names I didn't understand.

My mother had little to say. You'd think in such a situation she would have some questions for her only son (why were you in jail? where is your nose?), but no. She dropped me at the curb outside hospital admissions and reminded me to pray for my father on Father's Day, a full three months away. (My father is not living.) Half an hour later she called to discuss the terms of my paying back the bail money. A lump sum was preferable, she said – no point in drawing things out.

The cartilage in my nose was voided, and the doctor put in a rubber dummy bone. For a time afterward, if I pushed my nose to the side, it would stay that way, and I'd have to return it manually to its regular centered position. The doctor said the rubber would stiffen eventually, and this has proven true. Now my nose looks and feels almost exactly how it had before I met Audrey; the only difference is that if I stay in the sun for a length of time, my nose grows soft with give, like a pocket-hot gummy bear, which probably sounds unpleasant but somehow isn't.

V. At any rate, it was during my hospitalization that I first realized the man who was following me was following me. I was half-sedated, and he entered my room. He was wearing a doctor's face mask but I recognized his beard, his ratted, over-tightly cinched trench coat, his melancholy (I want to say soulful, but I don't trust that word) eyes. He looked over my mummified face with a sympathetic expression and lay a mixed bouquet (daisies, lillies, asters, poms) on the table beside my bed, no card attached. Due to my being drugged, I didn't remember this happening until I saw the man next, trailing me in my neighborhood. It was my first day back on the workforce (the Audrey-related assault charges were dropped after it was revealed she had called 911 sixteen times in that month alone), and I was walking to the subway when I heard the sickening pre-accident squeal of brake-locked tires. Reflexively, I turned to look; mid-rotation, there among the sidewalk crowd was one lone, hairy face not similarly craning his neck, but staring at me, mouth ajar. My head continued swiveling and I witnessed the wreckage itself (three cars folding into a teepee), when all at once I recalled the man's hospital visit, and I panned back to re-locate him. He was gone, and I turned once again to the wreckage. People within the vehicles had begun to talk, ask questions, scream questions. Bystanders took pictures with their phones. I could hear a siren but it didn't seem to be getting any closer or further away – a stationary droning.

VI. "There's a man who is following me," I said to my mother, over dinner at a Chinese restaurant. She shook her gray, bean-like head with not the slightest pause, as though she were already aware I believed this, and had been waiting to dismiss it. "No, there isn't," she said.

"Yes there is."

“You?”

“Yes.”

“Why?”

“I don’t know. But he’s following me. I see him all over the place.”

“Where?”

“Near my apartment. On the train. At work. In my hospital room.”

“You didn’t see him *in your hospital room*,” she said.

“I did so. He brought me flowers.”

She made a revolted expression and reached for the pepper shaker. She poured out quite a lot of pepper; you could barely make out the color of the rice dome by the time she was done. Something about this activity soothed her, and she became sanguine. She asked, “Did you pray for your father, like I asked you to?”

“He’s dead, Mom.”

“You pray for him anyway. You pray for his soul.”

“That doesn’t make sense.”

“It makes *excellent* sense.”

I said, “I prayed for you.”

“For me? Why?”

“I just did.”

“Well, don’t do it again.”

“Why not?”

“Pray for your father. Pray for yourself. Pray that this man you think is after you but who isn’t loses interest, which, if he really is, and he’s not, he will, believe me.”

“I didn’t say he was after me. I said he’s following me.”

“What’s the difference?”

“I mean, I don’t think he wants to, you know, *hurt* me.”

She slapped her forehead with the palm of her hand. “Who said anything about *that*?”

“You used the word, ‘after.’”

“Who’d want to hurt *anyone*?”

“People want to hurt each other, Mom.”

“Who? She took an angry bite of rice and began coughing from the pepper. She clutched her water glass and drank deeply.

“Anyway,” I said, “it’s nice he brought me flowers.”

“You would – *cough! cough!* – think that.”

“And you would think that it’s odd for me to think that.”

“What? *Cough!*”

I said, "What's wrong with someone bringing someone flowers?"

Chewing on a mouthful of ice, she said, "No one brings someone flowers just to bring someone flowers, okay? Take it from someone who knows." She reached across the table and took my water, which I'd wanted. "Also," she added, "where I come from we've got a word for men who bring other men flowers."

"I think I can guess."

"Dumbshits."

"That's not what I was going to guess." I had nothing more to say, and now she wore her I-Have-Won-the-Argument expression. She leveled her fork at me, then her knife, and clanged these together, *clang, clang, clang*.

VII. By this point I was more or less sure that this man was following me. And yet, I was not *unreservedly* sure. The flowers were real enough, but given my compromised frame of mind at the time of their delivery, could I be certain he was the man who'd brought them? No, I could not. And so, without this visitation, what proof did I actually have? It seemed beyond comprehension that my seeing him so often in so many locations could be credited to chance, but still and all, I had a lingering doubt. And then, even if he *was* following me, to what *degree* was he following me? That is, was he following me exclusively, or did he follow others as well? For all I knew, the man simply roamed around and plodded after any familiar face. Well, I must admit it: I hoped I was the only one. For a while this hope was distant in my mind, because it was embarrassing for me, but at a certain point I addressed the feeling and came to terms with it. I decided enough was enough, then – it was time to find out just where this man and I stood. The next instance I noticed his presence, I took the subway to midtown and entered a travel agency. The agent wore a grotesquely false smile, which I defeated with two words: "What's cheap?"

VIII. Here is what I remember of my vacation in Mexico:

Cigarettes in the sand.

Dead dogs in the road.

Stomach illness.

Third-tier scotch poured from a first-tier bottle.

Hangovers.

Loneliness, until: On the third day, from the vantage point of my

tenth-floor balcony, I saw a green Volkswagen Bug pull up to the hotel. The man who is following me emerged from the back seat, in semi-tropical clothing. Stepping into the sun, he took in the ocean, the promenade, and the hotel itself, which resembled a giant cassette tape stuck in the sand. He located me on the balcony, startled, and hurriedly ducked back into the taxi. After what I imagine was a frantic and confusing exchange between him and the cabbie, the Bug pulled away, its engine revving like a seething kettle as it shot out of sight. I returned to my room, full of jubilation. It was confirmed! I was Being Followed.

IX. The remaining days of my vacation went by in a lighthearted fashion. I had a fling with a blond woman from Rhode Island named Kate who'd just graduated college and was now free-roaming the globe in search of whatever the post-collegiate free-rom the globe for. She was friendly, pretty, funny; we had a day and a night together before she headed south – a perfectly brief and emotion-free dalliance. The night after Kate left, I met another woman in the hotel bar. She was a divorcee, mid-forties, nice jugs but too much taffy at the waist. She was drunk, with lime pulp gathered in the hair above her lip; she grabbed me roughly beneath the table and asked if I was going to “give it” to her. I was also drunk, and under normal circumstances I would indeed have given her whatever she wanted, but in this instance I didn't, and do you know why? I felt I would have let the man who was following me down in some way. I removed the woman's hand from my lap and stepped away from her. Crossing the lobby to the elevator bay, I could feel the man (he was sitting at a small table in the corner of the dim barroom, half-observed by a large frond-type plant) admiring my self control. And, let me say, this made me feel good. Actually it made me feel more than good. To tell you the truth, this moment was the highlight of my vacation. What I learned from the experience was that if someone is watching you always, you aspire to better yourself, and the quality of your life will improve.

X. Sometimes I don't see him for a day, two days – sometimes a week will go by. I take this in stride, but anything longer than ten days without a sighting and my life seizes up. There was a period of a month, once, when there was no sign of him. I became depressed when this happened, and I don't mean mildly depressed, either. It

was all I could do to peel myself from the mattress and get to work. I still wonder and will always wonder what became of the man during this month. Perhaps he fell ill. Perhaps there was a death in the family. Or perhaps he decided it was time to stop following me. I like this narrative, actually: Recognizing that my life had eclipsed his own, he made a clean break to reclaim his autonomy. At the start this had gone well. He tidied his apartment, rekindled old friendships, went out on a blind date. But as time wore on he found himself increasingly unable to focus; or rather, he found there was nothing to focus on, nothing worth focusing on. He missed me, missed spending time with me – being near me, seeing me bumble through my days. The morning he returned, the morning I caught his reflection in a plate glass window uptown, I was so pleased that I broke The Rule and looked directly at him. He knew I was watching him (his face reddened slightly), but he only continued staring straight ahead.

It was a relief to have him back but also discomfiting, because I recognized I truly did need the man as an active presence in my life. I had an impulse to reach out in some way, to verify that he had returned for good, but I could never do this, and so, without confirmation, there will always be a lurking fear that our shared lives could at any moment come apart, with disastrous effects. But, I tell myself, isn't that what love is?

XI. My mother lay dying of old age and meanness in a hospital downtown, and I went to say my goodbyes. She had tubes going into her arms and nostrils, and her eyelids fluttered like the dusty wings of a moth. I lay my hand on her wrist and she came to with a shudder, the beeping heart machine hastening, then easing off.

“He was here,” she said.

“Who was here?”

“The man who’s after you.”

“He was?”

She nodded.

“Did you talk to him?”

She nodded.

“What did you talk about?”

She said, “Things.”

“Like what things?”

“You.”

“What about me?”

She began rooting around the bed sheets. “Where’s my drip?”

“Your what?”

“My morphine drip. You hit the button, *pow*. Oh, here it is.” She held up a cylindrical plastic tube with a baby blue button on the top of it. She hit the button several times with her thumb. “Ooh,” she said.

“What did you guys talk about, about me?” I asked.

She turned away, eyes closed. Then she turned back and said, “Your father loved you, you know.”

“I know, Mom.”

“He called you Sam, Sam, the Guitar Man.” She laughed a little. “Why did he call you that?” (My name is not Sam, I’ve never held a guitar.)

“I can’t remember,” I said. Then I told her I loved her, too. I don’t know what possessed me. Of course, it was a lie. She lay there hitting her morphine button. “Ooh.” Her beeping heart machine stopped beeping and the room filled with slow-moving (as if underwater) nurses, who wordlessly removed her IVs and tape and cording.

“Is there anything I’m supposed to do?” I whispered to the nurse nearest me.

“I don’t know,” she admitted. “I don’t think so.”

As I was leaving the room I noticed the mixed bouquet on the bedside table. There was a card, unsigned, which read:

*What a shitty, stupid movie life can sometimes be.*

XII. Here, I have a story for you. Do you remember the snowstorm from two years ago? I woke up to find the world unrecognizable, cars and benches and trash cans buried and gone. It was beautiful but also frightening. My work phoned to confirm I was coming in and I said I didn’t think I should and they told me, if you don’t now, don’t ever. “I’ll see you soon,” I said. The front door of my building was snow-blocked, and I was forced to climb out a window in order to leave. The streets were quiet, and I walked down the center of the road. No one was out other than the occasional policeman or scattered band of snowball-throwing children, but in every window there loomed a body looking down at me. The world seemed unreal, and unkind. I saw no sign of the man who is following me. I felt lonesome on those white, weirdly shaped streets. I was blue he didn’t brave the elements on my account.

The subways were running erratically and it took me an extra hour to get to work. When I arrived, only my boss and his secretary were there, and they were leaving because no one else had come in. They did not apologize to me. Actually, they seemed angered that I'd shown up. "Go home," said my boss's secretary, who dislikes everyone, but me most of all. After they'd gone I warmed myself in the lobby, choking off tears at my feeling of insult.

Trudging back to the subway, I took a shortcut through an alley and was approached from behind by a man who stuck a gun to my back and told me, "Give me your money." I cooperated (I've been mugged six times), but in handing him my wallet I accidentally caught a glimpse of his face (burnt, picked-at lips, shiny, purple scar over his right eyebrow), which angered him greatly. Shoving me toward the wall, he ordered me to kneel beside an eight-foot mound of marshmallow-looking snow which I took to be an obscured dumpster. "Put your hands on your head," he said, and I did. I told him I wouldn't talk to the police. "I know you won't," he muttered, and he took a step back, presumably taking aim. Now I stared at the brick wall in front of me. Dry snowflakes breezed by, clinging to the mortar. There was no fight in me whatsoever; I closed my eyes and waited.

A gust of frigid wind spun in circles all around me – it actually whistled, like the canned effect from a radio play. Over top of this I heard the *crunch-crunch* of fast approaching footsteps, followed by the sounds of a struggle. The mugger's muffled cursing suddenly broke off, and next came the *punch* of his body falling into the snow. A pause, and I heard the footsteps retreating.

I opened my eyes. The wind had ceased whistling. When I turned around I saw the mugger lying in the snow with a mask of blood coating his face. He was unconscious or dead, a brick on the ground beside him, and his gun was gone. I stood and saw the footsteps leading down the alley, in the direction I'd been headed, and I followed these. They led around the corner, crossing the street two blocks up and disappearing into a bar. The bar had snow halfway up the plate glass windows but the walk had been freshly shoveled. It was the only business open on the block; who knows why the owner had bothered. I entered and shook off the snow. It was warm and dark and lovely; an elegant gray-haired bartender was flipping through the channels on the TV. There was a single drink on the bar; the bartender looked at me. "Scotch and soda, right?"

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“That’s right.”

He pointed to the drink and I sat before it.

“Where’d he go?” I asked.

“Out the back door. What are you two, playing hide-and-go-seek?”

“Yes.”

“You like football?”

“No.”

“Me neither.” He turned the TV off and sat on a stool behind the bar. The snowfall thickened and we watched it through the tops of the windows. The phone rang and the bartender shuffled over to answer. “What? Yeah, he’s still here.” He handed me the phone. “It’s your buddy.”

“Hello?” I said.

The line went dead, and I returned the phone to the bartender. He hung up, watching me with a questioning expression.

I told him, “When the man who is following me is following me, all is right with the world and my place in it.” I took a drink of the scotch. “When the man who is following me is near, I am a huge and real human being.”

## *Neki moški me zasleduje*

I. Neki moški me zasleduje. Ne vem, zakaj to počne. Ne vem, kdo je. Nikoli nisem govoril z njim in niti nimam namena govoriti z njim. Zasleduje me že več kot sedem let.

II. Ni mogoče natančno določiti datuma, kdaj me je začel zasledovati, saj prebivam v živahni metropoli in je zato trajalo kar nekaj časa (mesec? šest mesecev?), preden sem njegov obraz (poraščen, zardel, pogosto prepoten) jasno razločil od vrveče množice, ki me obdaja vsak dan. In potem, ko sem ga začel doživljati kot posameznika, sem seveda najprej pomislil, da je pač človek iz sosesčine, eden od petdesetih, ki jih na videz poznam, a jih nikoli ne pozdravim, niti oni ne pozdravljajo mene.

Toda od nekega trenutka dalje sem ga začel pogosteje opaziti. Medtem ko sem ga prej videval pretežno le v špecerijski trgovini na vogalu ali v lokalni knjižnici, je bil potem tudi na podzemni železnici na poti v središče mesta in nazadnje celo v stavbi, kjer delam. Zdelo se mi je nenavadno, a le mimobežno. Mestno življenje te nekako omrtviči za naključja, pravzaprav te omrtviči kar za vse. Toda, počakajte. Naj se vrnem na začetek.

III. Takrat sem bil v romantičnem razmerju s čednim dekletom Audrey, za katero se mi je počasi začenjalo svitati, da ni uravnovešena. Kar nekaj namigov je potrjevalo moje sume, a so bili dovolj nejasni, da jih nisem prepoznal, dokler ni bilo že mimo. Eden takih namigov: ko sva stala na peronu podzemne železnice, me je, tik preden sva vstopila v vagon, prazno pogledala in rekla: »Vkrcajmo se na posiljevalski kovinski kurac.« Audrey je jemala več zdravil, njene kopalniške omarice so bile polne oranžnih, polprozornih stekleničk, na katerih so bile mnoge etikete okrašene z mrtvaškimi glavami in prekrizanimi kostmi, njeni vinski kozarci pa so bili pobarvani z dramatičnimi rdečimi brazdami čopiča (vsak večer je popila steklenico vina, včasih tudi več). Nekega večera sva se zapletla v politični prepir, veliko predolgočasen, da bi ga tukaj ponavljal, v katerem sem gladko zmagal. Audrey je poraz sprejela z grenkobo, in ko sem spal, je prišla nadme s težkim kuhinjskim pripomočkom, terilnikom ali tolkačem za meso, me z njim treščila po obrazu in mi zlomila nosno kost. Znašel sem se na kolenih pred posteljo, lovil v dlani toplo kri in momljal: »Kaj di pa je? Kaj di je?« Orodje je odvrгла v kuhinj-

ski jašek za smeti (odbijalo se je od kovinskih sten: *KLENK klenk klenk klenk klenk*), potem pa se vrnila v spalnico in poklicala 911 ter dispečerju rekla, da je v stanovanju vlomilec, ki pa je že premagan in ga lahko kar odpeljejo. Mimo nje sem odšel v kopalnico, izlil kri iz dlani in si umil roke, nato obraz in nazadnje umivalnik. Audrey je stala na pragu in se mi smehljala z nemirnimi, utripajočimi zvezdicami v očeh.

