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30. Mednarodni
literarni festival
30th International
Literary Festival

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Jáchym Topol

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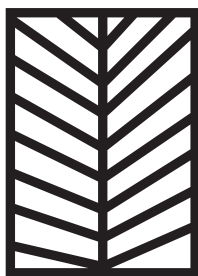
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30th Vilenica International Literary Festival

Vilenica 2015

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Jáchym Topol

Jáchym Topol se je rodil leta 1962 v Pragi na Češkem. Je sin dramatika Josefa Topola in vnuk pisatelja Karla Schulza. Ker izhaja iz disidentske družine, je bilo s tem zaznamovano njegovo odrasčanje. Obiskoval je gimnazijo, namenjeno otrokom oporečnikov, kjer obiski policije in zasliševanja niso bili redkost. Eno leto je študiral na socialno-pravni šoli, čemur je sledila tipična disidentska usoda: delal je kot skladiščnik, kurjač in nosač premoga, nato je bil do leta 1990 invalidsko upokojen. Leta 1986 je podpisal Listino 77, bil je aktivist politične skupine Češki otroci, leta 1988 pa so ga aretirali zaradi ilegalnega prestopa meje s Poljsko in razširjanja materialov, »sovražnih socialistični ureditvi« – zaradi amnestije ga niso kazensko preganjali. Aktivni je bil v izdajateljski in publicistični dejavnosti samizdata, sodeloval je pri izdajanju več samizdatskih revij, spomladi 1989 je bil soustanovitelj politične revije, ki se je pozneje preoblikovala v politični tednik *Respekt*, in bil v letih med 1990 in 2007 s presledki član uredništva. Vmes je študiral etnologijo in bil v svobodnem poklicu. Med letoma 2009 in 2011 je bil zaposlen kot urednik pri dnevniku *Lidové noviny*. Trenutno je programski vodja Knjižnice Václava Havla.

Debitiral je leta 1979 s pesmimi v samizdatskem zborniku in z besedili za glasbeno skupino *Psí vojáci* (Pasji vojaki), ki jo je ustanovil njegov mlajši brat Filip, v prvi polovici osemdesetih let pa je bil tekstopisec in pevec skupine *Národní třída* (Narodna cesta).

Kasneje je pisal besedila tudi za pevko Moniko Načevo. V samizdatu je izdal nekaj pesniških zbirk, ki so večinoma uradno izšle v devetdesetih letih v zbirkah *Miluju tě k zbláznění* (Ljubim te za znoret, 1991) in *V úterý bude válka* (V torek bo vojna, 1992). Zatem je Topol predsedal na prozo. Njegov romaneskni prvenec *Sestra* (1994) velja za vrhunec češkega romanopisja devetdesetih let. Avtorjeva prva dela so izhajala iz poetike in estetike undergrounda, bila so nekonformistična, izražala so politični protest proti režimu. Nekonformistični pisatelj pa se iz prodornega diagnosticiranja in kritičnih analiz sodobnih političnih, družbenih in vsakršnih drugih sprevrženosti, iz analiziranja sveta, ki nam razpada pred očmi, v novejših delih umika v bolj zasebne in osebne, družinske teme. Topol je provokativen tudi na jezikovni ravni, krši jezikovne konvencije, izumlja nove besede in radikalizira pogovornost.

V tujini velja za enega najzanimivejših sodobnih čeških pisateljev. Topolova dela so prevedena v 15 jezikov, med drugim v nemščino, angleščino, francoščino, nizozemščino, poljščino, norveščino, madžarščino, slovenščino in španščino. Po delih *Anděl* (*Angel*) in *Sestra* sta bila posneta filma.

Izbrane nagrade in priznanja

- 1988 Nagrada Toma Stopparda za neuradno literaturo za zbirko *Ljubim te za znoret*.
1994 Nagrada Egona Hostovskega za roman *Sestra*.
2005 Nagrada za knjigo leta po izboru dnevnika *Lidové noviny* za roman *Kloktat dehet* (Grgrati katran).
2010 Nagrada Jaroslava Seiferta za roman *Chladnou zemi* (*Hladna dežela*).
2013 Nagrada Angleškega centra PEN za prevodno literaturo za roman *The Devil's Workshop* (*Chladnou zemi*) v angleškem prevodu Alexa Zuckerja.
2015 Nominacija za roman *Chladnou zemi* (*Hladna dežela*) za mednarodno literarno nagrado IMPAC Dublin.

Izbrana bibliografija

Poezija

Miluju tě k zbláznění (Ljubim te za znoret); 1. izdaja samizdat 1988; 2. izdaja Atlantis, Brno 1990.

V úterý bude válka (V torek bo vojna); Edice 13x18, 1992.

Proza

Výlet k nádražní hale (Izlet do železniške avle); novela; Petrov, Brno 1994.

Sestra (*Sestra*); roman; Atlantis, Brno 1994.

Anděl (*Angel*); novela; Hynek, Praga 1995.

Noční práce (Nočno delo); roman; Hynek, Praga 2001.

Kloktat dehet (Grgrati katran); roman; Torst, Praga 2005.

Zlatá hlava (Zlata glava); kratka proza; Torst, Praga 2005.

Supermarket sovětských hrdinů (Supermarket sovjetskih junakov); že objavljena kratka proza in drama *Cesta do Bugulmy* (Pot v Bugulmo); Torst, Praga 2007.

Chladnou zemi (*Hladna dežela*); roman; Torst, Praga 2009.

Drama

Cesta do Bugulmy (Pot v Bugulmo), 2007.

Filmske adaptacije

Anděl Exit, režija Vladimír Michálek, 2000.

Sestra, režija Vít Pancíř, 2008.

Drugo

Nemůžu se zastavit (Ne morem se ustaviti); v knjižni obliki objavljen intervju z avtorjem, ki ga je opravil Tomáš Weiss; Portál, Praga 2000.

Knjižni prevodi v slovenščino

Angel, prevedla Nives Vidrih, Cankarjeva založba, Ljubljana 2006.

Sestra, prevedla Nives Vidrih, Sanje, Ljubljana 2007.

Hladna dežela, prevedla Nives Vidrih, Cankarjeva založba, Ljubljana 2010.

Jáchym Topol was born in 1962 in Prague, former Czechoslovakia, as son to playwright Josef Topol and grandson to writer Karl Schulz. A member of a family of dissidents, he was stigmatised since childhood. He attended a high school reserved for dissidents' children, where police visits and interrogations were not uncommon. After a single year of studying at a social-administrative school, he followed a typical dissident's career: having worked as a stocker, stoker, and coal deliveryman, he was pensioned for disability until 1990. He signed the Charter 77 human rights declaration in 1986 and was active in the České Děti (Czech Children) political group. In 1988 he was arrested for illegally crossing the Polish border and for disseminating materials "hostile to the socialist order", but was saved from further prosecution by amnesty. A prolific *samizdat* publisher and author, he collaborated in publishing a number of *samizdat* magazines. In the spring of 1989 he co-founded the political newsletter which was to develop into *Respekt*, an investigative weekly, and intermittently served on its editorial board between 1990 and 2007. During this period he also studied ethnology and worked as a freelancer. Between 2009 and 2011 he worked on the staff of the *Lidové noviny* daily, and is now programme director at the Prague Václav Havel Library. His writing began in 1979, when he published his poems in a *samizdat* volume and composed lyrics for the rock band *Psí vojáci* (Dog Soldiers),

founded by his younger brother, Filip. In the early 1980s he was a songwriter and singer in the group *Národní třída* (The National Road), and later began to write lyrics for the singer Monika Načeva. He published several poetry collections in *samizdat*: the greater part of them saw 'official' publication in the 1990s, in the collections *Miluju tě k zbláznění* (I love you madly, 1991) and *V úterý bude válka* (The war will be on Tuesday, 1992). Then Topol turned to prose. His debut novel, *Sestra* (*City Sister Silver*, 1994), is considered the masterpiece of Czech novel-writing in the 1990s. His early works, steeped in the poetics and aesthetics of the underground, are nonconformist protests against the regime. At the same time, this nonconformist writer's shrewd diagnoses and critical analyses of contemporary political, social and other perversions, his analyses of a world which is – temporarily or intermittently? – disintegrating before our eyes, may occasionally give way to more private and personal family themes. Topol is provocative in his use of language as well, defying conventions, coining new words, and radicalising the colloquial tone. Abroad he is considered one of the most fascinating contemporary Czech authors. His works have been translated into fifteen languages including Dutch, English, French, German, Hungarian, Norwegian, Polish, Slovenian, and Spanish. His books *Anděl* (Angel) and *City Sister Silver* have been adapted for film.

Selected Prizes and Awards

- 1988 Tom Stoppard Prize for Unofficial Literature, for the collection *Miluju tě k zbláznění*.
- 1994 Egon Hostovský Prize, for the novel *Sestra*.
- 2005 Book of the Year Award of the *Lidové noviny* daily, for the novel *Kloktat dehet* (*Gargling with Tar*).
- 2010 Jaroslav Seifert Prize, for the novel *Chladnou zemí* (*The Devil's Workshop*).
- 2013 English PEN Centre Award for translated literature, for *Chladnou zemí* (*The Devil's Workshop*) in the English translation by Alex Zucker.
- 2015 Nomination of the novel *Chladnou zemí* (*The Devil's Workshop*) for the International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award.

Selected Bibliography

Poetry

Miluju tě k zbláznění (I love you madly); 1st edition samizdat 1988; 2nd edition Atlantis, Brno 1990.

V úterý bude válka (The war will be on Tuesday); Edice 13x18, 1992.

Prose

Výlet k nádražní hale (*A Trip to the Train Station*), translated into English by Alex Zucker, novella; Petrov, Brno 1994.

Sestra (*City Sister Silver*), translated into English by Alex Zucker, novel; Atlantis, Brno 1994.

Anděl (Angel), novel; Hynek, Prague 1995.

Noční práce (*Nightwork*), translated into English by Marek Tomin, novel; Hynek, Prague 2001.

Kloktat dehet (*Gargling with Tar*), translated into English by David Short, novel; Torst, Prague 2005.

Zlatá hlava (Golden Head), short fiction; Torst, Prague 2005.

Supermarket sovětských hrdinů (Supermarket of Soviet Heroes); a new edition of previously published short fiction and the play *Cesta do Bugulmy* (The Road to Bugulma); Torst, Prague 2007.

Chladnou zemí (*The Devil's Workshop*), translated into English by Alex Zucker, novel; Torst, Prague 2009.

Drama

Cesta do Bugulmy (The Road to Bugulma), 2007.

Film Adaptations

Anděl Exit, directed by Vladimír Michálek, 2000.

Sestra, directed by Vít Pancíř, 2008.

Other

Nemůžu se zastavit (I Can't Stop); a book-length interview with the author by Tomáš Weiss; Portál, Prague 2000.

Book Format Translations into Slovenian

Angel, translated by Nives Vidrih, Cankarjeva založba, Ljubljana 2006.

Sestra, translated by Nives Vidrih, Sanje, Ljubljana 2007.

Hladna dežela, translated by Nives Vidrih, Cankarjeva založba, Ljubljana 2010.

Jáchym Topol Nagrajenec Vilenice 2015

Alenka Jensterle-Doležal

O mestu kot tekstu in postkatastrofičnem svetu

Jáchym Topol (1962) je pesnik, prozaist, esejist in novinar. Rodil se je 4. avgusta leta 1962 v Pragi v nekdanji Českoslovaški. Je sin pesnika in dramatika Josefa Topola, brat glasbenika Filipa Topola in vnuk pisatelja Karla Schulza. Do leta 1986 je – podobno kot starejši disidenti, ki so obstajali na družbenem obrobju – moral opravljati delo skladiščnika in kurjača, nekaj let pred usodnim letom 1989 je bil invalidsko upokojen. Leta 1986 je podpisal Listino 77 in bil politično aktiven v skupini České děti (Češki otroci). Leta 1988 so ga za kratek čas zaprli zaradi ilegalne prekoračitve meje s Poljsko in razširjanja sovražnega protisocialističnega gradiva. Od leta 1991 je svobodni pisatelj, nekaj let je študiral etnologijo na Filozofski fakulteti. Še v času undergrounda je skupaj z ostalimi izdajal revijo *Revolver Revue*, v kateri je bil glavni urednik do leta 1993. Deloval je tudi v uredništvu tednika *Respekt* in časopisa *Lidové noviny*, sedaj je programski vodja praške Knjižnice Václava Havla.

I.

Začenjal je kot najmlajši predstavnik undergrounda v osemdesetih letih, in to skupaj s Petrom Placákom, Ludkom Marksom in J. H. Krchovskim, ki so v depresivni in sivi socialistični družbi zaradi uporniškega obnašanja in kritične drže do socialistične stvarnosti do leta 1989 lahko objavljali samo v samizdatu.¹ Za prvo zbirko poezije *Milují tě k zblaznění* (Ljubim te za znoret, 1991) je dobil nagrado Toma Stopparda. Sledila je zbirka *V úterý bude válka* (V torek bo vojna, 1992). Že v prvih zbirkah je pisal o marginalni družbi in izjemnih psihičnih stanjih. V poetičnem prostoru zmaguje zlo in lirski subjekt je poln negotovosti, občutkov ogroženosti in izkoreninjenosti. Izpostavljenemu individuu se zoperstavlja apokaliptična realnost sodobnega sveta, v kateri se bojno polje nahaja tudi v pesniku samem.

¹ Topolova pesem »Zvonjenje« je izšla pod psevdonimom Vitěslav Sval tudi v slovenščini v: *Literatura – Problemi* 6, 1988, str. 92. V slovenščino prevedla Alenka Jensterle-Doležal.

Z iskanjem moralne perspektive v skeptičnem subjektu je v devetdesetih letih nadaljeval v prozi. V domači in mednarodni bralski skupnosti se je proslavil s poetičnim vizionarskim romanom *Sestra* (1994),² za katerega je dobil prestižno nagrado Egona Hostovskega. Roman se je uvrstil med kanonizirana dela sodobne češke proze. Napisan je v prvoosebni obliki. Opis sveta se s svojevrstno poetiko giblje med realnostjo in sanjami. Leta 2008 je tekst dobil tudi filmsko podobo (film je režiral Vít Pancíř). Prav v tem romanu je Topol pokazal, da je mojster obsežne romaneskne zgodbe in postmoderne pripovedovanja, da ima bogato domišljijo in da tudi mojstrsko obvlada jezik.

Bizarne zgodbe se tkejo iz spomina mesta, iz arhetipske podobe Prage, socialno in zgodovinsko zaznamovane. Glavna tema je iskanje sestre kot sinonima za ljubezen, bližino in smisel v opustelem svetu. Iskanje platonske druge polovice je mnogo več kot ljubezen, je iskanje rešitve v modernem boju med dobrim in zlom. Diskontinuirana zgodba se tke s fragmenti iz realnosti. Pripovedovalec s širokim pogledom na realnost sestavlja fiktivni svet dogajanja tako, da k osnovni zgodbi »lepi« številne podzgodbe in mikro dogajanja, v katerih nastopajo osebe iz različnih socialnih in narodnostnih skupin ter alternativnih subkultur. Glavna oseba Potok, po besedah samega pisatelja »luzer – izgubljenec in gangster«, je tudi pripovedovalec romana. V konstrukciji junaka Topol ne skriva avtobiografskih izkušenj. Potokovo potovanje se začne v okolju undergroundove komune tik pred žametno revolucijo, tj. pred koncem socializma, in se v podobnem kaotičnem tempu nadaljuje tudi po velikih zgodovinskih dogodkih. Potok je varianta sodobnega slehernika, ki išče cilj in smisel v svetu s potovanjem in »preživi« samo v tkivu zgodb. Potok najde sestro v pevki Černi, ki pa jo po svoji krivdi spet izgubi in se nato spet potopi v vrtinec neverjetnih peripetij, med drugim postane agent tajne službe. Konec je začetek: odkritje smisla je spoznanje, da je pot smisel vsega. Realna ravnina pripovedi je samo ena plast romana, ki skriva veliko pomenov in simbolnih nanosov: nanosov kulturnih in literarnih reminiscenc. Branje je zahtevno opravilo, saj roman od bralca predpostavlja aktivno sodelovanje pri konstrukciji smislov.

Eden od glavnih motivov je mesto: geografski in zgodovinsko označeni prostor mesta je svet zgodb, ki se rišejo v spominu mesta.

² Jáchym Topol, *Sestra*, prevedla Nives Vidrih, Sanje, Ljubljana 2007.

Mesto se veže na mite in dobiva mistične dimenzije. Topol se s tovrstno interpretacijo Prage veže na literarne predhodnike: tako razumevanje Prage kot mitičnega prostora se vleče v češki literaturi 20. stoletja (G. Meyrink, D. Hodrová, M. Ajvaz). Poudarjajo se temne podobe, čeprav osebe potujejo za svetlobo. Strukturo romana in tkivo pripovedi organizira tudi princip dobrega in zla, boj ima zgodovinske vzroke in razplet je lahko večpomenski, dostikrat pripovedovalca zavaja, resnice se prekrivajo. Bes in nezadovoljstvo subjekta ter njegova negotova pozicija se kažejo tudi v eksplozivnem toku jezika, ki je sinonim za tok »skupne nadzvesti«, ki jo poskuša izpovedati pripovedovalec. V toku pripovedi se mešajo vizionarne podobe nasilja in krutosti, podobe bizarnih možnosti v predkatastrofičnem svetu, ki jih spremlja atmosfera kaosa. Roman lahko jemljemo tudi kot generacijski roman. V kontekstu intertekstualnosti in medkulturnih odnosnic korespondira s svetom pravljic in mitov, z bitniško in punk kulturo, znanstveno fantastiko, pustolovskim romanom Maya in Londona ter mladinskimi romani Čeha Foglarja.

Glavna oseba romana je v resnici jezik. Teoretiki govorijo o »izbruhu češčine« v romanu, v kateri se menjavajo vsi možni načini pripovedovanja, pripovedne strategije, modusi izražanja in kjer najdemo različne zvrsti jezika: arhaizme, pogovorni jezik, argo, sleng in dialekte. Vključujejo se tudi prvine iz tujih jezikov (angleščine, nemščine, ruščine, poljščine, slovaščine, romščine ...). Tok izpovedi je gejzir možnosti, v katerem se v ritmu izpovedi večji kompleksnejši fragmenti večkrat zaustavljajo s tremi pikami kot sinonimom za neskončnost življenja in nepretrganost pripovedi. Pripovedovalec Potok ne skriva radosti nad pripovedovanjem; v tem se skrivajo tudi iniciacija bralca v čarni krog mreže zgodb ter njegova katarza in očiščenje na koncu. Jezik na novo, magično oblikuje svet in proces pisanja se zato približuje novodobnemu ritualu.

II.

Romanu sta v devetdesetih sledili krajši noveli *Anděl* (*Angel*, 1995) in *Výlet k nádražní hale* (Izlet do železniške avle, 1994).

Novela *Angel*³ tematizira socialno in simbolno geografijo dela Prage: fiktivni Smíchov – del praškega prostora, kjer se mešajo narkomani, Romi, izrinjenci in moderni popotniki. V zgodbi nas omreži glavno

³ Jáchym Topol, *Angel*, prevedla Nives Vidrih, Cankarjeva založba, Ljubljana 2006.

dogajanje, na katero se nizajo manjše zgodbe. Analitična pripoved se začne v praški psihiatrični bolnišnici Bohnice, kjer se glavna oseba – narkoman Jatek – nahaja na zdravljenju. Spominja se svojega življenja na Smíchovu. Zgodbene linije se mešajo, dogajanje je polno nasilja, umorov in bizarnih zapletov, ki spominjajo na črni roman prozaista L. Klíme iz začetka 20. stoletja. Pripovedovalec opisuje okolje narkomanov in preprodajalcev ter zločincev. Jatek iz Prage odpotuje v Pariz. Noro atmosfero na koncu zapečati groteskna podoba mrtve hčerke trafikanta, ki jo je umorila lastna mati – verska fanatičarka. Na koncu Jatek bivališče zažge in odide za svojo ljubeznijo Ljubo. Po noveli *Angel* je bil leta 2000 posnet film *Anděl Exit*. Film je režiral Vladimír Michálek in je bil v češki kulturi zelo uspešen, saj je dobil dva Češka leva.

Kratka zgodba *Izlet do železniške avle* iz leta 1994 je stilistično zelo izbrušen tekst, v katerem avtor v avtobiografski izpovedi o potovanju po središču mesta spet poskuša zaznati spremembe mesta in zarisati labirint mesta – teksta. Glavna oseba se na svojem enodnevnem potovanju po središču mesta proti postaji sreča z mafijo, postane žrtev policijskega nasilja, kupi knjigo De Sada, sreča preživelega iz taborišča in se spusti v pogovor z nekom, ki mu izpove zgodbo o dvojnem umoru.

Tokrat si avtor za pripovedovalski prostor izbere središče mesta in okolico glavne praške postaje kot zbirališča socialno in narodnostno različnih eksistenc, brezdomcev, narkomanov, socialnih izrinjencev in mesta drugačnežev. Tekst je – podobno kot *Sestro* – avtor večkrat predelal in ga pri tem tudi spreminjal (kar vidimo na primer v njegovi končni izdaji iz leta 2007). Podobno kot se je v dvajsetih letih spreminjalo mesto, se je spremenil tudi Topolov tekst o mestu: v mestu, kjer po njegovih besedah »umazanija res pomeni umazanijo in gniloba gnilobo«. Mesto ima veliko simbolnih kodov, ki se nanašajo na njegovo zgodovino in kulturo ter so vtikani v geografijo prostora in ki jih pisatelj poskuša dešifrirati. To je mesto labirint in mesto babilon, mesto kulisa kot tudi prostor ljubezni in smrti. V mestu pripovedovalec tudi poudarja zgodovinske aluzije. Boj proti pozabi je nujno opravilo modernega intelektualca: ni naključje, da avtor po antikvariatih išče knjige o preteklih mučenjih v taboriščih, saj hoče najti pričevanja groze holokavsta, taborišč, vojn, masovnih grobišč in socialističnih travm in se tako bori proti zgodovinski pozabi, ki vlada v razpršeni pripovedni sedanjosti. Tudi v njegovem mestu še vedno živijo preživeli iz 20. stoletja: pripovedovalec na

avtobusni postaji sreča Špiceka, ki je preživel Auschwitz. Njegove predstave mučijo tudi krute slike sodobnega nasilnega sveta, kot na primer suženjstvo v Moldaviji in lakota v Sudanu. Model sveta, ki ga v prepoznavni maniri popisuje Topol, je grozljiv in temen, sodobna zavest zapisuje v diskurz jezika podrobnosti in usodne povezanosti, jezik nervozno bruha v tekst pasaže. V babilonu teksta se vse prepleta z vsem, tudi v jeziku in stilu visoki stil z nizkim, vulgarizmi se menjavajo s slovesnim tonom (v jezikovnem slogu se skrivajo konotacije na antično gledališče). Tudi pod ostrim pogledom pripovedovalca so meje med dobrim in zlom v sodobnem svetu nerazpoznavne. Kritiki v zvezi s Topolovo poetiko govorijo o postmodernem stilu, ki meša prostorske in časovne dimenzije. Svet Topolove proze ne ponuja rešitve, je samo potovanje po mestu teksta.

III.

V 21. stoletju je Jáchym Topol nadaljeval pisateljsko kariero s krajšimi knjigami, v nekaj letih je izdal tekste: *Noční práce* (Nočno delo, 2001), *Kloktat dehet* (Grgrati katran, 2005) in *Zlatá hlava* (Zlata glava, 2005).

V *Nočnem delu*⁴ Topol prvič uvede otroško perspektivo. V romanu tematizira češko realnost leta 1968, ko so Čehoslovaško okupirale sovjetske sile skupaj z zavezniškimi silami. Pripovedovalec ne skriva avtobiografskih prvin. Dokument časa: praške pomladi in njej sledeče okupacije doživlja dozorevajoči fant Ondra, ki mora oditi iz Prage in se po spletu okoliščin znajde z invalidnim bratom Malim v češki vasi, kjer je že pred tem preživeljal počitnice. Pripoved o težkem času brez družinske varnosti je predstavljena v polifoniji raznih govorov in zavesti. Krute in nasilne zgodbe vaščanov opredeljujejo mračne, groteskne podobe, saj v določenem zgodovinskem trenutku tudi v vaški družbi zavladata kaos in zlo. Ondrova zgodba je samo ena od zgodb, nevrotični zapisi različnih glasov otežujejo razumevanje malih zgodb, ki se le s težavo luščijo v kalejdoskopu dogajanja, hkrati pa ustvarjajo svojevrsten nervozni ritem. Prepoznavno poetiko označuje odsekani ritem dogajanja, v katerem se le težko razpoznajo perspektive in v katerem so otroci – kot tisti, ki so najmanj krivi – izgubljeni in izpostavljeni nasilju, pritiskom in celo smrti. Epopeja grozljivega dogajanja v vrtincu glasov in zgodb

⁴ Odlomek v: Jáchym Topol, *Nočna izmena*, prevedla Alenka Jensterle-Doležal, *Sodobnost* 67, 2003, št. 9, str. 1128–1143.

je dokument o polpreteklem zgodovinskem času, ko sta okupacija in totalitarni režim uničila družbo za nekaj desetletij; v tem času so se premaknile glavne človeške vrednote in se je svet spremenil v nevaren prostor, v katerem je zavladala norost. Realnost se tudi tukaj meša s sanjskim prostorom, vaški svet, sicer zgodovinsko označen, je še bolj izpostavljen mistiki in legendam. Svet junakov pod vplivom zgodovinskega dogajanja še bolj preplavljajo iracionalnost in davna verovanja. Tu je pisatelj v dialogu s svetom Hrabalovih gostiln in retorike njegovih oseb ter Haškovega nizkega stila. Stavki so kratki, prevladuje pogovorni jezik, divji ritem vodi dogajanje proti tragičnemu koncu, ki ne obljublja nič dobrega.

Grgrati katran je bila v *Lidovih novinah* izbrana za knjigo leta. Tudi v občutljivi in bravurozno napisani zgodbi o otrocih iz popoljševalnega zavoda na češki periferiji, v katerem že tako vladajo zelo brutalni in nasilni odnosi, se osebe naenkrat znajdejo sredi vojaške akcije in sovjetske okupacije. V fiktivni zgodbi avtor prikazuje, kako bi bilo, če bi se leta 1968 Čehi uprli okupacijski armadi Varšavskega pakta in bi izbruhnila češko-ruska vojna: uporniki so paradokсно otroci iz doma za nepopoljšljive, zločinske otroke. Avtor poskuša posnemati njihov govor in način razmišljanja: glavni pripovedovalec je trinajstletni Ilja brez preteklosti. Surove zgodbe otrok so zgodbe o preživelih, so moralne obsodbe sodobnega sveta, ki ga zastirajo peruti temnega angela zgodovine. V fiktivni podobi sivine in nereda poapokaliptičnega obdobja se vsi zgodovinski časi mešajo. Otroški junaki se gibljejo na robu norosti in teme in neprestano bežijo pred zlom in pred samimi seboj, saj se zlo skriva tudi v njih samih. Realnost se tudi tu meša s fikcijo. Glavni junak Ilja konča s stavkom: »Zdaj bom končno šel na pot, odhajam domov.« Makro zgodbe in nervozne spremembe, ki jih spremljajo neverjetne pustolovščine, so zapisane v ekspresivnem pogovornem jeziku, ki je obogaten s slengom in argojem.

Topol v kratki zgodbi *Zlata glava* (bila naj bi samo del nikoli napisanega romana *Mongolski volk*, ki ga je začel pisati hkrati s *Sestro*) tematizira mongolsko motiviko: zapisuje zgodbo mongolskega dečka, ki odrašča v sovjetizirani, okupirani deželi. Zgodbo opremi z okvirno zgodbo: pretresljivo zgodbo o izgubi identitete posameznika in cele skupnosti pripovedovalec sliši od starca z izdolbenimi očmi. Nervozen, kaotičen stil pripovedovanja zelo doživeto približuje izkušnje druge, budistične kulture, ki je bila pod težo sovjetizacije uničena in se njeni simboli ohranjajo samo še v muzejih (in v predstavah ljudi).

Prav to kulturo je brezuspešno poskušal ohraniti mongolski fant in so ga zato oslepili. Tokrat je v ospredju zgodba posameznika kot dela kulture, ki je poražen na podlagi zgodovinskih sprememb 20. stoletja.

Tudi v noveli *Chladnou zemi* (*Hladna dežela*, 2009)⁵ upodablja apokaliptično sliko sveta, v kateri človeka razžira tesnoba in se mu oglašajo demoni, medtem ko zmaguje zlo. Moralno ravnotežje je porušeno. Tudi tu je tkivo romana večpomensko. Lahkotno pripovedovanje se spremeni v odkrivanje preteklih groz in travm, ki so jih povzročili zgodovinski dogodki v preteklosti. Katarza ni možna, saj sodobni komercializirani in politično razprodani svet pozablja na množične grobove evropskega Vzhoda. Za to novelo je leta 2010 Topol dobil nagrado Jaroslava Seiferta.

Značilen za njegovo poetiko je tudi avtobiografski potopis: reportaža v knjigi *Supermarket sovětských hrdinů* (*Supermarket sovjetskih junakov*, 2007). »Poskus kronike« ima svoje realne osnove: avtor opisuje lastno potovanje po Poljskem in Slovaškem, na katerem je obiskal poljskega pisatelja Andrzeja Stasiuka. Na poti, polni nostalgije in spominov, ga spremljajo trije prijatelji iz disidentskega časa. Avtor spet razkriva grozo zgodovinskega prostora. Izkušnje dramatične zgodovine Srednje Evrope, predvsem izkušnje vojn in totalitarnih sistemov, se zapisujejo v prostor: to je tudi potovanje na množična grobišča, ki se meša z opisi pripovedne sedanosti.

Jáchym Topol v zadnjem času piše tudi drame (*Uvařeno*, *Skuhanó*; *Cesta do Bugulmy*, *Pot v Bugulmo*), kjer v dramskem dialogu nadaljuje s temo odtujenosti in moralne izpraznjenosti sodobnega sveta, ki ga označuje s sarkazmom. Osebe so vržene v vrtiljak zgodovinskega in drugega zla. Situacijska drama brez večjega dogajanja je polna črnega humorja, ki spet kaže na zlo, ki se je nagrmadilo v človeški zgodovini.

Leta 1997 je Topol prevedel tudi izbrane zgodbe severnoameriških Indijancev, kar kaže nasploh na njegovo veliko zanimanje za druge kulture, njegovo navdušenje za mite, legende in zgodovinske zgodbe.

IV.

Jáchym Topol se je v tridesetletnem pisanju izoblikoval v prepoznavnega češkega prozaista in doživel mednarodni odziv. Njegova dela so prevedli v angleščino, nemščino, poljščino in številne druge jezike.

⁵ Jáchym Topol, *Hladna dežela*, prevedla Nives Vidrih, Cankarjeva založba, Ljubljana 2010.

Dokazal je, da je mojster jezika, da zna pisati zgodbe in da z bogato fantazijo oblikuje tako obsežne pripovedne tekste kot tudi krajše forme. Kot pripovednik menjava pripovedne strategije in oblikuje prepoznavno poetiko. Njegova proza se giblje med dokumentom in fikcijo, veliko vlogo igra v njegovi prozi zgodovinski spomin. V spominu prostora avtor obuja bolečine in krivice iz polpreteklega socialističnega časa. To je eksistencialna proza z moralnim nabojem: njegove osebe, bolj ali manj izgubljene, potujejo po »labirintu sveta in večinoma ne najdejo raja srca«. Dostikrat tudi one ne znajo razpoznati dobrega v prevladi zla, vedno pa poskušajo »varovati sirote in vdove« in tako najti moralno ravnotežje v kaotičnem svetu. Glavne osebe so iz marginalnega sveta: to so dečki, mladi intelektualci, lumpenproletarci, zločinci in narkomani. Njegova proza je dostikrat proza o Pragi kot sinonimu za križišče zgodovinskih dogodkov, za civilizacijsko presečišče narodov, za mitično mesto, ki je polno kulturnih in simbolnih kodov. Njegov najbolj tipični izraz je pogovorni jezik, ki ga zapisuje predvsem v dialogu in bogati s podobami nove fiktivne stvarnosti. Moderni avtor se v medbesedilni komunikaciji z drugimi avtorji navezuje na češko in evropsko tradicijo in se umešča med avtorje srednjeevropskega prostora. Kot Hašek, Kafka in Hrabal je Jáchym Topol za vedno zaznamoval literarno dogajanje tega prostora.

Jáchym Topol *Vilenica Prize Winner 2015*

Alenka Jensterle-Doležal

Of the City as Text and of a Post-Catastrophic World

Jáchym Topol (1962) is a poet, prose writer, essayist and journalist. Son to poet and playwright Josef Topol, brother to musician Filip Topol and grandson to writer Karl Schulz, he was born on August 4, 1962 in Prague, former Czechoslovakia. Like the older marginalised dissidents, he was forced to work as a stocker and stoker until 1986, and was pensioned for disability a few years before the watershed year of 1989. In 1986 he signed the Charter 77 human rights declaration and was politically active in the *České Děti* (Czech Children) group. In 1988 he was briefly imprisoned for illegally crossing the Polish border and disseminating hostile anti-socialist materials. A freelance writer since 1991, he spent some years studying ethnology at the Prague Faculty of Arts. While still in the underground, he co-edited the *Revolver Revue*, serving as its editor-in-chief until 1993. He has also worked in the editorial offices of the *Respekt* weekly and the *Lidové noviny* daily, and is now programme director at the Prague Václav Havel Library.

I

Topol set out as the youngest representative of the underground in the 1980s, along with Petr Placák, Luděk Marks, and J. H. Krchovský. In the depressing, grey socialist society, their rebellious stance and critical attitude to the socialist reality relegated their works to *samizdat* until 1989. Topol's first poetry collection, *Miluji tě k zblaznění* (I love you madly, 1991), received the Tom Stoppard Prize. It was followed by another collection, *V úterý bude válka* (The war will be on Tuesday, 1992). Even these very first collections dealt with marginal society and extraordinary psychological states. The poetic space is dominated by evil, and the subject feels uncertain, threatened, uprooted. The singled-out individual is pitted against the apocalyptic reality of the modern world, in which the battlefield rages even in the poet himself.

The 1990s saw Topol's quest, the quest for a moral perspective in a skeptical subject, continue in prose. He achieved national and international acclaim with *Sestra* (*City Sister Silver*, 1994), a poetic, vision-

ary novel, which was awarded the prestigious Egon Hostovský Prize. The novel has entered the canon of contemporary Czech prose. Written in the first person and imbued with a singular poetic quality, its description of the world oscillates between dreams and reality. It was transposed to the screen in 2008 by director Vít Pancíř. It was in this novel that Topol demonstrated his mastery of the large-scale novelistic plot and postmodern narration, the richness of his imagination and his superb command of language.

The bizarre stories are woven from the memory of the city, the archetypal image of Prague, marked both socially and historically. The key theme is the search for one's sister as a synonym for love, closeness, and meaning in a desolate world. Much more than love, the search for one's Platonic other half is a search for salvation in the modern struggle between good and evil. The discontinued story is pieced together from fragments of reality. The narrator, who has a panoramic view of reality, constructs the fictional setting by grafting onto the basic story numerous substories and microevents, which feature characters from various social and ethnic groups and alternative subcultures. The novel is narrated by the main character, Potok, "a loser – a lost soul and a gangster" according to the author. In constructing his hero, Topol makes no secret of the autobiographical elements. Potok's journey starts in the underground community just before the Velvet Revolution and the end of socialism, and continues at a similar chaotic pace after the watershed historical events. Potok is a contemporary Everyman who seeks for a goal, for meaning, by roaming the world, and 'survives' only in the fabric of stories. He finds a sister in the singer Černá but loses her through his own fault, diving again into a whirl of incredible twists, in which he even becomes a secret service agent. The end is the beginning: the discovery of the meaning is the recognition that the road is the meaning of everything. The realistic level of the narrative is but one aspect of this novel with its multiple meanings and symbolic layers – layers of cultural and literary reminiscences. A demanding read, the book presupposes the reader's active participation in the construction of meanings.