IV. Policista nista bila neprijazna, bila sta zbegana, že prišla sta zbegana in sta pravzaprav komaj zadrževala smeh. Oči sta imela rdeče obrobljene in sumil sem, da so ju sneli s kake improvizirane zabave v maricah po uspešni aretaciji. Zaupal sem jima svoje pomisleke o Audreyjinem duševnem zdravju – sedeč na postelji je jedla grozdje – in narejeno resno sta prikimala, potem pa me trikrat zavrtela naokrog, da sem se sukal okrog svoje osi, preden sta mi nataknila lisice. Rekla sta, da ne verjameta, da nisem vlomilec, jaz pa sem z brado pokimal proti kozarcu na pultu. »Poglejte mojo zobno ščetko!« sem jima rekel. Prav tako mi nista verjela, da sem žrtev. »Poglejte moj obraz!« Policistoma sta se obe moji izjavi očitno zdeli rahlo komični, saj sta kot papigi ponavljala drug drugemu moje besede: »Poglejte mojo zobno ščetko!« »Poglejte moj obraz!« »Poglejte mojo zobno ščetko!« »Poglejte moj obraz!« Njun smeh je bil dovolj glasen, da je Audreyjin sosed potolkel po zidu in zagrozil, da bo poklical policijo, kar je bilo presenetljivo učinkovito – policista sta bila potem čisto tiho. Ko smo vsi trije odhajali iz stanovanja, je Audrey rekla: »Se vidi v jutraj, srček.« A je v jutraj nisem videl. Sploh je nisem več videl. Ko je hotela zame položiti varščino, sem jo zavrnil in si s to potezo – skupaj s sploščenim nosom in slinčkom zasušene krvi na ovratniku majice – pridobil začasno spoštovanje sojetnikov. Pravim »začasno«, kajti ko je uro pozneje varščino zame položila moja mama (stražar je glasno oznanil, da me iz zavora rešuje mati), so preklicali svojo podporo in me zmerjali z izrazi, ki jih nisem razumel.

Mama ni imela veliko povedati. Človek bi pomislil, da bo v danih okoliščinah svojemu edincu postavila nekaj vprašanj (Zakaj si bil v zaporu? Kje imaš nos?), ampak ne. Odložila me je na pločniku pred urgentnim blokom in me opomnila, naj molim za svojega očeta na očetovski dan, do katerega so manjkali še polni trije meseci. (Mojega očeta ni več med živimi.) Pol ure pozneje mi je telefonirala, da bi se pogovorila o pogojih vračila denarja za varščino. Najbolj bi ji bil všeč enkratni znesek, je rekla, nima smisla, da bi razvlekla zadevo na preveč obrokov.

Iz nosa so mi odstranili hrustanec in zdravnik mi je tja namestil gumijast kostni nadomestek. Še nekaj časa potem je moj nos, če sem si ga potisnil na stran, tako tudi ostal in sem ga moral ročno poravnati na sredino. Zdravnik je rekel, da se bo guma sčasoma strdila, in njegove besede so se izkazale za resnične. Zdaj je moj nos po videzu in otipu skoraj takšen, kot je bil, preden sem spoznal Audrey, s to razliko, da se mi zelo zmehta, če predolgo ostanem na soncu, kot želatinasti medvedek, kadar ga predolgo valjaš po žepu, kar verjetno zveni zoprno, a v bistvu ni.

V. Kakorkoli, med bivanjem v bolnišnici sem prvič ugotovil, da me moški, ki me zasleduje, res zasleduje. Bil sem napol omamljen in tip je vstopil v mojo sobo. Na obrazu je imel zdravniško masko, a sem prepoznal njegovo brado, njegov ponošeni in preozki površnik, njegove otožne (hotel sem reči čustvene, a tej besedi ne zaupam) oči. S sočutnim izrazom si je ogledal moj mumificirani obraz in na mizico ob postelji položil mešani šopek (ivanjščice, lilije, astre, dalije) brez posetnice. Ker so mi dali pomirjevala, se vsega tega nisem spomnil, dokler ga nisem znova zagledal, kako mi sledi po moji soseski. Bil je prvi dan, ko sem bil spet v službi (obtožnico za napad na Audrey so umaknili, ko se je izkazalo, da je samo tisti mesec šestnajstkrat poklicala 911), in peščil sem proti podzemni, ko sem zaslišal strašljivo cviljenje gum, na katere so z vso silo pritiskale zavore, kar zanesljivo napoveduje nesrečo. Nagonsko sem se obrnil; sredi obrata sem med množico na pločniku uzrl osamljen, bradat obraz, ki ni stegoval vratu kot vsi drugi, temveč je z odprtimi usti strmel vame. Do konca sem obrnil glavo in zagledal trčenje (tri avtomobile, ki so s kljuni sestavili indijanski šotor), takrat pa sem se nenadoma spomnil obiska tistega moškega v bolnišnici ter se urno obrnil nazaj, da bi si ga še enkrat ogledal. Ni ga bilo več, zato sem spet motril karambol. Ljudje v avtomobilih so začeli govoriti, postavljati vprašanja, kričati. Mimoidoči so fotografirali prizor s svojimi telefoni. Slišal sem sireno, a se ni niti približevala niti oddaljevala – zgolj tulila na mestu.

VI. »Neki moški me zasleduje,« sem rekel mami med večerjo v kitajski restavraciji. Brez najmanjšega oklevanja je stresla svojo sivo, fižolu podobno glavo, kot bi že vedela, da verjamem to, kar sem rekel, in komaj čakala, da mi bo lahko oporekala. »Ne, pa te ne,« je rekla.

»Ja, pa me.«

»Tebe?«

»Ja.«

»Zakaj?«

»Ne vem. A me zasleduje. Povsod ga videvam.«

»Kje?«

»Blizu doma. Na vlaku. V službi. V svoji bolniški sobi.«

»Nisi ga videl v *svoji bolniški sobi*,« je rekla.

»Ja, sem ga. Prinesel mi je rože.«

Obraz je nagubala v zoprno grimaso in segla po poprnici. Kar precej popra si je nasula; ko je opravila, je bilo komajda še mogoče razbrati barvo kupčka riža. Nekaj v zvezi s tem početjem jo je pomirilo in postala je optimistična. Vprašala je: »Si molil za očeta, kot sem te prosila?«

»Oče je mrtev, mama.«

»Vseeno moli zanj. Moli za njegovo dušo.«

»To nima smisla.«

»Pa še kako ga ima!«

Rekel sem: »Molil sem zate.«

»Zame? Zakaj?«

»Pač sem.«

»Tega ne počni več.«

»Zakaj ne?«

»Moli za očeta. Moli zase. Moli, da bi moški, ki te lovi, a te v resnici ne, izgubil zanimanje zate, kar se bo zagotovo zgodilo, če te lovi, čeprav te ne, verjemi mi.«

»Nisem rekel, da me lovi. Rekel sem, da me zasleduje.«

»Kakšna pa je razlika?«

»Hočem reči, po mojem mi noče nič hudega, veš.«

Z dlanjo se je udarila po čelu. »Kdo je kaj rekel o *tem*?«

»Ti si rekla, da me ,lovi'.«

»Kdo bi sploh komu hotel kaj hudega?«

»Ljudje hočejo prizadeti drug drugega, mama.«

»Kdo?« Jezno je pogoltnila zalogaj riža in začela kašljati zaradi popra. Pograbila je kozarec z vodo in hlastno pila.

»Kakorkoli,« sem rekel, »lepo od njega, da mi je prinesel rože.«

»Tipično – *kreh! kreh!* – zate, da tako misliš.«

»In tebi se zdi čudno, da tako mislim.«

»Kaj? *Kreh!*«

»Rekel sem: ,Kaj je narobe s tem, če kdo komu prinese rože?‘«

S polnimi usti ledu je rekla: »Nihče nikomur ne prinese rož kar tako, prav? Verjemi mi, da vem.« Segla je čez mizo in mi vzela vodo,

ki sem jo nameraval sam popiti. »Poleg tega,« je dodala, »imamo tam, kjer sem doma, poseben izraz za moške, ki nosijo rože moškim.«

»Najbrž lahko uganem, katerega.«

»Butlji.«

»Torej ne bi uganil.« Ničesar več nisem rekel in nadela si je svoj izraz »imela-sem-zadnjo-besedo«. Poravnala je vilice, jih usmerila proti meni, potem še nož in udarila z obojim skupaj, *klink, klink, klink*.

VII. Do takrat sem bil že bolj ali manj prepričan, da me tisti moški zasleduje. In vendar nisem bil *nedvomno* prepričan. Rože so bile že prave, ampak ali sem bil glede na svoje napol prisebno duševno stanje v času njihove dostave lahko z gotovostjo prepričan, da jih je prinesel res on? Ne, nisem mogel biti. In brez tega obiska, kakšne dokaze sem imel v resnici? Zdelo se je neverjetno, da bi ga tako pogosto videval na toliko krajih povsem naključno, a sem imel vseeno pomisleke. In tudi če me je *res* zasledoval, v *kolikšni meri* me je zasledoval? Hočem reči, je zasledoval izključno mene ali tudi druge? Kolikor sem vedel, je možakar preprosto taval naokrog in lazil za znanimi obrazi. No, moram priznati: upal sem, da sem edini. Nekaj časa je bilo to upanje potisnjeno v ozadje mojega uma, ker me je spravljal v zadrego, a v nekem trenutku sem si občutek priznal in se z njim sprijaznil. Sklenil sem, da je zdaj pa dovolj – napočil je čas, da ugotovim, kako pravzaprav stojijo stvari med tem tipom in menoj. Ko sem ga naslednjič opazil, sem se s podzemno železnico odpeljal na rob centra in vstopil v potovalno agencijo. Uslužbenec je imel na obrazu groteskno potvorjen nasmešek, ki sem ga porazil s tremi besedami: »Kaj je poceni?«

VIII. Od svojih počitnic v Mehiki se spominjam sledečega:

Cigaret v pesku.

Mrtvih psov na cesti.

Prebavnih motenj.

Tretjerazrednega viskija, ki so ga točili iz prvorazredne steklenice.

Mačkov.

Osamljenosti: dokler nisem tretjega dne z razgledišča na balkonu v desetem nadstropju videl, kako je pred hotelom ustavil volkswagen hrošč. Z zadnjega sedeža je vstal moški, ki me zasleduje, v napol tropskih oblačilih. Stopil je na sonce, s pogledom objel ocean, sprehajališče in sam hotel, podoben velikanski avdio kaseti, zatlačeni v pesek. Ugledal me je na balkonu, se zbehal in se brž skrila nazaj v

taksi. Po, domnevam, mrzličnem in zmedenem pogovoru s taksistom je hrošč odpeljal, njegov motor je na visokih obratih sopel kot čajni kotliček, ko mi je odbrzel izpred oči. Vrnil sem se v sobo z občutkom zmagošlavja. Potrdilo se je! Zasedovan sem!

IX. Preostali počitniški dnevi so minili v lahkotnem vzdušju. Privoščil sem si avanturo z blondinko iz Rhode Islanda, Kate, ki je pravkar diplomirala na kolidžu in se potepala po svetu, išoč tisto, zaradi česar se ljudje po končanem kolidžu pač potepajo po svetu. Bila je prijazna, ljubka, zabavna; skupaj sva preživela dan in noč, preden je odšla proti jugu – prav kratek flirt brez čustev. Večer potem, ko je Kate odšla, sem v hotelskem baru spoznal še eno žensko. Ločenko, sredi štiridesetih, z dobrimi joški, a malo preobilnim pasom. Bila je pijana, na dlake nad zgornjo ustnico se ji je ujelo nekaj limete; grobo me je zgrabila pod mizo in me vprašala, ali jo bom »položil«. Tudi jaz sem bil pijan in v normalnih okoliščinah bi ji naredil, kar koli bi hotela, a v tem primeru nisem, in veste, zakaj? Občutek sem imel, da bi moškega, ki me zasleduje, nekako pustil na cedilu. Ženskin roko sem odstranil iz svojega naročja in se odmaknil od nje. Ko sem prečkal preddverje proti dvigalu, sem kar čutil, kako moški (sedel je za mizico v kotu mračnega bara, napol skrit za veliko pahljačasto lončnico) občuduje moj samonadzor. In naj vam priznam, ob tem sem se počutil dobro. V bistvu še bolje kot dobro. Po pravici povedano je bil tisti trenutek vrhunec mojih počitnic. Iz izkušnje sem se naučil, da se, kadar te nekdo stalno opazuje, trudiš biti boljši, zato se izboljša tudi kakovost tvojega življenja.

X. Včasih ga ne vidim dan ali dva, včasih mine cel teden. To še prenesem, a če mine več kot deset dni, ne da bi ga uzrl, moje življenje obstane. Enkrat ga ni bilo na spregled cel mesec. Ko se je to zgodilo, sem postal depresiven, in ni šlo za blago depresijo. Moral sem napeti vse sile, da sem se sploh odlepil od postelje in odšel v službo. Še vedno se sprašujem in vedno se bom, kaj se je v tistem mesecu zgodilo z njim. Morda je zbolel. Morda je imel smrtni primer v družini. Ali pa je sklenil, da je bilo dovolj in me bo nehal zasledovati. Ta domneva mi je v bistvu všeč: ko je spoznal, da je moje življenje zasenčilo njegovo, se je odločil za zlati rez, da bi si povrnil neodvisnost. Sprva mu je šlo kar dobro. Počistil je stanovanje, obnovil stara prijateljstva, šel na zmenek na slepo. A ko je mineval čas, je zlagoma ugotavljal, da se ne more osredotočiti; ali pa se mu je posvetilo, da ni nič takega,

na kar bi se lahko osredotočil, na kar bi se bilo vredno osredotočiti. Pogrešal me je, pogrešal čas, ki ga je preživel z menoj – v moji bližini, ko je opazoval, kako se prebijam skozi svoje dni. Tistega jutra, ko se je vrnil, ko sem ujel njegov odsev v okenski šipi v predmestju, sem bil tako srečen, da sem prekršil Pravilo in se zastrmel vanj. Vedel je, da ga gledam (rahlo je zardel v obraz), a je še kar boljčal naravnost predse.

Začutil sem olajšanje, da je spet nazaj, a tudi nelagodje, ker se mi je posvetilo, da resnično potrebujem njegovo dejavno navzočnost v svojem življenju. Začutil sem vzgib, da bi nekako stopil v stik z njim, da bi preveril, ali se je res vrnil za vedno, vendar tega nekako nikoli nisem zmožel, brez potrditve pa bo v meni vedno tlel strah, da bi se najini povezani življenji lahko vsak hip ločili, in to s katastrofalnimi posledicami.

Toda, dopovedujem sam sebi, mar ni to bistvo ljubezni?

XI. Mama je v bolniški sobi v centru mesta umirala od starosti in zlobe in šel sem se poslovit od nje. V roke in nosnice je imela napepljane cevke in veke so ji utripale kot zaprašena večšina krilca. Položil sem ji dlan na zapestje in drgetaje se je ovedla, piskajoči stroj, ki je meril njen srčni utrip, se je pospešil, potem umiril.

»Tukaj je bil,« je rekla.

»Kdo je bil tukaj?«

»Tisti moški, ki te lovi.«

»A res?«

Prikimala je.

»Si govorila z njim?«

Prikimala je.

»O čem sta govorila?«

Rekla je: »O stvareh.«

»O katerih stvareh?«

»O tebi.«

»Kaj o meni?«

Začela je brskati med rjuhami. »Kje je moja infuzija?«

»Za kaj?«

»Morfijsve kapljice. Pritisneš na gumb in, *bum*. Aja, tukaj je.«

Dvignila je valjast plastični tulec s svetlo modrim gumbom na vrhu. S palcem je večkrat pritisnila nanj. »Oooo,« je rekla.