A major theme is the city. The geographic and historically marked city space is the setting of stories which emerge in the city's memory. The city, associated with myths, acquires mystic dimensions. This interpretation of Prague connects Topol to his literary predecessors, as the perception of Prague as a mythical space runs throughout

20th century Czech literature (G. Meyrink, D. Hodrová, M. Ajvaz). The emphasis is on dark images, although the characters are in pursuit of light. A further organising element in the structure of the novel and the fabric of the narrative is the principle of good and evil: the struggle has a historical background and the dénouement may be equivocal. Indeed, truths overlap and the narrator is often misled. The subject's fury and discontent and his uncertain position are portrayed through an explosive stream of language, a synonym for the stream of "common superconsciousness" which the narrator seeks to express. The narrative stream mixes visionary images of violence and cruelty, images of bizarre possibilities in a pre-catastrophic world, which are steeped in an atmosphere of chaos. The novel can also be read as a generational novel. In terms of intertextuality and intercultural reference, it interacts with fairy-tales and myths, beat and punk cultures, science fiction, the adventure novels by Karl May and Jack London, and youth novels by the Czech author Jaroslav Foglar.

The true protagonist is language. Theorists discuss "the eruption of the Czech language" in this novel which plays through all possible methods and strategies of narration and modes of expression. It displays a wide range of language registers – archaisms, colloquial language, argot, slang, dialects – as well as foreign language elements (English, German, Russian, Polish, Slovak, Romany...). The stream of the confessions is a geyser of possibilities: as part of its rhythm, the larger and more complex fragments often end in three dots, which stand for the endlessness of life and unbroken continuity of the narrative. The narrator, Potok, does not conceal his delight with narrating: indeed, it is narration that initiates the reader into the magic circle of the web of stories and brings about his final catharsis. Freshly and magically, language shapes the world, and the writing process thus approaches a modern age ritual.

II

The novel *Sestra* was followed in the nineties by two shorter prose works, *Výlet k nádražní hale* (*A Trip to the Train Station*, 1994) and *Anděl* (Angel, 1995).

The novel *Anděl* thematises the social and symbolic geography of Smíchov, a fictitious Prague district and convergence point for drug addicts, Romanies, outcasts, and modern travellers. The gripping main plot is accompanied by minor stories. This analytical narra-

tive begins in the Prague psychiatric hospital of Bohnice, where the main character – Jatek, a drug addict on rehabilitation – is recalling his life in Smíchov. The story lines blend and the action is packed with violence, murders and bizarre plot twists, which evoke the dark novel of an early 20th century writer, Ladislav Klíma: the narrator describes the milieu of drug addicts, drug dealers, criminals. Jatek leaves Prague for Paris. The crazy atmosphere is enhanced by the final grotesque image of a tobacconist's daughter murdered by her own mother, a religious maniac. At the end, Jatek sets the living quarters on fire and leaves in pursuit of Ljuba, his love. The novel was adapted in 2000 into a film, *Anděl Exit*. Directed by Vladimír Michálek, it was a national success and received two Czech Lion Awards.

The 1994 novella *Výlet k nádražní hale* is a superb stylistic achievement. In this autobiographical account of a ramble through the city centre, the author again strives to sense the changes in the city and to map the maze of the city – text. On his day trip towards the train station, the protagonist encounters the Mafia, is victimised by police violence, buys a book by De Sade, meets a concentration camp survivor, and strikes up a chat with a person who confides to him the story of a double murder.

This time, the narrative is set in the centre of Prague. The environs of the train station serve as the haunt of a social and ethnic motley crew: of bums, drug addicts, and social outcasts. Like *Sestra*, the text has been revised and changed several times, as is evident from the final edition of 2007. The changes undergone by the city in these twenty years are reflected in Topol's changes to his text: in his words, this is a city where “filth really means filth and rot means rot”. The city has many symbolic codes which the author attempts to decipher, codes referring to its history and culture, woven into the geography of the place. A maze, a Babel, a stage backdrop, it is also a setting for love and death. There is an emphasis on historical allusions. The modern intellectual's urgent task is to struggle against oblivion. It is no coincidence that the author combs second-hand bookshops, looking for books about concentration camp torture: in his struggle against the historical oblivion dominating the dispersed narrative present, he wants to find testimonies to the horrors of the holocaust, concentration camps, wars, mass graves and socialist traumas. The world of his city is still populated by 20th-century survivors: at the bus stop he meets an Auschwitz survivor, Špíček.

Moreover, his imagination is tormented by cruel images from the violent present, such as slavery in Moldavia or hunger in Sudan. The model of the world, depicted in Topol's recognisable manner, is horrifying and dark. The contemporary consciousness writes into discourse sundry details and fatal connections, the language nervously sputters passages. In the Babel of the text everything intertwines with everything, including style: high registers with the low, vulgarisms with solemn tones (the language alludes to the theatre of antiquity). Even the sharp gaze of the narrator cannot trace the borders between good and evil in the contemporary world. Topol's poetics are described by critics as a postmodern style mixing spatial and temporal dimensions. The world of Topol's prose offers no solution, merely roaming through the city of the text.

III

Jáchym Topol's writing career continued into the 21st century with a string of shorter works: *Noční práce* (*Nightwork*, 2001), *Kloktat dehet* (*Gargling with Tar*, 2005), and *Zlatá hlava* (*Golden Head*, 2005).

Noční práce is the first of Topol's works to introduce a child's perspective. With overt autobiographical elements, the novel portrays the Czech reality of 1968, when Czechoslovakia was jointly occupied by the Soviet and Warsaw Pact forces. This document of the time – of the Prague Spring and the subsequent occupation – is experienced by Ondra, an adolescent boy who has to leave Prague. Together with his handicapped brother Squirt, he ends up in a Czech village where he had been on holiday before. The narrative about hard times with no family security is rendered in a polyphony of discourses and consciousnesses. The cruel, violent stories of the villagers are defined by dark, grotesque images: at a historical moment, the village society, too, is taken over by chaos and evil. Ondra's story is merely one out of many. The neurotic recordings of diverse voices obscure our understanding of the minor stories, which are difficult to trace out in the kaleidoscope of events yet establish a peculiar nervous rhythm. Topol's recognisable poetics are marked by the choppy rhythm of events, a rhythm blurring perspective, in which children – being at the very outset of life, and thus the least guilty – are lost and exposed to violence, pressure, even death. This epic of horrifying events in a whirlwind of voices and stories is a document of recent history, when occupation and a totalitarian régime destroyed society for decades to come. It was then that the

major human values underwent a shift and the world changed into a dangerous place ruled by madness. This book, too, mixes reality and dreams: the village setting, although historically defined, is even more prone to mysticism and legends. Stamped by historical events, the protagonists' world is increasingly immersed in irrationality and ancient beliefs. Here the author strikes up a dialogue with the world of Bohumil Hrabal's inns and the rhetoric of his characters, as well as with Jaroslav Hašek's low style. The sentences are short and the language mainly colloquial, while the wild rhythm speeds the events to a tragic, ill-boding end.

Kloktat dehet was selected by the *Lidové noviny* daily as the book of the year. In this sensitive and brilliantly crafted story about children from a boys' home in rural Bohemia, a home where relationships are stamped by brutality and violence, the protagonists find themselves in the fray of military action and Soviet occupation. This fictional tale portrays what might have happened if the Czechs had resisted the occupying Warsaw Pact army in 1968 and a Czech-Russian war had broken out. Paradoxically, the rebels are outcast children from a home. The author attempts to imitate their speech and way of thinking: the main narrator is thirteen-year-old Ilya without a past. The grim stories of the children, the stories of survivors, are moral accusations of today's world, which is shadowed by the wings of the dark angel of history. This imaginary fresco of the greyness and chaos of a post-apocalyptic era merges all historical periods into one. The child protagonists, teetering on the brink of madness and darkness, are ever on the run from evil as well as from their own selves, because evil resides within them, too. Again, the boundaries between reality and fiction are blurred. The main protagonist, Ilya, concludes with the sentence: "At last I'm setting out now, I'm going home." The macrostories and nervous changes, accompanied by incredible adventures, are couched in an expressive colloquial idiom enriched with slang and argot.

Topol's short story *Zlatá hlava* (ostensibly part of a never-written novel, *The Mongol Wolf*, which was begun at the same time as *Sestra*) tackles the theme of Mongolia, recording the story of a Mongol boy growing up in a Sovietised, occupied land. The poignant story of the loss of identity suffered by an individual and a whole community is furnished with a narrative frame: it is recounted to the narrator by an old man whose eyes have been gouged out. The nervous, chaotic narrative manner graphically introduces the experience of a different,

Buddhist culture crushed under the weight of Sovietisation, its symbols preserved only in museums (and in people's awareness). A futile attempt to preserve this culture had been made by the Mongol boy, who was consequently blinded. What is foregrounded this time is the story of an individual as part of a culture, an individual who is defeated by the historical changes brought on by the 20th century.

The novella *Chladnou zemi* (*The Devil's Workshop*, 2009) likewise portrays an apocalyptic picture of the world, where man is consumed by anxiety and haunted by demons while evil is encroaching. The moral balance is shattered. Again, the fabric of the text has multiple meanings. A light narration gives way to the discovery of past horrors and traumas caused by historical events. No catharsis is possible because the contemporary world, commercialised and politically sold out, is forgetting the mass graves of the European East. This novella received the Jaroslav Seifert Prize in 2010.

Another trademark of Topol's poetics is the autobiographical travelogue: the reportage in his book *Supermarket sovětských hrdinů* (*Supermarket of Soviet Heroes*, 2007). This "attempt at a chronicle" is based on fact, for the author is describing his own voyage through Poland and Slovakia, where he visited the Polish writer Andrzej Stasiuk. On this journey, steeped in nostalgia and memories, he is accompanied by three friends from his dissident days. Again there is revealed the horror of the historical space. The space is inscribed with the experience of Central Europe's dramatic history, especially wars and totalitarian systems – including a journey to the mass graves, which blends with descriptions of the narrative present.

Recent works by Jáchym Topol include plays, such as *Uvařeno* (*Cooked*) and *Cesta do Bugulmy* (*The Road to Bugulma*). These continue in dramatic dialogue the themes of the alienation and moral hollowness of the contemporary world, which is portrayed sarcastically. The characters are stranded on the carousel of historical and other evils. These plays are situational pieces lacking in action but abounding in black humour, a humour which again points to the evil accumulated in the course of human history.

In 1997 Topol translated a selection of Native American tales, a task which reflects his lively interest in other cultures, his enthusiasm for myths, legends, and historical tales.

IV

In the thirty years of his writer's career, Jáchym Topol has grown into an eminent Czech writer and won international acclaim. His works have been translated into English, German, Polish and many other languages. He has proved himself a master of language, an able and imaginative storyteller, skilled at extended and shorter narratives alike. He varies his narrative strategies and crafts recognisable poetics. His prose, oscillating between document and fiction, allots a major role to historical memory. In the memory of a given setting, Topol revives the agonies and injustices from the recent socialist era. His prose is existential, morally charged: his characters, more or less lost, roam "the maze of the world and rarely find the paradise of the heart". While they, too, are often unable to discern the good under the domination of evil, they ever seek to "protect the orphans and widows", and thus to find a moral balance in a chaotic world. They hail from the margins of society: boys, young intellectuals, labourers, criminals, drug addicts. His prose often revolves around Prague as the synonym for a junction of historical events, an intersection of civilisations and nations, a mythical city packed with cultural and symbolic codes. His most typical vehicle of expression is colloquial language, used especially in dialogues and enriched with images of a new, fictitious reality. In intertextual communication with other authors, this modern author forges links to the Czech and European traditions and takes his place among the authors of Central Europe. Like Hašek, Kafka and Hrabal, Jáchym Topol has left a permanent stamp on Central European literature.

Translated by Nada Grošelj

Trochu medu

Červnové slunce už praží, od rána leze nad město, sune se po obloze. Zácłony tu ale jsou, až na úzkou škvíru, pořád zatažené. Paprsky se do pokoje řinou v jednom bodě. Je prý lehčí je chytit. Do postele si vzala zrcátko, takové to dívčí, na špičku nosu.

Drží ho teď v ruce často a ráda, občas jí zapadne pod polštář nebo se ztratí někam do dek, nevadí, nějak ho vždy vyhrábne.

Sebe si máma neprohlíží, ostatně nikdy nebyla nějak přehnaně módní ani se zbytečně nešñořila, nestuduje kaňony vrásek ve svém obličejí, kdepak, loví zrcátkem kousky slunce s tím, že to jsou nej-spíš poslední paprsky světla, které vidí. I když kdo ví, co bude pak. O tom jsme se ale moc nebavili.

Během posledních dvou let si zvykla na pobyt v posteli. Předtím jsme v pomalém rytmu klapajících berel vyráželi i na procházky... třeba až k Vltavě... po nebi se proháněli rackové, všude barvy, hluk, lidi. Zhruba před půl rokem se ale pro ni nanejvýš dobrodružnou výpravou stala pouhá cesta na záchod. Líčí mi ty expedice pomocí esemesek, senior mobil má přivázaný na šňůrce pod ramenem, jako indián svůj toulec plný šípů. Pokud se po cestě džunglí bytu zastaví k nutnému odpočinku, nebo dokonce upadne, vysílá šíp.

Pradelník... ohlásí třeba. V nejbližší možné chvíli všeho nechám a vyrážím, shrábnu ji z prádelníku, donesu do postele nebo na záchod, jak si zrovna přeje. Hesel jako „pradelník“ máme víc.

A jaký to vlastně je, mami?

Pamatuješ, jak je to v dětství napínavý, když musíš v noci třeba přeběhnout přesdín? Rodiče nikde nebo spěj a ty cítíš hroznou úzkost a hrůzu, bojíš se. Ale pak to dokážeš.

Usmívá se nebo se o to snaží. Je to prostě řada drobných vítězství, dodá.

Neoslňuj mě...

Zrovna totiž ulovila sluneční paprsek a mrskla mi ho do očí.

Hned zrcátko odloží. Těma „prasátkama“ mě nechce nikterak trápit. My jsme se měli vždycky dost rádi.

No, tak do těch mých šestnácti, než jsem konečně vypadl, byla každý večer, téměř každý večer totálně zlitá. A když nebyla zlitá, tak měla kocovinu, což je horší. Kolem padesátky ale zaplatpánbůh přestala pít úplně. Začala vyrážet po kostelích. A den začínala i končila modlitbou. Nakonec, sama vyrůstala v řádovém sirotčinci. Její táta, můj děda, umřel za války. Máma ji prý „odvrhla“. To řád

anglických panen se významně podílel na její výchově. Než ho komunisti zatípli. Z toho názvu pobožného sesterstva si ale zamlada, podpořena lahví, dělala dost často legraci. V tom mě nijak nešetřila, v žertovných historkách z holčičího sirotčince. Jako kluk jsem to bohužel nedokázal ocenit. V jejím obrácení nebylo nic úporného. Život byl klidnější. Určitě je lepší se ráno modlit než do sebe házet panáky. A nejen to. Potom, co sama přilezla ke křížku, mě k ničemu nenutila, nezačala mě po chlastu drtit zas nějak biblicky, přinášela z kamenných kostelů spíš zvěsti o templářích, johanitech... Praha je toho plná... a to mě bavilo.

Tady máš ten med, mami. Z Galileje.

Řekl jsem to tak nonšalantně... Ohlásil jsem tenhle nákup mimoděk, na půl huby, běžně. Ale hrdý jsem byl, to ano. Vždyť který syn doveze umírající matce med z Ježíšovy země?

Jinak, nákupy... tašky, jídlo, pití, hygiena, zábava, to jsem tahal a tahám pořád, s tím nejde nic dělat. Krátce potom, co jsme se dohodli na tzv. sociální službě, přistihl jsem mámu, že veškeré jídlo, co jí ze sociálky vozí, sype do záchodu nebo nabízí ptactvu. Ani mýt ji nebo přestýlat její postel, to vpravdě už monstrózní hnízdo, plné knih, časopisů, drobků, prášků a jiné, už místy těžko identifikovatelné zmeti, nesmí nikdo cizí. A nemocnice? Ty nenávidí. To jsme už zkoušeli.

Mně tam vaděj ty ostatní lidi, chápeš?

Pryč jsem byl jen týden, špinavá mi máma nijak nepřipadá, ale leží pořád v těch samých dekách, no... půjdeme za chvíli na to.

Dnes jsem tašku s běžnými nákupy nechal v předsíni. Mámě k posteli jsem vzal jen malou lahvičku s izraelským medem. Je to stylový, jakoby pouštní výtvar, pálená hlína, voskový uzávěr.

Tady máš ten izraelskej med, mami, jak sis přála!

Položil jsem nádobku na stolek u postele. Trošku jsem s ní o ten stolek křupnul.

Vážně je z Galileje? A je to tam napsaný? Ukaž! A proč to taháš v takovým turistickým obalu?

Je tu napsaný... Galilea!... Ale hebrejsky, to dá rozum!

No jistě... Vůbec se ale nedivím, že ti vycházej knížky hebrejsky, vůbec. Oni tam prostě musej mít všechno! Knihy mého tatínka, tvého dědečka, vycházely pouze německy, polsky, maďarsky... a tak. Jen tady v okolí. Teď je to překladatelství asi snazší, že jo? S tolika strojem.

Jo, teď je to snadný. Vůbec nic to neznamená.

Je vůbec nějaká země, kde tě ještě nevydávají?

V Rusku ne.

Aha! To je ale samozřejmost, to je jasný. Tam se ani necpí. A dovezl jsi ze Svatý země taky něco Bolkovi a Lolkovi?

Tak říká máma mým synkům. Jsou to jména z nějakého polského seriálu.

Modely stíhaček, stříkací kalašnikovy, trička s nápisama, datle a tak různě. Kluci byli nadšený.

Hebrejskýma nápisama? Seš blázen? Dyt' je tam utlučou...

Máma si dětský domovy pořád představuje jako nějaký nanejvýš surový tak zhruba poválečný zařízení. K stáru jsou její vzpomínky asi ještě palčivější. Moje dvojčata jsou ale v úplně moderním zařízení, v tom nejlepším možným.

Mami, prosím tě, už nejsou padesátý roky. Chceš ten med ochutnat? A jak ses tu pořád měla?

Dobře jsem se měla. Nebyla jsem ani na chvilku sama. Je tu pořád se mnou. A mluvíme spolu.

S kým mluvíš?

S Ježíšem Kristem, spasitelem a vykupitelem.

Ale, mami. To bude asi jen v tvý hlavě.

No a co? I kdyby, tak mluví dobře.

Ochutnáš ten med? A co ti říká?

Takový ty obyčejný věci. Jako že se nemám bát. A že se mám připravit na cestu... no, to zní vážně jak z filmu... ale taky mi vysvětluje, proč to všechno je.

Co všechno?

No, život a smrt. To jsem dřív nevěděla, že ví i tohle.

Napadá mě, že až umře, tak tenhle byt zapálím. Ne, neudělám to, ale měl bych. V bibli, mezi normálníma lidma prostě...by se tomu nikdo nedivil. Že chci, aby to všechno okolo, postel, její knihy a obrazy, deky, polštáře, dávno nepoužívané hrnce, pánve... vyschlé květináče, různé ty stařecké věci, pomůcky, všechno nasáklé nakyslým pachem bytu, jak povlakem...moc bych si přál, aby to všechno zmizelo. Až tu nebude, tenhle byt na mě spadne, jako vskutku příšerný břemeno. Nechci to. Zamknu, vypadnu. Akorát to její mrňavý zrcátko si nechám, to se mi pak vejde do kapsy, to nic není.

Mami! A proč to teda všechno je?

Říká, že tohle je ta správná otázka. A že se to všichni dozvíme. Časem. Teda až čas nebude, prostě! Dozvíme se to postupně, no!

Aha.

Otvírám nádobku a trochu mlsáme. Vzal jsem z kuchyně dvě lžičky. Jsou ulepený, ale to nevadí. To je úplně jedno. Nádobí umeju potom. Zvedne hlavu, zasunu jí špičku lžičky s medem mezi zuby. Nasaje, padne zas hlavou do polštáře. V poklidu med vychutnává. Připadá mi, že se za ten týden, kdy jsem byl pryč, někam propadla. Někam ještě hlouběji, než kde je. Mizí. V obličejí už je vážně podobná kostře. A kdy jsem jí naposledy myl vlasy? A doopravdy vypadá tak zbědovaně? Nebo jsem za ten týden jenom odvykl? Když někdo umírá, je asi nejlepší být s ním pořád, pak vás nějaká ta změna hned tak nevyděsí.

Hm, tenhle med je ale docela obyčejnej! říká.

Jo jo, souhlasím. Vždyť med jsem požil naposledy tak zhruba před, já nevím, deseti patnácti lety. Navrhuju, že roztáhnu záclony. Už je léto! říkám.

Jen to nechej takhle!

Popojdu k oknu a vtom to uslyším. Zařinčení, se kterým jí zrcátko vypadlo z ruky, poskočilo na podlaze a teď se třístí. Na jehličky, na malý i úplně maličkatý kousky.

No, to sem tomu dala!

To je dobrý, já to sklídím. Smetám botou skleněný kousky pod postel, uklidím to někdy pak.

Dej mi ještě ochutnat, hlásí se máma k další kapce medu.

Tak si taky dám. Ale ne moc. Na sladký já nikdy nebyl.

Cos tu jedla celou tu dobu?

Ále, to je jedno, náký kekxy a tak, cos dones. Dobrý to bylo.

Stejně mi ale vrtá hlavou, co tu slyší. Co jí Ježíš říká. Tak se znovu optám. Důrazně.

Mami! A co ti ještě říká?

A vida, tohle je neuvěřitelný! Máma se úplně rozzáří.

A teď se culí, to je nepopsatelný, tenhle až koketní úsměv v tý strašný starý poničený tváři. A teď dokonce znachověla. Jo, zčervenala jak holka!

No, úplně všechno ti nemůžu... sdělit, vysouká ze sebe. Ale pěkný věci mi taky říká!

Co?

No, věci o nás dvou. Takový věci... velmi, velmi příjemný!

Cože? O mně jako?

Ale kdepak! Prosim tě! Zavrtí se v posteli.

O sobě a o mně jenom mluví. A hele, dál... to už si vážně nechám pro sebe.

Jasně! A mám ti teda vyprávět něco o Svatý zemi? Jo, kluci se maj moc dobře. Pozdravujou tě a posílaj obrázky. A potřebuješ něco?

Ne. Možná pozdějc.

Sedím na židli, máma leží v posteli. A koukáme na sebe. Nikdo jiný tu není, myslím, že ne a nikdo tu nemluví, možná jen v její hlavě. Jen tak tu jsme. A vládne klid. Ale čekáme. Je před námi celý léto. Celý dlouhý léto v plný síle. Tak třeba se máma ještě zmátoří, třeba jí bude líp?

Jo, určitě jí bude líp. To je jasný.

Citlivý člověk

(úryvek z připravovaného románu)

Rybář bratříčka zabalil do nových plenek. Zpod stolu vyndal velkou proutěnou tašku. Vyházel z ní hadry, dal tam nové, co mu podal kluk. A tašku s dítětem vnořil zas pod stůl, tam, kde spočívala předtím.

Hadry, kterými dítě otíral a umýval, rybář popadl, otevřel dveře a hodil je do vody, jako do propasti. Noviny strčil do ohně.

A teď se nekoukej!, řekl klukovi.

Z pytle, co se válel na podlaze, vyndal jednu, dvě želvičky a jedné po druhé odřízl hlavu. Hlavičky s náhle vyvrácenýma očima a ostrým zobákem hodil do kouta.

Otevřel sporák a krunýře, ze kterých trčely komíhající se končetiny, položil na řeřavějící uhlíky v ústí sporáku. Položil je na záda. A přivřel dvířka.

Ze džberu vytáhl rybku, usekl ji hlavu, nožem dřel šupiny, nohou je shrnul před sebe, pár pohyby nožem z ryby vyškrábl vnitřnosti, smetl je k šupinám, s měchýři a hlavičkami je nakopal do kouta.

Připravil čtyři ryby. Položil na sporák pánev, nechal na ni rozpustit hrudku másla, kterou vytáhl z hrnku a vložil na pánev ryby. A solil je a kořenil, všelijak. Koření měl v umělohmotných dózách, na kterých byla vypodobněna Sněhurka a trpaslíci. Ve Sněhurce byla sůl, ty ostatní byly o něco menší. Pět jich je, dumal kluk, to je ale málo. Někde už tu soupravu viděl. Ale kde? Nevěděl.

Cibuli ale nemám!

Kdes vzal ten vobraz?

Z kostela sem ho nevodnes, to dá rozum, ne? Z vody je.

Ty vole, to ale vypadá, jak Madona pořičská. Jako Panenka na Pahorku, no ne?

To je přece vona.

Hm, řekl táta.

Hele, Moure a co že si na sobě měl ty ženský háby? Chleba vy, kucí, nemáte, co? Měl sem tu brambory, ale zapomněl sem na ně, tak shnily. Mám akorát starej chleba. Dám ho na pánev a von změkne. Dám ho k rybám, nasákne. Vokurky mám. Rajčata. Tak já to teda nakrájím na salát, jo?

Hm.

Nevypi to všechno!

Ty vole, to by mě zabilo. Božkov rumík, že jo? Že to máš v petce vod piva, čoveče. Hm, Kozlík, taky bych si dal.

Já nepiju, to Dorka si spíš sem tam cmrndla. Třeba jí jeblo z toho? Nevim. Dneska je chlast prevít, lidi z toho chcípaj. Voslepeš hned.

Ale houby, to snad dřív, dyž si ho lidi sami pálili, ten chlast.

Viděl sem to v Čerčanech v nádražce. Tam maj dobrý klobásy. Dávali tam právě vo zlodějství ve stáčírnách. Kolika lidí už je slepejch, blbejch z toho. No já telku nemám.

Aha.

Mám tu ale kondenzovaný mlíko. To si Dorka dávala do kafe.

Rybář špičkou nože propíchl konzervu. Podal klukovi hrudku tvrdého chleba.

Udělej cumel. Smíš si líznout. Kapej to pomalinku. Je to lepší než bonbony.

Mňam!, řekl táta.

Moure, copak ty si zapomněl, jak se menuju? Tak nám voboum bylo pade už, vid'. Ale ty seš nákej nezměněnej. Furt takovej hrrr.

Sem taky furt v kalupu. A co ty tady u vody? Pamatuju, že si šel na pokrejšvače.

To nák nevyšlo. Ale povídej ty, Moure. Kdes všude byl? Lidi povídali, že prej hraješ divadlo. V cizině. Prej si byl v televizi, jak hraješ v Itálii na festivalu. No, to vole. V Itálii. To já nikam nepřídú, nehnu se vodsud.

Pokecáme, to vížejo.

Ste teda hráli na pouti divadlo nebo co? Vid'?

No!

A zůstaneš tady? U matky v Pyšelích? S klukama ste přijeli na vandr k vodě, vid'? Kde máte mámu?

Potřebujeme do Městečka. Mámu sem byl jen pozdravit. To víš, pěkný to u ní bylo.

Kde máte auto?

Zaparkovaný.

Kapal husté mléko na žmolek chleba, co urval z hrudky. Líznul si. Lepší než bonbóny? Ale jo. Dal nasáklý žmolek Malýmu k puse. Ten žmolek vcucnul, Malej se zdál bezednej. Narost? Nebo je to tím, jak je zabalenej? Chleba přímo žral, vsrkával z ruky.

Hele, šmakuje mu, prevítkovi.

Stál za klukem. Na lžici měl kousek rybího masa. Dal lžici Malýmu ke rtům. Ten rybu vcucal a polkl. Dostal zase.

Vodu mu dej z konve. A pod' jíst, ať to nevystydne!

Snědli všechno. Kosti se klukovi lepily na prsty.

Otřel prsty o sukni. Koukne se k té haldě. Po hadrech.

Poslyš, vyber si tam něco, řekl mu rybář. Je to divný bejt v sukýnce, ne? Jak ti říkaj? Mě děti říkaj strejda Šupina, představ si to. A ty se menuješ jak?

Ty nemluvíš? Hele, Moure, von nemluví?

Ted'ka ne.

No jo, to děti někdy dělaj.

Haha, Šupina, zasmál se táta. Jaký děti?

No vobčas prodám rybu lidem. Tak různě, u samošky, u kostela, jak kdo chce.

Jakejm lidem?

No lidem, prostě, místním, jak tu, kdo je. Jejich děti mi tak říkaj. Ále, co já co já vim, čím sou to děti, prostě haranti různý, no.

Rybář vytáhl tabák, papírky, ubalil si. Tu první podal tátovi a ubalil si další. Připálil.

No jo, normálně dycky zametala Dorka, řekl rybář. Ted' je to na mě, no. Kývl na kluka. Až to svinstvo smetu, pudem ven a uvidíš.

Jaká Dorka.

No, Dorka, pravil rybář, vstal, v koutě nahnátl koště a sunul rybí a želví a bůhví jaké ještě zbytky života na hromádku k prahu.

Vyber si něco, řekl tátovi a ukázal na hromadu hadrů.

To eště Dorka přepírala, to je všechno z vody a zánovní. Když povodeň strhá ploty a šňůry, dycky sou z toho hadry, dycky.

Kluk vyrazil ke kupě, mohl bych tu najít tepláky i svetr, říkal si, ale táta už u hromady rejdil, bylo ho tam plno, tak se kluk zas posadil, táta nahnátl kraťasy s kšandama, navlékl je, sedly mu, znovu kupu prohrábl, popadl pružované triko, oblíkl ho a zasmál se. Námořnický, to zrovna potřebuju. Svetr by se taky šiknul. A gumáka eště nemáš?

Hele, Moure, třeba se tu najde. To víš, já sem akorát tajdle u vody. Mobila tu nemám, telku, nic. Copak potřebuju ledničku? Žádný sem za mnou nepřide, až na toho vomyla, tehdy. Ale u samošky se někdy sejdou chlapi, povídáme, co je novýho a tak, chápeš? Někdo dělá v lese, jiný sou semhle támhle po řece, správce kempu tam chodí jeden a jiný hoší. Máme prima partu, řeknu ti.

Fakt, jo?

Já teda nepiju, ale pár pivek si dám, petku nebo i dvě natočíme u Vietnamce, ten ti má furt votevřino a kecáme. Všechno semelem, divil by ses!

Jo?

No, hele, já vim, že starej Sekyra to má za sebou. Čerstvě, ale má!

No, to jo, pokývl táta. A neměl bys do toho rumu trošku cukru? Vodvyk sem na tohle pítí.

Ale dyť ho nemusíš, ne? Kdo tě nutí, Moure, hele?

Jo, jo, křenil se táta a zas si trošku dolil.

No, to budeš bohatej tedřka, ne? Vo Soničce nic, tu já měl moc rád, taková fajn holka, milá, vážně! Ale starej Sekyra, no, ty za to nemůžeš za tuhle přízi. Cukr tu mám, ale jen malinko, musím nakoupit, no.

Jo, jo, umřel, už to tak je. Nezdálo se, takovej tuhej kořen, znáš to, ale to víš, všichni tam musíme!

To máš, recht, Moure. A co Sonička? Chudák, táta jí umřel, tak má teď starost. A tys vzal kluky ven, aby to zvládla, vid'. A co ty, mla-dej? Pomáháš tátovi hrát divadlo? No jo, koukám teda, že ses potatil. A to je dobře! Co ty na to?

Dyť já cukr nemusím! A řekni, Slavoji, že seš teda tedřka tady a tak, Slavoji. Pěkný to tu máš!

No, právě, ten Sekyra. Tak je po něm, říkáme si s chlapama. To víže sme si petku navrch dali! Při tý zprávě! Vietnamcovi je to fuk, ten má votevříno furt, sem ti říkal. Tak sem vzpomínal, jak sem byl v base, to ten Sekyra mě tak fackoval, že sem měl závratě pak. Von byl zvíře přes tyhlety mladistvý z vokresu, dyť víš. Von třeba dal jen vykopat nějaký trempíře, co sem lezli, ale jak byl někdo vodsud, tak to schytl. Koncerty nám zakazoval, čurák a kdo měl dlouhý vlasy, tak ho poliši vostříhali třeba v příkopu a eště nakopali do prdele, kurvy. Ty, že budeš hanba mýho vokresu, ty cucáku, jo?, povídal. A už to jelo! Přes uši mi facáky dával, ten čurák. Jak sem pak moh na lešení, na střechy s hučívou hlavou, co? Dyť von za to může, že tu hniju! Ále co, mě je tu dobře. Sem u vody na zdravým povětří a na všechno seru. Jako fůra lidí. No jo, ale je mi pade a už sem v prdeli, si někdy říkám. Ale mohlo by to bejt horší. Komunisti zkurvený. Je to dávno, ale hele, furt sou u vesla, no ne? Tak, kde já dostanu nějaký vodškodnění? To mi řekni.

Hele, to máš těžký. Mobila nemáš?

K čemu jako, vole?

Poslouvej, Slavoji, co teda ten vobraz? Je divný ho mít v takový chajdě, to snad uznáš!

Ale dyť ti říkám, že připlaval. Uchycenej na větvích. Jak byla ta bouřka, jak to sekalo do kostelů, ty blesky. Do poříčského kostela praštil kulovej blesk dvakrát, celý se to tam vyplavilo i s lavicema, to musí bejt vod toho. To sme poslouchali s Dorkou v rádiu.

Ty máš rádio?

Nemám ale baterky.

Hm.

Vietnamec má ale levný. Von ale ryby nebere. Von si udělá rejžičku a vosmaží si spíš mraženou rybu. Vono mu nic z řeky nešmakuje, povídal. No, to se pak nedá nic dělat!

Aha!

A rybář dometl. A náhle zmožen, usedl za stůl, svěsil hlavu, koště mu ze sevřené pěsti trčelo, jak oštěp.

Myslíš snad, že to někdo ukradl?, pravil po chvíli. Vezli třeba kostelní zloději ten vobraz po vodě, potopil je blesk a von jim uplaval? Ale dybych chodil hlásit, co sem všechno připlave, to bych se snad posral. Dyť na mě taky každej sere. Psí bouda připlave, kupa hader na šňůře, křesílko náky, to bys mrkal. To de třeba vyměnit, chápeš. Dyť kolik stojí u Vietnamce polívka? Šest korun, ty vole. Čtyři koruny! A sem kolikrát připlavou věci, to bys čuměl.

Jestli je ten obraz ale pravej, řekl táta.

Je to vona. Dyť já byl u týdle Madony ministrant celý leta. A připlavala sem, no.

No ale, ty vole, dyť v tom sou milióny. Seš bohatej! To propašovat někam do Německa, prodat, tak to máš milióny! Najdem sběratele, hele, a uvidíš to tóčo.

Jak do Německa? Já se vodsad' nehnu. Nechám si to tady, normálně. Na modlení, proč ne? Já jezdím akorát vobčas do Čerčan, pro krky a k sámošce dyžtak zajdu a zpátky. Do Benešova už nepojedu. Koho by to taky bavilo, pořád busem sem a tam, jako kretén. A víš taky, kolik to stojí.

A ví někdo, že to tu máš?

Ne. Po tom je každému houby, co sem přídě z vody.

Máš pravdu, řekl táta a zase si nalil.

Malo medu

Junijsko sonce že žge, od jutra pleza nad mesto, pomika se po nebu.

Zavese pa so, razen ozke špranje, ves čas zagrnjene. Žarki vdirajo v sobo v eni točki. Bajе jih je lažje ujeti. V posteljo si je vzela ogledalce, tako majceno dekliško, za čisto na blizu.

Zdaj ga pogosto drži v rokah, v veselje ji je, občasno ji pade pod blazino ali se izgubi kam pod odeje, nič hudega, vedno se nekako dokoplje do njega.

Mama si ne ogleduje same sebe, tako ali tako nikoli ni bila kaj pretirano mahnjena na modo niti se ni po nepotrebnem lišpala, ne raziskuje kanjonov gub na svojem obrazu, kje pa, z ogledalom lovi koščke sonca, češ da so to najbrž zadnji sončni žarki, ki jih vidi. Čeprav – kdo ve, kaj bo potem. O tem se nisva kaj dosti pogovarjala.

V zadnjih dveh letih se je navadila na bivanje v postelji. Pred tem sva se v počasnem ritmu klopotajočih bergel odpravila tudi na sprehod – recimo vse do Vltave ... po nebu so se preganjali galebi, povsod barve, hrušč, ljudje.

Približno pred pol leta pa je zanjo navadna pot na stranišče postala najbolj pustolovska odprava. Te ekspedicije mi opisuje v esemesih, mobilec za seniorje ima privezan na vrvič pod ramo kot Indijanec svoj tulec, poln pušic. Če se na poti skozi džunglo stanovanja ustavi, ker mora nujno počivati, ali celo pade, pošlje puščico.