»O čem sta se pogovarjala, kaj sta rekla o meni?« sem vprašal.

Obrnila se je proč, z zaprtimi očmi. Potem se je obrnila nazaj in rekla: »Tvoj oče te je imel rad, da boš vedel.«

»Saj vem, mama.«

»Klical te je Sam, Sam, fant s kitaro.« Na kratko se je zasmejala. »Zakaj te je tako klical?« (Ni mi ime Sam in nikoli nisem držal kitare v rokah.)

»Ne spomnim se,« sem rekel. Potem sem ji povedal, da jo imam rad. Ne vem, kaj me je prijelo. Seveda je bila to laž. Ležala je tam in pritiskala na morfijski gumb. »Ooo.« Utripajoči srčni stroj je nehal utripati in soba se je zapolnila s počasi gibajočimi se sestrami (kot bi se premikale pod vodo), ki so brez besed odstranile infuzije ter lepilne trakove in žice.

»Ali moram zdaj še kaj storiti?« sem zašepetal najbližji sestri.

»Ne vem,« je priznala. »Mislim, da ne.«

Ko sem odhajal iz sobe, sem na nočni omarici ob postelji opazil šopek. Priložena mu je bila posetnica, nepodpisana, na kateri je pisalo:

*Kakšen usran, trapast film je lahko včasih življenje.*

XII. Izvolite, za vas imam zgodbo. Se spominjate snežnega viharja pred dvema letoma? Prebudil sem se in uzrl neprepoznaven svet, avtomobilov in klopi in smetnjakov ni bilo več, vse je bilo pokopano pod snegom. Bilo je čudovito, a tudi strašljivo. Telefonirali so mi iz službe, da bi se prepričali, ali bom prišel, jaz pa sem rekel, da najbrž ne bi bilo pametno, nakar so rekli »pridi zdaj, ali pa ti sploh ni treba več hoditi«. »Se vidimo kmalu,« sem rekel. Vhodna vrata so bila zasuta in moral sem splezati skozi okno, če sem hotel iz hiše. Ulice so bile tihe in hodil sem po sredi ceste. Nikogar ni bilo zunaj razen kdaj pa kdaj policista ali rztresenih gruč kepajočih se otrok, a za vsakim oknom je bilo telo, ki je zrlo dol name. Svet se mi je zdel neresničen in neprijazen. Nobenega sledu o moškem, ki me zasleduje. Počutil sem se osamljenega na tistih belih, čudno izobličenihi ulicah. Bil sem žalosten, ker se ni bil pripravljen zaradi mene soočiti z elementi.

Podzemni vlaki so vozili neredno in do službe sem potreboval uro več kot sicer. Ko sem prispel, sta bila tam le šef in njegova tajnica, pa še onadva sta odhajala, ker se ni prikazal nihče drug. Nista se mi opravičila. V bistvu sta bila videti jezna, ker sem prišel. »Pojdi domov,« mi je rekla šefova tajnica, ki nikogar ne mara, mene pa še posebno ne. Potem ko sta odšla, sem se pogrel v preddverju in zadrževal solze užaljenosti.

Ko sem gazil nazaj proti podzemni, sem ubral bližnjico po stranski ulici in od zadaj se mi je približal tip, ki mi je zarinil pištolo v

hrbet in ukazal: »Daj mi ves svoj denar!« Sodeloval sem (že šestkrat so me oropali na ulici), a ko sem mu podal denarnico, sem mimogrede uzrl njegov obraz (ožgan, razpokane ustnice, svetlikajoča se škrlatna brazgotina čez desno obrv), kar ga je močno razbesnelo. Potisnil me je proti zidu in mi ukazal, naj počepnem poleg več kot dva metra visoke kopice snega, pod katero je bil najbrž smetnjak. »Roke na glavo!« je rekel in ubogal sem. Povedal sem mu, da ga ne bom prijavil policiji. »Vem, da ne boš,« je zamomljal in se za korak odmaknil, najbrž da bi lažje nameril. Strmel sem v opečnati zid pred seboj. Mimo mene so se vrtinčile suhe snežinke in se oprijemale malte. Prav nobene želje po upiranju nisem čutil; zaprl sem oči in čakal.

Sunki ledenega vetra so se v krogih vrtinčili okrog mene – pravzaprav žvižgali kot posneti učinki v radijski igri. Skozi veter sem zaslišal *hrsk-hrsk* hitro bližajočih se korakov, ki so jim sledili zvoki prerivanja. Kletvice uličnega roparja so nenadoma utihnile in potem je reklo *tup*, ko je njegovo telo padlo v sneg. Trenutek tišine, nato sem slišal, kako se koraki oddaljujejo.

Odprl sem oči. Veter je nehal žvižgati. Ko sem se obrnil, sem videl zlikovca v snegu, obraz mu je kot maska prekrivala kri. Bil je nezavesten ali mrtev, poleg njega je bila na tleh opeka in pištrole ni imel več. Vstal sem in videl, da stopinje vodijo po ulici navzdol, kamor sem bil namenjen, zato sem jim sledil. Peljale so okrog vogala, dva bloka višje prečkale cesto in izginile v bar. Bar je bil zasnežen do polovice velikih oken, a je nekdo na sveže skidal sneg pred vhodom. Bil je edini odprti lokal v ulici; kdo ve, zakaj se je lastnik sploh trudil. Vstopil sem in si otresel sneg. Bilo je toplo in temno in prijetno; eleganten sivolas točaj je preklapljal kanale na TV. Na točilnem pultu je bila ena sama pijača; točaj me je pogledal. »Viski s sodo, kajne?«

»Tako je.«

Pokazal je proti pijači in sedel sem poleg nje.

»Kam je šel?« sem vprašal.

»Skozi zadnja vrata ven. Kaj pa se gresta vidva, skrivalnice?«

»Ja.«

»Imate radi nogomet?«

»Ne.«

»Jaz tudi ne.« Izključil je TV in sedel na barski stol na drugi strani točilnega pulta. Sneg se je okrepil in opazovala sva ga skozi zgornji del oken. Zazvonil je telefon in točaj je oddrsal k njemu ter se oglašil. »Kaj? Ja, še vedno je tukaj.« Podal mi je telefon. »Vaš kolega.«

»Halo?« sem rekel.

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Linija je bila prekinjena in telefon sem vrnil točajju. Odložil ga je na svoje mesto in me opazoval z vprašujočim izrazom.

Rekel sem mu: »Kadar me zasleduje moški, ki me zasleduje, je vse v redu s svetom in mojim mestom v njem.« Odpil sem malo viskija. »Kadar je moški, ki me zasleduje, v bližini, sem veliko in resnično človeško bitje.«

*Prevedla Lili Potpara*



*Foto © Derek Shapton*

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# Linda Spalding

Linda Spalding se je rodila leta 1943 v Topeki v Kansasu v ZDA in štirinajst let živila na Havajih, preden se je leta 1982 preselila v Toronto. Je avtorica treh romanov: *Daughters of Captain Cook* (Hčere kapitana Cooka, 1987), *The Paper Wife* (Papirnata žena, 1994) in *Mere* (2001), ki ga je napisala skupaj s hčerko Esto, po poklicu scenaristko. Njeno neleposlovno delo *The Follow* (Sledenje, 1999) o delu slavne primatologinje Birutė Galdikas na Borneu je bilo nominirano za nagradi »Trillium Book Award« in »Pearson Writers' Trust Non-Fiction Prize«. V delu *Who Named the Knife* (Kdo je poimenoval nož, 2005) je strnila spomine iz časa, ko je bila porotnica na sojenju za umor na Havajih, in v njem popisala svoj odnos z obtoženko po obsodbi. V svojem najnovejšem romanu *The Purchase* (Nakup, 2012) opisuje usodo suženjskega dečka, ki ga odkupi izgnani kveker. Delo je bilo odlikovano s prestižno kanadsko nagrado »Governor General's Award« za prozo. Linda Spalding je urednica kritiške revije *Brick*. Za svoj prispevek kanadski literarni skupnosti je prejela tudi nagrado »Harbourfront Festival Prize«.

Linda Spalding was born in 1943 in Topeka, Kansas, USA, and lived in Hawaii for fourteen years before immigrating to Toronto in 1982. She is the author of three novels, *Daughters of Captain Cook* (1987), *The Paper Wife* (1994), and *Mere* (2001), which she wrote with her screenwriter daughter, Esta. Her non-fiction work, *The Follow* (1999), about the work of the famous primatologist Birutė Galdikas in Borneo, was short-listed for the Trillium Book Award and the Pearson Writers' Trust Non-Fiction Prize. *Who Named the Knife* (2005), a memoir of crime and punishment, is based on her experience as a juror in a murder trial in Hawaii and her subsequent relationship with the defendant. Her most recent novel, *The Purchase* (2012), traces the results of one act: the purchase of a slave boy by an exiled Quaker. It won the prestigious Governor General's Award for fiction. Spalding is an editor of *Brick*, a journal of reviews, and has been awarded the Harbourfront Festival Prize for her contribution to the Canadian literary community.

## *The Purchase*

(excerpt from the novel)

How long is the life of a tree? Here, in the soil just around and covering the roots of the locust there are drops of blood and a tree does not bleed. Above the ground, a boy is hanging - not by his neck but by his hands, one of which has been torn by a knife and there is no one around to see him kick or to find him in time to cut him down. The sky is hovering over the thorny branches, as if it would drop around the boy and become his shroud. The sun blinks shut for a minute, but no one notices the tiny night. Simus feels his arms pulled up hard like things unplanted. He thinks that if they stretch an inch or two more, his feet will touch the ground and he will somehow root himself again. He thinks about this new meaning of being free - only to touch the ground. He thinks it might be enough but it will never be guaranteed and he next feels the skin of his back and sides pulled tight in an effort to take up the sag of his weight. Then his bare feet jerk down and up and he feels his whole body jump and spin and he knows that someone is sitting above him up in this tree. "Set me down now! Please!"

"This is teachin you not to bash a white man's head!"

Simus is thinking about Jesus and those thieves dying by His side. There was three altogether, he says to himself, without making a sound. Then he remembers Bett's story of Osanyin the healer. To make him feel better, she'd tell him the god had one arm, one leg and one eye after his house fell down on him. He was so injured that he needed the help of human healers and she'd tell him this while she was mending his leg. He considers Hiram, the pig set to be killed this day because the cold is coming fast. And surely the best way of killing a pig is to strike him down with the sharp end of a pole axe and all that is left to do after that is to open the neck and lay it over a trough. A pig, after being killed, is scalded and scraped and hoisted up high enough to be gutted, but a boy is hung first, still alive. A boy is hung by his hands and left to rot. A boy is owned not by himself and, like the pig, has no right to decide his own circumstance. His past is unrecorded and his future is anybody's guess. This is therefore not a murder because it is done to someone who cannot be deprived of what he does not own. Indeed, the boy will hang until his arms are pulled out of their sockets, and still his feet will never know the ground as plant would define being free. He

will hang until animals come to feed on him. He will not be found for six days and nights of looking and by then all of Bett's herbs and unguents and potions will be useless, except those concerned with the laying out of what corpse is left. There will be part of a leg, both shoulders and arms, half a face.

But while he dissolves, he will also retrace.

He knows the ground he walked as a child in every molecule of his two feet and while they dangle, they keep hold of their sensitivities and send messages up his legs to his brain. While they dangle, they roam the slave encampment by the Tennessee border with its ruts and ridges so heartfelt. They touch the prickly stubble behind old auntie's cabin, where the ground grows something that opens and shuts, something that prickles and burns, and where the cook pot swings over its arid blur of precious smoke. He stumbles on acorns and crawls into leaves that are almost clean what with smelling so dry and sharp. He hears old auntie's shout and he goes on down to the riverbank which is slick from the washtubs and white bottomed feet. He lies on his chest and hears his heart pound soft against that ridge where tufts of waxy green erupted in the summer and the water's taste was thick like meat. He holds his face up over that taste and puts his tongue down to it thinking of the wild animal he had once seen doing this.

For a while, long or short depending, he spins and then hangs solitary, tongue and feet tasting, first watching the land and trees revolve and finally seeing only a slice of it out of a slice of eye. The main image, recurring, has been the trunk of the locust tree, which is thicker than one man or even two men and possibly thicker than three. Each time he sees it in his revolution, it seemed thinner, two boys, then none and the gorse bushes all along the edge of the field and the fallen down other trees covered by errant, roaming weeds. Spinning, he's frightened to the point of terror at not knowing what will be next; but hanging, he becomes philosophical. He has been sacrificed to save Mary. He dangles and thinks more and more of the tree, the span of its trunk contrasting with the branches that are meager like arms. The trunk is strong, but the life of the tree is shallow in the skin, as the life of a boy also is. The tree will not read or write and neither will the boy. The tree will feel its past in its roots, which are stuck hard in the ground, but the present is there too, in the dangling feet of the boy, like ants in the blood. When he runs out of water, the boy's insides will shrivel and his brain will shrink,

but the ants will keep marching all the way down to the gloss of the creek. The boy will not think clearly then, so he must think now of all the times he has been through and of what he can still know. There was the long ride he endured inside his ma's tight belly, and once before she died a moment when she called out, Son! and he felt swelled up on that word. Son! He thinks now of that word and remembers playing with his brother in the stiff corn stalks down by the well and how they built something of the stalks without cutting them, how they bent and wove those stalks like strong fellows and rested underneath and he remembers next a baby being in Bett's belly and her touching the bare skin on her torn breast. And maybe the baby is the same as he was inside the dark of his mother and maybe it is the Thing he calls the Dickens, for we are made in His image, and yet he longs to understand His purpose. Soon I will know, he thinks, and his next thought is for Mary, who instructed him and befriended him and was pleasant in his company, even baring her clean feet and learning from him and that had been the best part of his life.

## *Nakup*

(odlomek iz romana)

Kako dolgo je življenje drevesa? Tu so kaplje krvi v zemlji vseokrog robinije, tudi njene korenine prekrivajo, ampak saj drevo ne krvavi. Nad tlemi visi deček – ne za vrat, temveč za dlani, od katerih je ena porezana z nožem, daleč naokoli pa nikogar, ki bi ga videl, kako brca, ali da bi ga še pravi čas našel in odrezal z drevesa. Nebo se obeša nad trnovimi vejami, kakor da se bo vsak čas zrušilo na dečka in se spremenilo v njegov mrtvaški prt. Sonce za minuto potemni, a te neznatne noči nihče ne opazi. Simus čuti, kako mu neka sila z vso močjo vleče roke kvišku, kot bi kdo ruval divje rastje. Če se bodo raztegnile samo še za palec ali dva, pomisli, se mu bodo noge dotaknile tal in se spet nekako ukoreninile. Pomisli, da je beseda *svoboden* zdaj dobila nov pomen – da se vsaj tal lahko dotakneš. Mogoče bo to dovolj, pomisli, ni pa jamstva za to, in že čuti, kako se mu koža na hrbtu in po obeh straneh telesa močno nateza in jemlje nase pezo njegove teže. Nato mu bosa stopala sunejo gor in dol, da začuti, kako mu celotno telo trzne in se zasučje, in takrat ve, da nekdo sedi na drevesu nad njim. »Spusti me na tla! Prosim!«

»Da boš za drugič vedel, kaj se pravi kresniti belca po glavi!«

Simus misli na Jezusa in na tista razbojnika, ki sta umrla na Njegovi desnici in levici. Trije so bili, si reče, ne da bi spustil en sam glas. Nato se spomni Bettine zgodbe o zdravilcu Osanyinu. Da bi ga potolažila, mu je rekla, da je imel bog eno roko, eno nogo in eno oko, potem ko se je nanj zrušila hiša. Tako hudo poškodovan je bil, da je potreboval pomoč človeških zdravilcev, in to mu je povedala, medtem ko mu je krpala nogo. Deček razmišlja tudi o Hiramu, o prašiču, ki je danes namenjen za zakol, kajti hlad se hitro bliža. In seveda se prašiča najlaže pokonča tako, da se ga pobije z ostrim koncem mesarice, nato pa ni treba storiti drugega, kot da se mu prereže vrat in se ga položi v korito. Ko je prašič mrtev, se ga popari in ogoli in obesi tako visoko, da mu lahko odstranijo drobovje, dečka pa so najprej obesili, in to živega. Dečka so obesili za dlani in ga pustili, da bo segnil. Deček samega sebe nima v lasti in ravno tako kot prašič tudi on nima pravice, da bi odločal o svojem položaju. Njegova preteklost je nezabeležena, njegovo prihodnost je malone nemogoče napovedati. To torej ni umor, kajti storjeno je nekomu, ki ga vendar ni mogoče prikrajšati za nekaj, česar tako ali tako nima. Vsekakor bo visel, dokler se mu roke ne bodo izpahnille iz sklepnih jamic, in še

takrat njegova stopala ne bodo spoznala tal, saj bi dotik pomenil, da je svoboden. Visel bo, dokler se ne bodo prišle z njim hraniti živali. Prej kot po šestih dneh in nočeh iskanja ga ne bodo našli, in takrat bodo vse Bettine zeli in maže in zvarke povsem brez koristi; razen tistih, ki so namenjeni za pripravo trupla za na pare, kolikor ga bo sploh ostalo. Kak del noge, rame in roke, pol obraza.

A medtem ko se izgublja, bo obudil preteklost.

Tla, po katerih je hodil kot otrok, čuti v sleherni molekuli svojih stopal, in ko mu zdaj takole bingljajo, ohranjajo svojo občutljivost in pošiljajo sporočila po nogah navzgor v možgane. Bingljajo in se hkrati potikajo po taborišču za sužnje ob meji s Tennesseejem in globoko čutijo vsako kolesnico in brazdo. Dotikajo se bodičastega strnišča zadaj za kolibo stare tete, kjer iz tal raste nekaj, kar se odpira in zapira, nekaj, kar zbada in peče, in kjer se kuhinjski kotel ziblje nad jalovim čadom dragocenega dima. Deček se spotika ob storže in leze med listje, ki je skoraj snažno, saj diši tako suho in izrazito. Zasliši klic stare tete in gre dol vse do rečnega brega, spolzkega od čebrov za pranje in zglajenega od bosih belih podplatov. Uleže se na trebuh in prisluškuje srcu, ki mu tiho udarja ob tisto brazdo, iz katere so poleti pognali šopi voskastega zelenja in kjer ima voda tako gost okus kot meso. Obraz podrži nad tem okusom in iztegne jezik proti njemu in misli na neko divjo žival, ki jo je bil nekoč videl, da je to naredila.

Nekaj časa, malo ali dolgo, kakor se vzame, se vrti, nato pa samotno obvisi, okušajoč jezik in stopala, in najprej opazuje pokrajino in drevesa, kako se vrtijo okoli njega, nazadnje pa z režnjem očesa vidi samo še njihov reženj. Glavna podoba, ki se mu ves čas vrača, je deblo robinije, ki je širše od debeline enega moža ali dveh, nemara celo treh. Kadarkoli med vrtenjem ponovno zagleda deblo, se mu zdi vse ožje, debeline dveh dečkov, potem pa sploh nič več, samo še grme uleksa vidi vzdolž roba celotnega polja in druga podrta drevesa, poraščena z zablodelimi, klateškimi zelmi. Ko se tako vrti, ni le prestrašen, temveč navdan z grozo, ker ne ve, kaj bo sledilo; ko spet obmiruje, postane filozofsko miren. Žrtvovan je za to, da bo Mary rešena. Binglja in vse bolj in bolj premišljuje o drevesu, o obsegu njegovega debela v primerjavi z vejami, ki so mršave kot roke. Deblo je močno, življenje drevesa pa leži plitko pod kožo, ravno tako kot dečkovo življenje. Drevo ne bo nikoli bralo ali pisalo, deček pa tudi ne. Drevo bo svojo preteklost čutilo v svojih koreninah, ki so močno vraščene v tla, ampak tu je tudi sedanjost, v bingljajočih dečkovih

stopalih je, kot mravlje v krvi. Ko mu bo zmanjkalo vode, se bo njegova notranjost nagrbančila, skrčili se mu bodo možgani, mravlje pa bodo še naprej korakale do leska rečice. Deček takrat ne bo več mogel jasno misliti, zato mora zdaj misliti o času, ki ga je že preživel, in o tistem, kar zaenkrat še ve. Dolgo potovanje, ki ga je preстал v napetem trebuhu svoje matere, in daljni trenutek, ko je pred smrtjo zakričala »Sin!« in je začutil, kako je kar nabreknil od te besede. Sin! Zdaj misli na to besedo in se spominja, kako sta se z bratom igrala med olesenelimi koruznimi stebli pri vodnjaku in kako sta si neko reč zgradila iz koruznih stebel, ne da bi jih porezala, spomni se, da sta jih upognila in prepletla kot močne zaveznike in počivala pod njimi, pa dojenčka se tudi spomni, ki je bil v Bettinem trebuhu, in tega, kako se je dotikala gole kože po ranjeni dojki. In mogoče je dojenček tak, kot je bil on v temni notranjosti svoje matere, in mogoče je to tista stvar, ki jo on imenuje Hudobec, kajti ustvarjeni smo po Njegovi podobi, on pa tako zelo hrepeni po tem, da bi razumel Njegov namen. Pomisli, da bo kmalu vedel, nato pa hitro pomisli na Mary, ki mu je dajala napotke in mu pomagala in ki ji je bilo prijetno v njegovi družbi in mu je celo pokazala svoja čista stopala in se učila od njega, in to je bil najlepši del njegovega življenja.

*Prevedla Tina Mahkota*



*Foto © Aidan Murphy*

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# *Dimitra Xidou*

Dimitra Xidou se je rodila leta 1977 v Ottawi v kanadski provinci Ontario. Pesnica, ki živi v Dublinu, je pesmi doslej objavila v kanadskih, irskih in ameriških literarnih revijah, kot so *Room*, *Penduline* in *The Weary Blues*. Uvrščena je bila v končni izbor za nagrado »Open Season 2014«, bila pa je tudi v ožjem izboru za nagrado »Bridport« (2013) in nagrado »Over the Edge« za nove avtorje (2013) ter v širšem izboru za nagrado mednarodnega pesniškega natečaja v Montrealu (2011). Njena dela so bila vključena v antologijo *New Planet Cabaret Anthology* (Nova antologija Planet Kabaret), v spomladanski izdaji revije *The Stinging Fly* (2014) pa je bila predstavljena kot avtorica v središču. S Patrickom Chapmanom je soustanovila in soureja trimesečnik za poezijo in umetnost *The Pickled Body*. Njen pesniški prvenec *Keeping Bees* (Čebelarjenje, 2014) je izšel pri založbi Doire Press. Obožuje *duende*, kot se navdihu čustvenega in strastnega reče po špansko.

Dimitra Xidou was born in 1977 in Ottawa, in the Province of Ontario in Canada. She is a poet based in Dublin, Ireland, whose poetry has been published in literary journals in Canada, Ireland and the US, including *Room*, *Penduline* and *The Weary Blues*. Most recently, she was a finalist in the 2014 Open Season Awards. She was short-listed for the Bridport Prize (2013) and the "Over the Edge" Emerging New Writer Award (2013), and long-listed for the Montreal International Poetry Competition (2011). Her work was included in the *New Planet Cabaret Anthology* and she was the featured poet in the spring 2014 issue of *The Stinging Fly*. She co-founded and co-edits *The Pickled Body*, a quarterly poetry and art magazine, with Patrick Chapman. Her debut poetry collection, *Keeping Bees* (2014), was published by Doire Press. She loves *duende*, as the inspiration of the emotional and passionate is referred to in Spanish.

## *Onions*

My grandmother picked tomatoes that looked pregnant because she said they made the best salads.

Sitting in her kitchen I'd watch her knife away, separating cucumbers from prophylactic skins. In all her years she had gathered a wisdom the citizens of burnt-down Troy would envy.

Her hands shook with widowhood and old age but she never let it slip – the knife was now a heavy part taking the place of a uterus which used to grow into all kinds of nutritious sizes. The first real intimacy I spied, lived in those raw cucumbers as she let water lick them in corners most exposed.

Always, the onions were left to the end. It has taken years but finally, I understand that breaking down an onion is nothing short of murder. Like a surgeon ill-taught in the proper ways to excavate the human body, my grandmother grew merciless with the onions because they were merciless with her.

She could never cry for the dead the way she cried with them.

## *The Body of Christ*

The body of Christ is a tension of wires – a container for the electric, a movement, the soul. The body of Christ is best when served up on a cross, arms outstretched and open for business. The body of Christ is bankrupt because the body of Christ has holes: wrist holes, side hole, eye holes, mouth hole, and an asshole, amen. The body of Christ is resilient and full of cockroaches. The body of Christ is a body in longing, its mouth open wanting a kiss. The body of Christ is so much more than John the Baptist's head on a platter: the body of Christ is static skin stretched over the bones of the dead. The body of Christ, the body of Christ, the body of Christ, amen. The body of Christ is your body spread out on a bed, down to fuck. The body of Christ is your cock hard as a nail. The body of Christ is you looking up at me, trapped in ecstasy. The body of Christ shaking with joy and laughter; the body of Christ covered in lambskin; the body of Christ, the body of Christ, the body of Christ and I cum three times with the body of Christ inside me. The body of Christ trembles like a beetle, rides it out, goes soft, lies there belly up. The body of Christ came out of a woman's hole and so it goes that the body of Christ is divine. The body of Christ knows its way around a hammer. The body of Christ is a taxidermist's fantasy, a pedophile's wet dream: the body of Christ gets mounted over and over and no one gives a damn. The body of Christ, the body of Christ, the body of Christ, *Κύριε ἐλέησον*, the body of Christ. The body of Christ have mercy. The body of Christ is crying. The body of Christ is dying, and yet, the body of Christ refuses to die because the body of Christ is full of cockroaches. The body of Christ needs a glass of water. The body of Christ is a centrefold, hanging from the altar and the body of Christ is topless and it's turning me amen and hallelujah. The body of Christ is some people's idea of a good time. The body of Christ cut from its foreskin was the first act of violence against the body of Christ. The body of Christ, the body of Christ, the body of Christ sleeps with whores and fishes. The body of Christ looks down at me, says *σώσε με*. The body of Christ is a piece of bread going stale because the body of Christ is the poster boy for decay. The body of Christ, the body of Christ, the body of Christ is denied three times, and the body of Christ is full of cockroaches, and the body of Christ is just a body, and the body of Christ is starting to smell, amen.

## *Peach Season*

*for Bob*

If the dirt of my body came  
straight from the Okanagan Valley  
the fat of them would taste of peaches.

Nipples, taut and high as baby birds  
stretching out for food, choke  
on the excitement of new life and you  
touching me for the first time:

the bees of your fingers and thumbs  
buzz little circles into my flesh, find something  
that feels like a marble rolling under the skin  
and I remember

the mammogram, how it turned them both  
to fruit leather – flattened, so that the breastedness of them  
spread out until they were nothing – and I remember  
how it felt. I remember.

I break the silence to tell you  
*they're fine, I'm fine*  
but the sting of intimacy  
leaves a mark on everything it touches:  
I know you know what cancer feels like.

The best peach I ever had came all the way  
from British Columbia: a yolkyful of fruitedness,  
a line creasing down the skin of it,  
making cleavage – it was the closest thing  
to having something holy in my mouth  
and I swear it glowed going down my throat.

It was March when you sent that text  
to tell me *I miss your boobs*, and even though  
peach season was long gone

I went to Penney's, found a t-shirt with two shells  
on the front – one for right there and there, where  
the nest of my breasts rests, where the sting  
of intimacy left its mark – and I thought

*I'll wear it the next time, help you find them again:*

two birds cupped in your hands  
bring back the taste of peach to your mouth.

## *You Cannot Tell Me*

*We're all curious about what might hurt us*

– Federico García Lorca

You cannot tell me love is a cockroach  
    if you haven't seen it run across the floor  
or convince me that freedom is a dove  
    if you haven't seen it fly past your window.

You cannot tell me sadness is a lamb  
    if you haven't seen it hanging in the slaughterhouse  
or make me believe that forgiveness is a fish  
    if you haven't seen it swim like a ribbon in water.

You cannot tell me what I already know.

Love turns us into insects; we're nothing more than fragile,  
crawling on the floor. Sadness hangs after slaughter.  
Sadness is a lamb eaten at Easter, and the day after.

But freedom is not a dove; forgiveness, not a fish.  
If it were so –

    my lover would have sent me a dove  
    my lover would have given me a fish.

## Čebula

Moja babica je izbirala paradižnike z napetimi trebuščki, ker so bili po njenem najboljši za solato.

Sedeč v kuhinji sem jo pogosto opazovala vihteti nož, ko je ločevala kumarice od njihovega zaščitnega ovoja. Skozi leta svojega življenja je osvojila modrost, ki bi ji jo zavidali prebivalci do tal požgane Troje.

Njene roke so se tresle od vdovstva in starosti, a nož ji ni nikoli zdrknil – postal je težko orodje namesto maternice, ki se je nekoč raztezala v raznovrstne hranljive velikosti. Prva resnična intima, ki sem jo izsledila, je živela v tistih surovih kumaricah, ko je pustila vodi, da oblizne njihove najbolj izpostavljene koticke.

Čebula je vedno ostala za konec. Šele leta kasneje sem končno doumela, da rezanje čebule ni nič manj kruto kot umor. Kot kirurg, slabo poučen o pravih načinih razkopavanja človeškega telesa, je moja babica postala neizprosna s čebulo, ker je bila ta neizprosna do nje.

Za mrtvimi ni mogla nikoli jokati tako, kot je jokala z njo.

## *Kristusovo telo*

Kristusovo telo je napetost žic – posoda za električno, za gibanje, dušo. Kristusovo telo je najboljšo postreženo na križu, z razširjenimi rokami in odprto za poslovanje. Kristusovo telo je bankrotiralo, ker ima Kristusovo telo luknje: zapestne luknje, stransko luknjo, očesni luknji, ustno in ritno luknjo, amen. Kristusovo telo je odporno in polno ščurkov. Kristusovo telo je telo, ki hrepeni, odprtih ust hlepi po poljubu. Kristusovo telo je veliko več kot glava Janeza Krstnika na pladnju: Kristusovo telo je statična koža, razpeta prek kosti mrtvih. Kristusovo telo, Kristusovo telo, Kristusovo telo, amen. Kristusovo telo je tvoje telo, razkrceno prek postelje, pripravljeno na fuk. Kristusovo telo je tvoj kurac, trd kot kamen. Kristusovo telo si ti, s pogledom dvignjenim k meni, ujet v ekstazi. Kristusovo telo, ki drhti od sreče in smeha; Kristusovo telo, ovito v zaščito; Kristusovo telo, Kristusovo telo, Kristusovo telo in pride mi trikrat s Kristusovim telesom v meni. Kristusovo telo trepeta kot hrošč, se izlije do zadnjega, se zmehča, obleži na hrbtu. Kristusovo telo je izstopilo iz ženske luknje in Kristusovo telo je božansko, tako to gre. Kristusovo telo se spozna na natepavanje. Kristusovo telo je fantazija nagačevalca, mokre sanje pedofila: Kristusovo telo nasajajo na kol spet in spet, pa vse eno figo briga. Kristusovo telo, Kristusovo telo, Kristusovo telo, *Κύριε ἐλέησον*, Kristusovo telo. Kristusovo telo, milosti prosim. Kristusovo telo joče. Kristusovo telo umira, vendar Kristusovo telo noče umreti, ker je Kristusovo telo polno ščurkov. Kristusovo telo potrebuje kozarec vode. Kristusovo telo je poster iz sredine revije, ki visi z oltarja, in Kristusovo telo je golih prsi in me vzburja, amen in aleluja. Kristusovo telo je za nekatere ideja užitka. Kristusovo telo, odrezano od kožice penisa, je bilo prvo nasilno dejanje nad Kristusovim telesom. Kristusovo telo, Kristusovo telo, Kristusovo telo spi s kurbami in ribami. Kristusovo telo se ozre name, pravi *σώσε με*. Kristusovo telo je kos kruha, ki plesni, ker je Kristusovo telo fant iz reklame za razkroj. Kristusovo telo, Kristusovo telo, Kristusovo telo je trikrat zanikano, in Kristusovo telo je polno ščurkov, in Kristusovo telo je samo telo, in Kristusovo telo začenja zaudarjati, amen.