Predalnik za perilo ... sporoči na primer. V čim krajšem možnem trenutku vse spustim iz rok in oddirjam k njej, jo snamem s predalnika, odnesem v posteljo ali na stranišče, kakor si ravno želi. Gesel, kot je »predalnik«, imava več.

In kako ti sploh gre, mami?

Se spominjaš, kako napeto je v otroštvu, ko moraš ponoči na primer preteči predsobo? Staršev ni nikjer ali spijo in ti čutiš strašansko tesnobo in grozo, bojiš se. Potem pa ti uspe.

Smehlja se ali si prizadeva, da bi se. To je pač vrsta drobnih zmag, doda.

Ne sveti mi v oči ...

Pravkar je namreč ujela sončni žarek in mi ga švrknila v oči.

Takoj odloži ogledalce. Z zajčki mi ne želi nagajati. Vedno sva se imela precej rada.

No, do mojega šestnajstega leta, ko sem se končno spokal od doma, se ga je vsak večer, skoraj vsak večer, totalno ulila. Če pa se ga ni ulila, je imela mačka, kar je hujše. Ko jih je imela približno

petdeset, pa je hvalabogu čisto prenehala piti. Začela je zahajati v cerkev. Dan je začela in končala z molitvijo. Navsezadnje, ona sama je odraščala v samostanski sirotišnici. Njen oče, moj dedek, je umrl med vojno. Mama jo je baje »zavrgla«. Redovnice loretskega reda so imele pomembno vlogo pri njeni vzgoji. Dokler jim komunisti niso pristigli peruti. Iz imena pobožnih sester, ki jim pri nas rečemo angleške device, pa se je v mladih letih, opogumljena s steklenico, precej pogosto delala norca. S tem, namreč z zabavnimi zgodbicami iz dekleške sirotišnice, mi ni niti malo prizanašala. Ko sem bil še fant, tega žal nisem znal ceniti. V njeni spreobrnitvi ni bilo nič zagrizenega. Življenje je bilo mirnejše. Gotovo je boljše, da zjutraj moliš, kot da vase zливаš šnops. Pa ne samo to. Potem ko se je sama spokorila, me ni silila v nič, ko sem prihajal z žurov, me ni začela biblijsko privijati, iz visokih cerkev mi je prinašala novice o templjarjih, malteških vitezi ... Praga je polna tega ... in to me je zabavalo.

Tukaj imaš ta med, mami. Iz Galileje.

To sem rekel tako nonšalantno ... Nakup sem omenil mimogrede, nerazločno, spotoma. Ponosen sem pa bil, to pa že. Kateri sin pa prinese umirajoči materi med iz Jezusove dežele?

Sicer pa, nakupovanje ... vrečke, hrana, pijača, higienske potreščine, kaj za zabavo, to sem tovoril in še vedno tovorim, nimam kaj. Kmalu po tistem, ko sva se zmenila za tako imenovano pomoč iz doma ostarelih, sem zalotil mamo, da vso hrano, ki ji jo prinesejo od tam, strese v stranišče ali jo ponuja ptičem. Tudi umivati je ne sme noben tujec ali ji postiljati postelje, tega res pošastnega gnezda, polnega knjig, revij, drobtin, tablet in druge, mestoma že težko prepoznavne krame.

Pa bolnišnice? Sovraži jih. To smo že poskusili.

Mene tam motijo drugi ljudje, a razumeš?

Zdoma sem bil samo en teden, mama se mi nikakor ne zdi umažana, vendar še vedno leži v isti posteljnini, no ... vsak hip se bova lotila tega.

Danes sem pustil vrečko z običajnimi nakupljenimi stvarmi v predsobi. Mami sem odnesel k postelji samo majhno stekleničko z izraelskim medom. Stilna je, nekakšna puščavska umetnina, žgana glina, zamašek iz voska.

Tukaj imaš ta izraelski med, mami, kot si si želela! Posodico sem položil na omarico ob postelji. Ob tem sem z njo rahlo prasn timer ob omarico.

Je res iz Galileje? Pa to piše kje na njej? Pokaži mi! Zakaj pa si to prinesel v taki turistični embalaži?

Tukaj piše ... Galilea! Ampak v hebrejščini, kaj pa drugega!

Jasno ... Sploh se ne čudim, da ti izhajajo knjige v hebrejščini, sploh ne. Oni tam pač morajo imet vse! Knjige mojega očka, tvojega dedka, so izhajale samo v nemščini, poljščini, madžarščini ... in podobno. Samo tukaj naokoli. Zdaj je prevajalstvo najbrž lažje, a ne? Pri vseh teh strojih?

Ja, zdaj je to lahko. To sploh nič ne pomeni.

Je sploh kakšna država, v kateri ti niso še nič izdali?

V Rusiji še nič.

Aha! To je pa samoumevno, jasna stvar. Sploh se ne ponujaj tja. A si iz Svete dežele kaj prinesel tudi Bolku in Lolku?

Tako mama kliče moja sinčka. To sta imeni iz neke poljske risanke.

Modele lovskih letal, kalašnikova na vodo, majici z napisi, datlje in take stvari. Fanta sta bila navdušena.

S hebrejskimi napisi? Si nor? Saj ju bojo prebutali ...

Mama si mladinski dom še zmerom predstavlja kot neko skrajno surovo ustanovo približno iz povojnega časa. Njeni spomini so najbrž na stara leta še bolj mučni. Moja dvojčka pa sta v zelo moderni ustanovi, v najboljši možni.

Mami, lepo te prosim, nismo več v petdesetih letih. Bi pokusila med? Kako pa si se imela ves ta čas?

Dobro. Niti za trenutek nisem bila sama. Kar naprej je tukaj pri meni. In pogovarja se.

S kom se pogovarjaš?

Z Jezusom Kristusom, odrešenikom in zveličarjem.

Daj no, mami. To je najbrž samo v tvoji glavi.

Pa kaj potem? Pa čeprav je tako, govori lepo.

Boš pokusila med? Kaj pa ti pravi?

Nič posebnega. Recimo, naj se ne bojim. In naj se pripravim na pot ... no, to se res sliši kot iz filma ... ampak mi tudi razlaga, zakaj sploh je vse to.

Kaj vse?

Oh, življenje in smrt. Prej nisem vedela, da tudi to ve.

Prešine me, da bom stanovanje zažgal, ko bo umrla. Ne, tega ne bom storil, ampak bi moral. V Bibliji, med normalnimi ljudmi pač ... se temu ne bi nihče čudil. Da hočem, da bi vse to naokrog, postelja, njene knjige in slike, odeje, blazine, že dolgo neuporabljene lonci, ponve ... posušene rože v loncih, razne starčevske stvari, pripomočki, vse prepojeno s kislim smradom stanovanja, kot da je to nekakšna prevleka čez vse ... zelo bi si želel, da bi vse to izginilo.

Ko je ne bo več tukaj, bo to stanovanje padlo name kot zares grozljivo breme. Tega pa nočem. Zaklenil bom, se pobral stran. Edino tisto njeno majceno ogledalce bom obdržal, šlo mi bo v žep, to je malenkost.

Mami! Zakaj je sploh vse to?

Pravi, da je to pravo vprašanje. In da bomo vsi zvedeli. Sčasoma. Torej ko časa ne bo več, preprosto! To bomo zvedeli postopoma, no! Aha.

Odpiram posodico in malo se sladkava. Iz kuhinje sem prinesel dve žlički. Lepljivi sta, ampak nič hudega. Čisto vseeno je. Posodo bom pomil potem.

Privzdigne glavo, konico žličke z medom ji porinem med zobe. Posesa, z glavo pade nazaj na blazino. V miru okuša med. Zdi se mi, da se je v tem tednu, ko me ni bilo, nekam pogreznila. Nekam še globlje, kot je. Izginja. V obraz je že zares podobna okostnjaku. In kdaj sem ji nazadnje umil lase? Pa zares zgleda tako klavrno? Ali sem se v tem tednu samo odvadil? Ko kdo umira, je najbrž najboljša biti nenehno z njim, potem te kakšna sprememba ne prestraši tako hitro.

Hm, ta med je pa čisto navaden, reče.

Ja, ja, se strinjam. Saj sem med nazadnje jedel pred približno, ne vem, desetimi, petnajstimi leti. Predlagam, da bi razgrnil zavese. Poletje je že, pravim.

Kar pusti tako, kot je!

Stopim k oknu in naenkrat zaslišim. Žvenket, s katerim ji je ogledalce padlo iz roke, poskočilo na tleh in zdaj se razletava na kosce. Na iglice, na majhne in čisto majcene delčke.

Ojoj, kako sem štorasta!

Je že v redu, pospravil bom. Steklene kosce s čevljem pometam pod posteljo, to bom pospravil kdaj drugič.

Daj mi še za probat, se oglasi mama, želi si novo kapljico medu.

Še jaz bom. Ampak ne preveč. Nikoli nisem bil mahnjen na sladko.

Kaj si jedla ves ta čas?

Oh, saj je vseeno, piškote pa take stvari, kar si prinesel. Dobro je bilo.

Vseeno mi ne da miru, kaj sliši tukaj. Kaj ji govori Jezus. Zato spet vprašam. Odločno.

Mami! In kaj ti je še povedal?

Glej, glej, to je neverjetno! Mama kar zasiže.

In zdaj se muza, to je nepopisno, ta naravnost koketni nasmeh na tem groznem starem uničenem obrazu. In zdaj jo je oblila rdečica. Ja, zardela je kot punca!

No, čisto vsega ti ne morem ... povedat, stisne iz sebe. Ampak mi pa govori tudi lepe stvari!

Kaj?

No, stvari o naju dveh. Take stvari ... zelo, zelo prijetne!

Kaj? A o meni?

Kje pa! Lepo te prosim! Obrne se v postelji.

Samo o sebi in meni govori. Veš kaj, ostalo ... bom res obdržala zase.

Jasno! Naj ti zdaj kaj povem o Sveti deželi? Ja, fanta sta zelo v redu. Pozdravljata te in ti pošiljata risbice. A kaj rabiš?

Ne. Mogoče pozneje.

Sedim na stolu, mama leži v postelji. In se gledava. Nikogar drugega ni tukaj, mislim, da ne, in tukaj nihče ne govori, mogoče samo v njeni glavi. Kar tako sva. Vlada mir. Vendar čakava. Pred nama je celo poletje. Celo dolgo poletje v vsej svoji mogočnosti. Morda si bo mama še opomogla, mogoče ji bo boljše?

Ja, gotovo ji bo boljše. To je jasno.

Občutljivi človek

(odlomek iz romana v nastajanju)

Ribič je zavil bratca v nove plenice. Izpod mize je potegnil veliko pleteno torbo. Iz nje je zmetal cunje, dal noter nove, ki mu jih je podal fant. Torbo z otrokom je porinil nazaj pod mizo, tja, kjer je ležala pred tem.

Cunje, s katerimi je brisal in umival otroka, je pograbil, odprl vrata in jih zalučal v vodo kot v prepad. Časopis je vrgel na ogenj.

Zdej pa ne glej, je rekel fantu.

Iz žaklja, ki se je valjal na tleh, je vzel eno, dve želvici in jima, najprej eni, potem drugi, odrezal glavo. Glavici z nenadno izbuljenimi očmi in ostrima kljunoma je vrgel v kot.

Odprl je štedilnik in oklepa, iz katerih so štrlele migajoče okončine, položil na razbeljeno žerjavico v ustju štedilnika. Položil ju je na hrbet. In priprl vratca.

Iz čebra je izvlekel ribo, ji odsekal glavo, z nožem odstranjeval luske, z nogo jih je porinil podse, z nekaj zamahi z nožem je iz ribe izpraskal drobovje, ga pometel k luskam, z mehurji in glavicami ga je zbrcal v kot.

Pripravil je štiri ribe. Na štedilnik je položil ponev, v njej razpustil kepico masla, ki jo je izbežal iz lončka, in v ponev položil ribe. In jih solil in začinil, z vsem mogočim. Začimbe je imel v plastičnih posodicah, na katerih je bila upodobljena Sneguljčica s palčki. V sneguljčici je bila sol, druge so bile nekoliko manjše. Pet jih je, je tuhtal fant, to je premalo. Ta komplet je nekje že videl. Ampak kje? Ni vedel.

Čebule pa nimam!

Kje si dobil to sliko?

Nisem je odnesu iz cerkve, kaj pa misliš? Iz vode je.

Ej, stari, ampak zgleda ko Madona iz Poříča. Kot Devica na vzpetini, a se ti ne zdi?

Sej je ona.

Hm, je rekel očka.

Ej, Muri, kaj pa to, da si mel na seb ženske cote? A kruha pa vidva nimata, kaj? Tukej sem mel krompir, ampak sem pozabu, da ga mam, pa je zgnil. Sam star kruh mam. Dal ga bom v ponev pa se bo zmehčal. Dal ga bom k ribam pa se bo navzel. Kumarce mam. Paradižnike. Narezu jih bom za solato, a prav?

Hm.

Ne vsega popit!

Ej, stari, to bi me fental. Rum Božkov, a ne? Pa v plastični flaši od piva ga maš, mater. Hm, kozel, men bi tud pasal.

Jaz ne pijem, Dorka pa ga je kdaj pa kdaj cuknila. Mogoče se ji je zarad tega zrolal? Ne vem.

Dans je z alkomotom cela štala, ljudje cepajo ko muhe zarad njega. Takoj lahko oslepiš.

Ne me basat, to je blo bolj prej, ko so ljudje sami kuhal šnops.

Sem vidu v Čerčanih v restavraciji na železniški. Tam majo dobre klobase. Na televiziji so glih govoril o tatvinah v polnilnicah. Kolk ljudi je že slepih, pobebavljenih zarad tega. Jaz pa nimam teveja.

Aha.

Mam pa tukej konzerviran mlek. Dorka si ga je dajala v kofe.

Ribič je s konico noža prebodel konzervo. Fantu je dal kepico trdega kruha. Nared dudo. Lahko ga mal oblizneš. Počas kapljaj. To je boljš kot bonboni.

Mnjam, je rekel očka.

Muri, a si pozabu, kako mi je ime? Oba sva že čez petdeset, a ne! Ampak ti se nisi skor nič spremenu. Še zmerom si čist naspidiran.

Sej sem tud kar naprej v pogonu. Kaj pa ti počneš tukej pri vodi? Spomnim se, da si se učil za krovca.

Nekak mi ni ratal. Dej, rajš ti kej povej, Muri. Kje vse si bil? Govoril se je, da igraš v gledališču. V tujini. Baje so te pokazal na televiziji, kako igraš v Italiji na enem festivalu. Ja, stari. V Italiji. Jaz pa ne grem prov nikamor, ne ganem se od tukej.

Veš, da bova kakšno rekla, nič bat.

A ste pol igral gledališče na tistem srečanju, al kaj? A ste?

Ja!

A boš ostal tukej? Pr materi v Pyšelih? Z mulcema si prišel mal na izlet k vodi, a ne? Kje mate mamo?

V Městečko moramo it. Mamo sem prišel sam pozdravit. Sej veš, pri njej je blo fino.

Kje mate avto?

Tam je parkiran.

Gosto mleko je kapal na svaljek kruha, ki ga je izpulil iz kepice.

Si ga obliznil? Boljš ko bonboni?

Sam res.

Napojen cucelj je dal Malemu v usta. Ta je posesal svaljek, Mali se je zdel nenasiten. Je zrasel? Ali je to zaradi tega, kako je zavit? Naravnost žrl je kruh, ga srkal iz roke.

Glej, tekne mu, paglavčku.

Stal je za fantom. Na žlici je imel košček ribjega mesa. Žlico je pristavil Malemu na usta. Ta je ribo posrkal in pogoltnil. Dobil je še.

Vodo mu dej iz kangle. Pa prid jest, da se ne bo ohladil!

Pojedli so vse. Fantu so se kosti lepile na prste.

Prste si je obrisal v krilo. Pogleda proti kupu. Na cunje.

Poslušaj, zber si kej, mu je rekel ribič. Je čudn bit v kikli, a ne? Kako te kličejo? Men otroc pravjo striček Luska, a si predstavljaš? Kako je pa teb ime?

A ne govoriš? Ej, Muri, a on ne govori?

Zdej ne.

Ja, res, otroc to včasih počnejo.

Haha, Luska, se je zasmel očka. Kater otroc?

Ljudem občasno prodam kakšno ribo. Različn, pr samopostrežni, pr cerkvi, kakor komu paše.

Katerim ljudem?

Ljudem, ne, domačinom, tistim tukej. Njihov otroc me tko kličejo. Ampak kaj pa jaz vem, čigav so ti otroc, enostavn različni mulci, ne.

Ribič je izvlekel tobak, si zvil. Prvo je dal očku in zvil še eno.

Prižgal si je.

Ja, ja, sicer je zmerom pometala Dorka, je rekel ribič. Zdej moram pa jaz, ne. Prikimal je fantu. Ko bom pometu to svinjarijo, bomo šli ven, pa boš vidu.

Kakšna Dorka?

Ja, Dorka, Muri, je rekel ribič, vstal, v kotu otipal metlo in rinil ribje in želvje in bogve katere še ostanke življenja na kupček pri pragu.

Zber si nekej, je rekel očku in pokazal na kup cunj.

Dorka jih je še enkrat oprala, vse to je iz vode in čist novo. Ko poplave odnesejo ograje in špage, zmeri prnesejo cunje, zmeri.

Fant je stopil proti kopici, tukaj bi lahko našel trenirko in pullover, si je rekel, ampak očka je že premetaval kup, povsod ga je bilo polno, zato se je fant spet usedel, očka je prijel kratke hlače z naramnicami, si jih nataknil, pristajale so mu, spet je prebrskal kopico, zgrabil črtasto majico, si jo oblekel in se zasmel. Mornarska, ravno to rabim. Pullover bi mi tudi prav prišel.

A kakšnga dežnga plašča pa nimaš?

Ej, Muri, mogoče se bo še kje našu. Sej veš, jaz sem sam tukej pr vod. Nimam mobilca, nimam teveja, nič. A mogoče rabim hladilnik? Noben ne pride k men razen tiste zgube takrat. Ampak pr samopostrežni se včasih zberejo možakarji pa mal poklepetamo,

kaj je novga pa take stvari, štekaš? Eden dela v gozdu, drugi so gor pa dol po reki, en upravnik kempa tud prhaja pa drugi dedci. Super klapa smo, ti rečem.

A dej?

Jaz niti ne pijem, ampak kakšno pivce za živce, to pa, pr Vietnamcu napolnimo eno al pa dve plastični flaši, on ma nonstop odprt, pa mal gobcamo. Vse obdelamo, ne boš verjel!

Aja?

Ja, glej, vem, da je stari Sekyra že škripnu. Pred kratkim, ampak je!

Ja, res je, je očka prikimal. A maš mogoče mal cukra za v rum? Odvadu sem se ga pit kar tko.

Sej ti ni treba, ne? Noben te ne sil, Muri, ej.

Ja, ja, se je muzal očka in si spet malo natočil.

Zdej boš pa bogat, Muri? Nič slabga o Sonički, zelo rad sem jo mel, fajn punca, prijazna, res! Ampak stari Sekyra, no, ti nisi kriv za tist špetir. Cukr mam, ampak sam mejčken, moram ga kupit.

Ja, ja, umrl je, kaj čmo. Čist nepričakovan, taka korenina, sej veš, ampak ni kej, vsi bomo enkrat na vrsti!

Prav maš, Muri. Kaj pa Sonička? Revica, oče ji je umrl, zato ma zdej kup enga letanja. Ti si peljal fanta ven, da bo vse porihkala, ane? Kaj pa ti, mulc? A pomagáš očiju igrat gledališče? Ja, ja, vidim, da si se vrgu po fotru. In to je dobr! Kaj praviš?

Sej lahko tud brez cukra. Povej, Slavoj, kako to, da si zdej tukej pa to, Slavoj.

Lepo maš tukej!

Točno, ta Sekyra. Škripnu je, ej, si rečemo mi, dedci. Jasn, da smo si dal še eno plastično flašo za povrh! Pr tej novici! Vietnamcu dol visi, itak ma nonstop odprt, sej sem ti reku. Sem se mal spomnil, ko sem bil v čuzi, ta Sekyra me je tko skloftal, da se mi je pol v glav vrtel. On je bil do ta mladih iz okraja prava zverina, sej veš. Ene klateže, ki so rinil sem, je sam nagnal, ampak če je bil kdo od tukej, jih je pa fasal. Koncerte nam je prepovedu, kurac stari, in kdor je mel dolge lase, so ga pandurji na primer postrigl v jarku in ga še zbrcal v rit, prasci. Ti, a ti da boš v sramoto mojmu okraju, ti mulo, kaj, je rekel. In sem nastradal. Po ušesih me je kloftal, kurac stari. Kako bi pol lahko šel na zidarski oder, na streho, ko mi je bučal v glavi, kaj? On je kriv za to, da gnijem tukej! Pa kaj, tukej se mi dobr godi. Zraven vode sem, na svežem zraku in ne jebem žive sile. Kot kup drugih ljudi. Ja, že, ampak petdeset jih mam na puklu in sem v riti, si včasih rečem. Lahko bi blo pa še hujš. Komunisti zajebani.

Že dolg je od tega, ampak, glej, še zmerom so pr koritu, a ni res? Kje bom jaz pol dobil kakšno odškodnino? To mi povej.

Ej, ni ti lahko. A mobilca nimaš?

Zakaj bi ga pa mel, stari?

Poslušej, Slavoj, kaj pa ta slika? Čudn je, da jo maš v taki podrtiji, to mi boš pa dal za prov, a ne!

Ampak sej ti pravim, da je prplavala. Ujela se je na veje. Ko je blata nevihta, ko je treskal v cerkev, mislim strele. Cerkev v Poříčju je dvakrat zadela kroglasta strela, voda je vse skupej odnesla ven, tud klopi, to mora bit od tega. To sva z Dorko poslušala po radiu.

A maš radio?

Baterij pa nimam.

Hm.

Vietnamec jih ma pocen. Ampak ne jemlje rib. Skuha si riž in si rajš ocvre zmrznjeno ribo. Nič iz reke mu ne diši, je reku. Nimaš kej!

Aha!

Ribič je pometel do konca. Nenadoma se je, izmozgan, usedel za mizo, povedil glavo, metla mu je štrlela iz zaprte pesti kot sulica.

A slučajn misliš, da jo je kdo ukradu, je rekel čez trenutek. Da so cerkveni tatovi peljal to sliko po vod, da jih je strela potopila in jim je slika odplavala stran? Ampak če bi hodu prjavljat vse, kar prplava mim, bi se tud najebal. Sej mene tud noben ne jebe. Pasja uta prplava, kup cunj na štriku, kakšen fotelj mogoče, ni da ni. To se da zamenjat, štekaš. Kolk pa stane juha pr Vietnamcu? Šest kron, stari. Štir krone! Sem pa tolikokrat prplavajo stvari, da ne moreš verjet.

Pa je ta slika sploh prava, je rekel očka.

Ja, ona je. Sej sem bil pr tej Madoni dolga leta ministrant. Pa je prplavala sem, pa kaj.

Ampak vredna je milijone, stari. Bogat si! Če bi jo prešvercal kam v Nemčijo pa tam prodal, si milijonar! Našla bova zbiralce, ej, pa boš videl to frko.

Kako v Nemčijo? Jaz se ne ganem od tukej. Obdržu jo bom tukej, tko pač. Za molit, zakaj pa ne? Jaz se sam občasn peljem v Čerčane, po kurje vratove pa v samopostrežno zavijem, če je glih treba, pol pa nazaj. V Benešov pa že ne grem več. Komu bi pa se to dal, kar naprej z busom sem pa tja, ko kakšen kreten. Pa sej tud veš, kolk to stane.

Pa kdo ve, da jo maš tukej?

Ne. Itak nima nobenga kaj za brigat, kaj voda sem prnese.

Prav maš, je rekel očka in si spet natočil.

A Little Honey

Winter breathes its last gasp, leaving mounds of black ice and frozen chunks on the sidewalks. The sun occasionally climbs above the city now, edging across the glassy sky.

The curtains here are always shut, except for a narrow crack. The sun's rays pour into the room in a single spot. She says they're easier to catch that way.

She keeps a mirror in bed, the little kind girls use to look at the tip of their nose.

She uses it often these days. Sometimes it slips beneath her pillow or gets lost in the blankets. That's all right. She always manages to dig it out somehow.

She doesn't use it to look at herself. My mom never was very fashionable, she didn't get dolled up unless there was a reason. Instead of studying the wrinkles on her face, she uses the mirror to fish for rays of sunlight, assuming they're the last ones she'll see.

Though who knows? We didn't talk much about that.

Over the last two years she's gotten accustomed to staying in bed. Before, we used to go out for walks ... down to the river, say ... gulls chasing across the sky, colors, noise, people ... the slow click-clack of her crutches.

Nowadays the most adventurous trip she takes is to the bathroom. She recounts these expeditions to me by text message. She keeps her senior cell phone on a string looped over her shoulder, like an Indian quiver full of arrows. If she stops to rest on her way through the jungle, or trips and falls, she shoots out a signal – “dresser,” for instance. As soon as I can, I drop everything and head over to her place, scoop her up, and carry her back to bed or to the bathroom, depending what she wants. We've got a few other signals besides “dresser.”

So what's it like, anyway, Mom?

Remember how when you're little and you have to run through the hallway in the middle of the night? When your parents aren't around, or they're asleep, and you're nervous and afraid, but you do it?

She smiles, or tries to. It's just a series of minor victories, she says.

Stop it, you're blinding me ...

She's catching a ray of sunshine and flashing it in my eyes.

She sets the mirror aside. She doesn't mean to torture me. We've always liked each other. Well, up until I was sixteen and I finally

got out, she was totally smashed every night, or just about. If she wasn't smashed she had a hangover, which was even worse. When she was around fifty, though – thank God! – she gave up drinking and started visiting churches, beginning and ending every day with prayer. She had, after all, grown up in a religious orphanage. Her dad, my grandfather, had died during the war. She said her mom had “cast her off.” The Order of English Virgins played a big part in her upbringing. Till the Communists squelched them. When she was young, fueled by the bottle, she often made fun of the sisterhood's name. She didn't spare me any of her stories from the girls' home. As a boy, unfortunately, I couldn't appreciate them. There was nothing forced about her conversion. Her life calmed down. It really is better to get up and say a prayer in the morning instead of tossing back shots. And she didn't force anything on me, no waving the Bible at me and carrying on about booze. She just carried the news from the stone churches ... the Templars, the Hospitallers ... Prague is full of that stuff ... I enjoyed it.

Here's some honey for you, Mom. From the Galilee.

I was casual about it ... announcing my gift in an offhand way, like it was nothing special. But yes, I was proud. I mean, how many sons bring their dying mother honey from the Holy Land?

I did the shopping, too ... groceries, personal hygiene, entertainment ... I brought her stuff all the time, who else was going to do it? Not long after she agreed to visits from social services, I caught her dumping the food from them down the toilet, or feeding it to the birds. She wouldn't let anybody else wash her or make her bed, a monstrous nest of books, magazines, crumbs, and pills that was such a mess sometimes it was hard to tell what was what. Hospitals? She hated them. We'd already tried that.

The other people bother me, she said.

I was only gone a week. She didn't look dirty, but she still had the same sheets on her bed ... well, we'd deal with that later.

Today I'd left the bag of groceries out in the entryway. The only thing I brought to her bedside was the little jar of Israeli honey. It was a fancy terracotta jar, sealed with wax.

Here's that Israeli honey, Mom, just like you asked for! I set it down on the table next to her bed. It made a little cracking sound.

Is it really from the Galilee? Does it say it there? Let me see! Why does it have that silly tourist packaging?

It's written right there, see? ... Galilee! ... but in Hebrew, that's what they speak there.

Well, of course ... but I'm not at all surprised that your books are published in Hebrew. They have everything over there! My father's books only came out in German, Polish, Hungarian ... places around here. I suppose translation is easier now, isn't it? With all those machines.

Oh yeah, it's easy now. No big deal.

Is there any country where you aren't published?

Russia.

Oh, mm-hm. That's only natural, though. Don't even bother. Did you bring anything back for Bolek and Lolek?

That's what my mom calls my sons. After the Polish cartoon.

Model fighter planes, Kalashnikov water pistols, some T-shirts, fresh dates and stuff. The boys were thrilled.

T-shirts with Hebrew? Have you lost your mind? They'll beat the living daylight out of them ...

My mom still thought of children's homes as brutal institutions, like they were after the war. As she got older, I think, her memories had intensified. But my twins were in a modern facility, the best one available.

Mom, please, this isn't the '50s anymore. You want to taste the honey? How've you been, anyway?

Good. I wasn't alone for a minute. He's been with me the whole time. We talk.

Who is "he"?

Jesus Christ, our Savior and Redeemer.

Oh, come on, Mom. It's all in your head.

So what? Even if it is, I like what he says.

Are you going to taste it or not? And what does he say?

The usual stuff. Like I don't have to worry. And I should prepare myself for the journey ... well, I realize it sounds like a movie ... but he also explains why everything is the way it is.

What do you mean, everything?

You know, life and death. I never knew he knew all that.

I suddenly have the idea that when she dies, I'll burn the apartment down. I mean I won't, but I'd like to. In the days of the Bible, nobody would've been surprised. That I want all of this ... the bed, the books and pictures, blankets, pillows, the pots and pans she hasn't used in ages ... the dried-out flowerpots, all her old-lady stuff, everything here in this flat drenched in that sour smell, coated in it ... I wish it could all just disappear. Once she's gone, the flat will be mine, weighing me down like a terrible burden. Why would I want

that? I'll lock the door and walk away. All I'll keep is that tiny little mirror of hers. It'll easily fit in my pocket.

So why is everything the way it is, then?

He says that's the right question. And we'll all find out. In time. That is, at the end of time. We'll find out, but gradually.

Uh-huh.

I open the jar and bring in two teaspoons from the kitchen. They're sticky, but that's all right. I'll wash the dishes later.

She lifts her head. I insert the tip of the spoon between her teeth. She takes it in, her head drops back against the pillow. She savors the honey in peace.

It seems like she sank into a hole during the the week I was gone. Even deeper than before. Fading away. Seriously, her face looks like a skeleton. And when was the last time I washed her hair? Does she really look that pitiful? Or is it just that I haven't seen her in a week? When a person is dying, I think it's better to be with them all the time. That way the changes don't startle you as much.

Hm. I don't think this honey's anything special, she says.

You're right, I say. The last time I had honey was probably ten, fifteen years ago.

I offer to open the curtains. It's almost spring! I say.

Just leave it!

I step towards the window and suddenly I hear it. The crash as the mirror slips out of her hand and shatters on the floor. Into slivers, tiny little pieces of broken glass.

Well, now I've gone and done it!

That's all right, I'll clean it up. I sweep the pieces under the bed with my shoe, I'll deal with it later.

Give me another taste, she says.

I have some too. But not too much. I never was much for sweets.

What did you eat all this time?

Oh, this and that. Those biscuits and things you brought. It was good.

I still can't get over what she said. About Jesus talking to her. So I ask again. Firmly.

So tell me, Mom. What else did he say?

And then ... I can't believe it! My mother's face lights up and she grins in this indescribable way, a flirty smile spreading across her ravaged old face. Then she even blushes. Her face turns red like a little girl's!

Well, I can't tell you ... everything, she says coyly. But he also says nice things!

Like what?

Well, things about the two of us. Delightful things!

What? About me?

No, no! She squirms in her bed. He talks about him and me. As for the rest, well ... I'm keeping that to myself.

Fine! You want to hear about my trip? The boys're doing really well. They say hi and they'll send some pictures. You need anything?

No. Maybe later.

I sit on the chair, my mom in bed. We look at each other. There's nobody else here, I don't think, and nobody talking, except maybe in her head. We just sit. In peace and quiet. But we're waiting. That's right, waiting for an answer. Soon it'll be spring. Maybe my mom will still recover, maybe she'll get better? Oh, definitely. I'm sure of it.

Translated by Alex Zucker

The Sensitive Man

(excerpt from a novel in progress)

The fisherman wrapped little brother into new diapers. Snatching a huge linen bag from under the table, he tossed out some tatters and put fresh ones inside as the boy handed them over. With the toddler stashed in there, he pushed the bag back where he had found it.

Scooping up the rags used to wash and dry the child, he opened the door and flung them into the water as if it were a hole. The newspaper he tossed into the fire.

Don't look, now, he said to the boy.

He grabbed one, two small turtles from a sack rolling around the floor and then, one after another, sliced off their heads. Eyes suddenly bulging above their sharp little beaks, the heads went flying into the corner.

He opened the stove and placed the shells, limbs sticking out, twitching, onto the white-hot embers at the mouth of the aperture. On their backs, with the stove door ajar.

He pulled a fish from the bucket, chopped at its head. Scraping scales with the knife, shoving them under with the foot, gouging the entrails with a couple deft moves of the blade, sweeping the mess towards the scales, then kicking it all into the corner to keep company with the bladders and the tiny turtle heads.

Four fish were prepared. Placing a pan on the stove, he dissolved a lump of butter, having scooped it out of a small pot, and laid the fish in there, seasoning them with salt and who knows what. He kept his spices in small plastic dishes painted with images of Snow White and the dwarfs. Snow White kept the salt, the rest of them were a bit smaller. Five, the boy thought to himself, that's not enough. He'd already seen the set somewhere, but where? No idea.

Snap, got no onions!

Where did you get that painting?

Not from the church, that's for sure. I pulled it out of the water.

But it looks just like the Madonna of Poříčí. Like the Virgin on the Hill, don't you think?

It's her, actually.

Hmm, said daddy.

Hey, Moury, how come you were dressed in girls' clothes? You two don't happen to have any bread, do you? I had some potatoes in here but I forgot all about them, and now they're all rotten. Got

some stale bread, is all. I'll put it in the pan so it goes soft. Right next to the fish, it'll suck in the juice. Got some cucumbers. Some tomatoes. I'll chop them up and make salad, alright?

Hmm.

Don't drink all of it, now!

Dickens! That would be the end of me, yes. Bozhko's rum, is it? Cheeky of you, keeping it in a plastic beer bottle. Hmm, Kozel, wouldn't mind having one to be honest.

I don't drink, really. Dorka liked a sip now and then. Maybe that's why she went nuts? I don't know. Alcohol's nothing but trouble these days, makes people drop left and right. It'll strike you blind, can you imagine?

Nonsense, that was before, back when people cooked up their own schnapps.

Saw it in Čerčany, in the restaurant at the station. Good sausages there. Saw talk on the telly 'bout people stealing from bottling plants, they said plenty went blind or turned into cretins. Got no telly in here, ya know.

I see.

Got some canned milk, though. Dorka used to put it in her coffee.

With the point of his knife, the fisherman pierced the milk can. He passed the boy a lump of dry bread. Here, make a binky. You can lick it a little. Don't soak it all the way! It's better than candy, I'll tell you.

Yum yum, said daddy.

Forgot my name yet, Moury? We're both over fifty now, right? You haven't changed one bit, though. Still jittery as hell.

Well, I keep moving, too. And you, what are you doing here by the water? Weren't you apprenticing for a roofer?

Wasn't very good at it. You'd better tell me about yourself. Been around, yea? People said you played theatre. Abroad. They said you were on the telly, some festival in Italy. Italy, my old man! Myself, I never even leave the house.

I'll tell you about it, don't worry.

You played theatre at that thing there, then, didn't you? Did you?

Yes!

Gonna stay here now? At your mother's in Pyšely? Stopped by the water with your couple of boys, yea? Where's grandma, then?

We're headed to Městečko actually. Just stopped by to say hello to mama. She always took good care of us, you know.

Where's your car?

Parked over there.

He was dripping thick droplets of milk onto a mashed chunk of bread he had torn from the lump.

Tried licking it, laddie? Better than candy or not?

It really is.

He stuck the soaked chunk into the little one's mouth. Sucking at it voraciously, the little one seemed insatiable. Has he gotten bigger? Or is it because he's all wrapped up now? He was gobbling up the bread, slurping at the hand.

Look, he's loving it, the little bastard.

The fisherman stood behind the boy, a piece of fish on a spoon, taking the spoon to the little one's mouth. The toddler smacked at the fish, swallowed. He got some more.

Give him water from the jug. And come eat, it's getting cold!

They ate everything. Fishbones stuck to the boy's fingers.

He wiped them into his skirt, glanced at the heap of clothes.

Listen, just pick something out, the fisherman said. Must be weird prancing around in a skirt, eh? What's your name, boy? Children call me uncle Fishscale, can you imagine? And what do they call you?

Can't you speak? Hey, Moury, does the kid speak?

Not right now.