## *Sezona breskev*

*za Boba*

Če bi prst mojega telesa prihajala  
naravnost iz doline Okanagan,<sup>1</sup>  
bi moji okroglini imeli okus breskev.

Bradavički, čvrsti in pokončni kot mlada ptička,  
ki se stegujeta za hrano, se dušita  
v razburjenem pričakovanju novega življenja in tebe,  
ko se me prvič dotikaš:

čebele tvojih prstov in palcev  
brencijo majhne kroge v moje meso, naletijo na nekaj,  
kar je čutiti kot frnikola, ki se premika pod kožo,  
in spomnim se

mamograma, kako ju je obe spremenil  
v sadno usnje – speštano, da se je njuna prsatost  
razlezla naokoli, dokler nista izginili – in spomnim se  
občutka. Spomnim se.

Prekinem tišino, rekoč,  
*v redu sta, v redu sem,*  
a želo intimnosti  
pusti sledi na vsem, česar se dotakne:  
Vem, da veš, kakšen je občutek raka.

Najboljša breskev, kar sem jih okusila, je prišla iz  
daljne Britanske Kolumbije: poln rumenjак sadnosti,  
črta, ki se je zarezovala navzdol po njeni koži,  
risala razpoko – od vsega, kar sem kdaj imela  
v ustih, je bila najbližje nečemu svetemu,  
in prisežem, da je žarela, polzeč po mojem grlu.

Bil je marec, ko si mi poslal tisto sporočilo,  
v katerem si napisal *pogrešam tvoje joške*, in čeprav  
je bila sezona breskev že zdavnaj mimo,

<sup>1</sup> Dolina v kanadski provinci Britanska Kolumbija, znana po sadnih nasadih (op. prev.).

sem šla v Penneys,<sup>2</sup> poiskala majico z dvema školjkama  
spredaj – po eno prav tu in tam, kjer  
leži gnezdo mojih prsi, kjer je želo  
intimnosti pustilo svojo sled – in sem pomislila

*nosila jo bom naslednjič, da ti ju pomagam spet najti:*

dve ptici, ujeti v tvoje dlani,  
znova prineseta okus po breskvah v tvoja usta.

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<sup>2</sup> Penneys je ime veleblagovnice na Irskem (op. prev.).

## *Ne moreš mi govoriti*

*Vse nas zanima tisto, kar nas lahko prizadene.*

– Federico García Lorca

Ne moreš mi govoriti, da je ljubezen ščurek,  
     če je nisi videl tekati po tleh,  
 ali me prepričati, da je svoboda golobica,  
     če je nisi videl leteti mimo tvojega okna.

Ne moreš mi govoriti, da je žalost jagnje,  
     če je nisi videl v klavnici viseti,  
 ali me prepričati, da je odpuščanje riba,  
     če ga nisi videl plavati kot postrvi v vodi.

Ne moreš mi govoriti, kar že vem.

Ljubezen nas spremeni v žuželke; samo krhki smo,  
 ko se plazimo po tleh. Žalost visi po pokolu.  
 Žalost je jagnje na velikonočni mizi in še dan potem.

A svoboda ni golobica; odpuščanje ni riba.  
 Če bi bilo tako –

bi mi moj ljubimec poslal golobico,  
 bi mi moj ljubimec podal ribo.

*Prevedla Tanja Ahlin*



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**Mlada**

**Vilenica 2014**

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*Young Vilenica  
Award 2014*

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*Nagrajenka 14. Mlade Vilenice v kategoriji druge triade osnovne šole je **Lota Martinjak**, učenka petega razreda OŠ Brezovica pri Ljubljani, za pesem »Lesena pesem«. Mentorica: Marija Modic.*

### ***Lesena pesem***

Malo sem čez les,  
to je čisto res,  
saj se mi zdi,  
da imam lesene nogé,  
kar pravzaprav ne gre.

Malo sem čez les,  
to je čisto res,  
saj se mi zdi,  
da stol govori,  
kako je bilo,  
ko je bil še drevo.

Malo sem čez les,  
to je čisto res,  
saj se mi zdi,  
da svinčnik kar sam piše,  
kako je bilo,  
ko je bil na drevesu najviše.

Zdaj nisem več čez les,  
tudi to je res,  
saj sem videla na lastne oči,  
kako mlad par  
vrezuje v drevo svoji začetnici.

*The winner of the 14<sup>th</sup> Young Vilenica Award in the category of the second triad of elementary school is **Lota Martinjak**, a fifth-grader from Elementary School Brezovica pri Ljubljani, for the poem "A Wooden Poem". Mentor: Marija Modic.*

### ***A Wooden Poem***

My head feels just like wood,  
and that's the truth  
because it seems  
that I have wooden feet,  
and that's not right or meet.

My head feels just like wood,  
and that's the truth  
because it seems  
that I can hear the chair tell me  
of how it used to be  
when it was still a tree.

My head feels just like wood,  
and that's the truth  
because it seems  
as if the pencil wrote alone  
of how it used to be  
when it ruled the leafy dome.

My head no longer feels like wood,  
that, too, is true  
because I saw with my own eyes  
a couple as they carved  
their own initials in the bark.

*Translated by Nada Grošelj*

*Nagrajenka 14. Mlade Vilenice v kategoriji tretje triade osnovne šole je **Patricija Kavčič**, učenka devetega razreda Druge OŠ Slovenj Gradec, za pesem »Otrok v zibelki«. Mentorica: Janja Šerbinek.*

### ***Otrok v zibelki ...***

Kaj mu bo prineslo življenje?

Kmalu bo zibel zamenjal za posteljo.  
Sam bo sedel na stolu za mizo  
in risal ter pisal s svinčnikom.  
O željah, ki skrite v srcu tlijo  
kot pogorela polena,  
le da bodo sveže in mlade,  
ne stare, preperele.  
Hrepenече poglede  
bo sprva pošiljal v svet  
le skozi visoko ograjo,  
nato v veter z gugalnice,  
pritrjene na vejo mo(go)čnega drevesa.  
Igrače bo hitro prerasel.  
Na vse to bo ostal le spomin  
v okvirju na steni  
in na prašnih policah.  
Kmalu bo ugotovil,  
da je ta svet krivičen,  
ko bo zakorakal vanj  
skozi mogočna vrata odraslosti.  
Slabe stvari bo skril  
globoko v predale,  
da jih zaščiti  
pred nadležnimi pogledi.  
Skozi leta se bo tudi v omari nabral kup reči.  
Za vedno bodo ostale – dišeče po starem.  
A nič jih ne bo uničilo.  
Spremljal jih bo zvok brenkal in godal;  
tih, a zgovoren.

Čez mnogo let  
bo na vse gledal  
z drobnim nasmeškom na obrazu.  
V udobnem, škripajočem gugalniku je vse videti preprosto.

Kot tudi je.  
Je?

*The winner of the 14<sup>th</sup> Young Vilenica Award in the category of the third triad of elementary school is **Patricija Kavčič**, a ninth-grader from Second Elementary School Slovenj Gradec, for the poem "A Baby in the Cradle". Mentor: Janja Šerbinek.*

### ***A Baby in the Cradle...***

What has life in store for him?

Soon he'll exchange his cradle for a bed.  
Sitting on a chair behind a desk  
he'll draw and write with pencils.  
Of longings smouldering in his heart of hearts  
like burnt-out logs,  
except that they'll be fresh and young,  
not old and brittle.  
At first he'll cast  
his yearning glances in the world  
through towering fences,  
and later in the wind, perched on a swing  
hung in the branches of a mighty tree.  
Soon he'll outgrow his toys.  
With nothing left but memory  
framed on the wall  
and set on dusty shelves.  
Soon he will learn  
of the unfairness of the world  
once he has marched in  
through the mighty adult gate.  
He'll hide the bad  
deep in the drawers,  
to shelter it  
from prying stares.  
And through the years, a pile will rise inside the closet,  
to stay for ever, scented with old age.  
Never to be destroyed.  
Accompanied by strings and strumming,  
muted but eloquent.

And after many years  
he'll come to view it all  
with a tiny smile.  
From a cosy creaking rocker, all seems simple.

As indeed it is.  
Or is it?

*Translated by Nada Grošelj*

*Nagrajenka 14. Mlade Vilenice v kategoriji srednjih šol je **Lara Ružič Povirk**, dijakinja drugega letnika Gimnazije Poljane, za pesem »Kdo si tujka?«. Mentorica: Mateja Pandel.*

### ***Kdo si tujka?***

Vračaš se med obličji nemih zgodb  
vsa odrevenela in togotna.  
Svoj blišč brišeš v vlažne strehe vetrov.  
Odhajaš, zaljubljaš se, zapiraš vrata in okna, ker nikomur nočeš  
nakloniti svoje odsotnosti.  
Kako naj se tvoja samota opira na srce in kljubuje dnevom?  
Kdo sploh si? Odtujenost spomina od bežnega dotika ... nemirna igra.  
Tvoja vrata so zapahnjena, pa si vseeno sveža kot odpirajoča naslada.  
Tvoje pijane veje se pozibavajo na robu zavedanja vsakokrat,  
ko ima roka namen oditi ...  
In jaz te še nikoli nisem tako ljubila.  
Tvoj dom nima imena in ti nimaš nikogar.  
Od vetrov zagorela ... Od smeha in žalosti si zbledela.  
Blešččča iskra navdiha ...  
Tvoje visoko nebo izbriše dolgočasje.  
Strašno čudna si, tujka brez doma.

A zagotovo kaplja tvoje golote izpije luno.

*The winner of the 14<sup>th</sup> Young Vilenica Award in the high school category is **Lara Ružič Povirk**, a second-grader from Gymnasium Poljane, for the poem “Who Are You Stranger Woman?” Mentor: Mateja Pandel.*

### ***Who Are You Stranger Woman?***

Returning with the countenances of speechless tales,  
gone all numb and fierce,  
you wipe your splendour in the winds' damp rooftops.  
You leave, you fall in love, you close your doors and windows,  
granting nobody your absence.  
How can your solitude, relying on your heart, defy the days?  
Indeed, who *are* you? The memory's alienation from fleeting touch  
...a restive game.  
Your gate is barred but you are fresh like budding pleasure,  
your drunken branches swaying on the brink of consciousness  
whenever your hand means to leave...  
And I have never loved you so.  
Your homestead has no name and you have no-one.  
You, tanned with winds... Faded with grief and laughter.  
A gleaming spark of inspiration...  
Your sky vault wipes away all boredom.  
How weird you are, oh homeless stranger woman!

And yet a droplet of your nakedness will drain the moon.

*Translated by Nada Grošelj*



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**Dosedanji  
udeleženci in  
nagrajenci  
Vilenice**

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*Previous*

*Participants and  
Vilenica Prize  
Winners*

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MEDNARODNO LITERARNO NAGRADO VILENICA DRUŠTVA SLOVENSКИH PISATELJEV ZA LETO 1986 JE PREJEL / THE SLOVENE WRITERS' ASSOCIATION AWARDED THE 1986 VILENICA INTERNATIONAL LITERARY PRIZE TO

### *Fulvio Tomizza*

Utemeljitev nagrade / Laudation: Jože Pirjevec

V publikaciji *Vilenica 1986* in na literarnih prireditvah so sodelovali / The following are represented in the *Vilenica almanac 1986* and took part in the literary readings:

*Péter Esterházy, Reinhard P. Gruber, Ingram Hartinger, Zbigniew Herbert, Gert Hofmann, Tadeusz Konwicki, Lojze Kovačič, Slavko Mihalić, Gerhard Roth, Milan Rúfus, Eva Schmidt, Jan Skácel, Wisława Szymborska, Fulvio Tomizza, Istvan Vas, Igor Zidić*

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### *Peter Handke*

Utemeljitev nagrade / Laudation: Erik Prunč

KRISTAL VILENICE 1987 / 1987 CRYSTAL VILENICA AWARD – Gregor Strniša

V publikaciji *Vilenica 1987* in na literarnih prireditvah so sodelovali / The following are represented in the *Vilenica almanac 1987* and took part in the literary readings:

*Ivan Aralica, Tándori Dezső, Erzsébet Galgóczi, Lúbmír Feldek, Carmela Fratantonio, Peter Handke, Bohumil Hrabal, Geda Jacolutti, Drago Jančar, Alfred Kolleritsch, Ryszard Krynicki, Andrzej Kuśniewicz, Giuliana Morandini, Ágnes Nemes Nagy, Jan Skácel, Gregor Strniša, Wisława Szymborska, Dominik Tatarka, Venó Taufer, Pavle Ugrinov, Adam Zagajewski, Vitomil Zupan*

DISPUT: *Claudio Magris: Ewaldova bakla / Ewald's Torch*

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## *Péter Esterházy*

Utemeljitev nagrade / Laudation: *Jože Hradil*

KRISTAL VILENICE 1988 / 1988 CRYSTAL VILENICA AWARD – *Ewa Lipska*

V publikaciji *Vilenica 1988* in na literarnih prireditvah so sodelovali / The following are represented in the *Vilenica almanac 1988* and took part in the literary readings:

*Birgitta Arens, Francesco Burdin, Sándor Csoóri, Jaroslav Čejka, Miroslav Červenka, Milan Dekleva, Danijel Dragojević, Benedikt Dyrlich, Vlado Gotovac, Marian Grzeźczak, Klaus Hoffer, Anton Hykisch, Gert Jonke, László Lator, Ewa Lipska, Marcelijus Martinaitis, Vesna Parun, Erica Pedretti, Richard Pietrass, Ilma Rakusa, Christoph Ransmayr, Renzo Rosso, Jaroslav Marek Rymkiewicz, Ryszard Schubert, Tomáš Šalamun, Rudi Šeligo, Josef Šimon, Aleksandar Tišma, Judita Vaičiunaite, Tomas Venclova, Giorgio Voghera, Josef Winkler, Dane Zajc, Štefan Žarj*

DISPUT: *Czesław Miłosz: Četrta učna ura / The Fourth Teaching Lesson*

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## *Jan Skácel*

Utemeljitev nagrade / Laudation: *Albina Lipovec*

KRISTAL VILENICE 1989 / 1989 CRYSTAL VILENICA AWARD – *Dubravka Ugrešić*

V publikaciji *Vilenica 1989* in na literarnih prireditvah so sodelovali / The following are represented in the *Vilenica almanac 1989* and took part in the literary readings:

*H. C. Artmann, Jan Beno, Volker Braun, Gino Brazzoduro, Jan Buzássy, Paola Capriolo, Csoóri Sándor, Bogumil Ćuzel, Miroslav Dudok, Petar Gudelj, Christoph Hein, Milan Jesih, Gert Jonke, Eugeniusz Kabatc, Danilo Kiš, Ivan Klíma, Jurij Koch, Kajetan Kovič, Gabriel Laub, Florjan Lipuš, Miklos Meszöly, Emil Mikulenaite, Adolph Muschg, Tadeusz Nowak, Josip Osti, Tone Pavček, Kornelijus Platelis, Ingrid Puginigg, Miroslav Putik, Alojz Rebula, Carlo Sgorlon, Werner Sollner, Andrzej Szczypiorski, Antonio Tabucchi, Dubravka Ugrešić, Miroslav Valek, Dragana Velikić, Ligo Zanini*

DISPUT: *György Konrad: S sredine / From the Centre*

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## *Tomas Venclova*

Utemeljitev nagrade / Laudation: *Veno Taufer*

KRISTAL VILENICE 1990 / 1990 CRYSTAL VILENICA AWARD – *Aleš Debeljak*

V publikaciji *Vilenica 1990* in na literarnih prireditvah so sodelovali / The following are represented in the *Vilenica almanac 1990* and took part in the literary readings:

*Aleksandra Berková, Andrej Blatnik, Leon Briedis, Miroslav Červenka, Aleš Debeljak, Nedjeljko Fabrio, András Fodor, Branko Gradišnik, Niko Grafenauer, Reinhardt P. Gruber, Maja Haderlap, Paweł Huelle, Anton Hykisch, Eugenius Ignatavičius, Antanas Jonynas, Lubomir Jurík, Diana Kempff, Michael Köhlmeier, Tomas Saulius Kondrotas, György Konrád, Miroslav Košuta, Libuše Moniková, Stelio Mattioni, Péter Nádas, Gáspár Nagy, Boris Pahor, Miodrag Pavlović, Giorgio Pressburger, Eva Schmidt, Knuts Skujenieks, Jože Snoj, Andrzej Szycpiorski, Ján József Szczepański, Susanna Tamaro, Ladislav Tážký, Goran Tribuson, Božena Trilecová, Ludvík Vaculík, Joachim Walter, Anka Žagar*