Oh, right, they do that sometimes.

Hehe, Fishscale, chuckled daddy. Whose children?

I sell people some fish now and then. Here and there, by the store or the church, whatever makes them happy.

Which people?

Well, people, the locals 'round here. Their kids gave me the name. Don't know whose exactly, just a bunch of brats, ya know how it is.

The fisherman pulled out a pinch of tobacco, rolled it up. He offered the first cig to daddy then rolled up another.

Lit it up.

Dorka always swept the floor, the fisherman said. And now I've got to do it by myself, yea. He nodded at the boy. When I'm done sweeping this mess we'll go outside and you'll see.

Who's Dorka?

Well – Dorka, Moury old boy, quipped Fishscale, stood up, felt around the corner for the broom and started pushing the fish's and turtles' and god knows what creatures' remains into a pile by the threshold.

Pick one out, he said to daddy, pointing at the stash of clothes.

Dorka washed them again, they're fresh out the water, brand new. When the floods carry off the fences and clotheslines, they always bring in some clothes. Always do.

The boy took a step towards the mound, thinking he could perhaps find himself a sweatsuit and sweater, but daddy was already going through it, taking up all the space, so he sat back down as old man grabbed hold of a pair of shorts with suspenders, tried them on, happy about it, then rummaged some more, snatched up a striped shirt, put it on, laughed.

A sailor's shirt, just what I need! Could use a sweater, to be honest. How about a raincoat, got one of those?

Who knows, Moury, one just might turn up. I'm here all alone, ya know, by the water. No mobile, no telly, none of that. Like I need a fridge? Nobody comes 'round except for that poor old sod that one time. Me and the chaps gather sometimes by the store, though, we do, and chat a little, catch the drift, ya know? One of them works in the woods, the others are up and down the river, there's a camping site manager, too, and a couple more good blokes. We're a jolly nice bunch, let me tell you, we are.

You don't say?

I don't drink, myself, but a cold one with the lads, can't say no to that. We fill 'em up at the Vietnamese's 'cause he always keeps open, a plastic bottle or two, and then we shoot the crap. You wouldn't believe the things I hear!

Really?

Yea, like old Sekyra kicking the bucket. I know that one. Wasn't that long ago, but he did!

He did, yes, nodded daddy. Do you have some sugar for the rum, maybe? I'm over the habit of drinking it straight.

Well, there's no need to then, eh? Nobody's forcing you, Moury old boy.

Yes, yes, smirked daddy and poured himself some more.

So, you're a rich man now, Moury, is that it? Don't mean to say nothing bad 'bout Sonyichka, I always liked her, great lass, really! Old Sekyra, though... well, you aren't to blame for that squabble, are you. Got a little bit of sugar here, yea, just a little bit. Got to buy some more.

Yes, well, he's dead, nothing to do about that. Right out of the blue, too, and such a sturdy old geezer. I reckon it'll be everyone's turn sooner or later.

You're right about that, Moury boy! What about Sonyichka, then? Poor lass, with her old man stiffing up and all, I'm sure she's got all kinds of stuff to do. Right, you took the boys outside so she can take care of her stuff, did you? How about you, laddie? Ever help daddy play theatre? You're a chip off the old block, I see it. That's good! Right?

Straight rum is fine, actually. Tell me, Slavoj, what are you up to down here, my dear Slavoj?

Nice place you've got, by the way.

That old Sekyra, yea. Gone stiff as the lads put it. We filled another bottle just for him, we did. News like that! The Vietnamese don't care, he's always open I told you. Was thinking back, just now, how old Sekyra slapped me around, back when I was in the joint. Slapped me so hard my head kept spinning for days. He was real rough with the youngsters 'round here, remember? A real animal. If any young buck tried sniffing 'round these parts, he'd send him packing real fast, and when he got his hands on a local lad he'd give him a good beating, too, he always did. He wouldn't let us have any concerts, that old prick, and if some lad grew out his hair, the coppers gave him a good shave, down there in the ditch or someplace, and a good kick in the ass, the pigs. You little shit, he'd say, shaming my quarter like that, that's what he'd say. And then I got the hell slapped out of me, all about my ears, by that crabby old cock. How was I s'posed to climb the scaffold and the roof with my ears ringing like a bloody church bell? It's his fault I'm rotting here. And I don't even mind, really. I'm having a jolly good time. The water's close, the air is fresh and I don't give a damn about nothing. Just like most everyone else.

Alright, I'm pushing sixty I reckon, and a miserable old bastard at that, but it could be worse, could be worse. Fucking commies. It's been ages and they're still running the show, aren't they? Where's my damn compensation? Tell me that if you can.

It's a mess, it really is. No mobile, you said?

What's the use of that, my old boy?

Listen, Slavoj, what about this painting then? Looks a little out of place in this shabby old shack, you've got to agree.

Like I said, it swam right over. Got trapped in the branches, it did.

Was that big old storm hitting the church, the lightning, I mean. The church in Poříčí got struck by ball lightning, struck twice, and the water washed it all off, with the benches and all, and that's got to be how it happened. Me and Dorka, we heard it on the radio.

You have a radio?

No batteries, though.

Hmm.

The Vietnamese sells them cheap. But he won't take no fish in return. He cooks up his rice and fries them frozen ones instead.

Stuff from the river don't smell right to him, he says. Nothing to do about that, right?

Right!

The fisherman finished sweeping. Suddenly, spent, he sat down at the table, slumping, with the broom sticking out of his clenched fist like a javelin.

You don't think someone stole it, do you, he said after a while. Them church robbers taking it down the river got sunk by lightning, and that's how the painting wandered off? Then again, if I'd gone and reported every little thing floating past here, I'd be up to my neck in work, I would. Besides, I don't see nobody worrying 'bout me. Got dog houses swimming by, a whole bunch of clothes on them clotheslines, an armchair here and there, all kinds of stuff. You can trade it in, ya know, most of it. How much is soup at the Vietnamese's now? Six kronas, my old boy. Four kronas! Stuff swims my way all the time, you wouldn't believe it.

Is the painting real, though, asked daddy.

Damn right, it's her alright. Was an altar boy for this here Madonna for years, I should know. So it swam over here, so what.

But it has to be worth millions, man. You're rich! Smuggle it over to Germany and sell it, you're a millionaire just like that! We'll find some collectors, it'll be madness, you'll see.

Germany, what the hell? I ain't going nowhere. I'll keep it right here. For prayers, why not? The only place I ever go to is Čerčany, to fetch some chicken necks, visit the store if I need to, and then I'm right back here again. Benešov, that's too far, too far. Ain't nobody got time for that, taking the bus here and there like a nitwit. Besides, you know how expensive it is.

Does anyone know you have it here?

No. What the water brings in ain't nobody's business.

You're right about that, said daddy, and poured himself another one.

Translated from the Slovenian by Jeremi Slak

**Slovenski avtor
v središču 2015**

***Slovenian Author
in Focus 2015***

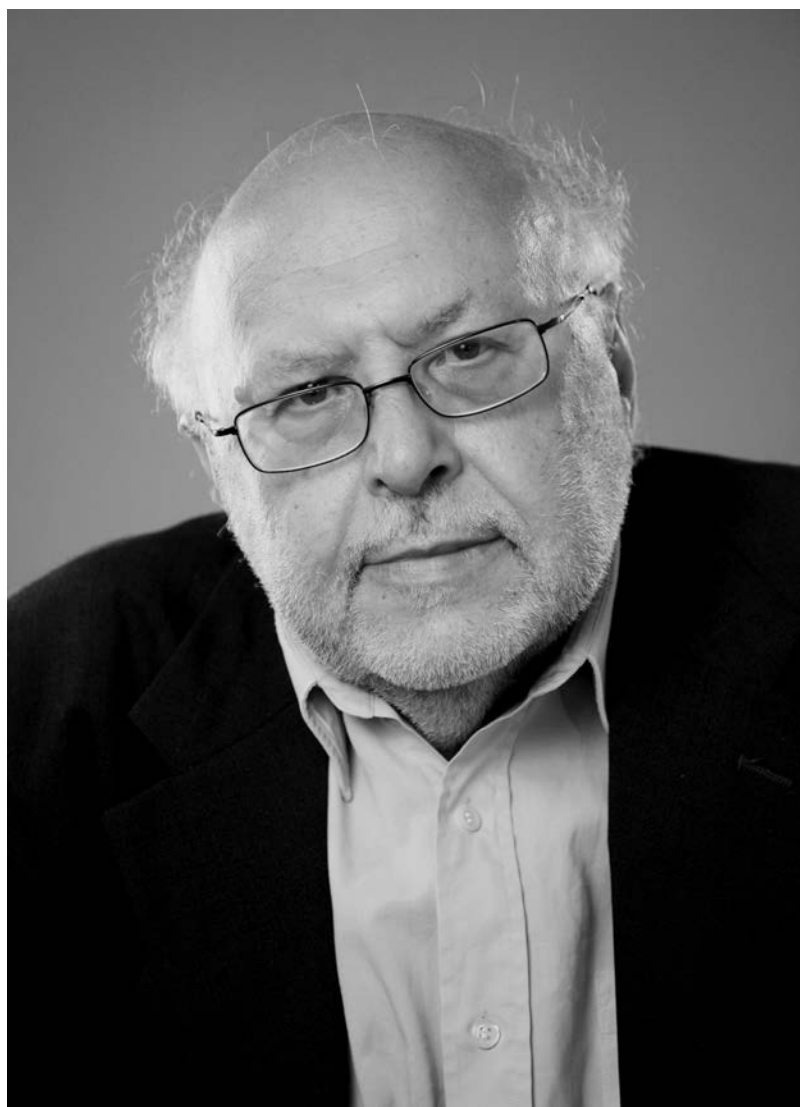


Foto © Tihomir Pinter

Milan Jesih

Milan Jesih se je rodil leta 1950 v Ljubljani. Pesmi in poskuse dialogov je začel pisati v gimnaziji, na ljubljanski Filozofski fakulteti je študiral primerjalno književnost in literarno teorijo. Nastopal je s pesniško skupino 442, iz katere je izšlo avantgardno Gledališče Pupilija Ferkeverk. Za njihovo pesništvo sta se v literarni zgodovini uveljavili oznaki lingvizem in ludizem, čeprav so pesniki razvili vsak svojo prepoznavno poetiko. Jesihov pesniški prvenec z naslovom *Uran v urinu, gospodar!*, izdan leta 1972, je še izhajal iz tradicije modernizma. V poznejših zbirkah je tipal v različne smeri, motivno pa ohranjal najspljošnejše, preizkušene modele in različne vrste verza. V knjigah *Soneti* (1989), *Soneti drugi* (1993) in *Jambi* (2000), ki po sodbi kritike predstavljajo vrh slovenskega pesniškega postmodernizma, se avtor poigrava s sonetno formo in tudi pozneje – do današnjih dni – ohranja jambsko stopico, motivno pa »prehaja tudi k bolj efemernim in celo bizarnim objektom, s čimer nemara poudarja tehnično plat pesnjenja bolj kot kakšno idejno odrešujočnost«, kot svojo zdajšnjo poetiko označuje sam.

Jesih je od leta 1973 do upokojitve leta 2013 delal v svobodnem poklicu. Med letoma 2009 in 2011 je bil predsednik Društva slovenskih pisateljev.

Piše pesmi, igre za odrasle in otroke (tudi za lutkovno gledališče) ter igre za radio in televizijo. Prevedel je več kot 60 gledaliških besedil, večinoma klasike, med njimi Shakespeara (dober ducat iger), Gogolja, Ostrovskega, Čehova, Bulgakova, Gorkoga, Bablja, Kleista in Nušića. Za pisateljsko in prevajalsko delo je prejel več slovenskih in mednarodnih nagrad.

Milan Jesih was born in 1950 in Ljubljana. After attending high school, which saw his first attempts at poetry and dialogue, he studied Comparative Literature and Literary Theory at the University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Arts. He performed with 442, a poets' group which produced the avant-garde Theatre of Pupilija Ferkeverk. Their poetry has been dubbed by literary scholarship as linguism and ludism, although each author developed his own distinctive poetics. Jesih's poetry debut, *Uran v urinu, gospodar!* (Uranium in the Urine, Master!), published in 1972, was still rooted in the modernist tradition. His later collections continued in different directions, but they always employed time-tested general themes and various types of verse. His volumes *Soneti* (Sonnets, 1989), *Soneti drugi* (Sonnets the Second, 1993) and *Jambi* (Iambics, 2000) are considered the peaks of Slovenian postmodernism in poetry. Ever since those forays into the sonnet form, the author has fostered a preference for iambics. Thematically he "crosses over to more ephemeral and even bizarre objects, a choice which underlines the technical aspect of writing poetry rather than any ideational power of redemption", as he describes his present work.

A freelancer from 1973 to his retirement in 2013, he served as President of the Slovenian Writers' Association from 2009–2011.

Jesih writes poems, plays for adults and children (including the puppet theatre), and radio and TV plays. He has translated over sixty texts for the theatre, mainly such classics as Shakespeare (over a dozen plays), Gogol, Ostrovsky, Chekhov, Bulgakov, Gorky, Babel, Kleist, and Nušić. His work as author and translator has been recognised with a number of awards, national and international.

Izbrane nagrade in priznanja

- 1974 Zlata ptica za literaturo.
1986 Nagrada Prešernovega sklada za pesniško zbirko *Usta* in za dramska besedila.
1987 Župančičeva nagrada Mestne občine Ljubljana za izjemen doprinos na področju kulture.
1990 Jenkova nagrada za pesniško zbirko *Soneti*.
1991 Grumova nagrada za *En sam dotik* kot najboljše slovensko dramsko besedilo.
1992 Sovretova nagrada za prevod Shakespearove tragedije *Romeo in Julija*.
1993 Zlata paličica za igro *Cesarjeva nova oblačila*.
1994 Zlata značka Borštnikovega srečanja.
2001 Veronikina nagrada za pesniško zbirko *Jambi*.
2001 Jenkova nagrada za pesniško zbirko *Jambi*.
2002 Prešernova nagrada za pesniški opus.
2004 Zlata paličica za uprizoritev *Prižgite luči*.
2007 Zlata medalja za poezijo, Salò (Italija).
2010 Srebrno leteče pero, Varna (Bolgarija).
2011 Čaša nesmrtnosti za pesniški opus.
2011 Srebrno pero, Tver (Rusija).

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Soneti drugi, Wieser, Celovec/Salzburg 1993.
Jambi, Mladinska knjiga, Ljubljana 2000.
Tako rekoč, Študentska založba, Ljubljana 2007.
Mesto sto, Cankarjeva založba, Ljubljana 2008.
Lahkoda, Študentska založba, Ljubljana 2013.

Pesniške antologije

Verzi (izbrane pesmi), Mladinska knjiga, Ljubljana 2002.

Pesmi (izbrane pesmi, miniatarka), Cankarjeva založba, Ljubljana 2006.

Zbrane zbirke, Študentska založba, Ljubljana 2012.

Knjige iger

Grenki sadeži pravice, Obzorja, Maribor 1978; DZS, Ljubljana 2004.

Premi govor, Aleph, Ljubljana 1989.

Štiri igre za otroke, Mladinska knjiga, Ljubljana 1997.

Zvezda in srce (skupaj z igro *Smradek* Svetlane Makarovič), Tuma, Ljubljana 2003.

Svoje igre (izbor iz dramskega dela), Cankarjeva založba, Ljubljana 2012.

Uprizorjena gledališka besedila

Limite, soavtor, 1973.

Grenki sadeži pravice, 1974.

Vzpon, padec in ponovni vzpon zanesenega ekonomista, 1974.

Brucka ali Obdobje prilagajanja, 1976.

Pravopisna komisija, 1985.

Triko, 1985.

Afrika, 1986.

Ptiči, 1987.

En sam dotik, 1990.

Ljubiti, 1993.

Ime na koncu jezika (libreto; glasba Mitja Vrhovnik Smrekar), 1997.

Kobila, 1998.

Srebrno rebro, 2002.

Govedina legendarno, 2012.

Uprizorjena besedila za mladino in otroke

Gulliver, velik in majhen, 1979.

Kronan norec (lutke). 1990.

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Zvezda in srce (lutke), 1996.

Deseti raček, 1997.

Prižgite luči, 2003.

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The colorature, v angleščino prevedla Gerda Fras, Radiotelevizija Slovenija, Ljubljana 1985.

Sonety, v češčino prevedel František Benhart, Votobia, Olomouc 1997.

The Name on the Tip of the Tongue (libreto za komorno opero), v angleščino prevedla Erica Johnson Debeljak, Gledališče Glej in Cankarjev dom, Ljubljana 1997.

Stihi, v ruščino prevedla Žanna Vladimirovna Perkovskaja, Litteræ Slovenicæ, Društvo slovenskih pisateljev, Ljubljana 2009.

Konstanta Ludol'fa, prevedla Žanna Vladimirovna Perkovskaja, Izdatel'stvo OOO MAGI »Iz veka v vek«, Tver 2014.

Selected Poems, v angleščino prevedla Nada Grošelj, Dalkey Archive Press, Champaign/Illinois 2015.

Selected Prizes and Awards

- 1974 The Golden Bird Award for literature.
- 1986 The Prešeren Foundation Prize, for the poetry collection *Usta (Lips)* and for theatre texts.
- 1987 The Župančič Award, conferred by the Municipality of Ljubljana for exceptional contributions to culture.
- 1990 The Jenko Award, for the poetry collection *Soneti (Sonnets)*.
- 1991 The Grum Award, for *En sam dotik* (A Single Touch) as the best Slovenian theatre text.
- 1992 The Anton Sovrè Award, for the translation of Shakespeare's tragedy *Romeo and Juliet*.
- 1993 The Golden Wand, for the play *Cesarjeva nova oblačila* (The Emperor's New Clothes).
- 1994 The Gold Badge at the Ignacij Borštnik Meeting.
- 2001 The Veronika Award, for the poetry collection *Jambi (Iambics)*.
- 2001 The Jenko Award, for the poetry collection *Jambi*.
- 2002 The Prešeren Prize, for poetic oeuvre.
- 2004 The Golden Wand, for the performance of *Prižgite luči* (Turn On the Lights).
- 2007 The Gold Medal for Poetry, Salò (Italy).
- 2010 The Winged Silver Pen, Varna (Bulgaria).
- 2011 The Cup of Immortality, for poetic oeuvre.
- 2011 The Silver Pen, Tver (Russia).

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- Uran v urinu, gospodar!* (Uranium in the Urine, Master!), Obzorja, Maribor 1972.
- Legende* (Legends), Cankarjeva založba, Ljubljana 1974.
- Kobalt* (Cobalt), Državna založba Slovenije, Ljubljana 1976.
- Volfram* (Tungsten), Državna založba Slovenije, Ljubljana 1980.
- Usta (Lips)*, Mladinska knjiga, Ljubljana 1985.
- Soneti (Sonnets)*, Wieser, Klagenfurt 1989.
- Soneti drugi (Sonnets the Second)*, Wieser, Klagenfurt/Salzburg 1993.
- Jambi (Iambics)*, Mladinska knjiga, Ljubljana 2000.
- Tako rekoč (So to Say)*, Študentska založba, Ljubljana 2007.
- Mesto sto (Hundredtown)*, Cankarjeva založba, Ljubljana 2008.
- Labkoda (Couldbe)*, Študentska založba, Ljubljana 2013.

Verse Anthologies

Verzi (Verses: selected poems), Mladinska knjiga, Ljubljana 2002.

Pesmi (Poems: selected poems, a miniature book), Cankarjeva založba, Ljubljana 2006.

Zbrane zbirke (Collected Poems), Študentska založba, Ljubljana 2012.

Books of Plays

Grenki sadeži pravice (Bitter Grapes of Justice), Obzorja, Maribor 1978; DZS, Ljubljana 2004.

Premi govor (Direct Speech), Aleph, Ljubljana 1989.

Štiri igre za otroke (Four Plays for Children), Mladinska knjiga, Ljubljana 1997.

Zvezda in srce (The Star and the Heart), together with the play *Smraddek* (Stinky) by Svetlana Makarovič, Tuma, Ljubljana 2003.

Svoje igre (Own Plays: a selection of texts for the theatre), Cankarjeva založba, Ljubljana 2012.

Theatre Texts (Performed)

Limite (Limits), co-author, 1973.

Grenki sadeži pravice (Bitter Grapes of Justice), 1974.

Vzpon, padec in ponovni vzpon zanesenega ekonomista (The Rise, Fall, and Repeated Rise of an Eager Economist), 1974.

Brucka ali Obdobje prilagajanja (Freshwoman: A Period of Adaptation), 1976.

Pravopisna komisija (The National Orthography Panel), 1985.

Triko (Leotard), 1985.

Afrika (Africa), 1986.

Ptiči (Birds), 1987.

En sam dotik (A Single Touch), 1990.

Ljubiti (To Love), 1993.

Ime na koncu jezika (*The Name on the Tip of the Tongue*: libretto; music by Mitja Vrhovnik Smrekar), 1997.

Kobila (The Mare), 1998.

Srebrno rebro (The Silver Rib), 2002.

Govedina legendarno (Beef, Legendarily), 2012.

Texts for the Young (Performed)

Gulliver, velik in majhen (Gulliver, Big and Small), 1979.

Kronan norec (lutke) (A Crowned Fool: a puppet performance), 1990.

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Cesarjeva nova oblačila (lutke) (The Emperor's New Clothes: a puppet performance), 1995.

Zvezda in srce (lutke) (The Star and the Heart: a puppet performance), 1996.

Deseti raček (The Tenth Duckling), 1997.

Prižgite luči (Turn On the Lights), 2003.

Translations

Pesme, translated into Serbo-Croatian by Josip Osti, Narodna knjiga, Belgrade 1981.

The Colorature, translated into English by Gerda Fras, Radiotelevizija Slovenija, Ljubljana 1985.

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Skrivnost subjekta

David Bandelj

1. Kratka zgodovina verza

Z imenom Milana Jesiha tradicionalna literarna zgodovina ves čas povezuje sintagmo pesniški modernizem. Trditev seveda ni sporna, če jo vzamemo s strogega stališča literarne znanosti, saj se je z Jesihovo prvo pesniško zbirko *Uran v urinu, gospodar!* (1972) nadaljeval Šalamunov *navidezni* ludizem. Navidezni zato, ker ludizem ni umetniški *credo* t. i. modernistov, temveč le formalna ali duhovna podstat, ki omogoča mimikrijo subjekta, kar se pri Jesihu v nadaljevanju izkaže za zelo osebno potezo. V zgodovini svojega verza je namreč Milan Jesih doživel velik razvoj ali celo, kakor označuje Matevž Kos,¹ več pesniških metamorfoz.

Janko Kos² je že pred tem nakazal, da je Jesih pripadnik iste generacije kot denimo Ivo Svetina, a drugačnega tipa poezije. Pri njem gre za »izhodiščno poetično igrivost«, njegove zbirke kažejo pretežno »modernistično usmeritev v alogičen miselni tok presenetljivih asociacij in besednih zvez, vendar oprt tudi na parodiranje pesniške tradicije«.

Že z drugo zbirko *Legende* (1974) se modernistični prijemi razvijajo in delajo zbirko prehodno, verz se daljša in postaja pripovedni ter pelje do dveh modernističnih viškov Jesihovega pesništva, zbirki *Kobalt* (1976) in *Volfram* (1980). V njih se izpoje Jesihov udarni modernizem. Ta oblika pesniškega oblikovanja se pet let pozneje v zbirki *Usta* (1985) preobrazi. Subjekt, ki ga v prejšnjih dveh zbirkah poistovetimo z avtorjem, se otrese vseh subjektivnih kategorij in išče svoje mesto v čisti poeziji. Tudi verz se Jesihu skrajša, tako da Matevž Kos³ zbirko *Usta* opredeli kot zbirko pesniških miniaturn.

Vrhunec Jesihovega pesništva pa je tradicionalna literarna veda postavila v devetdeseta leta, ko so izšli njegovi *Soneti* (1989) in *Soneti drugi* (1993). Formalna pravilnost in navezava na prešernovsko tradicijo sta naredili Jesiha za postmodernista, ki je v klasičnih strukturah uspel izrabiti pisane možnosti slovenskega jezika. O *Sonetih* se

¹ Matevž Kos: Sonet kot forma prebolevanja vsakdanjosti. *Fragmenti o celoti*. Ljubljana: LUD Literatura (zbirka Novi pristopi), 2007, str. 153–169.

² Janko Kos: *Pregled slovenskega slovstva*. Ljubljana: DZS, 1992, str. 377–378.

³ Nav. delo.

je izreklo tudi bralstvo, saj sta obe knjigi sonetov priljubljeno romali od bralca do bralca, morda tudi v povezavi s tradicijo prešernovskega soneta, ki jo Jesih prefinjeno in elegantno presaja v sodobnost. Boris Paternu⁴ omenja, da je posebnost Jesihovega pesništva v tem, da »ni samozadostno, ker je na široko odprto tudi gledanju nazaj, v domačo pesniško tradicijo, celo v njeno najbolj znano in bleščečo klasiko [...] z notranjim navezovanjem in zlivanjem z njo v neko novo tvorbo«. Tudi *Jambi* (2000) se pojavljajo v isti navezi in kažejo Jesihovo zavezanost formi, njegov jezik pa v tej navidezni strukturalni togosti pridobi na pomenu, zaradi česar velja Jesih za enega večjih jezikovnih mojstrov slovenske poezije.

Po dveh celovitih izborih – *Verzi* (2002) in *Pesmi* (2006) – pesnik leta 2007 objavi zbirko *Tako rekoč*, v kateri se pojavi tip pesnjenja, ki manj resnobno, toda z veliko mero uglašenosti in elegance išče način za pripoved, ta pa spreminja pesništvo v užitek.

V povezavi s prejšnjo zbirka *Mesto sto* (2007) bolj provokativno, a napisano z enako mero ironije upesnjuje partikularnost namišljene-ga mesta in (malo)meščanskega življenja v njem, najnovejša zbirka *Lahkoda* (2013) pa je nadgradnja pesnikovega iskanja in opuščanja subjekta v različnih, bolj ali manj resn(ičn)ih tonih, kjer prevladuje izčiščen verz.

To je kratek oris zgodovine Jesihovega pesništva, predvsem take, kot jo vidi uradna slovenska literarna zgodovina. Partikularnosti pa lahko pod drobnogledom razkrijejo malce drugačno podobo o pesniku in njegovem pesniškem ustvarjanju.

2. Subjekt na vse ali nič

Pozorni bralci v pesništvu Milana Jesiha najprej opazijo postopno pomikanje subjekta v ozadje. To se sicer ne dogaja diahrono, iz zbirke v zbirko, temveč je posledica avtorjevih izbir od zbirke *Kobalt* dalje. Če je v prvencu *Uran v urinu, gospodar!* subjekt vključen v vratolomne in subverzivne pesniške izjave, ki bralca dobesedno udarijo zaradi svoje navidezne igrivosti, se v *Legendah* subjekt začne skrivati v vizionarskih in sanjskih podobah. Za trenutek se ustavimo ob oznaki, ki Jesihovim pesmim pripisuje ludizem. Težko bi verjeli, da je tovrstno pesništvo le vrsta igračkastega onegavljenja

⁴ Boris Paternu: Jesih v klasiki. *Od ekspresionizma do postmoderne*. Ljubljana: Slovenska matica, 1999, str. 204–216.

s poezijo. Peter Kolšek⁵ je v spremni besedi k Jesihovim *Verzom* sicer ugotavljal, da ima ludizem širši pomen in da je »drzna in na nekaterih mestih zagotovo tudi travmatična – antiideološka kampanja, ki podira tako stare utrdbe kot nove barikade«, kar gotovo bolje ponazarja tako imenovani ludizem slovenskih poznih šestdesetih in zgodnjih sedemdesetih let. Toda ludistična faza se pri Jesihu kmalu izpoje in v *novumu* dveh naslednjih zbirk: *Volfram* in *Kobalt* se začneja pot k izničenju subjekta, ki pa je brez cilja, saj je sam pesnik že priznal,⁶ da se subjekta ne da kar tako izničiti: »Seveda mi je prav, da moja pesem ni govorjena z mojega stališča, ampak mi to ne zadošča, hočem, da bi bila govorjena z nikogaršnjega in nobenega stališča. Če bi se dalo.«

Volfram in *Kobalt* sta zbirki, ki sta povedni že v naslovu: gre za kovini, ki sta trši od železa, toda zelo krhki. V taki imenski navezavi sta tudi obe zbirki, ki sta izšli v sosledju. Za obe je značilna tiskarska postavitev počez, ker se je verz pesniku vztrajno daljšal. Daljšanje verza je seveda prineslo obilico pesniškega materiala, ki terja bralni napor. Vdiranje »sentimenta in melanholije«⁷ pa govori zoper skrajno modernistično naravnost, ki bi presekala s preteklostjo. Pravzaprav se Jesihovo iskanje nagiba k temu, da bi preteklost vključevalo v lastno pesništvo in jo prekodiralo v dobi primernejši izrazni manever.

Zbirka postopoma začenja diskurz o pesniški umetnosti, o načinu ustvarjanja sveta skozi poezijo, o resničnosti ali fikcijskosti pesniških izjav. Zdi se, da je pesnik (ali pa njegov subjekt) prišel do faze, ko se intenzivno sprašuje o svojem početju. Pesništvo postaja nizanje podob v varnem počelu verza, ki pa ni merodajen, saj pesnik vztrajno preizkuša njegovo zmogljivost. Podobe, ki navidezno dišijo po modernizmu, pa so prefinjen izraz stiske trenutka, ko želi pesem postati čisti obraz same sebe.

Dve »kovinski«⁸ Jesihovi zbirki sta le pot do prihodnosti skozi preteklost, ki jo avtor poskuša puščati za sabo, vendar se mu vedno bolj vpleta v tekst: ne samo skozi številne reference, temveč predvsem skozi občutje nizanja podob, ki postajajo mestoma celo ekspresionistično obarvane in prežete s smislom za tragiko.

⁵ Peter Kolšek: Podobar in podoba. Milan Jesih: *Verzi*. Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga (Knjižnica Kondor), 2001, str. 203–226.

⁶ Tina Kozin: Tri besede (Milan Jesih, intervju). *Literatura* XXIV/247–248, januar–februar 2012, str. 88–102.

⁷ Matevž Kos, nav. delo.

Toda *Kobalt* in *Volfram* nista zadostovala. Morje verzov (po mnenju Petra Kolška najdaljših verzov v zgodovini slovenske poezije)⁸ je kljub trdnosti krhko in bi za preskok v nikogaršnje izjavljanje potrebovalo usta, ki sama govorijo. Ta so prišla prav v naslednji zbirki, ki nosi zgovoren naslov *Usta*.

V njej se pesnik po iskanju, skozi katero se je prebil v *Kobaltu* in *Volframu*, pojavi z znatno krajšo verzno obliko, z odpovedjo prvoosebne lirskega subjektu in z novostjo, ki dokončno prelomi Jesihovo fazo ekstremne besedne živahnosti in se navda s preprosto, skorajda osnovno jezikovno materijo.

Kljub temu pa je odmikanje prvoosebnega subjekta pomembno ne samo, ker se poezija srečuje z ironijo, ampak tudi zato, ker uspe pesniku iz dolgega verza, polnega pomenov, v krajši obliki izločiti le tisto, kar je bilo za obstoj subjekta odveč. Pomen ostaja, prav tako določene refleksije, ki bralca napeljejo na večno poetološko temo.

Posebnost zbirke je poleg omenjene krajšave verza in vsaj navidezne odsotnosti subjekta tudi korak naprej v polifoniji Jesihove govornice. *Usta* so vmesna postaja, kjer se je vlak Jesihovega ustvarjanja za dalj časa ustavil in reflektiral o nadaljevanju poti. Ni naključje, da prihajajo *Usta* tik pred *Soneti*, ko se dokončno definira Jesihov pesniški jezik. Avtor je moral priti do najkrajše možne oblike lastnega verza, da je nato stopil na pot definiranega jamskega metruma, ki ga je dokončno ustoličil. *Usta* so se končala z upravičenim dvomom, kaj bo po njih:

Odslej ni več govora o subjektu, temveč se Jesihova poezija postavlja zase, sonet je izbran zaradi povezave s preteklostjo, vendar ne le zgodovinsko, temveč tudi umetniško. Tu se začne Jesihova jezikovna preobrazba, ki izhaja iz tradicije in se vanjo vrača, potem ko je na vseh prejšnjih poteh poskusila pesniško realizacijo, ki bi bila za dobo najbolj primerna. In namesto *subjekta* stopi v ospredje *govorec*.

3. *Soneti*, poglavje zase

Čeprav se Jesihovi soneti vključujejo v avtorjevo zgodbo o odmikanju subjekta, zahtevajo poglavje zase. To pa zato, ker predstavljajo etabliranje Jesihovega jezika, njegove forme in vsebinske zrelosti. Literarna zgodovina je obe sonetni zbirki dodobra premostrila in ju označila z laskavimi ocenami, ki izpričujejo njuno pomembnost

⁸ Peter Kolšek, nav. delo.

ne le v konstelaciji avtorjeve osebne pesniške zgodovine, temveč s pogledom na celotno slovensko poezijo. Denis Poniž⁹ jedrnato ugotavlja, da je v Jesihovih sonetih, »ki izpovedujejo pesnikovo 'popotovanje' skozi resnične in umišljene pokrajine, skrito nenavadno besedno bogastvo, živopisni kontrasti, metaforični obrati, aluzije na druge pesnike, postmoderni spoj najrazličnejših vtisov, zaznav in vizij«. Matevž Kos je v sintagmi »sonet kot forma prebolevanja modernosti«¹⁰ vzpostavil paradigmo, v kateri je jasno, da se s soneti Jesih približuje postmodernističnemu občutenju poezije in njene tradicije.

Prav taka literarnozgodovinska oznaka je vplivala na razumevanje Jesihovih sonetov kot postmodernistični poskus ubesedovanja sveta. Ne glede na očitno *zeitgeistovsko* moč, ki so jo *Soneti* ob koncu osemdesetih in na začetku devetdesetih let prikazali in se resnično spojili s postmodernističnim »modelom«, ki se je pri slovenskih literarnih zgodovinarjih odprl tudi na raziskovalnem področju, moramo pri tem upoštevati tudi avtonomijo ustvarjalca, ki je v svojih sonetih združil eminentno klasično tradicijo te forme. Ta je v slovenski poeziji vzcvetela s Prešernom, nato je po njej seglo kar precej slovenskih pesnikov (tudi sodobnejših) in poskušalo bodisi ustvariti svojo različico bodisi sprejeti sonet kot eminentno formo in ga uporabiti kot navezavo na preteklost, z željo po umetniški kontinuiteti in po obvladovanju pesniške odličnosti. Jesih operira s soneti bolj z vsebinskega kot formalnega vidika. V formi je seveda neoporečen, toda njegov pravi premik se zgodi na notranji snovni ravni, saj se izpoved subjekta spričo iskanja (ali pravilneje: njegovega izgubljanja) iz prejšnjih zbirk prelevi v pripoved glasu, ki ustvarja in obnavlja pokrajine iz preteklosti tudi z uporabo citatov, ki pa pri Jesihu niso umetelni in prisiljeni, temveč so posledica pesniške prakse, neke vrste ekstatične poplave besed, ki je pri vsakem pesniku drugačna. O svojem domnevnem postmodernizmu in z njim povezano citatnostjo Jesih pravi:

»[B]esede družijo se rade; prvih nekaj že kod snamem, potem prihajajo same; saj izstrelim signalno raketo, da pritečejo bolj zažele-
ne, z ustrezno barvo las in lepšimi merami in bolj škandalozno pre-
teklostjo in zrabljenostjo in vsem, kar jih določa, in potem pasirajo

⁹ Denis Poniž: *Beseda se vzdiguje v dim. Stoletje slovenske lirike 1900–2000*. Ljubljana: Cankarjeva založba, 2002, str. 269–281.