DISPUT: *Veno Taufer: Izziv ali zgaga? / Challenge or Hassle?*

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## *Zbigniew Herbert*

Utemeljitev nagrade / Laudation: *Niko Jež*

KRISTAL VILENICE 1991 / 1991 CRYSTAL VILENICA AWARD – *Grendel Lajos*

V publikaciji *Vilenica 1991* in na literarnih prireditvah so sodelovali / The following are represented in the *Vilenica almanac 1991* and took part in the literary readings:

*Ladislav Ballek, Andrej Brvar, Lenka Chytilová, Heinz Czechowski, István Eörsi, Lajos Grendel, Fabjan Hafner, Reto Hännny, Ivanka Hergold, Andrej Hieng, Alois Hotschnig, Viťazoslav Hronec, Jókai Anna, Donaldas Kajokas, Milan Kleč, Mirko Kovač, Lojze Krakar, Vít Kremlička, Bronisław Maj, Laura Marchig, Štefan Moravčík, Luko Paljetak, Oskar Pastior, Jure Potokar, Hans Raimund, Rolandas Rastauskas, Somlyó György, Mario Suško, Ivo Svetina, Susanna Tamaro, Arvo Valton, Várady Szabolcs, Bite Vilimaité, Alena Vostrá, Joachim Walther, Ernest Wichner, Josef Winkler*

DISPUT: *Vlado Gotovac: Skica o Atlasu / Sketch of the Atlas*

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## *Milan Kundera*

Utemeljitev nagrade / Laudation: *Jaroslav Skrušný*

KRISTAL VILENICE 1992 / 1992 CRYSTAL VILENICA AWARD – *Endre Kukorelly*

V publikaciji *Vilenica 1992* in na literarnih prireditvah so sodelovali / The following are represented in the *Vilenica almanac 1992* and took part in the literary readings:

*Alexandra Berková, Vytautas Bložė, Branko Ćepec, Slavenka Drakulić, Gustav Januš, Dušan Jovanović, Ferenc Juhász, Ryszard Kapuściński, Marie-Thérèse Kerschbaumer, Eftim Kletnikov, Krzysztof Koehler, Uwe Kolbe, Mirko Kovač, Endre Kukorelly, Krzysztof Lisowski, Drahošlav Machala, Vytautas Martinkus, Ivan Minatti, Libuše Moníková, Boris A. Novak, Lajos Parti Nagy, Aarne Puu, Gerhard Roth, Štefan Strážay, Jana Štroblová, Marjan Tomšič, Miloslav Topinka, Dragan Velikić, Jani Virk, Peter Waterhouse*

DISPUT: *Evgen Bavčar: Univerzalizmi in njihova Facies Hypocritica / Universalisms and Their Facies Hypocritica*

*Péter Esterházy: Postmoderni barbarizem ali Evropa brez lastnosti / Postmodern Barbarism Or Europe with No Characteristics*

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## *Libuše Moníková*

Utemeljitev nagrade / Laudation: *Neva Šlibar*

KRISTAL VILENICE 1993 / 1993 CRYSTAL VILENICA AWARD – *Francesco Micieli*

V publikaciji *Vilenica 1993* in na literarnih prireditvah so sodelovali / The following are represented in the *Vilenica almanac 1993* and took part in the literary readings:

*Zsófia Balla, József Baran, Roberto Dedenaro, Helmut Einsendle, Alojz Ihan, Dževad Karahasan, Matjaž Kocbek, Vlastimil Kovalčík, Marko Kravos, Zvonko Makovič, Márton László, Robert Menasse, Francesco Micieli, Marjeta Novak Kajzer, Paul Parin, Denis Poniž, Diana Pranckietytė, Carlo Sgorlon, Arvo Valton, Michal Viewegh, Piotr Woiciechowski, Ifigenija Zagoričnik Simonović*

DISPUT: *Georges-Arthur Goldschmidt, Vlado Gotovac, László Krasznahorkai, Antonin J. Liehm: Edvard Kocbek: Palica / Edvard Kocbek: The Stick*

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MEDNARODNO LITERARNO NAGRADO VILENICA DRUŠTVA SLOVENSКИH PISATELJEV ZA LETO 1994 JE PREJEL / THE SLOVENE WRITERS' ASSOCIATION AWARDED THE 1994 VILENICA INTERNATIONAL LITERARY PRIZE TO

## *Josip Osti*

Utemeljitev nagrade / Laudation: *Denis Poniž*

KRISTAL VILENICE 1994 / 1994 CRYSTAL VILENICA AWARD – *Slavko Mihalić*

V publikaciji *Vilenica 1994* in na literarnih prireditvah so sodelovali / The following are represented in the *Vilenica almanac 1994* and took part in the literary readings:

*Marjorie Agosàn, Edoardo Albinati, Árni Bergmann, Miloš Biedrzycki, Christa Dericum, Janko Ferk, Antonio Fian, Antanas Gailius, Vlado Gotovac, Egid Gstättnner, Gunnar D. Hansson, Daniel Hevier, Vi'azoslav Hronec, Paweł Huelle, Goran Ignjatije Janković, Richard Jackson, Dževad Karahasan, Lubor Kasal, Thomas Kling, Majda Kne, Miklavž Komelj, Jurgis Kunčinas, Feri Lainšček, Phillis Levin, Svetlana Makarovič, Giuseppe Mariuz, János Marno, Mateja Matevski, Andrej Medved, Slavko Mihalić, Dušan Mitana, Grzegorz Musiał, Juan Octavio Prenz, Aleksander Peršolja, György Petri, Lenka Procházková, Gianfranco Sodomaco, Matthew Sweeney, Tomaž Šalamun, Igor Škamperle, Jachým Topol, Urs Widmer, Uroš Zupan*

DISPUT: *Alain Finkielkraut: Intelektualci, politika in vojna / Intellectuals, Politics and War*

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MEDNARODNO LITERARNO NAGRADO VILENICA DRUŠTVA SLOVENSКИH PISATELJEV ZA LETO 1995 JE PREJEL / THE SLOVENE WRITERS' ASSOCIATION AWARDED THE 1995 VILENICA INTERNATIONAL LITERARY PRIZE TO

## *Adolf Muschg*

Utemeljitev nagrade / Laudation: *Vesna Kondrič Horvat*

KRISTAL VILENICE 1995 / 1995 CRYSTAL VILENICA AWARD –

*Marzanna Bogumila Kielar*

V publikaciji *Vilenica 1995* in na literarnih prireditvah so sodelovali / The following are represented in the *Vilenica almanac 1995* and took part in the literary readings:

*Jovica Aćin, Kurt Aebli, Marjorie Agosàn, Eugenijus Ališanka, Marcin Baran, Árni Bergmann, Krzysztof Bielecki, Dariusz Bittner, Loredana Bogliun, Berta Bojetu-Boeta, Tereza Boučková, Lucas Cejpek, Róza Domašcyňa, Erik Groch, Gunnar D. Hansson, Nora Ikstena, Richard Jackson, Marzanna Bogumila Kielar, Rade Krstić, Phillis Levin, Tonko Maroević, Manfred Moser, Danielius Mušinskas, Juan Octavio Prenz, Radovan Pavlovski, Tone Perčič, Sibila Petlevski, Raoul Schrott, Zorko Simčič, Rudolf Sloboda, Andrzej Stasiuk, Matthew Sweeney,*

*Tomaž Šalamun, Ján Štrasser, Zsuzsa Tákács, Dezső Tandori, Jaromír Typlt, Miloš Vacík, Saša Vegri, Pavel Vilikovský, Ernest Wichner, Ciril Zlobec, Vlado Žabot, Aldo Žerjal*

DISPUT: *Lojze Kovačič: Ali pisatelj potrebuje svet, ki njega ne potrebuje? / Does a Writer Need the World Which Doesn't Need Him?*

MEDNARODNO LITERARNO NAGRADO VILENICA DRUŠTVA SLOVENSКИH PISATELJEV ZA LETO 1996 JE PREJEL / THE SLOVENE WRITERS' ASSOCIATION AWARDED THE 1996 VILENICA INTERNATIONAL LITERARY PRIZE TO

*Adam Zagajewski*

Utemeljitev nagrade / Laudation: *Niko Jež*

KRISTAL VILENICE 1996 / 1996 CRYSTAL VILENICA AWARD – *Kača Čelan*

V publikaciji *Vilenica 1996* in na literarnih prireditvah so sodelovali / The following are represented in the *Vilenica almanac 1996* and took part in the literary readings:

*Lothar Baier, Uldis Berzinš, Petr Borkovec, Magda Carneci, Karol Chmel, Claude Michel Cluny, Branko Čegec, Kača Čelan, Zita Čepaite, Stefano Dell'antonio, Ljiljana Dirjan, Dušan Dušek, Milan Đorđević, Menna Elfyn, János Háry, Ann Jäderlund, Antanas A. Jonynas, Julian Kornhauser, András Ferenc Kovács, Vladimír Kovačič, Friederike Kretzen, Enzo Martines, Lydia Mischkulnig, Brane Mozetič, Boris A. Novak, Iztok Osojnik, Žarko Petan, James Ragan, Ales Razanov, Hansjörg Schertenleib, Triini Soomets, Karel Šiktanc, Aleš Šteger, Thorgeir Thorgeirson, Maja Vidmar, Märtinš Zelmenis*

DISPUT: *Svoboda imaginacije – imaginacija svobode / Imagination of Freedom – Freedom of Imagination:*

*Branko Miljković: Poezijo bodo vsi pisali / Everybody Will Be Writing Poetry*

MEDNARODNO LITERARNO NAGRADO VILENICA DRUŠTVA SLOVENSКИH PISATELJEV ZA LETO 1997 JE PREJEL / THE SLOVENE WRITERS' ASSOCIATION AWARDED THE 1997 VILENICA INTERNATIONAL LITERARY PRIZE TO

*Pavel Vilikovský*

Utemeljitev nagrade / Laudation: *Andrej Rozman*

KRISTAL VILENICE 1997 / 1997 CRYSTAL VILENICA AWARD – *Nicole Müller*

V publikaciji *Vilenica 1997* in na literarnih prireditvah so sodelovali / The following are represented in the *Vilenica almanac 1997* and took part in the literary readings:

*Balázs Attila, Pauls Bankovskis, Peters Brüveris, Stefan Chwin, Gillian Clarke, Vittorio Cozzoli, Vera Čejkowska, Liutauras Degėsys, Evald Flisar, Franjo Francič, Niko Grafenauer, Marianne Gruber, Aime Hansen, Jože Hudeček, Hanna Johansen, Vanda Juknaite, Mila Kačič, Doris Kareva, István Kovács, Kristina Ljaljko, Peter Macsovský, Herbert Maurer, Christopher Merrill, Katja Lange Müller, Nicole Müller, Neža Maurer, Ewald Murrer, Miha Obit, Albert Ostermaier, Pavao Pavličić, Delimir Rešicki, Brane Senegačnik, Abdulah Sidran, Andrzej Sosnowski, Pierre-Yves Soucy, Ragnar Strömberg, Olga Tokarczuk, Alta Vášová, Anastassis Vistonitis, Anatol Vjarcinski, Andrew Zawadzki*

DISPUT: *Daimon zapeljevanja / Daimon of Temptation:*

*Rainer Maria Rilke: Orfej • Evridika • Hermes / Orpheus • Eurydike • Hermes*

MEDNARODNO LITERARNO NAGRADO VILENICA DRUŠTVA SLOVENSkih PISATELJEV ZA LETO 1998 JE PREJEL / THE SLOVENE WRITERS' ASSOCIATION AWARDED THE 1998 VILENICA INTERNATIONAL LITERARY PRIZE TO

*Péter Nádas*

Utemeljitev nagrade / Laudation: *Orsolya Gállos*

KRISTAL VILENICE 1998 / 1998 CRYSTAL VILENICA AWARD – *Peter Semolič*

V publikaciji *Vilenica 1998* in na literarnih prireditvah so sodelovali / The following are represented in the *Vilenica almanac 1998* and took part in the literary readings:

*Amanda Aizpuriete, Andrei Bodiú, Jan Čikvin, France Forstnerič, Natasza Goerke, Felicitas Hoppe, Zoë Jenny, Arne Johnsson, Jiří Kratochvíl, José Jorge Letria, Vida Mokrin Pauer, Maja Novak, Osamljeni Tekachi, Hava Pinhas Coen, Ilma Rakusa, Izet Sarajlić, Peter Semolič, Marko Sosič, Alvydas Šlepikas, Slobodan Šnajder, Pia Tafdrup, Veno Taufer, László Villányi, Milan Vincetič, Hugo Williams, Andrea Zanzotto*

DISPUT: *Timothy Garton Ash: Konec stoletja, začetek tisočletja / The End of the Century, the Beginning of the Millennium*

MEDNARODNO LITERARNO NAGRADO VILENICA DRUŠTVA SLOVENSkih PISATELJEV ZA LETO 1999 JE PREJELA / THE SLOVENE WRITERS' ASSOCIATION AWARDED THE 1999 VILENICA INTERNATIONAL LITERARY PRIZE TO

*Erica Pedretti*

Utemeljitev nagrade / Laudation: *Vesna Kondrič Horvat*

KRISTAL VILENICE 1999 / 1999 CRYSTAL VILENICA AWARD – *Angelo Cherchi*

V publikaciji *Vilenica 1999* in na literarnih prireditvah so sodelovali / The following are represented in the *Vilenica almanac 1999* and took part in the literary readings:

*Neringa Abrutyte, Angelo Cherchi, Lelo Cjanton, Richard Flanagan, Marius Ivaškevičius, Richard Jackson, Jana Juránova, Jaan Kaplinski, Dražen Katunarich, Taja Kramberger, Ryszard Krynicki, Franco Loi, Miha Mazzini, Miloš Mikeš, Mimmo Morina, Andrej Morovič, Amir Or, Razvan Petrescu, Asher Reich, Christopher Reid, Kathrin Röggla, Ljudmila Rubljévska, Anna Santoliquido, Armin Sencer, Sande Stojčevski, Vojo Šindolič, Adriana Škunca, Ottó Tolnai, Bogdan Trojak, Nenad Veličković, Karen Volkman, Dane Zajc*

DISPUT: *Trst na začetku 20. stoletja: futuristična utopija ali možni model za nadnacionalno in ustvarjalno sožitje v združeni (srednji) Evropi / Trieste at the Beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century: A Futuristic Utopia or Realistic Model of Trans-National and Creative Coexistence of People in the Common (Central) Europe*

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MEDNARODNO LITERARNO NAGRADO VILENICA DRUŠTVA SLOVENSКИH PISATELJEV ZA LETO 2000 JE PREJEL / THE SLOVENE WRITERS' ASSOCIATION AWARDED THE 2000 VILENICA INTERNATIONAL LITERARY PRIZE TO

*Slavko Mihalic*

Utemeljitev nagrade / Laudation: *Veno Taufer*

KRISTAL VILENICE 2000 / 2000 CRYSTAL VILENICA AWARD – *Vörös István*

V publikaciji *Vilenica 2000* in na literarnih prireditvah so sodelovali / The following are represented in the *Vilenica almanac 2000* and took part in the literary readings:

*Zoran Ančevski, Peter Božič, Uke Bucpapaj, Aleš Čar, Primož Čučnik, Jacques Darras, Lidija Dimkowska, Mircea Dinescu, Michael Donhauser, Janis Elsberg, Leopold Federmair, Mila Haugova, Željko Ivanković, Liudvikas Jakimavičius, Urs Karpf, Georgiu Konstantinovu, Hasso Krull, Gary Lawless, Umberto Mangani, Erik Menkveld, Brina Švigelj Mérat, Jaume Perez Montaner, Imre Oravecz, Silvana Paletti, Katherine Pierpoint, Angelina Polonskaya, Milorad Popović, Ana Ristović, Sudeep Sen, Marcin Sendeci, Ronny Someck, Marjan Strojan, Yörgos Veis, Vörös István, Gerald Zschorsch*

DISPUT: *Friederike Kretzen: Vloga in pomen literature danes / The Meaning and the Role of Literature Today*

*Niko Grafenauer: Pisatelj v ekscentru časa / Writer in the Off-Centre of Time*

*Régis Debray, Zdenko Vrdlovec: Literatura in mediji / Literature and the Media*

MEDNARODNO LITERARNO NAGRADO VILENICA DRUŠTVA SLOVENSКИH PISATELJEV ZA LETO 2001 JE PREJEL / THE SLOVENE WRITERS' ASSOCIATION AWARDED THE 2001 VILENICA INTERNATIONAL LITERARY PRIZE TO

## *Jaan Kaplinski*

Utemeljitev nagrade / Laudation: *Veno Taufer*

KRISTAL VILENICE 2001 / 2001 CRYSTAL VILENICA AWARD – *Natalka Bilocerkevica*

V publikaciji *Vilenica 2001* in na literarnih prireditvah so sodelovali / The following are represented in the *Vilenica almanac 2001* and took part in the literary readings:

*Esad Babačić, Mohammed Bennis, Natalka Bilocerkevica, Casimiro De Brito, Richard Burns, Peteris Cedriņš, Dragan Jovanović Danilov, Robert Davis, Michel Deguy, Ferida Duraković, Andreas Ehin, Hans Eichhorn, Mauro Faccioni Filho, Michael Farrell, Garaczi László, Greg Gatenby, Adam Globus, Adela Greceanu, Petr Hruška, Valdo Immovilli, Laurynas Katkus, Vladimir Kavčič, Katica Kjulavkova, Barbara Korun, Maruša Krese, Roman Ludva, Sonja Manojlović, Narlan Matos, Marián Milčák, Ban'ya Natsuisshi, Claudio Pozzani, Matthew Rohrer, Erik Stinus, Franco Supino, Vivienne Vermes, Thor Vilhjálmsson, Hans Van De Waarsenburg, Adam Wiedemann*

DELAVNICE / WORKSHOPS: *Prevajanje poezije, O estetski komponenti vsakdanjega življenja / Translating Poetry, On the Aesthetic Component of the Everyday Life*

MLADA VILENICA 2001 / YOUNG VILENICA AWARD 2001: *Špela Poljak*

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MEDNARODNO LITERARNO NAGRADO VILENICA DRUŠTVA SLOVENSКИH PISATELJEV ZA LETO 2002 JE PREJELA / THE SLOVENE WRITERS' ASSOCIATION AWARDED THE 2002 VILENICA INTERNATIONAL LITERARY PRIZE TO

## *Ana Blandiana*

Utemeljitev nagrade / Laudation: *Lidija Dimkowska*

KRISTAL VILENICE 2002 / 2002 CRYSTAL VILENICA AWARD – *Pál Závada*

V publikaciji *Vilenica 2002* in na literarnih prireditvah so sodelovali / The following are represented in the *Vilenica almanac 2002* and took part in the literary readings:

*Jorge Enrique Adoum, Dritëro Agolli, Andriy Bondar, Snežana Bukal, Bora Ćosić, Jozefina Dautbegović, Tanja Dücker, Oswald Egger, Chuah Guat Eng, Jakša Fiamengo, Ioan Flora, Janice Galloway, Sinan Gudžević, Michál Hvorecký, Anatol Kudravec, Anatolij Kudrjavicki, Leena Lander, Franco Manzoni, Maciej Melecki, Dušan Merc, Petr Mikeš, Vinko Moderndorfer, Herta Müller, Patricia Nolan, Knut Odegård, Justo Jorge Padron, Monika Van Paemel, Ratimir Pavlović,*

*Janis Rokpelnis, Ken Smith, Glen Sorestad, Luan Starova, Vidosav Stevanović, Lucija Stupica, Tone Škrjanec, Willem Van Toorn, Pál Závada*

DELAVNICE / WORKSHOPS: *Prevajanje poezije, O literaturi na internetu, O vizualni in literarni podobi / On Translating Poetry, On Literature on the Internet, On Visual and Literary Image*

MLADA VILENICA 2002 / YOUNG VILENICA AWARD 2002: *Ana Šalgaj*

MEDNARODNO LITERARNO NAGRADO VILENICA DRUŠTVA SLOVENSКИH PISATELJEV ZA LETO 2003 JE PREJEL / THE SLOVENE WRITERS' ASSOCIATION AWARDED THE 2003 VILENICA INTERNATIONAL LITERARY PRIZE TO

*Mirko Kovač*

Utemeljitev nagrade / Laudation: *Josip Osti*

V publikaciji *Vilenica 2003* in na literarnih prireditvah so sodelovali / The following are represented in the *Vilenica almanac 2003* and took part in the literary readings:

*Constantin Abăluță, Hana Andronikova, Kostas Assimacopoulos, Vladimír Balla, Marek Bieńczyk, Boris Biletić, Gordana Mihailova Bošnjakoska, Nicole Brossard, René De Ceccatty, Paulo Da Costa, John F. Deane, Paulette Dubé, Lynn Emanuel, Pavle Goranović, Norbert Gstrein, Jacques Izoard, Rutger Kopland, Herkus Kunčius, Taras Luchuk, Donal McLaughlin, Tom Petsinis, Vivienne Plumb, Gregor Podlogar, Alek Popov, Stella Rotenberg, Paolo Ruffilli, Fiona Sampson, Ljudka Silnova, Andrej E. Skubic, Eira Stenberg, James Tate, Krisztina Tóth, Suzana Tratnik, Christian Uetz, Vladimir Vertlib, Erika Vouk, Juli Zeh*

DELAVNICE / WORKSHOPS: *Prevajanje poezije, Prostori transgresije, Revija v reviji / Translating Poetry, Places of Transgression, Review In Review*

MLADA VILENICA 2003 / YOUNG VILENICA AWARD 2003: *Žiga Mohorič, Agata Venier*

MEDNARODNO LITERARNO NAGRADO VILENICA DRUŠTVA SLOVENSКИH PISATELJEV ZA LETO 2004 JE PREJELA / THE SLOVENE WRITERS' ASSOCIATION AWARDED THE 2004 VILENICA INTERNATIONAL LITERARY PRIZE TO

*Brigitte Kronauer*

Utemeljitev nagrade / Laudation: *Neva Šlibar in Vesna Kondrič Horvat*  
KRISTAL VILENICE 2004 / 2004 CRYSTAL VILENICA AWARD – *Valžina Mort*

V publikaciji *Vilenica 2004* in na literarnih prireditvah so sodelovali / The following are represented in the *Vilenica almanac 2004* and took part in the literary readings:

*Jan Balabán, Muharem Bazdulj, Eric Brogniet, Štefan Caraman, Daša Drndić, Martin Fahrner, Edward Foster, Georgi Gospodinov, Gintaras Grajauskas, Daniela Kapitáňová, Vojislav Karanović, Artjom Kavalevski, Juris Kronbergs, Alain Lance, Sydney Lea, Vasyl Makhno, Katarina Marinčič, Txema Martínez Inglés, Valžina Mort, Novica Novaković, Gino Pastega, Szilárd Podmaniczky, Aleksandar Prokopiev, Barbara Simoniti, Peter Steiner, Anni Sumari, Vladimir P. Štefanec, Cai Tianxin, Krzysztof Varga, Peter Weber, Andrea Zanzotto*

PREVAJALSKA DELAVNICA / TRANSLATION WORKSHOP: *Mererid Puw Davies, Louis De Paor, Helena Sinervo*

DISPUT: *Primer Edvard Kocbek in svoboda izražanja danes / The Edvard Kocbek Case and the Freedom of Expression Today*

MLADA VILENICA 2004 / YOUNG VILENICA AWARD 2004: *Eva Rener, Brigita Berčon*

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MEDNARODNO LITERARNO NAGRADO VILENICA DRUŠTVA SLOVENSКИH PISATELJEV ZA LETO 2005 STA PREJELA / THE SLOVENE WRITERS' ASSOCIATION AWARDED THE 2005 VILENICA INTERNATIONAL LITERARY PRIZE TO

## *Ilma Rakusa in Karl-Markus Gauß*

Utemeljitev nagrade / Laudation: *Vesna Kondrič Horvat in Drago Jančar*

KRISTAL VILENICE 2005 / 2005 CRYSTAL VILENICA AWARD – *Vladas Braziunas*

V publikaciji *Vilenica 2005* in na literarnih prireditvah so sodelovali / The following are represented in the *Vilenica almanac 2005* and took part in the literary readings:

*Carlos A. Aguilera, Veljko Barbieri, Juras Barisevič, Vladas Braziunas, Anna Maria Carpi, Theodora Dimova, Jure Jakob, Janez Kajzer, Viliam Klimáček, Olivera Korvezirovska, Cvetka Lipuš, Jaan Malin, Jim Mcgarrah, Anna Mitgutsch, Sinead Morrissey, Duško Novaković, Gregor Papež, Leung-Ping Kwan, Jean Portante, Zsuzsa Rakovszky, Ralf Schlatter, Stephanos Stephanides, Faruk Šehić, Magdalena Tulli, Miloš Urban, Liliana Ursu*

OKROGLA MIZA SEP NA VILENICI / CEI ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION AT VILENICA:

»Možnosti sobivanja različnih kultur v Evropi in proces iskanja nove kulturne paradigme« / "The Possibilities of Coexistence of Different Cultures in Europe and the Process of Searching a New Cultural Paradigm"

MODERATOR: *Aleš Debeljak*

MLADA VILENICA 2005 / YOUNG VILENICA AWARD 2005: *Rožana Švara, Eva Mohorič*

MEDNARODNO LITERARNO NAGRADO VILENICA DRUŠTVA SLOVENSКИH PISATELJEV ZA LETO 2006 JE PREJEL / THE SLOVENE WRITERS' ASSOCIATION AWARDED THE 2006 VILENICA INTERNATIONAL LITERARY PRIZE TO

## *Miodrag Pavlović*

Utemeljitev nagrade / Laudation: *Veno Taufer*

KRISTAL VILENICE 2006 / 2006 CRYSTAL VILENICA AWARD – *Mojca Kumerdej*

V publikaciji *Vilenica 2006* in na literarnih prireditvah so sodelovali / The following are represented in the *Vilenica almanac 2006* and took part in the literary readings:

*Inga Abele, Michál Ajvaz, Venko Andonovski, Lindita Arapi, Alhierd Bacharevič, Szilárd Borbély, Yiorgos Chouliaras, Daiva Čepauskaitė, Ervin Fritz, Tatjana Gromača, Brian Henry, Oto Horvat, Nora Iuga, Iva Jevtić, Ekaterina Yossifova, Zdenko Kodrič, Márius Kopcsay, Miran Košuta, Mojca Kumerdej, Terézia Mora, Birgit Müller-Wieland, Claudio Pozzani, Gabriel Rosenstock, Goran Samardžić, Ostap Slyvynsky, Breda Smolnikar, Tönnu Önnepalu (Emil Tode), Olga Tokarczuk, Marko Uršič, Raphael Urweider*

OKROGLA MIZA SEP NA VILENICI / CEI ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION AT VILENICA: »Kdo sliši sosedovo zgodbo?« / "Who Can Hear One's Neighbour's Story?"

MODERATORKA / MODERATOR: *Simona Škrabec*

DOBITNIK ŠTIPENDIJE SEP 2006 / CEI FELLOWSHIP WINNER 2006: *Goce Smilevski, Makedonija / Macedonia*

MANJ POZNANE KNJIŽEVNOSTI EVROPE NA VILENICI / LESSER-KNOWN LITERATURES OF EUROPE AT VILENICA: *Sodobna baskovska književnost / Contemporary Basque Writing: Barnardo Atxaga, Harkaitz Cano, Miren Agur Meabe, Rikardo Arregi, Kirmen Uribe*  
MLADA VILENICA 2006 / YOUNG VILENICA AWARD 2006: *Dita Škalič, Aljaž Ferencek, Miroslava Furtkevičová*

MEDNARODNO LITERARNO NAGRADO VILENICA DRUŠTVA SLOVENSКИH PISATELJEV ZA LETO 2007 JE PREJEL / THE SLOVENE WRITERS' ASSOCIATION AWARDED THE 2007 VILENICA INTERNATIONAL LITERARY PRIZE TO

## *Goran Stefanovski*

Utemeljitev nagrade / Laudation: *Lidija Dimkowska*

KRISTAL VILENICE 2007 / 2007 CRYSTAL VILENICA AWARD – *Piotr Sommer*

SLOVENSKI AVTOR V SREDIŠČU 2007 / SLOVENIAN AUTHOR IN FOCUS 2007 – *Milan Dekleva*

V publikaciji *Vilenica 2007* in na literarnih prireditvah so sodelovali / The following are represented in the *Vilenica almanac 2007* and took part in the literary readings:

*David Albahari, Attila Bartis, Ataol Behramoğlu, Balša Brković, Gentian Çoçoli, Dumitru Crudu, Vytautas Dekšnys, Dagnija Dreika, Kristiina Ehin, Carolyn*

*Forché Mattison, Nejc Gazvoda, Sonja Harter, Ioana Ieronim, Andrej Kurkov, Meta Kušar, Ermis Lafazanovski, Agi Mishol, Senadin Musabegović, Aleš Mustar, Dennis O'driscoll, Maja Panajotova, Roberto Pazzi, Monika Rinck, Piotr Sommer, Igor Štijs, Ján Štrasser, Edi Shukriu, Sami Tchak, Tomas Tranströmer, Christina Viragh, Barys Žančak, Matjaž Zupančič*

OKROGLA MIZA SEP NA VILENICI / CEI ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION AT VILENICA:  
»(Samo)cenzura danes: literarna cenzura v luči politične korektnosti« / "(Self)-  
Censorship Today: Literary Censorship in the Light of Political Correctness"

MODERATORICA / MODERATOR: *Alenka Puhar*

DOBITNICA ŠTIPENDIJE SEP 2007 / CEI FELLOWSHIP WINNER 2007:

*Marianna Kijanovska / Marianna Kiyonovska, Ukrajina / Ukraine*

MANJ POZNANE KNJIŽEVNOSTI EVROPE NA VILENICI / LESSER-KNOWN LITERATURES  
OF EUROPE AT VILENICA: *Sodobna književnost v irščini / Contemporary Literature  
in Irish: Celia de Fréine, Tomás Mac Stomóin, Dairena Ní Chinnéide, Micheál Ó  
Conghaile, Cathal Ó Searcaigh, Gabriel Rosenstock*

MLADA VILENICA 2007 / YOUNG VILENICA AWARD 2007: *Katja Lavrenčič, Matic Može*

MEDNARODNO LITERARNO NAGRADO VILENICA DRUŠTVA SLOVENSКИH  
PISATELJEV ZA LETO 2008 JE PREJEL / THE SLOVENE WRITERS' ASSOCIATION  
AWARDED THE 2008 VILENICA INTERNATIONAL LITERARY PRIZE TO

## *Andrzej Stasiuk*

Utemeljitev nagrade / Laudation: *Jana Unuk*

KRISTAL VILENICE 2008 / 2008 CRYSTAL VILENICA AWARD – *Andrej Hadanovič*  
SLOVENSKA AVTORICA V SREDIŠČU 2008 / SLOVENIAN AUTHOR IN FOCUS 2008 –  
*Svetlana Makarovič*

V publikaciji *Vilenica 2008* in na literarnih prireditvah so sodelovali / The  
following are represented in the *Vilenica almanac 2008* and took part in the  
literary readings:

*Jurij Andruhovič, Laslo Blaškovič, Andrej Hadanovič, Cvetanka Elenkova, Iztok  
Geister, Kica Kolbe, Florin Lăzărescu, Arian Leka, Yang Lian, Diego Marani,  
Jean-Michel Maulpoix, Irina Neki, Imre Oravec, Marina Palej, Ulrich Peltzer,  
Ivana Sajko, Peter Stamm, Magdalena Svetina Terčon, Dušan Šarotar, Bina  
Štampe Žmavc, Jüri Talvet, Zoé Valdés, Andrea Winkler, Yo Yo, Inga Žolude*

OKROGLA MIZA SEP NA VILENICI / CEI ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION AT VILENICA:  
»Avtor med tekstom in kontekstom« / "The Author between Text and Context"

MODERATOR: *Marko Uršič*

DOBITNICA ŠTIPENDIJE SEP 2008 / CEI FELLOWSHIP WINNER 2008: *Ivana Sajko,  
Hrvaška / Croatia*