¹⁰ Nav. delo.

kot manekenke in bodibilderji po pisti in jih izbiram in zavračam [...]. Najprej sem se citatov malo plašil, a jih sprejel; ko sem prebral, prej sem bil menda spregledal, da so tako značilni za postmodernizem, sem jih nekaj časa odrival, potem pa spet sprejemal, češ, kaj mi pa morejo; če hočejo, da bomo postmodernisti, bomo pa postmodernisti, gor ali dol, pesem ni zato ne boljša ne slabša.«¹¹

Jesihov govorec je pripovednik in slikar. Pripovednik zato, ker je značilnost sonetov govor, ki je opisovalen, lagodno ritmičen in predstavlja pokrajino besed, ki nato ustvari sliko. Pa tudi slikar (Kolšek¹² ga po eni izmed pesmi *Podobar in podoba* imenuje »podobar«), saj je v sonetih živo prisoten slikovni element, ki ga najdemo v metaforičnih izbirah. Te niso hermetične, ampak jasne in odprte ter ustvarjajo pravilen ambient, ki ga je literarna zgodovina razumela kot postmodernističnega. Tak pa je zaradi pesnika, ne zaradi postmodernizma. Okolje, kronotop, v katerem so uglaseni soneti, je fiktivni čas neke daljne ali manj daljne preteklosti, kjer se dogajanje umirja in presaja na raven predstav. Realije niso več realije, tudi če so videti tako. So le način izražanja, ki izniči sodobnost in preteklost in se postavi v *kairos* poezije.

Namišljena pokrajina in s tem tudi namišljeni *chronos*, ki postane *kairos*, se v Jesihovih sonetih spoji z elementi, ki jih Paternu¹³ označi za tematske kroge Jesihove poezije, in sicer z bivanjsko, ljubezensko in poetološko temo.

Tudi različnost jezika, stilna polifonija, ki meša visoki in nižji jezikovni slog, Petrarcoe verze in slengovske izraze, je značilnost, ki opredeljuje Jesihove sonete. Poskus z njimi je bil za pesnika torej uspešen (ne glede na to, da so *Soneti* doživeli dva ponatisa), ker je znal revolucionirati tradicijo in jo vključiti v sodobno dožemanje sveta ter tako ustvaril knjigo, pravzaprav dve, ki opredeljujeta pomemben preskok slovenske poezije iz tradicije v sodobnost, ne hote, a z veliko mero umetniške občutljivosti. Zato forma pri Jesihu ni le zunanji videz ali varno zavetje, temveč zavestna izbira, ki omogoča razprtost jezika v vse smeri. Konec koncev je tudi prosti verz neke vrste formalna izbira. Jesihu pa se je s *Soneti* očitno odprlo prizorišče pesniške pokrajine, ki jo bo nadaljeval v jambih.

¹¹ Tina Kozin, nav. delo.

¹² Nav. delo.

¹³ Nav. delo.

4. In od tu dalje ...

Jambi so v svojem bistvu predrugačeni soneti, saj se je pesnik očitno odpovedal tercnam in oblikoval pesmi, ki so dolge štiri, pet, največ šest kvartin – med njimi se najde tudi kak sonet – in nadaljujejo začeto pot prejšnjih dveh zbirk s formalno značilnostjo, ki bo Jesiha spremljala odslej. V *Jambih* se občutje *kairoso* iz *Sonetov* prelevi in postane bolj intimno. Če se v sonetih pojavljajo metafore, ki nakazujejo vpletenost v družbeno življenje, je v *Jambih* tega nekoliko manj in v ospredje stopa tematika bivanja, na katero opozarja večina pesmi. *Jambi* so presenetljivo nemeščansko vraščena knjiga. V njej se giblje narava in ustvarja ozadje tišine, ki mestoma spremlja ugotovitve Jesihovega govorca. Te so v svojem bistvu trpke, melanholične, včasih tudi tragične. Eksistencialno vzdušje, ki veje iz jambov (ali *Jambov*), ustvarja poetično občutje, ki svet namišljenih realij, kakršnega poznamo iz *Sonetov*, poveže s svetom namišljenih čustvovanj.

Občutek eteričnosti in krhkosti pa se zruši v zbirki *Tako rekoč*. Spet smo torej tam, kjer smo začeli. Jesihovo namerno zgubljanje subjekta se mora uresničevati naprej. Govorec lahko ostane, subjekt naj izgine. Oklepaj, ki ga v poetičnem obroču Jesihovega ustvarjanja predstavljajo *Jambi*, se tu zapre in subjekt ponovno roma v nujno pozabo. Zdi se, kot bi hotele pesmi za hipec obuditi nostalgijo po subjektu in preizkusiti, ali lahko utrjen in uveljavljen govorec v *Sonetih* vsaj igra subjekta. *Tako rekoč* se spet naslaja ob užitku pripovedi in poplavi podob, ki se mestoma mojstrsko prepletajo z erudicijo in (bralno) izkušnjo avtorja.

Da pa ne bi ostala zbirka *tako rekoč* brez pesnikovega podpisa, se je treba tudi tu postaviti v vlogo detektiva, ki išče skrite sledi. Poleg znatne mere (samo)ironije je v zbirki razvidna tudi refleksija o avtorjevem lastnem delu, ki se giblje na meji med obupom in veseljem. Jesih velikokrat premišljuje o tehnopoetiki. Pravi obrat v zbirki pa predstavlja njen zaključni del, kjer se Jesihov govorec spopada s smrtjo, eno najpogostejše upesnjenih tem, na način, ki je videti lahкотen, a pomeni le obračun s strahom, ki navdaja vsa bitja. Pesmi ostajajo presenetljivo svetle, tudi ko izražajo dokončnost, predvsem pa, ko iz Jesihove poezije preženejo metafizični nihilizem, v katerega je pesnik (ali njegov govorec) od *Sonetov* dalje dvomil. Avtorjev dvom pa ni skeptični, temveč kartezijanski dvom, ki sploh omogoča eksistenco. Tudi iz teh pesniških glasov je spoznati navidezno odsotnost subjekta, ki pa se vseskozi vsiljuje z avtorjevo izbiro tematike.

Zato je pravo presenečenje, da zbirka *Mesto sto* nadaljuje pot brez prvoosebne subjekta in je njen govorec čisti pripovedovalec. Mesto kot kronotop dogajanja prihaja spet v ospredje in postaja velika metafora življenja, vendar se ta poezija pod krinko ironije, plehke vsakdanjosti in nesentimentalnosti odpira v srž človekovega smisla. Gre za poezijo, ki se spet dogaja v *kairosu* in obnavlja wittgensteinovsko zavezo molčanja o bistvenem. Jesih oziroma njegov govorec se v govorjenju o obrobnostih dotakneta prav tistega, čemur je poezija prvenstveno namenjena – namreč razkrivanju.

Jesih z zbirko *Mesto sto* potrjuje vlogo graditelja svetov in podob, ki kvazirealno opredeljujejo sodobnost. S tem lahko pritrdimo tudi mnenju Iva Svetine,¹⁴ ki pravi, da je Jesihovo mesto »nemara nova Goga«. Prešernovsko večno dilemo med strahom in upom Jesih rešuje s fluktuantno poezijo, ki spretno prehaja med obema bivanjskima skrajnostma.

Ob srečanju s smislom in »upom« bivanja pri Jesihovem govorcu je močno zaznavna tudi ljubezenska tematika, ki doseže svoj vrhunec v *Sonetih*. Če se pred *Soneti* pesnik pogovarja o ljubezni le posredno, je v slednjih močno vidna sled prepuščanja silovitemu toku večnega ognja ljubezni, toda ne na *romantično izpovedni* način, temveč na *upajoče pripovedni*. Dvom o bivanju ali *strah* pred njim je presežen z *upom* ljubezenskih srečanj, ki osmišljajo govorčev in nemara pesnikov svet. Tu se razblini časovni aspekt in prej omenjeni *kairos* poezije postane sedanjost, *hic et nunc* trenutek erotične ekstaze.

Čas, kategorija, ki je v ljubezni po definiciji večna, se v Jesihovih stvaritvah zoži na trenutek. Ta je minljiv, toda zdi se, da poezija služi le temu, da ga ustavi in poskuša razbliniti dvom o minljivosti ljubezni. Pravzaprav je čas njen največji nasprotnik. Vez med bežanjem časa in minljivostjo ljubezni je tako močna, da postane vodilni motiv Jesihovega iskanja v ljubezenski liriki:

Potešitve v erotiki v bistvu ni, zdi se, da je ljubezenska tematika le možnost, da se slast bivanja nekje uresniči, toda z groznim dvomom, ki skorajda onemogoča pozitivni pogled v prihodnost. Tako se po *Sonetih* tudi ljubezenska tematika premakne v ozadje in se pojavlja le sporadično kot svetla reminiscenca, ki poživlja, a obenem pušča za sabo globok dvom.

Jesih se na tem področju čedalje manj ustvarjalno pojavlja in največjih bivanjskih dilem ne rešuje z ljubeznijo, temveč z iskanjem

¹⁴ Milan Jesih: *Mesto sto*. Ljubljana: Cankarjeva založba, 2007.

smisla umetniškega početja in refleksijo o svojem delu. Toda če si podrobneje ogledamo pesmi, ki se dotikajo poetološke teme, lahko v njih najdemo prefinjeno in pretanjeno obliko samoodreševanja. Jesih-pesnik-subjekt-govorec se s svojim delom spoji s konstelacijo vesolja in je del Pranačrta, ki nam ne bo nikdar znan. Nekdo ga imenuje usoda, drugi bog, tretji kaj drugega. Neizmerljivost Jesihovega naslavljanja boga (ali Boga), ki je včasih ironično, drugič celo sarkastično, tretjič pa smrtno resno, priča o vsestranskem obračunavanju s svetom in njegovo nelogično logiko, ki je ne nazadnje prapočelo pisanja dobre literature. Zato so verzi, ki premišlujejo ustvarjanje, v bistvu verzi, ki jih piše *stvaritelj*. In s tega vidika se spajajo z večno trditvijo, da so pesniki ne samo ustvarjalci poezije, temveč ustvarjalci vesolja-sveta. Kot tak se tudi Milan Jesih odloča, da bo z ustvarjanjem premagoval strah in spodbujal up, brez katerega stvarjenja ni.

Nemogoče je potegniti črto pod opusom, ki je še vedno v nastajanju. S čim nas bo Jesih presenetil v prihodnje, ne moremo vedeti. Naj velja le to, da je poleg umetniške občutljivosti pri takem pesniku na delu vedno tudi magičnost jezika, ki prihaja, odhaja, valuje in ga pesnik/stvaritelj le oblikuje. Včasih sam od sebe, včasih pa to dela jezik sam in je pesnik le orodje v njegovih rokah. Kje je meja med njima, ostaja skrivnost, ki je ne bomo izvedeli.

The Mystery of the Subject

David Bandelj

1. A brief history of verse

Traditional Slovenian literary criticism has always associated the name of Milan Jesih with the phrase *poetic modernism*. Viewed strictly from the perspective of literary science, this claim is justified, for Jesih's first poetry collection, *Uranium in the Urine, Master!* (*Uran v urinu, gospodar!*, 1972) continues the *apparent* ludism of Tomaž Šalamun. "Apparent" because ludism was not the artistic *credo* of the so-called modernists but merely a formal or spiritual basis enabling the mimicry of the subject, a feature which was to become highly personalised in Jesih's writing. The history of Jesih's verse in fact spans a remarkable development or, in the words of Matevž Kos,¹ a sequence of poetic metamorphoses.

Earlier, Janko Kos² had suggested that Jesih belongs to the same generation as, for example, Ivo Svetina, but to a different type of poetry. According to Kos, Jesih's starting-point is "poetic playfulness," and his collections show a largely modernist orientation toward an alogical flow of surprising associations and phrases: a flow which at the same time draws on a parody of the poetic tradition.

Jesih's second collection, *Legends* (*Legende*, 1974), already evinces a development of the modernist techniques and thus assumes a transitional role: the line gains in length and narrativity, thus paving the way for the twin summits of Jesih's modernism, the collections *Cobalt* (*Kobalt*, 1976) and *Tungsten* (*Volfram*, 1980). With these, Jesih's energetic modernism peters out, and five years later his poetic composition is transformed in the collection *Lips* (*Usta*, 1985). If the subject of the first two collections invites identification with the author, the subject of *Lips* shakes off all subjective categories, searching for his place in pure poetry. In addition, the line of verse shortens: Matevž Kos³ considers *Lips* a collection of poetic miniatures.

¹ Matevž Kos: "Sonet kot forma prebolevanja vsakdanjosti." [The Sonnet as a Form of Recovering from Daily Routine.] *Fragmenti o celoti*. Ljubljana: LUD Literatura (Novi Pristopi Series), 2007. 153–169.

² Janko Kos: *Pregled slovenskega slovstva*. [A Survey of Slovenian Literature.] Ljubljana: DZS, 1992. 377–378.

³ Op. cit.

The peak of Jesih's writing, according to traditional literary criticism, occurs in the 1990s, which saw the publication of his *Sonnets* (*Soneti*, 1989) and *Sonnets the Second* (*Soneti drugi*, 1993). The regularity of their form and their connection to the France Prešeren tradition make Jesih a postmodernist who has successfully employed classic structures to exploit the range of possibilities inherent in the Slovenian language. The two sonnet books became popular and were widely read, perhaps partly due to the tradition of the Prešeren sonnet, which had been elegantly transplanted to the present in Jesih's approach. One of Jesih's distinctive features, according to Boris Paternu,⁴ is that his poetry is not self-sufficient; rather, he is fully open to looking back, to the national poetic tradition, even to its best known and most brilliant classics. It is this tradition that he alludes to and blends into an innovative configuration. The same association continues in *Iambics* (*Jambi*, 2000), but this apparent structural rigidity in fact charges his language with even more meaning, which is why Jesih is considered a master of language in Slovenian poetry.

Two subsequent anthologies, *Verses* (*Verzi*, 2002) and *Poems* (*Pesmi*, 2006), were followed in 2007 by the collection *So to Say* (*Tako rekoč*). *So to Say* inaugurates a type of composition which seeks, less gravely but with great harmony and elegance, a narrative mode – a mode which makes poetry a pure delight.

Continuing the trend of *So to Say*, the collection *Hundredtown* (*Mesto sto*, 2007), slightly more provocative but just as ironic, sets to verse the details of an imaginary town and its (petit) bourgeois life. And the latest collection, *Couldbe* (*Lahkoda*, 2013), is an elaboration of the poet's search for and omission of the subject in various tones, ranging from more to less serious. What preponderates is again a polished verse form.

This brief sketch is the history of Jesih's poetry as seen by the mainstream Slovenian literary criticism. A minute examination of details, however, yields still another image of the poet and his work.

2. The subject: all or nothing

For the attentive reader, the most striking feature of Milan Jesih's poetry is the gradual withdrawal of the subject. Rather than a dia-

⁴ Boris Paternu: "Jesih v klasiki." [Jesih among the Classics.] *Od ekspresionizma do postmoderne*. Ljubljana: Slovenska matica, 1999. 204–216.

chronic development from one collection to another, this is a result of the author's decisions ever since *Cobalt*. If the subject of his debut collection, *Uranium in the Urine, Master!*, is heavily involved in daring and subversive poetic utterances, which veritably "hit" the reader with their seeming playfulness, the subject of *Legends* takes to hiding in visionary and oneiric images. At this point we may stop to examine the *ludism* label attached to Jesih's poems, which can hardly be read as a mere toying with poetry. Peter Kolšek's⁵ afterword to Jesih's *Verses* notes that ludism has a larger meaning: it is a daring, at times traumatic, counter-ideological campaign which breaks down both old ramparts and new barricades. This is certainly a more appropriate portrayal of the Slovenian ludism in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Yet Jesih's ludist phase soon peters out, and the *novum* of the two subsequent collections, *Cobalt* and *Tungsten*, is that they embark on the annihilation of the subject – a futile task because the poet himself admits⁶ that the subject is not so easily annihilated: "Of course it's fine with me that my poem is not told from my own viewpoint, but it's not enough, I want it to be told from nobody's viewpoint. If such can be done."

The collections *Cobalt* and *Tungsten* bear eloquent titles: both refer to metals which are at once harder than iron and very brittle. Similar features mark the two collections. Both were printed in landscape orientation because the lines of verse extended progressively. This extension brings, of course, an abundance of material which poses a challenge to the reader's ability. On the other hand, the intrusion of "sentiment and melancholy"⁷ speaks against a total adherence to modernist ideology which is eager to break from the past. In fact, Jesih's quest leans toward absorbing the past in his own poetry and recasting it with means of expression more suitable to this day and age.

Cobalt segues into a discourse on the art of poetry, on the creation of worlds through poetry, on the truth or fictionality of poetic utterances. The poet (or his subject) seems to have reached a phase when he is intensely questioning his activity. Poetry turns into a string of

⁵ Peter Kolšek: "Podobar in podoba." [The Painter and the Painting.] Milan Jesih: *Verzi*. Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga (Knjižnica Kondor), 2001. 203–226.

⁶ Tina Kozin: "Tri besede (Milan Jesih, intervju)." [Three Words (Milan Jesih: an interview).] *Literatura* XXIV/247–248, January–February 2012. 88–102.

⁷ Matevž Kos, op. cit.

images embedded in the safety of the verse, but the latter has no authority because the poet is continually testing its endurance. The images which superficially smack of modernism subtly express the predicament of the moment when the poem wants to become the pure reflection of its self.

Jesih's two "metal" collections are simply a road leading to the future through the past: a past which the author strives to leave behind but which increasingly becomes entwined in his text. This is achieved not only through numerous references but, above all, by the atmosphere evoked by a string of images, which are sometimes tinged with expressionism and imbued with a sense of the tragic.

Yet *Cobalt* and *Tungsten* were not enough. The ocean of verse lines (the longest lines in the history of Slovenian poetry, according to Peter Kolšek)⁸ is fragile for all its solidity; to achieve a subject-less utterance would require lips speaking on their own. This image comes in handy in the next collection with a telling title: *Lips*.

After the arduous quest of *Cobalt* and *Tungsten*, the poet reappears with a considerably shorter verse form, renounces the first-person subject, and definitively ends his phase of extreme linguistic exuberance by adopting simple, almost rudimentary language material.

The withdrawal of the first-person subject is important not just because poetry thus meets irony, but also because the poet strips the long verse line, laden with meaning, only of those elements which are related to the subject and therefore redundant. The meaning remains, as do certain reflections that touch on his timeless poetological theme.

In addition to the line shortening and the (at least apparent) absence of the subject, a distinctive feature of *Lips* is the enhanced polyphony of Jesih's idiom. *Lips* is an intermediary stop where the train of Jesih's creativity pulls up to reflect on its way forward. It is no coincidence that the book comes just before *Sonnets*, the collection which crystallises Jesih's poetic idiom, for it is only by attaining his shortest possible verse form that he can move on, step onto the path of the defined iambic metre which finally establishes him as a full-fledged poet. *Lips* concludes with a well-founded doubt as to what may come next.

With this, the subject disappears for good. Henceforth Jesih's poetry speaks for itself; the sonnet is chosen because of its link to the

⁸ Peter Kolšek, op. cit.

past – not merely the historical but the creative past. Here begins Jesih's language metamorphosis, which emerges out of tradition and returns to it, having sought on all previous forays the kind of poetic realisation that would prove most suitable for our time. Instead of a *subject*, the floor is taken by a *speaker*.

3. *Sonnets*, a chapter unto itself

Although they are an integral part of Jesih's process of withdrawal, his sonnets require a separate chapter because it is here that his idiom, form, and maturity of content become fully established. Both of his sonnet collections have been minutely examined by literary scholarship and given favourable reviews, reviews testifying to their role not only in the author's personal development as a poet but in the context of Slovenian poetry as a whole. To cite some examples: Denis Poniz⁹ concisely notes that Jesih's sonnets, which give voice to the poet's "journey" through real and imagined landscapes, contain an uncommon wealth of words, brightly coloured contrasts, metaphorical turns, allusions to other poets, a postmodern blend of the most diverse impressions, perceptions, and visions. The phrase "the sonnet as a form of recovering from modernity" coined by Matevž Kos¹⁰ clearly establishes that Jesih's sonnets approach the postmodernist experience of poetry and its tradition.

It was precisely characterisations such as these that led to the perception of Jesih's sonnets as postmodernist attempts to verbalise the world. True, in the late 1980s and early 1990s *Sonnets* certainly displayed an evident *zeitgeist* power, fusing with the postmodernist "model" which had emerged in Slovenian literary scholarship. But of equal importance is the autonomy of the author who has gathered in his sonnets the prestigious tradition of this verse form. The Slovenian sonnet blossomed with Prešeren and went on to be adopted by a number of Slovenian poets (even recent ones), who sought either to create their own versions of it or to adopt it as a classic form, a reference to the past, in their desire to establish artistic continuity and poetic excellence. Jesih's work on the sonnets centres on

⁹ Denis Poniz: *Beseda se vzdiguje v dim. Stoletje slovenske lirike 1900–2000*. [The Word Rises Up in Smoke: A Century of Slovenian Lyric Poetry 1900–2000.] Ljubljana: Cankarjeva založba, 2002. 269–281.

¹⁰ Op. cit.

content rather than form. His form is impeccable, of course, but the real shift happens at the inner, subject-matter level: the confessions of the subject, who has been sought (or rather lost) in the previous collections, are transformed into the narrative of a voice which creates and renews landscapes from the past. To this end Jesih employs quotations as well, but without an artificial or constrained effect; they result from his poetic practice, an ecstatic flood of words that takes a different shape for each poet. Of his alleged postmodernism and the use of quotations associated with it, Jesih says:

“[W]ords like to flock together: once I’ve ferreted out the first ones, the rest will come of their own accord; I fire a signal rocket to call together the more desirable ones, with the right hair colours and finer measurements and a scandalous past and all their wear and tear and all that defines them, and then they parade on the catwalk like models and bodybuilders while I choose or reject them [...]. At first I was a bit wary of quotations but adopted them all the same; when I read how typical they were of postmodernism, something I must have overlooked before, I began to reject them but then accepted them again, thinking There’s no harm in that, if they want me to be a postmodernist I’ll settle for it, what the hell, the poem won’t be any better or worse for it.”¹¹

Jesih’s speaker is a narrator and painter. A narrator because the sonnets are largely characterised by discourse that is descriptive and unhurriedly rhythmical, presenting a landscape of words which coalesces into an image. But he is a visual artist as well (Kolšek¹² calls him a “painter” after one of his poems, “The painter and the painting”), for the sonnets display a vivid visual element in their choice of metaphors. Far from being hermetic, these are clear and open, conjuring up an ambience which is interpreted by literary criticism as postmodernist. This quality, however, stems from the poet himself rather than from postmodernism. The setting, the chronotope to which the sonnets are attuned, is a fictional, remote, or not-so-remote past where the action, transplanted to the level of conceptions, slows down. Facts are no longer facts even if they appear as such. They are simply a way of expression which annuls the present and past, entering the *kairos* of poetry.

The imaginary landscape, and thus the imaginary *chronos*-turned-*kairos*, smoothly blends in Jesih’s sonnets with the elements de-

¹¹ Tina Kozin, op. cit.

¹² Op. cit.

scribed by Boris Paternu¹³ as the thematic circles of Jesih's poetry: existential, erotic, and poetological themes.

Another defining feature of Jesih's sonnets is their variety of language, a polyphonic style that mixes higher and lower registers, Petrarchan verses and slang expressions. The sonnet experiment succeeded (even apart from the fact that *Sonnets* had two reprints) because the poet was able to revolutionise tradition and include it in the contemporary perception of the world, creating a book or, rather, two books which define a major leap in Slovenian poetry from tradition to the present with great artistic sensibility. Therefore Jesih's form is no superficial appearance or escape but a consistent choice which opens up the language in all directions. Even free verse, after all, can be perceived as a kind of formal choice. *Sonnets* evidently laid out for Jesih the setting of a poetic landscape which he was to continue in his iambics.

4. Where do we go from here. . .

In its essence *Iambics* is a collection of modified sonnets, for the poet has given up tercets in order to form poems of four, five, or six quatrains at most (with an occasional sonnet still thrown in) and thus continue down the path taken by the preceding two collections, equipped with a formal feature which will accompany him throughout the years. The mood of the *kairos* from *Sonnets* grows more intimate in *Iambics*. The frequent sonnet metaphors suggesting involvement in public life are reduced, giving way to the theme of being, of existence, which is underlined in most poems. Surprisingly, *Iambics* is hardly embedded in town life at all: there is a lot of nature instead, conjuring up a background of silence which accompanies the observations of Jesih's speaker. These are essentially bitter, melancholy, at times even tragic. It is possible to associate the existential mood radiating from the iambics (or *Iambics*) with the creation of a poetic mood: a mood which might link the world of imaginary facts, such as is found in *Sonnets*, to the world of imaginary emotions.

This ethereal, fragile atmosphere is shattered in the next collection, *So to Say*. We are back at the drawing board. Jesih's intentional loss of the subject must continue. The speaker may stay, but the

¹³ Op. cit.

subject must disappear. The parenthesis represented by *Iambics* in the poetic circle of Jesih's writing closes and the subject is sent back into his imposed exile. It is as if the poems sought to awaken a momentary nostalgia for the subject and to test whether the acknowledged and established speaker of *Sonnets* might not at least "impersonate" the latter. The collection *So to Say* again delights in the joy of narrating and the flood of images, which sometimes masterfully interweave with the author's erudition and (reading) experience.

But hidden clues can be discerned to prove that the text has not been – *so to say* – stranded, left without the author's signature. In addition to a pronounced (self)irony, the collection presents the author's reflection on his own work, a reflection ever hovering between despair and joy. Jesih often portrays himself as a keen thinker on technopoetics. The true twist in the collection, however, comes in its final section where Jesih's speaker confronts one of the themes most frequently addressed in poetry, death. Seemingly lighthearted, this confrontation actually deals with the fear which pervades all living creatures. Yet the poems are surprisingly bright even when they express finiteness, and especially once they have been rid of the metaphysical nihilism which the poet (or his speaker) has been skeptical of ever since *Sonnets*. Jesih's doubt is not skeptical but Cartesian, the kind that may shed some light on existence. These poetic voices, too, reveal the apparent absence of the subject, but the latter keeps intruding through the author's choice of themes.

Thus it comes as a surprise that the collection *Hundredtown* continues the journey without a first-person subject, and that its speaker is a pure narrator. Again it is the town, growing into a large metaphor, which is foregrounded as the chronotope of action. Under a guise of irony, shallow routine and lack of sentimentality, this poetry opens to the very core of man's purpose in the world. Again it takes place in the *kairos*, renewing Wittgenstein's covenant to keep the essentials concealed. But in talking about marginal things, Jesih (or his speaker) in fact puts his finger on the primary goal of poetry – revelation.

The collection *Hundredtown* reinforces Jesih's role as a builder of worlds and images which define the present in a quasi-realistic manner. One may well agree with Ivo Svetina's¹⁴ view of Jesih's town as possibly a new Goga. Prešeren's eternal dilemma between fear

¹⁴ Milan Jesih: *Mesto sto*. Ljubljana: Cankarjeva založba, 2007.

and hope is addressed by a fluctuating poetry which skilfully swings from one existential extreme to the other.

A close encounter with the purpose and “hope” of existence as perceived by Jesih’s speaker calls attention to the theme of love, which reaches its apogee in *Sonnets*. If the pre-*Sonnets* poems talk about love only indirectly, the sonnets are deeply stamped with surrender to the overwhelming force of love’s eternal flame, but this is done in a *hopeful and narrative* manner rather than a *romantic and confessional* one. The doubt about existence, or the *fear* of it, is redeemed by the *hope* of amorous encounters which bring meaning into the speaker’s – and perhaps the poet’s – world. The aspect of time dissolves: the *kairos* of this poetry becomes the present, the *hic et nunc* moment of erotic ecstasy.

Time, a category which is considered everlasting in love, narrows in Jesih’s poems to a single moment. A fleeting moment, to be sure, but poetry seems created precisely for the purpose of arresting this moment, for dispelling any misgivings about the transience of love. In fact, time is love’s strongest adversary. The flight of time and transience of love are so closely entwined that they become the leitmotif of Jesih’s quest in erotic lyric poetry.

Eroticism provides no real fulfilment: all that the theme seems to offer is the suggestion that the ecstasy of existence may yet be realised somewhere, but it is burdened with a gnawing doubt which hinders any optimistic view of the future. After *Sonnets*, the theme of love accordingly retreats into the background, resurfacing only at times as a bright, invigorating reminiscence which nevertheless leaves a deep doubt in its wake.

In grappling with the greatest existential dilemmas, Jesih does not turn to love for support: he prefers to reflect on his work, seeking the purpose of the artist’s activity. On the other hand, a close look at the poems clustered around the poetological theme reveals a subtle form of self-redemption. Through his work, Jesih – or the poet/subject/speaker – merges into the structure of the universe and becomes part of the primordial plan which we shall never understand: the plan commonly referred to as fate, god or the like. The immeasurability of Jesih’s address to god (or God), which ranges from irony and even sarcasm to deadly earnestness, reflects his multi-faceted confrontation with the world and its illogical logic, a confrontation which is, after all, the arch-origin of outstanding literature. Therefore the verses meditating on creation are in fact verses written by a *creator*.

Seen in this light, they join in the ancient dictum that says poets create not merely poetry but the universe or world itself. As a poet, Milan Jesih, too, engages in creation to keep fear at bay and to foster hope, which is a prerequisite for any creative act.

It is impossible to sum up an oeuvre that is still in the making. There is no telling how Jesih may surprise us in the future. What is certain is that a poet of his ilk not only possesses an artist's sensibility but also demonstrates the magic of language which comes, goes, and oscillates, while the poet/creator's role is merely to shape it. Sometimes he does it by himself, but sometimes it is the language that does the shaping, the poet being a mere tool in its hands. The dividing line between them is a mystery which remains unknown.

Translated by Nada Grošelj

* * *

Zvečer hud veter naglo je pritisnil,
iz sadovnjaka je cvetoče drevje
hotelo pobegniti – grom je blisnil
in v belo, tiho sliko ga ujel je:

čas zagostil se v pretnjo je zloveščo
naliva in viharja in povodnji;
s trebuhu so oblaki se nerodni
zadevali v zvonik, da bron je ječal,

ko jih gonilo je po črnem črne –
zaprl si okno in ob njem postal,
»dokler se prva kaplja ne utrne«,

zdaj pa si zdramil se odpret: zato ker
je zunaj mesečno, zrak čist in zdrav
in slavec gostoli, še malo moker.

(Soneti, 1989)

* * *

Stojim, na vso moč, pod prostranstvom zvezd
in se izgubljam v davne mile čase,
ko mama je zvečer klicala jest –
ves svet je enostaven bil in jasen,

pred mano kvišku so kipela leta
burne mladosti moške brez strahu,
bila je vera silna nenačeta
in silno upanje na srčnem dnu. –

Zdaj vem za strah, in ne bi rad ne vedel;
po izgubljenih verah ne žalujem;
tujega v sebi nimam več za tuje;

ni sram me lastne plitkosti in bede.
A vendar, kot nocoj, se včasih rad
zatapljam v tiste dni, preden grem spat.

(Soneti drugi, 1993)

* * *

Ves dan sem živel. Najprej sem zarana
pogledal, kaj se včeraj je spisalo
(ukrotil patos: strast se piše z malo),
šel ven, koder vrvela je Ljubljana,

na trgu videl lepe ženske mlade,
kupil sardele, jih doma zalil,
avtor postal kozarčku marmelade,
bral in podremal in se zbudil živ

in živel še naprej. Proti večeru,
kakor sem bil se pravi čas nameril,
sem krog vratu zadrnil si kravato,

se nadišavil in odšel v teater.
Komad je bil puščoben in neslan.
Spil šardonejček. Živel sem ves dan.

(Soneti drugi, 1993)

* * *

Luči se vžigajo po hišah v vasi,
molili so in tiho jedli zbrani,
in ko sprehajam samcat se počasi
pod vrbami ob reke drugi strani

in prisluškujem harfam, ki so k njim
posedle zale hčere, sramežljivo
razkrečene, in si tobak kadim
in puham pod nebo škrlatno sivo –

mi je lahko pri srcu, saj če Bog
mi zaukaže v motno vodo k sebi,
za okni zlatimi se krik in stok

in jek medleč nikjer razlegel ne bi,
in muzika se ne bi pomotila,
naprej nad vali bi lebdela mila.

(Soneti drugi, 1993)

* * *

Navpične stene, v nebes uklesane,
kamen, postavljen na vrh najbolj vrhnje,
od njega lahko kamnič se odkrhne
in slep orličji drekec v brezno kane;

v zraku zgubljene velbane dvorane
s plesalkami iz upov in spominov
in zraven toči se presladko vino
in poldan mine in večer nastane

in nikdar se ne spremeni podoba.
Na koreninah kdaj se škrat spotakne
in združga zrelo tepko v žepu jakne;
kotanjo kdaj napolni dež do roba

in žaba splašena kdaj skoči vanjo;
veter pred zimo puka listje z vej;
zemlja naplavi kdaj volčjo lobanjo;
in vse je vselej, kot bilo je prej.

(Jambi, 2000)

* * *

Za vselej je zastal otrok pred hišo
in naglo stekel proč – za vselej, deček.
Odrastel bo, vzhrumel in se utišal,
potoval, ljubil, skusil troho sreče,

tu stal, se staral, sam imel otroke;
bahatil se; in stradal v suhih letih;
in živel; in strmeč v noči globoke
še upal, ded že, v zvezde poleteti

s prostosti perutnicami; in tu stal;
zamišljen molčal v sneg; stal pred seboj;
si točil časa in nesmisel hrustal,
brezzobec; vselej, nikdar in nocoj

tu dlje od vseh zamišljenih daljav;
in mrzlo ilo gluh na parah ležal
– po temnem cvetju bo žehlala veža –;
in deček navsevdilj pred hišo stal.

(Jambi, 2000)

* * *

Kamen se sveti v blagi luči nizki,
ni srebrnik, in se gasi počasi;
v tem prva okna vžigajo se v vasi;
sonce zatone v gorah kot med zizki;

v gozdu spočil se veter je plečati
in zdaj naprej odide; pesem tiha
dekliška zložno vase se zaviha,
preneha in še lahno traja hkrati,

in je, kot je od zmeraj. – Jaz bi klical
ime neznano ljubice neznane,
da bi se tresle izdelane stopnice,
v mrzlo vijolično nebo speljane,

a sem za larfo skril srca si lice,
in je ne snamem, naj, kar hoče, stane;
strmeč v brezdanje bom sam s sabo ždel,
žgal čas in se smehljal v njegov pepel.

(Jambi, 2000)

* * *

Jaz verujem v vélikega praptiča,
ki v pumparicah po pravadni modi
ošaben po dvorišču zložno hodi
in ga kokošji kokodajs veliča;

in verujem v njegov dvomljivi prav,
kadar pod nebes z gnoja kikirika,
kot bi se v kikirika slast zažgal,
da izblini se za hip slepeča slika,

pa dolgo se, prafeniks, spet oveda,
kot slednje bitje, ki prihaja iz nič,
in se ove in sebe in pogléda
zbor, ki s kokodajsom ga veliča —,

v vélikega praptiča izrekam credo
— golič negoden, ves svoj vek v plenica —
v njegovo silno prvo prabesedo,
ki z njo me iz dna grla je izklical

biti na časa vselej skrajni rob;
v ptiča, ki brusi kljun ob led sred zime
onkraj dežel in tokraj prispodob
in enkrat samkrat kavsne in že ni me.

(Tako rekoč, 2007)

* * *

V antikvariatu, ko sinoči
knjižico reprodukcij sem polistal,
nasred pejzaža impresionista
vojak se je, micen, neznamen ločil

v suknjiču plavem in prebelih hlačah,
nekakšnih pumparicah, od nians
mrakotnih ure, ko se ugaša dan,
daljava pa v praznino se prevrača,

ki mu figuro in klobuk nažira
z gotovostjo in vztrajnostjo večera,
stal je, vem, stal, ne klečal, stal, tam stal,
kot je za brdkega vojaka prav

– obok neba nad njim vse bolj oglen
temotno je žarel; v skrivnosti zadnji –.
Vojak je bil, stal je v cunjah paradnih
in zagreben že v zemlji do kolen.

(Tako rekoč, 2007)

* * *

Zvezdnato noč se furmanca spominja
drugega nebesa in drugih zvezd,
ko neki drug konj meril drugih cest
je milje v drugih podkvah in stopinjah

in z zoro so obrisi drugih mest
z zlato obrobo vzplavali pred njima
in z drugim mrazom pekla druga zima
leta devetnajst, tri in sto in šest

in vse drugo bilo je in drugačen
v obpotnih krčmah je vzkipeval smeh;
včasih je vozeč vlekel velik maček
in vprega največkrat ni šla po tleh;

daljava je bila drugače sinja
v ravninah drugih carstev in celin,
ki s tujo žalostjo se je spominja
bolj druge od druge neki drug spomin.

(Lahkoda, 2013)

* * *

Ženska in moški odhajata objeta,
od zadaj se od daleč zdita
v eno žival samotno ulita,
in ko pogled že več ju ne doseže

skoz zdavnaj odminula leta –
se morebiti vam nameri
ob morju kdaj, da po večerji
neujeta v nebne mreže

z obzorja zvezda nizka
se iznenada
nasproti v slutnjo vam zabliska
in bliže in bliže in vse bliže pada.

(Lahkoda, 2013)

* * *

Jaz vem, kje v vasi kupim dobro vino,
vem žensko, ki mi v lectni hiši
neizgovorjeno slednjo željo usliši,
in vem glasove vaških petelinov;

vem čas, ko v dan blede se lunin krajec,
vem čas, ko v krvi sončni gong zahaja;
vem čas, ko pada droben, lahen sneg,
vem čas neusmiljenih pripek,

vem zvon, ki ukazuje fari,
in vem nebo nad njim, ki gospodari
potoku in ribam, času in ljudem.
A kje je vas, tega ne vem.

(Lahkoda, 2013)

* * *

Po vodi plava
lesena raca.
Poletje vene.
Iz vnučke, kako

rata babica?
Malo počakaš.

(Usta, 1985)

* * *

Kratka je bila
noč,
dan jo je
malo podaljšal.

(Usta, 1985)

* * *

At night there pressed a wind, a sudden dash,
the trees in blossom poised themselves to flee
from their orchard – but the thunder flashed
and froze them in a white and silent scene:

time thickened in an ill-foreboding threat
of pouring rains and gales and rising floods;
the bellies of the clumsy clouds were thrust
against the belfry; driven, black and set

against the black, they brought the bronze to moans –
you closed the window but you lingered near
“until the first rain droplet overflows”;

you’ve snapped awake and opened it because
the moon is lit, the air is crisp and clear,
the nightingale is warbling on, still moist.

(Sonnets, 1989)

* * *

Standing with all my might beneath the stars,
I lose myself in those dear olden days
when Mum would call to supper through the dark –
then all the world was simple, clear and straight,

the years were bursting up before my gaze,
years of a stormy, virile, fearless youth,
there was a mighty, still uncrumbling faith
and in my heart of hearts a great hope grew –

Now I know fear, and would not rather not;
for any faith I've lost I do not mourn;
what's alien in me feels strange no more;

I'm not ashamed of shallowness and rot.
But I like to revisit still at times
those days before I turn in for the night.

(Sonnets the Second, 1993)

* * *

All day I've lived. In early morning, first
I checked the writing of the day before
(reined in the pathos: passion's *p* is small)
and headed for the city's bustling stir,

saw pretty women in the market place,
bought some anchovies, washed them down at home,
and authored a small jar of marmalade;
I read and had a nap, alive I woke

and went on living. As the dusk drew close,
I did as planned: with time left to dispose,
I knotted round my neck an evening tie,

dabbed on some scent, and went to see a play.
The piece was dreary, drained of spice and life.
I had a Chardonnay. I've lived all day.

(Sonnets the Second, 1993)

* * *

The village cottages are lighting up,
the prayer said, the quiet meal at end,
and as I saunter all alone through dusk
by willows on the facing river edge

and listen for the harps whose strings are played
by lovely daughters, spreading their thighs
so modestly; as, dragging on my pipe,
I blow the smoke to skies gone purple grey,

my heart is easy, for if God should call
on me to join Him in the muddied flow,
the cries and moans and fainting echoes all

should be shut out by windows lit with gold,
nor should the music falter in its sway
but go on floating, gentle, on the waves.

(Sonnets the Second, 1993)

* * *

In heaven's vault are carved the looming cliffs
and on the topmost cliff is perched a rock,
from it, a rockling lightly crumbles off,
an eaglet's droppings fall in the abyss;

there hover in the air lost vaulted halls
with dancing girls of hopes and memories
and wine is poured out freely, passing sweet,
and so the noon is gone and evening falls

and never does the image change a whit.
Now and again, an elf will squash a fruit
stashed in his pocket, stumbling over roots;
the rain may fill a hollow to the lip

and in may sometimes leap a startled frog;
come winter, winds come ripping leaves from boughs;
at times a wolf skull washes from the bog;
as it has ever been, so it is now.

(Iambics, 2000)

* * *

The child has paused forever by the gate
and scampered off – forever, a small boy.
He'll grow to raise a roar and then abate,
he'll roam and love and taste a crumb of joy,

stand here, grow old, have children of his own;
he'll preen himself and, in a thin year, starve;
and live; and stare into the nights with hope,
grandfather though he is, to fly to stars

on freedom's wings; he'll stand here; sunk in thought
he'll muse at snow; he'll stand before himself;
toothless, he'll munch at pointlessness and pour
time in his glass; and never, always, then,

be more remote than any stretch conceived;
he'll lie upon his bier, a cold deaf clay
– the hall steeped in the scent of somber wreaths –
and stand, a boy, forever by the gate.

(Iambics, 2000)

* * *

A stone is glowing in the low soft light,
no silver piece, and slowly peters out;
the first of village windows flash to life;
the sun sinks down between two teat-like mounts;

in woods, the broadbacked wind has had its rest
and hit the road again; the quiet song
of girls, unhurried, folds into itself
and ceases but still faintly lingers on,

and all is as it's ever been – I'd shout
the unknown name of an unknown sweetheart
to shake the staircase, ancient and worn out,
which leads into the cold and purple skies,

but I've a mask I will not stir without,
and I'll not bare my heart at any price;
my gaze bent far beyond, I will exult
as I burn time and watch it turn to dust.

(Iambics, 2000)

* * *

What I believe in is the primal bird
in knickerbockers of an ancient cut,
pacing the farmyard where he preens and struts,
exalted by hens' cluck and squawk and stir;

and I believe he's – dubiously – right
when he crows from his dunghill to the sky
as if he'd burst in flame from sheer delight,
and then the dazzling picture fades a while;

he takes, the primal phoenix, long to wake,
as anyone who comes from nothingness,
and wakes up to himself and to the gaze
of choristers who cluck their praise of him –

I state my credo in the primal bird
– I, fledgling, all my life in swaddling-clothes –
my credo in his mighty primal word
by which he called me from his inmost throat

to be on the outlying edge of time;
in one who hones his beak on wintry ice
this side of parables, outside the orb:
a single peck, just one, and I'm no more.

(So to Say, 2007)

* * *

A second-hand bookshop: last night I leafed
through reproductions of some painters' works:
in an Impressionist paysage emerged
a soldier – tiny, only just perceived

in his blue jacket and his too-white pants,
a kind of knickers – from the dusky shades
which gather when the day begins to fade
and distance is transformed into a blank

corroding both the figure and head-gear
with all the surety of an eve drawn near,
he stood there, I remember, as is meet
for dashing soldiers, stood and did not kneel

– the heaven's vault above glowed murkily
in the last mystery, and grew coal-dark –
It was a soldier in parading garb,
already buried to the very knee.

(Iambics, 2000)

* * *

The wagon-driving woman calls to mind,
one starry night, still other skies and stars:
another horse had measured then the miles
of other roads in other steps and yards,

the dawn traced out still other towns to greet
the eyes of both, their skylines lined with gold,
another winter stung with other cold,
the year was nineteen hundred six and three,

and all was different and a different ring
was in the laughter from a roadside inn;
the cart was sometimes pulled by a huge cat
and rarely did the harness touch the track;

a different blue lay then on distant fields
of other kingdoms, other continents,
and, doubly other, is recalled with grief
and in the memory of someone else.

(Couldbe, 2013)

* * *

A man and woman walking off, entwined,
 seem from a distance to be squeezed
 into a single lonesome beast,
and when they can no longer be beheld

 through withered years now long gone by –
 before your eyes may flash a scene:
 once after dinner, by the sea,
 uncaught in heaven's webs,

 a star hung low in firmament
 one sudden moment
 will flash in a presentiment
and topple closer, closer, and still closer.

(Couldbe, 2013)

* * *

I know who in the village sells good wines,
I know a woman in a candy house
 who grants me every wish unheard,
I know the crowing of the village birds;

the time when the moon's crescent pales to day,
the time when the sun's gong sinks down in blood;
the time when snow comes falling, light as dust,
 the time of unrelenting blaze,

I know the bell – the parish lord –
I know the sky above, which steers the course
of streams and fish, of time and humankind.
What I don't know is where the village lies.

(Couldbe, 2013)

* * *

On the water glides
a wooden duck.
The summer fades.
From a grandchild, how

does a grandma sprout?
Just wait a while.

(Lips, 1985)

* * *

Short it has been,
the night,
the day has
stretched it a little.

(Lips, 1985)

Translated by Nada Grošelj

Literarna branja
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Readings 2015



Foto © Francesca Cirilli

Stefano Benni

Uradna biografija Volka Bennija ne obstaja, saj jo ta že trideset let spreminja vsakokrat, ko ga kdo prosi zanj, vanjo pa nameče na kupe izmišljotin ali vsaj polizmišljotin. Ker pa jih ni nikoli nihče preverjal, si je Benni v lastno veselje napisal najmanj dvajset različnih biografij.

Tole je ena izmed njih, ki je skoraj merodajna.

Benni se rodi leta 1947 v Bologni, a otroštvo preživi v apeninskih gorah, kjer začne odkrivati književnost, erotiko in politiko.

Prav tam mu prvič rečejo Volk, in sicer zato, ker ponoči rad pohaja naokrog s svojimi sedmimi psi, zraven pa tuli v noč.

Igra nogomet, toda kariero prekine poškodba.

Na črno sodeluje z nekaterimi časopisi, dokler ga ne odkrije uredniški dvojec Fruttero & Lucentini pri reviji *Il Mago*. Donato Barbone ga povabi k založbi Mondadori (ki takrat še ni bila Silviova).

Vojsko odsluži pri Toskanskih volkovih (če to ni usoda!), kjer med stražami napiše knjigo zgodb *Bar Sport*.

S prvim zasluženim denarjem potuje kot zmešan.

Po zaslugi dveh dobrih prijateljev, Valeria Occhetta in Grazie Cherchi, pomisli, da bi lahko postal pisatelj. Napiše romana *Terra!* (Zemlja!) in *Comici spaventati guerrieri* (Bojevitci prestrašeni komiki).

Pri štiridesetih dobi sina, pri petinštiridesetih pa ga jazzist Paolo Damiani znova porine na oder.

Z Dariom Fojem posname film *Musica per vecchi animali* (Glasba za stare živali), ki ne doživi nobenega uspeha, zato pa se Volk med snemanjem nauči vse mogoče, in to po zaslugi Umberta Angeluccija in Pasqualina De Santisa. Napiše več kot dvajset knjig. Njegova najljubša je *Blues in sedici* (Šestnajstkrat blues), zadnja pa *Pantera* (Panter). V gledališču sodeluje predvsem s prijateljico Angelo Finocchiaro, z Lucio Poli in Teatrom dell'Archivolt, pa s Paolom Rossijem, Dariom Fojem in Franco Rame, z Antoniom Catanio, Fabiom De Luigijem, Anito Caprioli in glasbeniki, kot so Danilo Rea, Paolo Fresu, Umberto Petrin, Danilo Rossi, Gianluigi Trovesi in mnogi drugi.

Kot bralec-igralec na oder ponese Nabokova, Gaddo, Landolfija, Pazienzo, Eliota in Pennaca.

Z Altanom in Pietrom Perottijem ustvari v podporo organizaciji AMREF Muzej izmišljenih bitij.

Z Alessandrom Castellarijem in Libe-rom Mancusom si zamisli totalno nor seminar na temo imaginacije. Je boter legendarnega družbeno solidarnostnega projekta Gruppo Lupo (Skupina Volk), ki deluje že dvajset let.

Trinajst let se ukvarja z borilnimi veččinami in izumi slog strahopetnega zajca.

Prevajajo ga v mnoge jezike, doseže celo kitajski trg.

V višino meri meter osemdeset, tehta pa 77 kilogramov.

Trenutno je živ in dobrega zdravja.

There is no single biography of Wolf Benni because he has changed it over the last three decades every time he was asked for it, telling a sackful of fibs, or near-fibs. And since no one has bothered to check, Benni has amused himself by concocting at least twelve different biographies.

Here is one that is near-true.

Benni is born in 1947 in Bologna but spends his childhood in the Apennines, where he makes his first discoveries – literary, erotic, and political ones.

It is here that his nickname, Wolf, is born as well, owing to his habit of roaming at night, together with his seven dogs, and howling.

Plays football but his career is interrupted by an accident.

Works on the sly for various dailies, until he is discovered by Fruttero and Lucentini from the *Il Mago* magazine.

He is invited by Donato Barbone to join the Mondadori publishing house (which did not belong to Silvio then).

Does military service in the Infantry Division Lupi di Toscana (the ‘Wolves of Tuscany’ – must have been fate!), writing on picket and sentinel duty a book of stories, *Bar Sport*.

Travels with his first earnings like one obsessed.

Is convinced by two great friends, Valerio Occhetto and Grazia Cherchi, that he can become a writer. He writes two novels, *Terra!* and *Comici Spaventati Guerrieri* (Belligerent Frightened Comedians).

Fathers a son at forty and returns onstage at forty-five, pushed by the jazz player Paolo Damiani.

Shoots with Dario Fo the film *Musica per Vecchi Animali* (Music for Old Animals), which is a flop but helps him learn a heap of stuff, thanks to the unforgettable Umberto Angelucci and Pasqualino De Santis.

He has written more than twenty books. His favourite is *Blues in sedici* (Sixteen Times Blues), and his latest is *Pantera* (Panther).

He has worked in the theatre, mainly with his friend Angela Finocchiaro, Lucia Poli, the Archivoltò Theatre, with Paolo Rossi, Dario Fo, Franca Rame, Antonio Catania, Fabio De Luigi, Anita Caprioli and such musicians as Danilo Rea, Paolo Fresu, Umberto Petrin, Danilo Rossi, Gianluigi Trovesi and many others.

As a reader-actor he has staged texts by Nabokov, Gadda, Landolfi, Piazienza, Eliot and Pennac.

With Altan and Perotti, he has set up the Imaginary Creatures Museum in support of AMREF.

With Alessandro Castellari and Libero Mancuso, he has founded a haywire seminar on imagination. He has fathered a legendary project of social solidarity, Gruppo Lupo (Wolf Group), which has been active for twenty years. He has been practising martial arts for thirteen years and has invented the ‘Gutless Rabbit’ style.

His work has been translated into many languages, and has even found its way to the Chinese market.

He is a metre eighty and weighs seventy-seven kilos.

He is currently alive and kicking up the dickens.

Killer

L'odore di cuoio che fanno
i sedili delle auto
e le fondine delle armi
lo spavento negli occhi
di chi ha paura di me.
Mi piace passare in fretta
come i titoli e le sigle
senza niente prima
e niente dopo.

un giorno
sarò rispettato
come il boia che intervistano
di spalle, nel salotto buono
sarò una figurina da scambiare
nell'album degli Assassini.

Non mi chiedere chi sono
il tuo cuore lo sa
non chiedere cosa vendo
un giorno lo comprerai.
Ho tatuato uno scheletro
Un giorno sarà il tuo ritratto
Io so cosa c'è dietro
Ogni tuo opaco sguardo
Il tuo cane sanguinario
Le botte ai figli
Non chiedermi perché
sto lucidando il fucile
io non faccio che ascoltare
le parole che mi sussurri.

Lisa

Io cammino a occhi chiusi
sognando la riva del mare
ciò che dicono le persone non sento
se del mio corpo parlano
o del destino futuro.
Io ho piccoli piedi per fuggire
e un culo che ammiro
come una volpe la coda
vanitosamente.

Io vorrei essere rispettata
come rispetto la quercia
nel giardino che beve
le nostre gocce di sangue
quando nasconde il sole
e enorme nel buio appare
il soffitto di un sogno.
Io rido e mi tolgo il rossetto
e subito lo rimetto
e non saprei dirvi perché
io vorrei cambiare ogni ora
ma non chiamatemi incostante.
Ho bisogno di aria buona
e di fumo, e di nebbia
di andare via e restare
rotolare e lavarmi
non chiamatemi pazza.
Io voglio una città
che non sia solo di insegne
io amo il silenzio
che separa le parole
non quello che viene dopo
alle sirene e agli spari.
Io sento l'uggiolare dei cani
nella tana. Io lavoro
tra profumi e shampoo
ma sento la puzza
del fiato dei caimani.

Io piango china davanti
all'altare di un'autoradio
io graffio e scalcio.

Io vorrei non essere mai nata
e vorrei essere vecchia
come ciò che so del mondo
dormire tra le tue braccia
sentirti parlare
di tuo Padre, per ore
e vorrei lasciarti solo
con la moto in fiamme
sull'asfalto striato
bere il tuo sangue dal mignolo
succhiarti il cazzo
fredda come in un film
e mostrarlo alle amiche
e vorrei che scrivessi
di me su tutti i muri.

Io piantai le forbici
nel braccio a un tipo
che mi sbavava addosso
io mordo, io soffro
prigioniera nel bosco
tra le mute dei cani
io sono la regina, la serva
io non so dove andare
questa sera, nel buio
e non so dove trovarti.

Margherita Dolcevit

(un brano)

I.

La sparizione delle stelle

Sono andata a letto e le stelle non c'erano più. Ho pulito per bene il vetro della finestra, ma niente da fare. Erano sparite. Era sparita Sirio e Venere e Carmilla e Altazor. E anche Mab e Zelda e Bacbuc e Dandelion e la costellazione del Tacchino e la Croce di Lennon.

Non ditemi che alcune di queste stelle non esistono. Sono i nomi che gli ho dato io. Infatti rivendico il diritto di ognuno, specialmente delle fanciulle fantasiose come me, a chiamare le cose non soltanto con il nome del vocabolario, ma anche quello del vocabolaltro, cioè con un nome inventato e scelto. In fondo tutti lo fanno. I miei genitori mi hanno chiamato Margherita, ma io amo essere chiamata Maga o Maghetta. I miei compagni di scuola, ironizzando sul fatto che non sono proprio snella, a volte mi chiamano Megarita; mio nonno che è un po' arteriosclerotico, mi chiama Margheritina, ma a volte anche Mariella, Marisella oppure Venusta, che era sua sorella. Ma soprattutto, quando sono allegra mi chiama Margherita Dolcevit.

Il vigile davanti al quale sfrecciavo in bicicletta mi chiamava Vaipianomargh. Le insegnanti mi chiamano Silenziolaggiù. Il mio primo amore, praticamente anche l'ultimo, mi chiamava Minnie. Viveva con gli zii e aveva una visione disneyana della vita. A quei tempi portavamo tutti e due l'apparecchio per i denti e ci davamo dei baci metallici che sembravano i duelli dell'Iliade. Eppure li rimpiango. Anche a quattordici anni e nove mesi si può rimpiangere. È presto, dite? E se muori a quindici?

Stavo parlando delle stelle. La cosa strana è che il cielo era limpido, poco fa, quando ho accompagnato fuori Pisolo, il mio cane, nella sua tournée di sessanta minipisce.

Quindi non potevano essere le nuvole a nasconderle. Infatti ho aperto la finestra e ho visto che, proprio dove un'ora fa c'erano il prato e gli alberi, avevano piantato un cartellone enorme, tipo schermo di cinema, quaran-cinquanta metri, e sopra c'era scritto:

LAVORI IN CORSO

Era quello schermo immenso a coprire le stelle. Cosa sta succedendo? mi sono chiesta.

Ho allungato il capino fuori come una tartaruga a primavera, e ho visto vari tipi di camion. Scaricavano lastroni di vetro, tubi e blocchi di cemento, e anche lavandini e piastrelle. Allora ho capito.

Da tempo sapevamo che qualcuno aveva comperato il terreno vicino al nostro per costruirci una casa.

Ero eccitatissima, avrei voluto svegliare mamma o il nonno o i miei fratelli, ma era tardi e così ho fischiato per chiamare Pisolo e lui è venuto.

Pisolo è il mio cancatologo, perché più che un incrocio è veramente un catalogo di tutte le razze canine e animali e forse vegetali apparse sulla Terra, mi fanno ridere gli esperimenti sul diennea e le clonazioni, Pisolo è più complicato, è uno dei più misteriosi arcimboldi della natura. Potrei descriverlo così:

Corpo cilindrico da porcello.

Zampe davanti da ornitorinco.

Zampe dietro da rospo cavallerizzo.

Orecchio destro dritto da volpe del deserto.

Orecchio sinistro pendulo da cocker.

Muso da pterodattilo occhi da camaleonte naso da bufalo baffi da birraio e denti da piranha.

Culo da papera.

Coda ritorta da scimmia.

Pelo di cinghialepezzato e maculato. Non saprei precisare il colore. Diciamo color straccio di benzinaio.

Il tutto con qualche cromosoma di pipistrello, di caimano e di oloturia.

E questo non esaurisce la bellezza di Pisolo.

Mio nonno dice che ogni bellezza è complicata, e che Pisolo è come una casa, o come il mondo intero. In ogni casa ci sono il salotto buono, il bagno sfavillante e i mobili antichi, ma anche il ripostiglio polveroso, le tubature viscide e i tarli che rodono, la stanza dei giochi e la cantina oscura che spaventa e attrae noi bambini. In ogni casa che crediamo di conoscere bene c'è sempre qualcosa di

dimenticato, di nascosto. Un cassetto chiuso, con un coltello insanguinato in mezzo ai tranquilli cucchiaini. E nel giardino scopriamo una misteriosa scritta su un albero, o un fiore mai visto, nella strada che percorriamo tutti i giorni c'è un vicolo buio, nella città scorre un fiume sotterraneo, e nel nostro paese vive una banda nascosta di assassini.

Ma Pisolo non è una metafora, è carne, pelo e avorio, ha sentimenti e ricordi. Quando era cucciolo, lo hanno abbandonato in un cassonetto della spazzatura. Il rumore del coperchio che si richiudeva come una lapide lo ha choccato per il resto della vita. Perciò quando sente un rumore tipo tuono o rimbombo di lamiera, e soprattutto il frastuono di un camion dell'immondizia, per la fifa si mummifica. Diventa rigido come un peluche lasciato nel freezer, a zampe in su, e resta così un intero giorno, poi risorge. Il veterinario la chiama narcolessia isterica, io lo chiamo coma psicopisolico, quando mi lauree-erò in medicina ci scriverò la tesi. Volete conoscere altri misteri del mio cane? Allora vi dico anche che fa dei peti silenziosi e perfidi, puzzolenti come il fiato di una balena malata che ha mangiato plancton scaduto, sardine marce e mutande di maratoneta. La mamma non vuole che si dica, ma è la pura scomoda verità.

Pisolo è entrato scodinzolando, cioè srotolando la coda come una trombetta di carnevale, per fortuna senza rumore annesso. E io gli ho detto:

– Pisolo, Pisolo, avremo dei vicini.

L'ho preso in braccio, resistendo all'odorino paludoso, e insieme abbiamo guardato il nostro piccolo mondo di fiaba.

Il giardino della casa con un solo abete che a Natale riempiamo di luci e palle anche se nessuno lo vede, forse qualcuno dall'aereo.

L'altalena dove i miei fratelli mi lanciavano a volte in cielo a volte in terra.

La nostra automobile, piena di bozzi come la faccia di un vecchio pugile.

Il giardino un po' incolto con una magnolia, un rosmarino e un'aiuola di rose, pitale preferito di Pisolo.

Un'autentica anfora romana finta, ultimo ricordo del periodo neotarocco di mio padre. L'anno scorso al suo posto c'erano sette strepitosi nanetti di gesso, ma poi mamma ha letto su una rivista che erano volgari e ha costretto mio padre a toglierli.

Sul retro del giardino, potete vedere il galeone dei sogni della nostra infanzia: ovvero il garage-capannone di papà, che ha davanti due teschi di auto arrugginite, pozzanghere di benzina, lattoni, molle e altre viscere meccaniche.

Davanti alla casa corre la strada chiamata Circonvallazione Ovest, orlata di lampioni balbuzienti.

Oltre la strada, cartelloni pubblicitari e una barricata di palazzi tutti uguali: la grigia e necessaria periferia.

Dietro la casa il Grande Prato, ricordo di una antica campagna dove vivevano stalle con buosauri e aie di polli senza spiedo infilato.

Il prato in questa stagione si riempie di margherite bianche e gialle, papaveri e soffioni, tarassaco e radicchio, la gramigna e le ortiche crescono a dismisura in scomposti cespugli, e oltre i cespugli si può vedere un filare di pioppi guardiani, e il rigagnolo che una volta era un fiume, mentre al di là del canneto l'autostrada sussurra il suo lamento di traffico e fretta.

E laggiù in fondo una fila di ciminiere ognuna con un fumo di colore diverso, come enormi pennarelli.

Ma se nuotate nell'erba alta, fra i morsi delle ortiche e dei rovi, proprio al centro del prato, vedrete il bosco rosso, un manipolo di alberi tenaci che nasconde le macerie di una casa bombardata, con tutte le sue storie.

Qua abita il fantasma della Bambina di polvere, la mia dolce spaventosa amica.

Ovviamente un giorno le ciminiere crolleranno, il fiume si seccerà, l'autostrada sarà deserta, piena di rottami di auto e scheletri avvinghiati ai volanti, e le margherite resteranno padrone del mondo.

E la Bambina di polvere sarà di nuovo regina.

Vero, Pisolo?

Lui ha guardato le impalcature dell'erigenda casa, si è divincolato ed è scappato sotto il letto.

Brutto segno, perché Pisolo è profeta di sventura, è un animale veggente come suo cugino Julius, l'upupa e il corvo pindaccio. Dice un proverbio:

*Se Pisolo si intana
Sfortuna tutta la settimana.*

Sentendo che non dormivo ancora, è arrivata la mamma. Deve aver capito che ero inquieta, perché ha detto: stai tranquilla, andrà tutto bene.

Sono stata zitta. Cosa potevo risponderle? Quando i bambini crescono e diventano adulti, capiscono subito che quello che gli avevano detto da bambini non è vero, eppure riciclano ai loro figli l'antica bugia. E cioè che tutti vogliono consegnare ai bambini un mondo migliore, è un passaparola che dura da secoli, e il risultato è questa Terra, questa vescichetta d'odio.

Perciò io, che sono una bambina in scadenza, penso:

a) che i grandi non hanno più nulla da insegnarci;

b) che sarebbe meglio se noi prendessimo le decisioni, e i temi scolastici contro la guerra li scrivessero loro;

c) che dovrebbero smettere di fare i film dove la giustizia trionfa e farla trionfare subito all'uscita del cinema.

Ebbene sì, sono polemica.

Ah, dimenticavo: ogni tanto mi piace pensare che sono una vecchia signora e sto raccontando la mia vita a un angelo, nella sala d'aspetto del paradiso, o dell'inferno (credo che sarà più o meno uguale, tanto l'agenzia di viaggi è la stessa).

Oppure immagino di essere in una casa galleggiante in mezzo a una sconfinata palude, con un ingorgo di motoscafi che suonano il clacson. Il mondo è sommerso dall'acqua e io sto raccontando la mia vita di sopravvissuta a mia figlia Margherana (i bimbi in questo mio ipotetico futuro saranno anfibi). E le racconto: anche se la mia vita era piena di sorprese e curiosità e lampi e buio, mi sentivo sola, in quel modo unico e spaventoso in cui ci si sente da ragazzi. E nello stesso tempo, avevo la speranza che il giorno dopo mi sarei svegliata regina.

E lei mi chiede: e la Bambina di polvere?

Un giorno ti parlerò di lei.

Killer

Vonj po usnju
avtomobilskih sedežev
in toka za pištolo
groza v očeh vseh
ki se me bojijo.
Rad hitro izginem
kot zaključne špice
nič ni pred mano
nič za menoj.

Nekega dne
bom spoštovan
kot rabelj, ki ga med intervjujem
snemajo hrbtno, v salonu elite
sličica bom, lahko me izmenjaš
za album Morilcev.

Ne sprašuj, kdo sem
v srcu že veš
ne sprašuj, kaj prodajam
sam boš to kupil.
Vtetoviral sem okostnjaka
Tvoj bodoči portret
Vem, zakaj
me motno pogleduješ
imaš krvoločnega psa
in tepeš otroke
Ne sprašuj, zakaj
loščim puško
saj zgolj poslušam
kar mi šepečeš.

Lisa

Hodim z zaprtimi očmi
in sanjam morsko obrežje
ničesar ne slišim, če ljudje govorijo
o mojem telesu
ali bodoči usodi.
Imam drobna stopalca za beg
in rit, ki jo občudujem
kot lisica svoj rep
nečimrno.

Ko bi me le spoštovali
kot spoštujem hrast
ki v vrtu nam pije
krvave srage
ko zakrije sonce
in se v mraku neznanski prikaže
strop sanj.
Smejem se in zbrišem si šminko
pa spet takoj jo namažem
ne vem, zakaj
spremenila bi vsako uro
a ne imejte me za nestanovitno.
Rada bi čist zrak
in dim, in meglo
odšla bi in ostala
se povaljala in umila
ne mislite, da sem nora.
Hočem mesto
ki ni le iz izveskov
ljubim tišino
ki ločuje besede
in ne tišine
po sirenah in streljih.
Slišim cviljenje psov
po brlogih. Delam
med parfumi in šamponi
a voham smrad
zadaha kajmanov.

Ko jočem, se sklanjam
nad oltar avtoradia
praskam in brcam.

Raje se ne bi nikoli rodila
raje bi bila stara
kot vse, kar vem o svetu
spala v tvojem objemu
in poslušala
o tvojem Očetu, ure in ure
in pustila bi te samega
z motorjem v plamenih
na progastem asfaltu
iz mezinca bi ti pila kri
kurca pocuzala
hladno kot v filmu
in pokazala prijateljicam
in rada bi, da bi pisal
o meni po vseh zidovih.

Škarje sem zarila
v roko tipu
ki se je slinil po meni
jaz grizem, trpim
zapornica v gozdu
med pasjimi tropi
sem kraljica, sem dekla
ne vem, kam naj grem
nocoj, v temi
in ne vem, kje naj te najdem.

Prevedel Janko Petrovec

Marjetka Sladkosnedka

(odlomek iz romana)

1.

Noč, ko so izginile zvezde

Legla sem v posteljo in zvezd ni bilo več. Pošteno sem očistila šipe na oknih, a brez uspeha. Izginile so. Izginil je Sirij, izginili Venera, Karmila in Altazor. Pa tudi Mab, Zelda, Bakbuk in Dandelijon, ozvezdje Purana in Lennonov križ.

Nikar ne recite, da nekatere od naštetih zvezd ne obstajajo. Ta imena sem jim dala jaz. Še več: zahtevam, naj imajo vsi – še zlasti domišljije polni deklji, kot sem jaz – pravico, da stvari ne imenujejo samo z besedami iz slovarja, ampak tudi s tistimi iz jazvarja, to se pravi, z izmišljenimi in posebej izbranimi imeni. Sicer pa to vsi počnejo. Starši so mi dali ime Marjetka, ampak meni je všeč, če me kličejo Maga ali Magica. Sošolci, ki se radi zafrkavajo spričo dejstva, da nisem ravno vitka, me kličejo Megaritka; dedek, ki je rahlo arteriosklerotičen, me kliče Marjetkica, včasih pa tudi Marica, Maričica ali celo Zlata, kakor je bilo ime njegovi sestri. Kadar sem dobre volje, pa me najraje kliče Marjetka Sladkosnedka.

Mestni redar, mimo katerega sem včasih drvela s kolesom, me je klical Pučaspelmarči. Učiteljice mi pravijo Tihtamzad. Moj prvi dragi (pa zaenkrat tudi zadnji) me je imenoval Mini. Živel je s stricem in teto in imel disneyjevski pogled na svet. Takrat sva oba nosila aparat za zobe in dajala sva si kovinske poljubčke, da je cingljalo kot med dvoboji v Iliadi. Žal mi je za njimi. Čeprav ima človek šele štirinajst let in šest mesecev, mu je kljub temu lahko za čim žal. Da je prezgodaj, pravite? Kaj pa, če umrem pri petnajstih?

Pripovedovala sem vam o zvezdah. Nenavadno je bilo to, da je bilo nebo še malo prej, ko sem pospremila svojega psa Zaspanka na običajno turnejo šestdesetih miniscanj, popolnoma jasno.

Kar pomeni, da jih oblaki niso mogli zakriti. Zato sem odprla okno in na mestu, kjer sta bila še pred uro travnik in drevje, zagledala gromozanski pano, velik kot štirideset-, petdesetmetrsko filmsko platno, na katerem je pisalo:

GRADBIŠČE

To neznansko platno je torej zakrilo zvezde. Le kaj se dogaja, sem se vprašala.

Bučko sem pomolila ven kot želve spomladi in zagledala tovarnjake različnih vrst. Delavci so raztovarjali velike steklene plošče, cevi in betonske bloke, pa tudi umivalnike in keramične ploščice. Končno sem doumela.

Že nekaj časa smo vedeli, da je nekdo kupil sosednjo parcelo in da bi naj tam postavili hišo.

Vse skupaj me je močno vznemirilo. Najraje bi takoj zbudila mamo ali dedka ali pa oba brata, a bilo je že pozno, zato sem požvižgala Zaspanku, ki je takoj pritekel.

Zaspanko je moj peskatalog; to pa zato, ker ni navaden mešanec, ampak je dejansko katalog vseh vrst psov in živali in mogoče tudi rastlin, ki so se kdaj koli pojavile na Zemlji. Novice o poskusih z deenkajem in kloniranjem me zmeraj spravijo v smeh, saj je moj Zaspanko mnogo bolj zapleten od vsega tega. Videti je kot najskrivnostnejša od vseh Arcimboldovih slik. Takole bi ga lahko opisala:

Valjast trup je od pujsa.

Sprednje noge so od kljunaša.

Zadnje noge kot pri krastači na konju.

Desno uho pokončno kot pri puščavski lisici.

Levo uho visi, kakor pri kokeršpanjelu.

Gobec kot pri pterodaktilu, oči kameleonove, nos bivolji, brki so pivovarjevi, zobje pa od piranhe.

Račja rit.

Rep zviti, opičji.

Dlaka kot pri merjasfajcu¹, lisasta in pegasta. Barve ne bi znala opisati. Recimo, da ima barvo črpalkarjeve krpe za brisanje.

Vse skupaj je zabeljeno z nekaj kromosomi netopirja, kajmana in morske kumare.

A popis Zaspankove lepote se s tem ne konča.

¹ Merjasfajec je žival, ki si jo je izmislil Stefano Benni in se pojavlja v številnih njegovih delih. V originalu CINFALEPRO (*pluriselvus pidginizzatus*). Nastal je po parjenju merjasca z zajkljo, eden od dedov pa je bil fazan. (Ta in naslednja opomba sta prevajalčevi.)

Dedek pravi, da je vsaka lepota zapletena ter da je Zaspanko kot hiša ali kot ves svet. Vsaka hiša ima lepo dnevno sobo, bleščečo kopalnico in starinsko pohištvo, ima pa tudi prašno shrambo, spolzke cevi in črve, ki glodajo v les; ima igralno sobo in temačno klet, ki privlači nas, otroke. Vsaka reč, za katero mislimo, da jo dobro poznamo, vsebuje kaj pozabljenega, kaj skritega. Zaprt predal, v katerem med miroljubnimi žlicami leži okrvavljen nož ... Vrt, sredi katerega na drevesu uzremo skrivnosten napis ali nikoli prej viden cvet ... Temačna pot, ki vodi s ceste, po kateri se vozimo vsak dan ... Po sredini mesta teče podzemna reka ali pa se v vasi skriva tolpa morilcev ...

Zaspanko ni nobena prispodoba; narejen je iz mesa, dlake in slonovine, ima čustva in spomine. Ko je bil še mladič, so se ga hoteli znebiti, zato so ga vrgli v kanto za smeti. Šok zaradi ropota pokrova, ki se je kot nagrobni kamen zaprl nad njim, ga bo spremljal do konca življenja. Kadar sliši kaj podobnega gromu ali udarjanju po pločevini ali še zlasti hrušč smetarskega tovornjaka, ga tako stisne, da kar zakrknje. Postane trd kot plišast medvedek v zamrzovalniku, z nogami v zrak; po cel dan ostane tako, preden ponovno oživi. Veterinar pravi temu histerična narkolepsija, jaz pa jo imenujem psihozaspankitična koma, in ko bom diplomaturirala iz medicine, bom o tem napisala tezo. Bi radi spoznali še druge tajne mojega psa? Zaupam vam torej, da včasih prav potihno in hinavsko prdi. Njegovi prdci smrdijo kot zadah bolnega kita, ki je pravkar požrl porcijo potečenega planktona, nekaj plesnivih sardin in gate maratonskega tekača. Mama pravi, da tega ne smemo praviti naokoli; a čeprav je neprijetno, je vse res.