MANJ POZNANE KNJIŽEVNOSTI EVROPE NA VILENICI / LESSER-KNOWN LITERATURES  
OF EUROPE AT VILENICA: *Sodobna litovska književnost / Contemporary Lithuanian  
Writing: Eugenijus Ališanka, Birutė Jonuškaitė, Sigitas Parulskis, Kornelijus Platelis,  
Tomas Venclova*

MLADA VILENICA 2008 / YOUNG VILENICA AWARD 2008: *Liam Visentin, Ana Šemrov*

MEDNARODNO LITERARNO NAGRADO VILENICA DRUŠTVA SLOVENSКИH PISATELJEV ZA LETO 2009 JE PREJEL / THE SLOVENE WRITERS' ASSOCIATION AWARDED THE 2009 VILENICA INTERNATIONAL LITERARY PRIZE TO

## *Claudio Magris*

Utemeljitev nagrade / Laudation: *Veronika Simoniti*

KRISTAL VILENICE 2009 / 2009 CRYSTAL VILENICA AWARD – *Luljeta Lleshanaku*  
SLOVENSKI AVTOR V SREDIŠČU 2009 / SLOVENIAN AUTHOR IN FOCUS 2009 –  
*Boris Pahor*

V publikaciji *Vilenica 2009* in na literarnih prireditvah so sodelovali / The following are represented in the *Vilenica almanac 2009* and took part in the literary readings:

*Jana Benová, Ines Cergol, Kalin Donkov, Umberto Galimberti, Forrest Gander, Andrea Grill, Miljenko Jergović, Štefan Kardoš, Yasmina Khadra, Herkus Kuncius, Alejandra Laurencich, Luljeta Lleshanaku, Dan Lungu, Tone Partljič, Jana Putrle Srdić, Peter Rezman, Víctor Rodríguez Núñez, Maria Šlehtičhi, Ewa Sonnenberg, Vlada Urošević, Oksana Zabuzhko*

OKROGLA MIZA SEP NA VILENICI / CEI ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION AT VILENICA:  
»Izbina med svobodo in zapovedjo: literarna avtonomija in mehanizmi izbora« / “Choice between Freedom and Command: Literary Autonomy and the Mechanics of Choice”

MODERATOR: *Andrej Blatnik*

DOBITNIK ŠTIPENDIJE SEP 2009 / CEI FELLOWSHIP WINNER 2009:

*Dragan Radovančević, Srbija / Serbia*

MANJ POZNANE KNJIŽEVNOSTI EVROPE NA VILENICI / LESSER-KNOWN LITERATURES OF EUROPE AT VILENICA: *Flandrija na Vilenici / Flanders at Vilenica: Miriam Van Hee, Stefan Hertmans, Monika Van Paemel, Peter Verhelst*

MLADA VILENICA 2009 / YOUNG VILENICA AWARD 2009: *Jana Stekar, Gaja Rupnik Caruso*

MEDNARODNO LITERARNO NAGRADO VILENICA DRUŠTVA SLOVENSКИH PISATELJEV ZA LETO 2010 JE PREJEL / THE SLOVENE WRITERS' ASSOCIATION AWARDED THE 2010 VILENICA INTERNATIONAL LITERARY PRIZE TO

## *Dževad Karahasan*

Utemeljitev nagrade / Laudation: *Jana Unuk*

KRISTAL VILENICE 2010 / 2010 CRYSTAL VILENICA AWARD – *Goran Vojnović*  
SLOVENSKI AVTOR V SREDIŠČU 2010 / SLOVENIAN AUTHOR IN FOCUS 2010 –  
*Tomaž Šalamun*

V publikaciji *Vilenica 2010* in na literarnih prireditvah so sodelovali / The following are represented in the *Vilenica almanac 2010* and took part in the literary readings:

*Max Blaeulich, Jacek Dehnel, Kristin Dimitrova, Veronika Dintinjana, Aris Fioretos, Ludwig Hartinger, Enes Karić, Blaže Minevski, Salvatore Niffoi,*

*Radoslav Petković, Taras Prohasko, Viktória Radics, Maja Razboršek, Joachim Sartorius, Illja Sin, Octavian Soviany, Veronika Šikulova, Jáchym Topol, Suzana Tratnik, Goran Vojnović, C.D. Wright, Agnė Žagrakalytė*

OKROGLA MIZA SEP NA VILENICI / CEI ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION AT VILENICA:

»O branju: bralna izkušnja in njene oblike v sodobnem času« / "On Reading: Reading Experience and its Forms in Modern Times

MODERATORKA / MODERATOR: *Tanja Lesničar Pučko*

DOBITNICA ŠTIPENDIJE SEP 2010 / CEI FELLOWSHIP WINNER 2010: *Maja Hrgović, Hrvaška / Croatia*

MANJ POZNANE KNJIŽEVNOSTI EVROPE NA VILENICI / LESSER-KNOWN LITERATURES OF EUROPE AT VILENICA: *Wales na Vilenici / Wales at Vilenica: Lloyd Jones, Siân Melangell Dafydd, Wiliam Owen Roberts, Angharad Price*

MLADA VILENICA 2010 / YOUNG VILENICA AWARD 2010: *Nina Rozman, Rok Muhič, Lidija Magdevska*

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MEDNARODNO LITERARNO NAGRADO VILENICA DRUŠTVA SLOVENSКИH PISATELJEV ZA LETO 2011 JE PREJEL / THE SLOVENE WRITERS' ASSOCIATION AWARDED THE 2011 VILENICA INTERNATIONAL LITERARY PRIZE TO

## *Mircea Cărtărescu*

Utemeljitev nagrade / Laudation: *Lidija Dimkowska*

KRISTAL VILENICE 2011 / 2011 CRYSTAL VILENICA AWARD – *Dan Coman*  
SLOVENSKI AVTOR V SREDIŠČU 2011 / SLOVENIAN AUTHOR IN FOCUS 2011 –  
*Drago Jančar*

V publikaciji *Vilenica 2011* in na literarnih prireditvah so sodelovali / The following are represented in the *Vilenica almanac 2011* and took part in the literary readings:

*Pavel Brycz, Pierluigi Cappello, Sarah Clancey, Dan Coman, Ivan Dobnik, György Dragomán, Jean-Michel Espitallier, Xavier Farré Vidal, Guy Helmingier, Stanka Hrastelj, Ljiljana Jokić Kaspar, Gorazd Kocijančič, Tatjana Komissarova, Alain Lance, Vesna Lemaic, Vladimir Levčev, Nikola Madžirov, Alberto Manguel, Aleksander Peršolja, Edo Popović, Angelika Reitzer, Tomasz Różycki, Lubica Somolayová, Ognjen Spahić, Agron Tufa, Arturas Valionis, Jan Wagner*

OKROGLA MIZA SEP NA VILENICI / CEI ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION AT VILENICA:

»Beri me v živo« / "Read Me Live"

MODERATOR: *Gregor Podlogar*

DOBITNIK ŠTIPENDIJE SEP 2011 / CEI FELLOWSHIP WINNER 2011: *Ognjen Spahić, Črna gora / Montenegro*

MANJ POZNANE KNJIŽEVNOSTI EVROPE NA VILENICI / LESSER-KNOWN LITERATURES OF EUROPE AT VILENICA: *Turčija na Vilenici / Turkey at Vilenica: Nazlı Eray, Nedim Gürsel, Mehmet Yaşın*

MLADA VILENICA 2011 / YOUNG VILENICA AWARD 2011: *Julija Železnik, Teja Gerjovič, Lara Ružič Povirk*

MEDNARODNO LITERARNO NAGRADO VILENICA DRUŠTVA SLOVENSКИH  
PISATELJEV ZA LETO 2012 JE PREJEL / THE SLOVENE WRITERS' ASSOCIATION  
AWARDED THE 2012 VILENICA INTERNATIONAL LITERARY PRIZE TO

## David Albahari

Utemeljitev nagrade / Laudation: *Andrej Blatnik*

KRISTAL VILENICE 2012 / 2012 CRYSTAL VILENICA AWARD – *Rumen Leonidov*

SLOVENSKI AVTOR V SREDIŠČU 2012 / SLOVENIAN AUTHOR IN FOCUS 2012 –  
*Boris A. Novak*

V publikaciji *Vilenica 2012* in na literarnih prireditvah so sodelovali / The following are represented in the *Vilenica almanac 2012* and took part in the literary readings:

*Antonia Arslan, Miljana Cunta, László Darvasi, Dimitré Dinev, Dušan Dušek, Zineb El Rhazoui, Maja Haderlap, Petr Hruška, Igor Isakovski, Erica Johnson Debeljak, Colm Keegan, Rumen Leonidov, Dorota Masłowska, Indrek Mesikepp, Miroslav Mićanović, Paul Muldoon, Ioana Nicolaie, Tom Petsinis, Sebastijan Pregelj, Pino Roveredo, Monique Schwitter, Bekim Sejranović, Dmitrij Strocev, Kārlis Vērdiņš, Gian Mario Villalta, Jiaxin Wang, Aldo Žerjal*

OKROGLA MIZA SEP NA VILENICI / CEI ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION AT VILENICA:  
»Avtorji nomadi« / "Nomadic Writers"

MODERATORKA / MODERATOR: *Iva Kosmos*

DOBITNICA ŠTIPENDIJE SEP 2012 / CEI FELLOWSHIP WINNER 2012: *Alja Terzić*,  
Bosna in Hercegovina / Bosnia and Herzegovina

MANJ POZNANE KNJIŽEVNOSTI EVROPE NA VILENICI / LESSER-KNOWN LITERATURES  
OF EUROPE AT VILENICA: *Hebrejska književnost na Vilenici / Hebrew literature at  
Vilenica: Hana Amichai, Sami Michael, Hava Pinhas-Cohen, Nurit Zarchi*

MLADA VILENICA 2012 / YOUNG VILENICA AWARD 2012: *Tilka Namestnik, Marta  
Radić, Veronika Martinčič*

MEDNARODNO LITERARNO NAGRADO VILENICA DRUŠTVA SLOVENSКИH  
PISATELJEV ZA LETO 2013 JE PREJELA / THE SLOVENE WRITERS' ASSOCIATION  
AWARDED THE 2013 VILENICA INTERNATIONAL LITERARY PRIZE TO

## Olga Tokarczuk

Utemeljitev nagrade / Laudation: *Jana Unuk*

KRISTAL VILENICE 2013 / 2013 CRYSTAL VILENICA AWARD – *Tanja Maljarčuk /  
Tania Malyarchuk*

SLOVENSKI AVTOR V SREDIŠČU 2013 / SLOVENIAN AUTHOR IN FOCUS 2013 –  
*Florjan Lipuš*

V publikaciji *Vilenica 2013* in na literarnih prireditvah so sodelovali / The following are represented in the *Vilenica Almanac 2013* and took part in the literary readings:

*Anna Auziņa, Mauro Covacich, Silviya Čoleva, Radka Denemarková, Rodica Draghinescu, Miriam Drev, Katharina Hacker, Olli Heikkinen, Brian Henry, Ignacy Karłowicz, Vladimir Kopicl, Tone Kuntner, Gerry Loose, Tanja Maljarčuk, Alan McMonagle, Tomislav Osmanli, Vanja Pegan, Ana Pepelnik, Katja Perat, Milan Rakovac, Zhao Si, Martin Solotruk, Brita Steinwendtner*

OKROGLA MIZA SEP NA VILENICI / CEI ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION AT VILENICA:

»Nadih meja« / "Inspiration of Borders"

MODERATORKA / MODERATOR: *Vesna Humar*

DOBITNIK ŠTIPENDIJE SEP 2013 / CEI FELLOWSHIP WINNER 2013: *Artem Čapaj / Artem Chapeye, Ukrajina / Ukraine*

MANJ POZNANE KNJIŽEVNOSTI EVROPE NA VILENICI / LESSER-KNOWN LITERATURES OF EUROPE AT VILENICA: *Švica na Vilenici / Switzerland at Vilenica: Lukas Bärfuss, Arno Camenisch, Pietro De Marchi, Michel Layaz, Ilma Rakusa*

MLADA VILENICA 2013 / YOUNG VILENICA AWARD 2013: *Ajda Furlan, Jerneja Rupnik, Eva Salopek*

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## Člani žirije 2014 / *Jury Members 2014*

*Andrej Blatnik*, predsednik žirije, pisatelj, prevajalec, urednik / president of the jury, writer, translator, editor

*Lidija Dimkowska*, podpredsednica žirije, pesnica, prevajalka, esejistka / vice president, poet, translator, essayist

*Ludwig Hartinger*, pesnik, prevajalec, esejist, urednik / poet, translator, essayist, editor

*Vesna Kondrič Horvat*, docentka za novejšo nemško književnost na Univerzi v Mariboru / associate professor of modern German literature at the University of Maribor

*Tone Peršak*, pisatelj / writer

*Jutka Rudaš*, izredna profesorica za madžarsko književnost na Filozofski fakulteti Univerze v Mariboru / assistant Professor of Hungarian literature at the Faculty of Arts, University of Maribor

*Špela Sevšek Šrnel*, prevajalka, asistentka za slovaško književnost na Univerzi v Ljubljani / translator, assistant professor of Slovak literature at the University of Ljubljana

*Veronika Simoniti*, prevajalka, pisateljica / translator, writer

*Namita Subiotto*, docentka za makedonski jezik in književnost na Filozofski fakulteti Univerze v Ljubljani / assistant professor at the Department of Macedonian language and literature at the Faculty of Arts in Ljubljana

*Tomaz Šalamun*, pesnik, prevajalec / poet, translator

*Aleš Šteger*, pesnik, pisatelj, esejist / poet, writer, essayist

*Veno Taufer*, pesnik, prevajalec, esejist, ustanovni predsednik Vilenice / poet, translator, essayist, founding president of the Vilenica Festival

*Jana Unuk*, prevajalka / translator

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## Konzultanti 2014 / Advisory Panel 2014

*Lindita Arapi*, pisateljica, prevajalka, Albanija, Nemčija / writer, translator, Albania, Germany

*Agnieszka Będkowska-Kopczyk*, prevajalka, docentka na Tehnično-humanistični akademiji v Bielsko-Biały, Poljska / translator, senior lecturer at the University of Bielsko-Biała, Poland

*Ljudmil Dimitrov*, prevajalec, urednik, Bolgarija / translator, editor, Bulgaria

*Csordás Gábor*, esejist, urednik založbe Jelenkor, Madžarska / essayist, editor at Jelenkor Publishing House, Hungary

*Orsolya Gállos*, prevajalka, Madžarska / translator, Hungary

*Dana Hučková*, kritičarka, literarna raziskovalka na Inštitutu za slovaško književnost v Bratislavi, Slovaška / literary critic, literary scholar at the Institute of Slovak Literature in Bratislava, Slovak Republic

*Alenka Jensterle-Doležal*, docentka za slovensko književnost na Filozofski fakulteti v Pragi, Češka / senior lecturer in Slovene literature at the Faculty of Arts in Prague, Czech Republic

*Erica Johnson-Debeljak*, pisateljica, prevajalka, publicistka, Slovenija / writer, translator, columnist, Slovenia

*Inesa Kurjan*, znanstvena delavka, Belorusija / researcher, Belarus

*Arian Leka*, pisatelj, pesnik, prevajalec, urednik, organizator Mednarodnega festivala lirike Poeteka, Albanija / writer, poet, translator, editor, organizer of the International Lyric Poetry Festival Poeteka, Albania

*Valžina Mort*, pesnica, prevajalka, Belorusija / poet, translator, Belarus

*Aleš Mustar*, pesnik, prevajalec, Slovenija / poet, translator, Slovenia

*Kornelijus Platelis*, pesnik, prevajalec, Litva / poet, translator, Lithuania

*Julija Potrč*, prevajalka, Slovenija / translator, Slovenia

*Marjeta Prelesnik Drozg*, bibliotekarka, prevajalka, Slovenija / librarian, translator, Slovenia

*Peter Rácz*, filozof, pesnik, prevajalec, Madžarska / philosopher, poet, translator, Hungary

*Ilma Rakusa*, pisateljica, predavateljica na Univerzi v Zürichu, Švica / writer, lecturer at the University of Zürich, Switzerland

*Judit Reiman*, prevajalka, predavateljica na Univerzi v Budimpešti, Madžarska / translator, lecturer at the University of Budapest, Hungary

*Jüri Talvet*, predavatelj na Univerzi v Tartuju, Estonija / lecturer at the University of Tartu, Estonia



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*Slovene Writers' Association*

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