Zaspanko je vstopil in živahno mahal z repom. Bolje rečeno: rep je odvijal kot pustno trobento. Še dobro, da ni zraven piskalo. Rekla sem mu:

»Zaspanko, Zaspanko, sosede bomo dobili!«

Vzela sem ga v naročje in skušala vzdržati sredi gnilobnega smradka, potem pa sva se skupaj zazrla v najin mali pravljični svet.

Vrt, v katerem raste ena sama jelka, ki jo o božiču popolnimo z lučkami in bučkami, čeprav tega nihče ne vidi; no, mogoče kdo z letala.

Gugalnica, s katero sta me brata izstreljevala včasih v nebo in včasih v tla.

Naš avto, tako poln bušk kot obraz postaranega boksarja.

Trata pred hišo nekam zanemarjena, na njej pa magnolija, grm rožmarina in Zaspankov najljubši pisoar: gredica z vrtnicami.

Pristen ponaredek rimske amfore, zadnji spomin na obdobje neotaroka v življenju mojega očeta. Lani je na njenem mestu stalo sedem krasnih palčkov iz mavca, toda potem je mama nekje prebrala, da so palčki v vrtu odraz slabega okusa, pa je očka prisilila, da jih je odstranil.

Na zadnjem koncu vrta stoji sanjska galeja našega otroštva. To je očkova delavnica, pred katero stojita lobanji dveh prerjavelih avtov; tam so še luže z bencinom, kosi pločevine, vzmeti in druga mehanična drobovina.

Mimo hiše teče cesta, imenovana Zahodna obvoznica, obrobljena z brnečo razsvetljavo.

Na drugi strani ceste stojijo reklamni napisi in barikada identičnih in sivih, prepotrebnih predmestnih blokov.

Za hišo leži Veliki travnik, zadnji spomin na nekdanje poljane, kjer so svojčas živeli hlevi z volozavri in kurniki s piščanci brez nabodala v riti.

V tem letnem času se travnik napolni z belimi in rumenimi marjetkami, z makom in regratom, s smoličko in cikorijo; prsati pesjak in koprive rastejo kot nori pod razmršenim grmovjem. Zadaž stoji drevored topolov čuvajev in tam je tudi potoček, ki je bil nekoč reka. Izza trsja je slišati šum avtoceste s pritajeno tožbo hitečih avtomobilov.

V daljavi stoji vrsta tovarniških dimnikov in iz vsakega puha dim drugačne barve. Videti so kot velikanski flomastri.

A če zaplavate v visoko travo, med pikanje kopriv in zbadanje robid, boste sredi travnika naleteli na Rdeči gozd. Gre za peščico žilavih dreves, pod katerimi se skrivajo ruševine in zgodbe zbombardirane hiše.

Tu stanuje prikazen Prašne deklice, moje drage, strašne prijateljice.

Povsem jasno je, da se bodo dimniki nekoč zrušili, reka bo presahnila, avtocesta bo opustela in bo polna avtomobilskih razbitin z okostnjaki, prilepljenimi na volane. Takrat bodo marjetke postale gospodarice sveta.

In Prašna deklica bo spet kraljica.

Kajne, Zaspanko?

Pogledal je gradbene odre okrog hiše, ki so jo pravkar postavljali, se zmuznil in zbežal pod posteljo.

Slab znak, saj je Zaspanko prerok zle sreče. Daljnoviden je kot njegov bratranec Julius², kot smrdokavre in kot nesrečni vrani. Star pregovor pravi:

*Če Zaspanko se skrije,
te teden pobije.*

Vstopila je mama, ki je slišala, da še ne spim. Najbrž je razumela, da sem nemirna, saj je dejala: »Ne skrbi, vse bo v redu.«

Nič nisem rekla. Kaj naj bi ji pa odgovorila? Ko otroci zrastejo in postanejo odrasli, hitro doumejo, da ni nič od tega, kar so jim govorili prej, res, kljub temu pa tudi svojim otrokom reciklirajo staro laž. In sicer: da bodo bodočim rodovom zapustili boljši svet. In ta lajna je že stoletja ista. Rezultat vsega pa je tale Zemlja, tale sovraštva poln žolčnik.

Zato jaz, ki sem kot otrok že skoraj potekla, smatram:

- a.) da nas odrasli nimajo več kaj naučiti;
 - b.) da bi bilo bolje, če bi mi sprejemali odločitve, oni pa naj pišejo proste spise proti vojni;
 - c.) da bi morali takoj nehati snemati filme, v katerih pravica na koncu zmaga, in bi ji morali pustiti, da zmaga takoj po koncu filma.
- Polemična sem, vem. Pa kaj.

Oh, skoraj bi pozabila: včasih si predstavljam, da sem že stara gospa in da o svojem življenju pripovedujem angelu v sprejemnici pred rajem, ali pa pred peklom (po mojem sta si precej podobna, saj ju trži ista turistična agencija).

In včasih si mislim, da sem v plavajoči hiši sredi brezmejnega močvirja, polnega motornih čolnov, ki hupajo v prometnem zamašku. Svet je poplavlila voda, jaz pa pripovedujem o svojem življenju in o tem, kako sem se rešila, svoji hčerki Marježabi (v moji domnevni prihodnosti bodo otroci dvoživke). In ji pravim: Čeprav je bilo moje življenje polno prese-

² Zaspankov »bratranec Julius« je najbrž božjastni pes Benjamina Malaussèna, junaka del francoskega pisatelja Daniela Pennaca.

nečenj in posebnosti, bliskov in teme, sem se počutila osamljeno, in to na edinstven in strašen način, kot lahko to občutijo le otroci. Toda hkrati sem upala, da se bom naslednjega jutra zbudila kot kraljica.

Vpraša me: Kaj pa Prašna deklica?

Nekega dne ti bom povedala njeno zgodbo.

Prevedel Janko Petrovec

Objavljeno v:

Benni, Stefano: *Marjetka Sladkosnedka*. Prevedel Janko Petrovec. Cankarjeva založba: Ljubljana 2011.

Killer

The smell of leather that
Car seats possess
and gun holsters

the fear in the eyes
of those that fear me

I love to pass by in a hurry
Like titles and closing tunes
With nothing before
And nothing afterwards.

But I'm patient
One day,
I shall be respected
like the executioner
being interviewed
his back turned, in the tv show
I'll be a collectable card
In the assassins book.

Don't ask me who I am
Your heart does know
Don't ask me what I sell
One day you shall buy it.
I tattooed a skull
It will become your portrait
I know what's behind
Your every murky stare
Your rabid dog
Your children's beatings
So don't ask me why
I keep polishing my gun
I keep listening to
The words you're whispering

Lisa

I walk with my eyes closed
dreaming of the sea shore
of what people say, I do not hear
whether they speak of my body
or future destiny .

I have tiny feet to escape
and an ass I admire
like a fox its own tail
vainly.

I wish to be respected
as I respect the oak
in the garden which drinks
our blood drops
when the sun hides
and in the darkness it appears
the ceiling of a dream

I laugh and take my lipstick off
then put it back on right away
and I couldn't tell you why
I wish to change each and every hour
but do not call me inconstant.

I need fresh air
and smoke, and fog
I need to run away, and stay
roll about and clean myself
do not call me crazy

I want a city
not only made of neon signs
I love the silence
which separates words
not the one which comes after
the sirens and the gunshots.
I hear the dogs whining

in the den. I work
amidst perfumes and shampoos
but I feel the stink
of the caimans' breath.
I cry bent over
the altar of a car radio
I claw and kick.

I wish I had never been born

and that I was as old
as the world I know
sleep inside your arms
hear you talk
about your Father, for hours
and I'd like to leave you alone
with your motorbike in flames
on the striped asphalt
drink the blood from your little finger
suck your cock
while staying cold, like in a movie
and show it to my friends
and I wish you wrote of me
on every wall.

I stuck a pair of scissors

in the arm of a guy
who kept drooling over me
I bite, I suffer
a prisoner in the woods
among the packs of dogs
I am the queen, the servant
I don't know where to go
tonight, in the dark
and I don't know where to find you

Translated by Niclas Benni

Margherita Dolce Vita

(excerpt from the novel)

1. *The Night the Stars Vanished*

I climbed into bed, and the stars had vanished. I carefully cleaned the window pane, but it did no good. The stars were gone. Sirius had disappeared. So had Venus and Carmilla and Althazor. And Mab and Zelda and Bakbuk and Dandelion, along with the constellation of the Turkey and Lennon's Cross.

You needn't tell me that some of these stars don't exist. Those are my own names for them. In fact, I defend the right of anyone—especially an imaginative young girl like me—to call things not only by the names that are found in the dictionary but also by names found only in the fictionary, names that I make up and choose. Actually, everybody does it. My parents named me Margherita, but I like to be called Maga or Magic. My classmates like to poke fun, because I'm not what you would call slender, and so they call me Mega-Rita; my grandfather, who has a touch of old-timer's disease, calls me Margheritina, or sometimes Mariella, Marisella, or else Venusta, which was his sister's name. But, especially when I'm being cheerful, he calls me Margherita Dolce Vita.

The traffic cop I used to zip past on my bicycle would call me SlowDownMadge. My teachers call me HushDownThere. The first love of my life—well, actually the first and *last* love of my life—used to call me Minnie. He lived with his uncle and aunt and had a Disney-ish view of life. Back then, we both had braces, and when we kissed the metal would clash like a duel in the *Iliad*. But I think back on those kisses with regret. You can be fourteen and a half and have regrets, you know. You think I'm too young to have regrets? What if I die when I'm fifteen?

Anyway, I was talking about the stars. The strange thing is that the sky had been clear just a few minutes earlier when I took Sleepy, my dog, out for his usual walkabout of sixty mini-pees.

So it couldn't be clouds covering the stars. I opened the window and saw that right where an hour before there had been a meadow and trees they had erected a giant billboard, the size of a drive-in movie screen, about 150 feet tall, and on it was written:

MEN WORKING

That huge board was covering the stars. What's going on? I wondered.

I poked my head out a little further, like a turtle in springtime, and I saw a huge assortment of trucks. They were unloading sheets of glass, pipes, and blocks of concrete, as well as sinks and tiles. Then it dawned on me.

We had known for a while that someone had bought the lot next door to us and was planning to build a house on it.

I was all excited. I wanted to wake Mamma or Grandpa or my brothers, but it was late, so I whistled for Sleepy, and he trotted over.

Sleepy is my catadogue, so called because he is not so much a mongrel as he is a genuine catalogue of every breed of dog and species of animal (and possibly plant) that has ever lived on planet Earth. I have to laugh when I read about experiments with DNA and cloning. Sleepy is more complicated than that. He is a genuine arcimboldo, one of nature's most mysterious contrivances. Let me try to describe him:

Cylindrical piggy body.

Front paws like a platypus.

Back paws like a froggy gone a-courting.

Right ear standing up, like a desert fox.

Left ear drooping, like a cocker spaniel.

Pterodactyl muzzle, chameleon eyes, water-buffalo nostrils, German-brewer whiskers, piranha-fish teeth.

Backside of a duck.

Twisted monkey tail.

The spotted, speckled coat of a jackalope. I'm not sure I could pinpoint the color. Let's say, the color of a mechanic's rag.

Add to the mix a sprinkling of bat, caiman, and sea-cucumber chromosomes.

And we haven't even begun to explore Sleepy's beauty.

My grandfather says that all beauty is complex, and that Sleepy is like a house, or the whole world, really. Every house has its formal livingroom, its gleaming bathroom, its antique furniture; but there is also a dusty broom closet, slimy plumbing, and woodworms gnawing away at the beams, a playroom, and a dark cellar to frighten—and attract—us kids. In

every house we think we know well, there is always something forgotten, something hidden. A drawer, shut tight, with a bloody knife tucked in among the innocent spoons. In the backyard, we might find a mysterious phrase carved into the bark of a tree, or a flower we've never seen before. Along the road we walk down every day, there is a dark alley. Under the city flows a subterranean river. Somewhere in our village, a band of assassins lives in hiding.

But Sleepy isn't a metaphor. He is flesh and blood and ivory; he has feelings and memories. When he was a puppy, somebody abandoned him in a Dumpster. The sound of the lid closing like a tombstone scarred him for life. Now, whenever Sleepy hears thunder or the sound of sheet metal clanging, and especially when he hears the din of a garbage truck, his fear mummifies him. He goes as stiff as a plush toy left in the freezer, legs poking straight into the air, and there he stays, motionless, for a whole day, until he finally revives. The veterinarian calls this hysterical narcolepsy. I call it psychosleep-o-lepsy, and when I get my degree in medicine, I'll write my thesis on it. Would you like to learn about some of the other mysteries of my dog? Then let me tell you: he sometimes emits noiseless, treacherous farts, as foul-smelling as the breath of a sick whale that has dined on out-of-date plankton, rotten sardines, and marathon-runners' underpants. Mamma doesn't like me saying so, but it is the pure, unvarnished truth.

Sleepy came into the room wagging his tail, which is to say, unrolling his tail like a New Year's Eve noisemaker, but fortunately with none of the accompanying sound effects. I whispered to him: "Sleepy, Sleepy, we're going to have neighbors!"

I took him in my arms, despite the boggy scent, and together we gazed out upon our little fairytale world.

Our backyard, with the single fir tree that at Christmas we deck with lights and ornaments, even if no one can see it, except maybe someone looking down from a passing plane.

The swing, where my brothers would send me flying, sometimes up to the sky, sometimes down to the ground.

Our car, as dented as the face of an old boxer.

The slightly overgrown garden, with a magnolia tree, a rosemary bush, and a bed of roses, Sleepy's favorite urinal.

An authentic fake Roman amphora, the last lingering relic of my father's nouveau trailer-trash period. Last year, where it now stands,

there were seven magnificent ceramic gnomes, but then Mamma read in a magazine that they were vulgar, and made my father remove them.

At the very back of the yard, you can see our childhood ship of dreams: dad's warehouse-shed, guarded by two rusty skulls, puddles of gasoline, oil drums, car springs, and all sorts of other mechanical guts and gizzards.

Running right in front of the house is a road called the Western Ring Road, edged with stuttering streetlamps.

Across the road, billboards and a barricade of apartment buildings, all identical. The colorless and necessary outskirts of town.

Behind the house is the Great Meadow, a relic of an ancient countryside once inhabited by stables full of moo-o-saurs and chicken houses filled with skewerless chickens.

At this time of year, the meadow is covered with white and yellow daisies, poppies and dandelions; wild chicory, spear grass, and nettles grow rampant in huge disheveled thickets, and beyond the thickets you can see a row of poplars standing watch and a small trickling brook that was once a river. From the far side of the reed thicket, the highway whispers its perennial lament of hurrying traffic.

Far in the distance stands a row of smokestacks, each emitting a different-colored plume of smoke, like so many enormous magic markers.

But if you waded through the high grass, braving the stinging nettles and thorn bushes, right in the middle of the meadow, you will see the red forest, a tenacious platoon of trees that conceals the ruins of a house destroyed by bombing, with all its stories.

Here lives the ghost of the Dust Girl, my sweet and frightening friend.

Of course, one day the smokestacks will fall, the river will dry up, the highway will be abandoned, littered with the hulks of cars, skeletons clinging to the steering wheels, and daisies—maybe even my namesake, the marguerite daisies—will rule the world.

And the Dust Girl will once again be queen.

Right, Sleepy?

He looked out at the scaffolding on the house under construction, twisted out of my arms, and scurried under the bed.

Bad sign, because Sleepy is a prophet of calamity, he is a clairvoyant animal, like his cousin Julius, the hoopoe, and the ill-augured raven. According to a proverb:

*If Sleepy hides under the bed,
Face the coming week with dread.*

Mamma came into my room; she must have heard that I wasn't asleep yet. She understood that I was restless, and she said, "Don't worry, everything will be all right."

I said nothing. What could I say? When children grow up and become adults, they immediately understand that what they were told when they were little was not true, and yet they recycle the age-old lie to their own children. Everyone wants to hand a better world down to their children, it is a game of Chinese telephone that has been going on for centuries, and the result is this world, this tissue of hatred.

And so I, a girl past her sell-by date, believe:

- a) that grown-ups have nothing left to teach us;
- b) that it would probably be better if we made the decisions and they wrote classroom compositions against war;
- c) that they ought to stop making movies where justice triumphs, and arrange for it to do its triumphing directly outside the exit of the movie house.

Well, okay, I admit it: I'm argumentative.

Oh, I forgot: every so often I like to pretend that I am an old lady, telling the story of my life to an angel, in Heaven's waiting room, or Hell's (I imagine that they will be roughly the same. After all, it's the same travel agency).

Or else I imagine that I live in the floating house in the middle of a vast swamp, and outside there is a traffic jam of motorboats, all honking their boat horns. The world has been flooded with water, and I am telling the story of my life as a survivor to my daughter Margherana (the children in this hypothetical future will be amphibious). And I will tell her: even though my life was full of surprises and odd occurrences and bolts of lightning and darkness, I felt lonely, in that unique and frightening way you feel lonely when you are a child. And yet, at the same time, I hoped that the next morning I would wake up to discover that I was a queen.

And she would ask me: what about the Dust Girl?

One day I'll tell you about her.

Translated by Antony Shugaar



Foto © Ivan Kelava

Mirko Božić

Mirko Božić se je rodil leta 1982 v Mostarju v Bosni in Hercegovini. Leta 2008 je diplomiral iz angleškega in hrvaškega jezika in književnosti na Filozofski fakulteti Univerze v Mostarju. Je pesnik, pisec kratkih zgodb, esejist in ustanovitelj združenja mladih književnikov z območja Balkana »United Literary Front«. Izdal je tri pesniške zbirke: *Jedrim kroz buru* (Jadram skozi vihar, 2001), *Bijele noći* (Bele noči, 2004) in *Mrlje na njenim rukama* (Madeži na njenih rokah, 2012), za katero je prejel hrvaško nagrado mesta Karlovac za poezijo (2012). Njegove pesmi so bile objavljene v številnih antologijah, izdanih v Bosni in Hercegovini, Sloveniji, Črni gori in Srbiji. Pesmi in eseji so prevedeni v angleščino, nemščino, poljščino, albanščino, španščino, slovaščino in slovenščino. Med nagrade, ki jih je prejel za svoje delo, sodita nagrada Antuna Branka Šimića za najboljšega mladega pesnika Bosne in Hercegovine (2000) in nagrada revije *Opomena* za kratko zgodbo (2003). Leta 2014 je prejel pisateljsko štipendijo Srednjeevropske pobude (SEP).

Mirko Božić was born in 1982 in Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina. He obtained a degree in English and Croatian Language and Literature from the Faculty of Arts at the University of Mostar in 2008. He is a poet, short story writer, essayist, and creator of the United Literary Front, a network for young authors from the Balkans. He has published three collections of poetry: *Jedrim kroz buru* (I Sail through the Storm, 2001), *Bijele noći* (White Nights, 2004), and *Mrlje na njenim rukama* (Stains on her Hands, 2012), for which he won the Croatian Poetry Award of the City of Karlovac (2012). His poetry has been featured in various anthologies published in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, and Slovenia. His poems and essays have been translated into Albanian, English, German, Polish, Slovakian, Slovenian, and Spanish. Awards he has received for his work include the "Antun Branko Šimić Prize" for the best young poet in Bosnia and Herzegovina (2000) and the *Opomena* Magazine Short Story Award (2003). He was the recipient of the Central European Initiative (CEI) Fellowship for Writers in Residence in 2014.

Kolač sa jabukama

4 žumanca

10 kašika šećera

10 kašika ulja

10 kašika mlijeka

12 kašika brašna

½ praška za pecivo

1 vanilin šećer

1 kg jabuka oguliti, izrendati, (a ne mora), sa 5 šoljica šećera i 1 vanilin-šećer.

To ohladiti i staviti na tijesto.

Snijeg: umutiti 4 bjelanjka sa 4 kašike šećera. Prokuhati jednu šolju šećera i šolju vode.

Ova priča započinje na Šemovcu, malom naselju na početku mostarskog Starog grada, osmanlijskog kamenog gnijezda na estuariju Radobolje i Neretve ispresijecanog mostovima i kanalima obgrljenim oblom kaldrmom izvadjenom iz dvaju rijeka. U ovom gradu čovjek ne može pobjeći od vode, rijeka je stalno prisutna tu negdje u offu i zvuk vode prati te danju i noću. Moja kuća bila je u Oneščukovoj 33. Visoka, drvena zelena kapija, koja se otvarala na dugi, uski prilaz okružen dvjema kućama. Ona sa desne strane bila je moja, a na kraju prolaza bila je kuća moga strica. Odatle se ulazilo u avliju popločanu kamenom i ogradjenu niskim betonskim zidom ispod kojeg su rasli grmovi maminih hortenzija. Na dnu su se nalazile stepenice odakle se pružao možda najbolji pogled na Krivu ćupriju. Iako je Mostar grad koji su mostovi do te mjere obilježili da je praktički nastao iz jednog, mala ćuprija mi je uvijek bila najdraža, bez obzira što na Neretvi ima mnogo većih i poznatijih. Ne samo zato što sam iznad nje stanovao, nego i zato što je taj dio Starog grada uvijek djelovao intimnije i životnije. Tada se na Šemovcu mogla napraviti i kuća na drvetu što danas, kada je turizam preuzeo svaki pedalj prostora, više nije moguće. Moje kuće danas više nema, no kapija je i dalje tu, ali od kovanog željeza, novokomponovani kič novog vlasnika koji nema nikakve veze sa mnom i mojim uspomenama na broj 33. Ja tu više ne stanujem, ostala su tek sjećanja, kao talog na dnu šolje kave. No barem je ulica i dalje zadržala svoje ime.

Oneščuk je jedan od rijetkih koji su i dalje tu, iako ništa o njemu ne znam.

Ćupriju ispod Šemovca u 16. stoljeću sagradio je Čejvan-Čehaja, i sve do gradnje željezničke pruge u Mostaru 1884. godine, ona je bila dio glavne prometnice. Nakon toga je pomalo pala u zaborav, onako skrivena, duboko u tkivu grada, nad Radoboljom. Takvu, prepuštenu šetačima, slučajnim prolaznicima i psima, nekako ju je zaobišao i rat devedesetih godina, koji je jedina od mostarskih mostova uspjela preživjeti, da bi se srušila tek koncem devedesetih nakon jedne jake poplave na Radobolji. Rijeka ju je, već izraubanu i oštećenu, odnijela sa sobom prema ušću Neretve u kojoj je tada još uvijek ležao Hajrudinov most, razlomljen na komade poput kolača od jabuke koji je znala napraviti moja mama. Danas više nema moje majke, kao ni njenog kolača. Sve što je ostalo od toga, pohabani je stari rokovnik prepun recepata za kolače, juhe i umake. I uspomene na na ženu koja se, jednako kao i Kriva ćuprija, pretvorila u metaforu nečega što je nekada bilo, a danas više nije, i više nikad neće biti.

Onako odozgo, taj mali kameni most okružen starim vodenicama djelovao je kao kazališna predstava koju sam imao privilegij gledati iz najbolje lože u toj metafizičkoj dvorani, svaki dan. Jutra su bila najljepša. Ona bijela jutra kada bi grad zasvijetlio poput kristala. Bez obzira na sve što se u međuvremenu promijenilo, ljude koji su otišli i došli, zgrade koje su nestale i priče koje smo zaboravili, ta jutra i svjetlost su ostali. Jedino što se može usporediti s tim jutarnjim svjetlom, noćni je pogled na grad svisoka, recimo sa parkinga iznad stadiona pod Bijelim Brijegom, ili kad se automobilom spuštaš niz Kobilovaču, staru zmijugavu cestu zbog koje ulazak u grad djeluje kao uranjanje u ogromnu, svjetleću galaksiju prepunu žmirkavih svjetala. Tek tu i tamo ovaj spektakl remete crvene neonske reklame za klima uređaje i turske banke, i možda agresivna betonska vertikalna nedovršenog franjevačkog zvonika, najvišeg na Balkanu, čija me visoka, osvijetljena bakrena kapa noću uvijek pomalo podsjećala na moskovski Kremlj. Što uopće znači dovršen? Gradovi su uvijek nedovršene stvari.

No ovo nije priča o njemu, već nečemu što je bilo prije njega, na toj maloj avliji u Oneščukovoj 33. Dole, ispred kuće, stajao je okrugli bijeli stol, i oko njega žute plastične stolice. Na tom stolu popilo se, pojelo i protabirilo mnogo toga, što je u međuvremenu isparilo iz moje glave. Blagost djetinjstva i sastoji se u zaboravu. Zaboravu svega onog lošeg, ali i onog dobrog. Zato su fotoalbumi

toliko važni, jer bez njih bih ostao bez prošlosti poput kakvog čovjeka bez biografije. U onim zlim vremenima prije dvadesetak godina, kada se preko noći napuštalo sve ono što je čovjek godinama gradio, napuštavši svoj cijeli prijašnji život i nekog prijašnjeg sebe, jedna od rijetkih stvari koje su se nosile sa sobom prije nego što posljednji put okreneš ključ u svojoj bravi i odeš u neizvjesnost, bili su upravo albumi. U mojoj blagovaonici, na jednoj drugoj adresi, sada stoji hrastova vitrina iz naše kuće na Šemovcu. Na vrhu, sa desne strane, vidi se oštećenje od gelera u ratu, poput ožiljka na obrvi. Unutra su, na polici, i dalje uredno poredane kristalne čaše i servisi od kineskog i ruskog porculana koje je tu stavila moja pokojna majka. Za razliku od nje i drugih, meni bliskih ljudi, porculan je i dalje tu, žilaviji i dugovječniji od ljudi na koje me podsjeti svaki put kad ga pogledam. Dode mi da se gorko nasmijem svaki put kad shvatim da se jedan kobaltni servis za čaj kroz pakao devedesetih uspio provući bez ikakvog ožiljka, dok su ljudi na koje me podsjeća sada duboko pod zemljom. Taj malograđanski mizanscen za svečane prigode rijetko kad napušta mrak vitrine, ni ne sjećam se kad sam zadnji put pio iz tih šolja. One sada drijemaju u toploj hrastovini kao da se ništa nije dogodilo i kao da se ništa, baš ništa, neće ni dogoditi. Vrijeme je irelevantna kategorija za unutarnju memoriju porculana.

Ova vitrina izvorno je stajala u prizemlju naše kuće na Šemovcu, koje se sastojalo od blagovaonice, kuhinje, dnevnog boravka i malog kupatila improviziranog ispod stubišta koje je, s vanjske strane kuće, vodilo na kat. Zidovi prizemlja bili su prekriveni bijelim tapetama sa okomitim cvjetnim uzorkom. Na ulazu u kuhinju stajala je bijela zavjesa sa crveno obrubljenim volanima, poput kazališnog zastora. Naše kuće i jesu neka vrsta malih kazališta svakodnevice, scenografije dragog i nebitnog, sitnica koje žive u balonu pomno osmišljene intime čiji su unutarnji zakoni poznati samo onima koji su ga smislili. Kada danas promatram hrastovu vitrinu i sve ostale sitnice iz naše kuće, djeluju mi pomalo dezorijentirano i tužno, kao scena koja je ostala bez svoje pozornice pa sad pokušava pronaći smisao u novoj, nepoznatoj situaciji. Unutarnji prostor prizemlja bio je od jednake važnosti za naš život kao i vanjski prostor avlije, i ova dva prostora prelijevala su se jedan u drugi slijedom godišnjih doba koja su prolazila preko male ćuprije, penjući se uvis prema kući u Oneščukovoj 33.

Mostar je najtopliji grad Balkana i zato se na avliji moglo sjediti do dugo u jesen, kao što je ovdje inače slučaj. Oni pravi zimski mra-

zovi obično tek zadnjim vlakom stignu u ovaj grad, a i tad su rijetko okrutni prema njemu, pa se osim u hladnim naletima bure, zima i ne osjeti toliko kao drugdje na sjeveru. Tek 2012. godine osjetilo se što je prava bijela zima, kada je debeli, sloj snijega prekrrio i paralizirao grad na čitava dva tjedna, a onu andrićevsku bjelinu sunca zamijenila zaglušujuća tišina snijega. Mirisala je pomalo na slatku bjelinu snijega iz maminog recepta za kolač s jabukama. Samo što, za razliku od kolača, nije za sobom ostavljala trag ugođe na mom nepcu, već hrpu polomljenih udova na zaleđenim ulicama i tvrdih štruca bijelog kruha zarobljenih u skladištima gradskih pekara. Bio je to snijeg za pamćenje.

Jabolčna pita

4 rumenjaki

10 žlic sladkorja

10 žlic olja

10 žlic mleka

12 žlic moka

½ pecilnega praška

1 vanilijev sladkor

1 kg jabolk olupiti, naribati (ni nujno), 5 malih skodelic sladkorja in 1 vanilijev sladkor.

To ohladiti in dati na testo.

Sneg: stepsti 4 beljake s 4 žlicami sladkorja. Prevreti skodelico sladkorja in skodelico vode.

Ta zgodba se začne na Šemovcu, v majhnem naselju na začetku mostarske četrti Stari grad, osmanskega kamnitega gnezda na estuariju Radobolje in Neretve, prepredenega z mostovi in kanali, ki jih objemajo poti iz oblih prodnikov iz obeh rek. Človek v tem mestu ne more pobegniti pred vodo, reka je ves čas navzoča nekje v offu in zvok vode te spremlja podnevi in ponoči. Moja hiša je bila na Oneščukovi, številka 33. Visoka lesena zelena dvoriščna vrata, ki so se odpirala na dolgo ozko uličico z dvema hišama. Tista na desni je bila moja, tista na koncu uličice pa je bila hiša mojega strica. Tam je bil vhod na dvorišče, tlakovano s kamni in ograjeno z nizkim betonskim zidom, pod katerim so rastle grmi maminih hortenzij. Na koncu so bile stopnice, od koder je bil morebiti najlepši pogled na most Kriva čuprija. Čeprav je Mostar mesto, ki so ga mostovi zaznamovali do te mere, da je praktično nastal iz enega, mi je bil ta mali most vedno najljubši, ne glede na to, da je na Neretvi veliko večjih in bolj znanih. Ne samo zato, ker sem nad njim stanoval, temveč tudi zato, ker se je ta del četrti Stari grad vedno zdel bolj intimen in bolj življenjski. Takrat si lahko na Šemovcu postavil tudi drevesno hišico, kar danes, ko je turizem prevzel vsako ped prostora, ni več mogoče. Moje hiše danes ni več, dvoriščna vrata pa so še vedno tu, vendar iz kovanega železa, novokomponirani kič novega lastnika, ki nima nikakršne zveze z mano in mojimi spomini na številko 33. Jaz tu ne stanujem več, ostali so le spomini kot usedlina na dnu kavne

skodelice. Je pa vsaj ulica ohranila svoje ime. Oneščuk je eden redkih, ki so še vedno tu, čeprav o njem ne vem nič.

Most pod Šemovcem je v 16. stoletju zgradil Čejvan-Čehaja in vse do gradnje železniške proge v Mostarju leta 1884 je bil del glavne prometne poti. Potem je počasi potonil v pozabo, tako skrit, globoko v tkivu mesta, nad Radoboljo. Takšnega, prepuščenega sprehajalcem, naključnim mimoidočim in psom, je nekako obšla tudi vojna v devetdesetih letih, ki mu jo je edinemu med mostarskimi mostovi uspelo preživeti, zrušil pa se je proti koncu devetdesetih let po močni poplavi Radobolje. Reka ga je, že dotrajanega in poškodovanega, odnesla s sabo do sotočja Neretve, v kateri je takrat še vedno ležal Hajrudinov most, razlomljen na kose kot jabolčna pita, ki jo je znala pripraviti moja mama. Danes ni več moje matere, tudi njene pite ne. Vse, kar je od tega ostalo, je obrabljen star rokovnik, poln receptov za pecivo, juhe in omake. In spomini na žensko, ki se je, enako kot most Kriva ćuprija, spremenila v metaforo nečesa, kar je nekoč bilo, danes pa več ni in nikoli več ne bo.

Gledano od zgoraj je bil ta mali kamniti most, obkrožen s starimi mlini, kot gledališka predstava, ki sem jo lahko privilegirano gledal iz najboljše lože v tej metafizični dvorani vsak dan. Jutra so bila najlepša. Tista bela jutra, ko se je mesto zableščalo kot kristal. Ne glede na vse, kar se je medtem spremenilo, na ljudi, ki so odšli in prišli, na stavbe, ki so izginile, in na zgodbe, ki smo jih pozabili, so ta jutra in svetloba ostali. Edino, kar je primerljivo s to jutranjo svetlobo, je nočni pogled na mesto z visokega, denimo s parkirišča nad stadionom pod Bijelim Brijegom, ali ko se z avtomobilom spuščas po Kobilovači, stari vijugasti cesti, zaradi katere se vstop v mesto zdi kot potapljanje v velikansko, bleščečo galaksijo, polno utripajočih luči. Ta spektakel le tu in tam zmotijo neonske reklame za klimatske naprave in turške banke in mogoče agresivna betonska vertikalna nedokončanega frančiškanskega zvonika, najvišjega na Balkanu, katerega visoka, osvetljena bakrena kapa me je ponoči vedno malce spominjala na moskovski Kremelj. Kaj sploh pomeni dokončan? Mesta so vedno nedokončane stvari.

Ampak to ni zgodba o njem, temveč o nečem, kar je bilo pred njim, na tem malem dvorišču Oneščukove 33. Spodaj pred hišo je stala okrogla bela miza, okrog pa rumeni plastični stoli. Za to mizo se je spilo, pojedlo in preučilo veliko stvari, ki so medtem izhlapеле iz moje glave. Blagodat otroštva je tudi pozaba. Pozaba vsega slabega pa tudi vsega dobrega. Zato so fotografski albumi tako pomembni,

ker bi brez njih ostal brez preteklosti kot kakšen človek brez biografije. V tistih zlih časih pred približno dvajsetimi leti, ko se je čez noč zapustilo vse tisto, kar je človek leta in leta gradil, ko si zapustil vse svoje prejšnje življenje in nekega prejšnjega sebe, so bili ena redkih stvari, ki si jih vzel s sabo, preden si zadnjič obrnil ključ v svoji ključavnici in odšel v negotovost, ravno albumi. V moji jedilnici na nekem drugem naslovu je zdaj hrastova vitrina iz naše hiše na Šemovcu. Na vrhu na desni strani se vidi poškodba od izstrelka med vojno kot brazgotina na obrvi. Notri na polici so še vedno lepo zloženi kristalni kozarci in servisi iz kitajskega in ruskega porcelana, ki jih je tja postavila moja pokojna mati. V nasprotju z njo in drugimi ljubimi ljudmi je porcelan še vedno tu, odpornejši in trajnejši od ljudi, na katere me spomni vsakič, ko ga pogledam. Prime me, da bi se grenko zasmel, vsakič, ko spoznam, da se je kobaltnemu čajnemu servisu uspelo prebiti skozi pekel devetdesetih let brez kakršne koli brazgotine, ljudje, na katere me spominja, pa so zdaj globoko pod rušo. Ta malomeščanska mizanscena za svečane priložnosti redkokdaj zapusti temo vitrine, ne spomnim se, kdaj sem nazadnje pil iz teh skodelic. Zdaj dremajo v topli hrastovini, kakor da se ni nič zgodilo in kakor da se tudi nič, res nič ne bo zgodilo. Čas je za notranji spomin porcelana irelevantna kategorija.

Ta vitrina je bila najprej v pritličju naše hiše na Šemovcu, ki je bilo sestavljeno iz jedilnice, kuhinje, dnevne sobe in majhne kopalnice, improvizirane pod stopnicami, ki so z zunanje strani hiše vodile v nadstropje. Stene pritličja so bile prekrte z belimi tapetami z navpičnim cvetličnim vzorcem. Na vhodu v kuhinjo je bila bela zavesa z rdeče obrobljenimi volani, podobna gledališki. Naše hiše tudi so neka vrsta majhnih gledališč vsakdana, scenografije ljubega in nepomembnega, drobnarij, ki živijo v balonu pozorno osmišljene intimne, katere notranje zakonitosti so znane samo tistim, ki so si ga izmislili. Ko danes opazujem hrastovo vitrino in vse druge drobnarije iz naše hiše, se mi zdijo malce dezorientirane in žalostne kakor scena, ki je ostala brez svojega odra in zdaj skuša najti smisel v novi, neznani situaciji. Notranji prostor pritličja je bil enako pomemben za naše življenje kakor zunanji prostor dvorišča in ta dva prostora sta se prelivala drug v drugega po zaporedju letnih časov, ki so šli prek malega mostu in se vzpenjali proti hiši na Oneščukovi, številka 33.

Mostar je najtoplejše mesto Balkana in zato se je na dvorišču lahko sedelo dolgo v jesen, kot je tu sicer navada. Tista prava zimska slana pride v to mesto po navadi šele z zadnjim vlakom, vendar je

tudi takrat redko kruta do njega, zato se zima, razen v mrzlih sunkih burje, ne občuti tako zelo kot drugje na severu. Le leta 2012 se je dalo občutiti, kaj je prava bela zima, ko je debel sloj snega prekril in ohromil mesto za cela dva tedna, tisto andričevsko beloto sonca pa je zamenjala oglušujoča tišina snega. Malo je dišala po sladki beloti snega iz maminega recepta za jabolčno pito. Le da, v nasprotju s pito, za sabo ni pustila sledi ugodja na mojem nebu, temveč kup polomljenih udov na poledenelih ulicah in trdih štruc belega kruha, ujetih v skladiščih mestnih pekarn. To je bil sneg, ki si ga zapomniš.

Prevedla Đurđa Strsoglavec

Apple Cake

4 egg yolks

10 tablespoons sugar

10 tablespoons oil

10 tablespoons milk

12 tablespoons flour

½ teaspoon baking powder

1 packet vanilla sugar

Peel 1kg of apples, then slice them and mix them with 5 cups of sugar and one packet of vanilla sugar

Add to the dough.

Icing: whisk 4 egg yolks with 4 tablespoons sugar; boil one cup of sugar in one cup of water.

This story starts in Šemovac, a small settlement at the entrance to the Old Town in Mostar, the Ottoman stone nest at the estuary of the Neretva and Radobolja Rivers, intertwined with bridges and canals framed by the cobblestones extracted from the two rivers. One can never quite get away from water in this city, it's always there somewhere, and the sound of the water follows you day and night. My house was at 33 Onescuk Street. A big, tall green door opened up to a long passage that led between two houses. The one on the right was mine, and the one at the other end was my uncle's. From there, one entered a stone-covered courtyard surrounded by a low concrete wall, underneath which stood Mom's hydrangea bushes. At the bottom there were stairs which had maybe the best view of the Crooked Bridge. Although Mostar is a city hallmarked by bridges, so much so that it practically sprang from one, the small bridge was always my favourite one, even if there are larger and more famous ones. Not just because I lived above it, but also because that part of the Old Town always seemed livelier, more intimate. Back then, you could build a tree house in Šemovac, which is now impossible because every available square meter has been commercialized for tourism. My house is no longer there today, but the gate is still there, made of cast iron, a bit post-war kitsch that has nothing to do with me and my memories of number 33. I don't live there any more, memories are all that's left, like coffee grounds at the bottom of the cup. At least

the street still has its name. Onescuk is one of the few who hasn't left Šemovac, though I don't know anything about him.

The Crooked Bridge was built in the 16th century by Cejvan Cehaja, and right up until the railway was built in 1884 it was a part of the main road. After that, it was slowly forgotten, located deep in the city tissue, above Radobolja. So much so that it was even forgotten by the 90's war itself, which it managed to get through as the only local bridge to do so in the city. Only, the river tore it down at the end of the 90s during one major flood, when it was already worn out and damaged anyway, and carried it towards Neretva, which still harboured the remains of Hajrudin's bridge, crumbled into pieces like the apple cake my mom used to make. Today my mom is gone, just like her apple cake. All that's left is a ragged notebook filled with recipes for cakes, soups and sauces. And memories of a woman who, just like that bridge, had turned into a metaphor for something that used to be, no longer is, and never will be again.

Seen from above, that small stone bridge, surrounded by old watermills, seems like a stage set that I had the privilege of seeing from the best seat in that metaphysical house, every day. The mornings were the best. Those white mornings when the city would light up like a crystal. Notwithstanding everything that has changed in the meantime, the people who have come and gone, the disappeared buildings and the stories we've forgotten, the morning light is still there. The only thing comparable to that is the night view from above when you drive down old, meandering Kobilovaca Road, where entering the city seems like entering a vast, lit galaxy overloaded with gleaming lights. This spectacle is disturbed here and there by red neon ads for air conditioning and Turkish banks, and maybe the aggressive concrete shaft of the incomplete Franciscan bell tower, the tallest one in the Balkans, the lit copper tip of which always reminds me of the Kremlin in Moscow. What does it mean, *incomplete*, anyway? Cities as such are always incomplete things.

No, this is not a story about that, but about something that was there before it, on that small courtyard at 33 Onescuk. Downstairs, in front of the house, there was a round table, surrounded by yellow plastic chairs. A lot of drinks were had there, lots of food, many words were said. But all of it has disappeared from my head. The kindness of childhood is in forgetting. Forgetting all the bad but also all the good stuff. This makes photo albums very important. Without them, I'd be like a man without a biography. In those

evil times 20 years ago, when overnight one abandoned everything he had been building for years, abandoning his former life and his former self, one of the few things he'd carry with himself, before he turned the key in his own lock one last time, was the photo albums. In our dining room, at a different address, is our oak cupboard from the house in Šemovac. At the top, on the right, you can see a scar from a bomb from the time of war, like the scar above an eyebrow. Inside are still our crystal glasses, Russian and Chinese dining sets put there by my late mother. In contrast to her and to some other dear people close to me, the porcelain is still there, more resistant and long-living than many of those it reminds me of. It makes me laugh bitterly every time I recall that a cobalt tea set managed to pull through the war without a scar, while those it reminds me of are now deep in the ground. This *petit-bourgeois mis-en-scène* for special occasions rarely ever leaves the darkness of the cupboard. I barely remember when I used it the last time. It sleeps inside as if nothing, really nothing, ever happened or ever will. Time is an irrelevant category for the internal memory of porcelain.

This cupboard originally stood in the ground floor of our house in Šemovac, where there were the dining room, kitchen, living room, and a small bathroom underneath the external staircase. The ground floor walls were covered with a white flower-patterned wallpaper. At the kitchen door, there was a white curtain with red frills, like a theatre curtain. Our houses are indeed like small theatres of the everyday, sceneries of the dear and unimportant; trinkets living in a balloon of carefully curated intimacy, the internal laws of which are known only to those that have put it together. When I regard the oak cupboard and the rest of stuff from our house today, they make a disoriented and sad impression, like a scene without its stage that's now trying to find some sense in a new and unknown situation. The ground floor space was as important to us as the courtyard in front of the house was. The two kept intertwining through the seasons that kept coming over the little bridge below, coming up towards the house at 33 Onescuk.

Mostar is the warmest city in the Balkans and that's why you could sit outside in the courtyard for quite a long time in the fall, which is usually the case. The real winter frost usually arrives on the last winter train, and even then it's rarely very harsh to the city. Which means that, apart from the bora, you rarely feel the winter as you would elsewhere. Only in 2012 did we feel what a real snowy

winter was. There was a thick, white snow coat covering the whole city for over two weeks, paralysing it completely. The Andrić-like white sun was replaced by the deafening silence of snow. It smelled a bit like the sweet whiteness of the icing from mom's apple cake recipe. Just, unlike the cake, it didn't leave a sweet trace on my palate, rather, a big pile of broken limbs in frozen streets and hard loaves of bread taken hostage in the storage rooms of city bakeries. A snow to remember.

Translated by Mirko Božić



Foto © Karol Grygoruk

Sylvia Chutnik

Sylvia Chutnik se je rodila leta 1979 v Varšavi na Poljskem. Sodi med najbolj znane in prepoznavne poljske avtorice. Diplomirala je iz kulturologije in študija s področja spolov na Univerzi v Varšavi. Je romanopiska, esejistka, dramatičarka, socialna delavka, predsednica fundacije MaMa, ki si prizadeva za uveljavljanje pravic mater na Poljskem, in članica neformalne feministične skupine »Porozumienie Kobiet 8 Marca« (»Ženski pakt 8. marec«). Za svoja prizadevanja na področju socialnega dela je prejela štipendijo mednarodne nevladne organizacije Ashoka, ki spodbuja socialno podjetništvo. Njen romaneskni prvenec *Kieszonkowy atlas kobiet* (Žepni atlas žensk) je izšel leta 2008. Roman je prejel nagrado Potni list za književnost tednika *Polityka* (2008) in bil nominiran za literarno nagrado Nike. Omeniti je treba še romana *Dzidzia* (Dojenčica, 2010) in *Warszawa kobiet* (Varšava žensk, 2011) ter dramska dela *Aleksandra* (2012), *Murano00* (Duhovi iz Muranówa 2012) in *Wanda* (2013). Objavila je več esejev in uredniških člankov v revijah *Polityka* in *Pani*. Njena besedila so bila objavljena tudi v številnih antologijah in zbornikih. Trenutno zaključuje doktorski študij na Inštitutu za poljsko kulturo Univerze v Varšavi.

Sylvia Chutnik was born in 1979 in Warsaw, Poland. She is considered to be one of the most famous and recognized authors in Poland. She graduated from Warsaw University with a degree in Culture and Gender Studies. She is a novelist, essayist, dramatist, social worker, the President of the MaMa Foundation promoting mothers' rights in Poland, and a member of the informal feminist group "Porozumienie Kobiet 8 Marca" ("The March 8th Women's Agreement"). She was named a fellow of the international non-governmental organization Ashoka, which supports social entrepreneurship endeavors, for her involvement with social work. Her debut novel, *Kieszonkowy atlas kobiet* (The Pocket Atlas of Women), was published in 2008. The novel was awarded the *Polityka* Passport Award (2008) and nominated for the Nike Award for literature. Her other works include the novels *Dzidzia* (Diddums, 2010) and *Warszawa kobiet* (Women's Warsaw, 2011), as well as the plays *Aleksandra* (Alexandra, 2012), *Murano00* (The Ghosts of Muranów, 2012), and *Wanda* (2013). She has written multiple essays and editorials for the magazines *Polityka* and *Pani*. Her writings have also been published in several anthologies and collective works. She is currently completing her PhD at the Institute of Polish Culture at the University of Warsaw.

W krainie czarów

(fragment powieści)

Kiedy byłam bardzo młoda, to byłam też mała, ale niczemu się nie dziwiłam.

Kiedy byłam bardzo młoda, to pisałam wiersze w zeszytach. Odkryłam śmierć ciemnej klatki schodowej, zimnej klatki schodowej. Odkrywałam całą masę różnych rzeczy. Teraz wiem, że ta śmierć może być też w krzakach, liściach i miękkiej trawie – dotychczas zarezerwowanej dla rusałek, mrówek, niedopałków. Ona – ta śmierć – jest nawet w niewinnej przyrodzie. Czy ktoś mógłby się tym zająć, jakiś rząd czy ruch społeczny? Apeluję o to, bo ja osobiście byłam w głębokim szoku, kiedy zmarł Jan Stanisław C. Tak zwyczajnie, w trawie. Rozrzucony jak cień po południu. Rozrzucony bezwładnie przy drzewie.

Nie mogłam uwierzyć, że mu się to przytrafiło, bo Jan był silny i potężny. Stał nade mną czasem i to było, jakby góra stała nade mną. Zasłaniała wszystko, co można było zobaczyć. Mówił wtedy, że unieść może w dłoni, co sobie zechce: wielką rurę, opony od samochodu albo mnie. Wierzyłam mu, bo wyglądał jak postać z komiksów, brakowało mu pelerynki na plecach i rajtuzów, ale podobny był bardzo do Batmana. Wchodził na drabinę i wierzyłam, że może wspiąć się do samego nieba. Nie robił tego, bo mu się nie chciało, poza tym nie przepadał raczej za Bogiem.

Bardzo przepraszam, ale takie osoby jak on nie umierają, chyba się ze mną zgodzicie.

Jestem jak Alicja z deficytem czarów, która rośnie lub kurczy się nerwowo, jeśli coś dzieje się w jej życiu nie tak. Tchórzliwa dziewczynka w za małych butach i za dużej sukience.

Zamykam oczy, gdy przechodzi obok mnie czarny kot z szerokim uśmiechem. Zamieram w swojskim kokonie odpowiedzialności i zobowiązań. Wydaje mi się, że już na zawsze będę mieściła się pod kwietną łodygą. A wtedy przychodzi olbrzym i kosi trawnik. Z lewej do prawej, nic nie zostaje. Kwiat leży i nie ma się pod czym schronić.

Następuje wypędzenie z raju.

W rodzinie mówiło się: działka. Że się tam jedzie, że trzeba trawę skosić, że opłaty. Wyjeżdżało się w piątek wieczorem, ale jak Polska się zmieniła i ludzie zaczęli jeździć wszędzie samochodami, to w piątek nie było sensu. Bo straszne korki na trasie do Siedlec. I wtedy albo w sobotę o świcie, albo w piątek też, tylko wcześniej. Najpierw

się jechało białym fiatem 126p, z kierownicą taką niby drewnianą. Z obiciem brąz skajowy, parzący w tyłek i uda w czasie lata, bo to był plastik chamski i z FSO ściema.

Działkę kupili Jan Stanisław i Barbara C. w tym samym roku, w którym się urodziłam. Początkowo był tylko plac, nieogrodzony i zarośnięty. Pojedyncze słupki wbite przez geodetę z gminy pokazywały skalę zakupu. Sporo ziemi, jak na rekreację. Wokół las, głównie sosnowy, w ściółce mnóstwo grzybów. Prawdziwki, kozaki, kurki i podgrzybki. Ludzie łazili po nieogrodzonym terenie, myśląc, że to jeszcze wspólna polana, a to już było nasze. Stawialiśmy namiot, obok samochód i podręczna lodóweczka z nabiałem i napojami. Powoli, powoli Jan Stanisław grodził teren, stawiał dom. Przywieziono go w częściach, model Mikołajki, ale został szybko przerobiony, obudowany, ulepszony. Oczkiem w głowie Jana był dach, ponieważ od wielu lat zajmował się tym zawodowo.

Dach to archetypowe poczucie bezpieczeństwa. Motyw zadbania, uchronienia od deszczu, piorunów i oka Złego. Fundamenty są początkiem tworzenia swojego miejsca na ziemi, ale to właśnie dach jest tego końcem, kropką nad „i”, podsumowaniem. I Jan Stanisław wchodził z papą po drabinie, rozpuszczał w wiadrze różne mazie, potem je wylewał między dachówki. Siedział okragiem na samej górze, wielki i potężny. Pogwizdywał pod nosem stare piosenki. O Czarnej Mańce, o Stachu, Antku Cwaniaku. Wychowany na styku Ochoty i Woli, pomiędzy torami przy Zachodnim a Górką Szczęśliwicką, tkwił w lumpenproletariacie przez całe swoje życie. Inteligenci frajerzy nie rozumieli jego paznokci wysmarowanych farbą, jego tatuaży pokrywających całe ciało. Dmuchania nosa bez chusteczki i mówienia ludziom wprost. Ależ panie Janku, co pan mówi. Mówię, co myślałem, że się pani to ciasto nie udało, nie smakuje mi, no co mam zrobić.

Dziadku, daj już spokój, będzie tej pani przykro.

E tam, przykro, co przykro, przecież mówię, jak jest.

Mijały miesiące, dom rósł. Mała ja spędzałam tam niemal całe wakacje, pomiędzy drzewami i stukającym dziecięcym. Było mi trochę nudno, trochę dziko. Wchodziłam pod krzesła i stół, a wtedy stawałam się małeńka jak takie zupełnie nic.

Albo gapiałam się godzinami w lustro, bo wtedy nie czułam się samotna. Wcale nie chciałam przejść na drugą stronę tafli. Zwyczajnie potrzebowałam towarzystwa i nie umiałam przestać wyobrażać sobie, że ze mnie samej zrodzą się nowe postaci. Zaproszą na herbatkę, jak Alicję. Zadziwią ją i wytrącą ze stuporu.

Jako jedynaczka umiałam się bawić w samotności, dość wcześnie uzależniłam się od czytania książek i w związku z tym minuty liczyłam stronami. Mam przebłyski siebie lat osiem, siedzącej na leżaku i czytającej *Lassie, wróć*. Wspominam też dmuchany basenik i domek z materiału, w którym miałam swoje lalki. Czasami przychodził do mnie sąsiad z naprzeciwka, Mariusz. Był starszy, no i poza tym chłopak, więc zabawy były ograniczone.

Słońce wypalało wzory w coraz bardziej wypłowiałym materiale, ledwo się już mieściłam w tym rozkładanym domku. Lalki Barbie zamieniałam na kasety i pierwsze bunt. Dziwne stroje, ulubiona muzyka. To historia dojrzewania, fali zmian. Wpisana zarazem w historię działki, ale jednocześnie bardzo miejska. Wszystko po kolei działa się jak w wielkiej mądrej książce leżącej na strychu albo w bibliotece typu „mamy wszystko, co chcesz, i twoje życie spisane na pergaminie również”. Więc uważaj.

Działka była zawsze Domem Letnim, podporządkowanym wszystkim tym czynnościom dbania o ziemię, po której się chodzi. Przesadzanie kwiatów, nawożenie ich taczkami wypełnionymi kompostem. Rękawiczki ubrudzone ziemią wisały na płotku przy werandzie. Podlewanie dwa razy dziennie, ile to się wody lało w te piachy, a to wsiąkało wszystko od razu, na pniu, jak to mówią. Strasznie suchy teren, żeby coś urosło, to trzeba było drugiej ziemi nawozić. Zielony, długi szlauch podłączony do kranu z tyłu dobudówki rozdawał krople kwiatom i krzewom. Trawie, drzewom, a to trwało i trwało, w sumie nudne, ale i podniosłe, uroczyste. Jan Stanisław stojący na swoich rozkraczonych krzywych nogach i trzymający sztywno polewaczkę.

Sylwia, weź mi ten szlauch wyprostuj, bo się zagiął.

O, już leci woda, dziękuję.

Kiedy teraz zaglądam na miejsce śmierci, to od razu przestaje wiać wiatr.

Leżeć tam
to jakiś sen
zaraz trzeba wyjść z psem
zaraz trzeba pomalować werandę
zaraz trzeba podlać kwiaty
iść pójść załatwić
radio gra czeka herbata w kubku
a ja leżę

to jakiś chyba sen
 tylko nie można się podnieść
 a potem to już tylko
 noc latarka karetka oględziny nosze zakład
 zimno przez tydzień
 i bardzo gorąco przez dwie (do trzech) godzin
 no ładnie
 ciekawy jestem
 kto wyjdzie z psem pomaluje werandę podleje kwiaty

W warsztacie stoi drewniany stół z imadłem oraz milionami drobiazgów. Plus maska do spawania. Przedmioty wygrywają w konkurencji dużo, jest ich ponad miarę ogarnięcia i wykorzystania. Trudno je docenić, ponieważ wzrok nie sięga do tych wszystkich pudełeczek, skrzyń i toreb. Człowiek zbieracz miałby tam bałagan, ale w warsztacie jest on tylko pozorny. W istocie wszystko ma swoją wewnętrzną logikę, tylko się należy otworzyć na oryginalne zestawienia i przeznaczenia. Że pudełko po margarynie, a w środku nakrętki. Że słoik umorusany mazią, ale z możliwością napelnienia go nową substancją.

Jest też specjalny szeroki pas do wspinania się na drzewo. Człowiek przytula się do pnia i odchyła o trzydzieści stopni. Ale nie spada, bo się uprzednio spina z drzewem pasem i wisi odgięty. Może wtedy piłować, zbierać szyszki albo czyścić ptakom budki. Na nogach stare buty, w których nie można by się już pokazać ludziom na ulicy, ale tutaj nikomu to nie wadzi, że z dziurą podeszwa i przydeptana pięta.

Stara farba, jakaś czarna. To chyba do dachu. Jeśli o niego chodzi, to dopasowane są tu następujące słowa: papa, krajzega, rynna i blachodachówka. Materiały izolacyjne, bariery przeciwnieęgowe, wyłazy, stopnie i ławy kominiarskie, wywietrzniki dachowe, gąsior, taśmy kalenicowe, obróbka komina. Takie określenia latały na werandzie w czasie siorbania kawy. Odpoczywał, wychodził z warsztatu co jakiś czas i siadał. Patrzył. Myślał. Chrząkał i knuł. Bardzo głośno ziewał i klepał się po brzuchu. Ale mi kałdun wyrósł, o, jaki duży. Prawie zimna ta kawa, ja to bym nie mogła czegoś takiego pić, ale on lubił, dwie łyżki cukru.

No i te przedmioty. Wszędzie jego rzeczy. Oczywiście teraz bezużyteczne, bo bez kontekstu i puste w swojej nieładności.

A szczególnie te pierdolone szklanki do kawy. Wszystkie bym pobiła, jedną po drugiej. Trzaskałabym o ścianę lub o podłogę. Zrzuciła z blatu i deptała butem odpryski. O ziemię bym tłukła i jeszcze dorzuciła talerze. Bo domyc ich nie można i mnie tylko denerwują.

Przypominają. Każdy kąt mi przypomina, to można dostać kurwicy, bo człowiek się wybiera z tego miasta na jakiś relaks. Ludzie mówią: „O, działeczkę masz, ale fajnie, to sobie odpoczniesz”. I rzeczywiście: rodzina robi w ziemi, coś tam naprawia. A ja się płaczę bez ładu i składu, bo sobie miejsca znaleźć nie mogę. Tylko dyryguję innymi albo się wypowiadam w różnych kwestiach. Przygotowuję obiad na stole, noszę i wynoszę. Ale tak ogólnie to nic nie robię, bo nie umiem. O wszystkim coś powiem, każdy przedmiot na działce omówię, ale nic nie wezmę w rękę, bo mi się przypomina.

Dzieciństwo, w każdy rogu moja przeszłość.

Nie wiem, jak u was na podwórku, ale u mnie to się nazywało sekrety. Ale wiem, że czasem też mówili na to widoczki. Kopało się dołek, w środku robiło wyściełanko z kawałka materiału, na to kładło kamyczki, cekiny, gałązki lub nawet zdjęcia. I się to zakrywało szkiełkiem, na przykład ze złotej butelki. Można było zrobić całą galerię albo konkurs z koleżankami, która przygotowała ładniej. Widoczki to rozumiem, bo w środku ciekawe do zobaczenia. Ale sekrety to jednak coś innego. Tajemniczego, nie dla wszystkich. Tak więc kładło się na szkiełka jeszcze liście lub nawet zasypywało ziemią i zaznaczało jakoś, że to tam, ta galeria. Dla wybranych nasze dzieło.

Pół działki jest w sekretach. Gdyby ją przekopać, toby się ukazały setki potłuczonych szkiełek. A pod nimi wszystkie moje dzieciństwa wypatroszone ze znaczenia. Sekret powinien być zazwyczaj brudny, niechciany, jakiś taki bękartowaty. Te moje są za to cudne, brokato-we i pachnące. Jak w Ameryce lub delikatesach.

Czyszczę działkę z liści, mocno przyciskam stylisko. Ostre grabie ryją ściółkę i ukazują gołą ziemię, pod którą przecież nic nie ma. Pie-lę ogródek, wyrzucam wszystko na zewnątrz. I tam też już niczego nie ma. Zabawa skończona.

Jak długo to wszystko będzie trwać, prawie dwa lata minęły, jak długo ja się będę przemazywała po terenie jak glut po chustce. Mucha w szklance. Zdziwiona, te gały tak wybałuszone i się dziwię. Ojej, a jak to się mogło stać? Jak to się mogło tak zakończyć?

Znowu Alicja stoi bezradnie na środku świata i poprawia fartuszek. Kot-Dziwak ociera się o jej nogę.

– *A skąd pan wie, że pan jest zwariowany?*

– *Normalny pies nie jest zwariowany – odrzekł Kot. – Zgadzasz się z tym, prawda?*

– *Sądzę, że ma pan słuszność.*

– *A więc taki normalny pies warczy, kiedy jest zły, a macha ogonem, kiedy ma powód do radości. Ja zaś warczę, kiedy jestem zadowolony, a macham ogonem, kiedy ogarnia mnie wściekłość. Dlatego jestem zbzikowany¹.*

Alicja staje się więc kotem. Płacze i wyciera nos ogonem. Myśli:

Nie powinnam była tyle płakać. Spotyka mnie teraz za to taka kara, że mogę się utopić w swoich własnych łzach².

Płacze i się śmieje, zbzikowana do kwadratu.

Właśnie się topisz, dziewczyno, szkoda słów i szlochów twoich. Do roboty się weź, bo tu tyle tego naniesione z dworu, że wstyd w kuchni coś zrobić, bo liście, ziemia, błoto. Kurz.

Ale ja idę do warsztatu. Chcę sobie zrobić zakładkę do książki ze starej listewki. Przycinam i piłuję, gwizdząc pod nosem za dziadka. Dotykając jego tych rzeczy facetowych, do naprawy niezbędnych.

Co u ciebie? A u mnie
 Śrubki, rury, silikon
 Rękawiczki w farbie, ołówek kopiowy
 Piła mechaniczna
 Kosiarka spalinowa
 Imadło średnie
 Komplet kluczy o pełnej numeracji
 Zapas papieru ściernego, grabie
 Pompka, taczka, emalia fталowa
 Nożyczki, giętarka, siekiera, scyzoryk
 Zamknięte drzwi i
 Resztki zapachu wody brzozowej na poduszce
 Bo się dziadkowi ostatnio robiły zakola przy czole
 Co u ciebie?
 U mnie te wszystkie rzeczy tracące sens

¹ Lewis Carroll, *Alicja w Krainie Czarów*, tłum. Jolanta Kozak, Warszawa 2010, s. 68.

² Tamże.

V čudežni deželi

(odlomek iz romana)

Ko sem bila zelo mlada, sem bila tudi majhna, ampak ničemur se nisem čudila.

Ko sem bila zelo mlada, sem v zvezek pisala pesmi. Odkrila sem smrt temnega stopnišča, mrzlega stopnišča. Odkrivala sem cel kup različnih stvari. Zdaj vem, da je ta smrt lahko tudi v grmovju, listju in mehki travi – do zdaj rezervirani za vile, mravlje, cigaretne ogorke. Ona – ta smrt – je celo v nedolžni naravi. Bi lahko kdo kaj ukrenil glede tega, kakšna vlada ali družbeno gibanje? Opozarjam na to, ker sem jaz sama doživela strašen šok, ko je umrl Jan Stanisław C. Kar tako, v travi. Razprostrt kot popoldanska senca. Razprostrt vse povprek poleg drevesa.

Nisem mogla verjeti, da ga je to doletelo, saj je bil Jan močan in mogočen. Včasih je stal nad mano in bilo je, kot bi nad mano stala gora. Prekrivala je vse, kar se je dalo videti. Takrat je govoril, da lahko na dlani dvigne, kar se mu zljubi: ogromno cev, avtomobilske gume ali pa mene. Verjela sem mu, ker je bil videti kot lik iz stripa, ni imel pelerine na hrbtu in pajkic, toda bil je zelo podoben Batmanu. Vzpel se je na lestev in verjela sem, da lahko spleza vse do neba. Tega ni naredil, ker se mu ni ljubilo, sicer pa mu bog ni bil preveč pri srcu.

Oprostite, prosim, ampak takšni ljudje ne umirajo, menda se strinjate z mano.

Sem kot Alicia s primanjkljajem čarovnij, ki raste ali se živčno krči, če ji gre v življenju kaj narobe. Strahopetna punčka s premajhnimi čevlji in v preveliki oblekici.

Zaprem oči, ko gre mimo mene črna mačka s širokim nasmehom. Zamrem v domačem kokonu odgovornosti in obvez. Zdi se mi, da se bom vedno lahko zместila pod steblo rože. Takrat pa pride velikan in pokosi travnik. Od leve proti desni, nič ne ostane. Roža je padla in nimam se več pod kaj skriti.

Sledi izgon iz raja.

V družini smo rekli: parcela. Da gremo tja, da je treba pokositi travo, plačati najemnino. Vozili smo se ob petkih zvečer, ko pa se je Poljska spremenila in so se ljudje začeli povsod voziti z avtomobili, v petek ni imelo smisla. Ker so bili strašni zamaški na cesti v Siedlce. In potem ali v soboto ob zori ali pa tudi v petek, ampak prej.

smo se vozili z belim fiatom 126p, s takšnim kao lesenim volanom. S prevleko iz rjavega skaja, ki nas je poleti grizla v zadnjico in stegna, ker je bila iz neokusne plastike in nateg FSO-ja.¹

Parcelo sta Jan Stanisław in Barbara C. kupila tistega leta, ko sem se rodila. Najprej je bilo samo zemljišče, neograjeno in zaraščeno. Posamični stožci, ki jih je zakoličil občinski geodet, so označevali obseg nakupa. Precej zemlje, samo za prosti čas. Okrog nje gozd, v glavnem smrekov, v podrasti polno gob. Jurčki, dedi, lisičke in gobani. Ljudje so lazili po neograjenem terenu, ker so mislili, da je to še skupna jasa, pa je bilo že naše. Postavili smo šotor, poleg njega avto in hladilna torba z mlečnimi izdelki in pijačo. Počasi, počasi je Jan Stanisław ograjeval teren, postavljal hišo. Pripeljali so jo v kosi, model Mikołajki, toda hitro so jo predelali, prezidali, izboljšali. Punčica v Janovih očeh je bila streha, saj se je že dolga leta s tem baval poklicno.

Streha je arhetipski občutek varnosti. Motiv preskrbljenosti, zaščitenosti pred dežjem, strelami in očesom Zlega. Temelji so začetek ustvarjanja svojega mesta na zemlji, ampak ravno streha je njegov konec, pika na i, povzetek. In Jan Stanisław se je s strešno lepenko vzpenjal po lestvi, v vedru je raztapljal razne brozge, potem jih je vlival med strešnike. Razkrečen je sedel čisto na vrhu, velik in mogočen. V brk si je požvižgaval stare popevke. O Črni Mancu, o Stahu, Prebrisanem Antku. Odraščal je na stiku Ohote in Vole, med tiri poleg Zahodnega in Górko Szczęśliwicko, in za vse življenje obtičal v lumpenproletariatu. Blazirani intelektualci niso razumeli njegovih nohtov, prekritih z barvo, njegovih tatujev, ki so prekrivali celo telo. Izpihovanja nosu brez robčka in govorjenja v fris. Gospod Janek, kaj pa govorite. Povem, kar si mislim, da vam to pecivo ni uspelo, ne tekne mi, no, kaj naj zdaj.

Dedek, nehaj že, prizadel boš gospo.

Pa kaj še, prizadel, kaj prizadel, če povem, kot je.

Minevali so meseci, hiša je rasla. Mala jaz sem tam preživljala skoraj cele počitnice, med drevesi in trkanjem detla. Bilo mi je malo dolgčas, malo divje. Lezla sem pod stole in mizo in takrat sem postala majčkena, kot nekakšen čisti nič.

Ali pa sem ure in ure zijala v ogledalo, ker se takrat nisem počutila osamljeno. Sploh si nisem želela na drugo stran površine. Preprosto sem rabila družbo in si nisem znala nehati predstavljati,

¹ Tovarna osebnih avtomobilov (op. prev.).

da se iz mene same rojevajo novi liki. Me povabijo na čaj, kot Alico. Začudijo jo in jo zdramijo iz mrtvila.

Kot edinka sem se znala igrati v samoti, dokaj zgodaj me je zasvojilo branje knjig in sem v zvezi s tem štela minute v straneh. Imam prebliske sebe pri osmih, kako sedim na ležalniku in berem *Lassie se vrača*. Obujam spomine tudi na napihljivi bazenček in hišo iz blaga, v kateri sem hranila punčke. Včasih je k meni prihajal sosed iz hiše nasproti, Mariusz. Bil je starejši od mene, poleg tega pa še fant, zato je bil razpon iger omejen.

Sonce je vžigalo vzorčke v vse bolj obledelo blago, komaj sem se še stlačila v to prenosno hiško. Barbike sem menjavala za kasete in prve čevlje. Čudna obleka, priljubljena glasba. To je zgodovina odraščanja, poplave sprememb. Hkrati vpisana v zgodovino parcele, istočasno pa zelo mestna. Vse po vrsti se je odvijalo kot v veliki modri knjigi, ki je ležala na podstrešju ali v knjižnici tipa »imamo vse, kar hočeš, in tudi tvoje življenje, popisano na pergaminu«. Zato previdno.

Parcela je bila vedno vikend hiška, podrejena vsem tem dejavnostim, povezanim s skrbjo za zemljo, po kateri se hodi. Presajanje rož, njihovo gnojenje s samokolnicami, polnimi komposta. Rokavice, umazane od zemlje, so visele na plotu pri verandi. Zalivanje dvakrat na dan, koliko vode se je izlivalo v ta pesek, vse to pa se je vpijalo pri priči, kot blisk, kot se reče. Strašno suha podlaga, da bi kaj zraslo, je bilo treba pripeljati drugo zemljo. Zelen, dolg šlavf, pripet na pipo zadaj za prizidkom, je škropil kapljice po rožah in grmovju. Travo, drevje, to pa je trajalo in trajalo, v bistvu dolgočasno, ampak tudi vzvišeno, slovesno. Jan Stanisław, ki je stal na svojih razkoračenih nogah in trdno držal zalivalko.

Sylwia, daj mi zravnaj ta šlavf, ker se je upognil.

O, voda že teče, hvala.

Kadar zdaj pogledam na mesto smrti, veter pri priči neha pihati.

Da tam ležim
to so nekakšne sanje
vsak hip bo treba s psom na sprehod
vsak hip bo treba popleskati verando
vsak hip bo treba zaliti rože
iti oditi urediti
radio je prižgan čaka čaj v lončku
jaz pa ležim
to so menda nekakšne sanje

samo da ni mogoče vstati
 potem pa samo še
 noč svetilka rešilec mrliški ogled nosila mrtvašnica
 mrzel teden
 in velika vročina dve (do tri) ure
 no krasno
 me zanima
 kdo bo vzel psa na sprehod, popleskal verando, zalil rože

V delavnici stoji lesena miza s primežem in milijonom malenkosti. Plus varilna maska. Predmeti v tej konkurenci močno prevladujejo, presegajo mero obvladovanja in uporabe. Težko jih dovolj ceniš, ker s pogledom ne moreš seči v vse škatlice, skrinjice in torbe. Človek zbiratelj bi imel tam nered, ampak v delavnici je samo navidezen. V resnici ima vse svojo notranjo logiko, samo odpreti se moraš za izvirne kombinacije in namene. Da je škatlica od margarine, notri pa so matice. Da je kozarec umazan od brozge, ampak ga je mogoče napolniti z novo snovjo.

Je tudi poseben širok pas za vzpenjanje na drevo. Človek se stisne k deblu in se nagne za 30 stopinj. Ampak ne pade, ker se prej pripne na drevo s pasom in visi nagnjen. Tako lahko žaga, nabira storže ali čisti ptičem utice. Na nogah stari čevlji, v katerih se ne moreš več pokazati na ulici med ljudmi, tukaj pa nikogar ne moti, da je podplat luknjast in peta pošvedrana.

Stara barva, nekakšna črna. To je menda za streho. Kar se nje tiče, sem pašejo besede: strešna lepenka, cirkularka, žleb in pločevinasta kritina. Materiali za izolacijo, snegolovi, strešne line, stopnice in dimniške ploščadi, oddušniki, slemenjaki, grebenski trakovi, obroba dimnika. Takšni izrazi so frčali po verandi med srkanjem kave. Počival je, od časa do časa je zapustil delavnico in se usedel. Gledal je. Mislil. Odkašljeval se je in naklepal. Zelo glasno je zehal in se trepljal po trebuhu. Kakšen vamp se mi je naredil, o, kako je velik. Kava že skoraj mrzla, jaz že ne bi mogla piti česa takega, njemu pa je bila všeč, dve žlički sladkorja.

No, in ti predmeti. Povsod njegove stvari. Zdaj seveda neuporabne, ker so brez konteksta in prazne v svoji nelepoti.

Še posebej pa te jebene skodelice za kavo. Vse bi porazbila, drugo za drugo. Treskala bi jih ob steno ali ob tla. Metala bi jih s pulta in s čevljem teptala drobce. Razbijala bi jih ob zemljo in dodala še krožnike. Ker se jih ne da umiti do čistega in me samo živcirajo. Spominjajo. Vsak vogal me spominja, človek bi naraje skočil iz kože, saj se iz mes-

ta odpravlja na nekakšno sprostitev. Ljudje mi pravijo: »O, parcelo imaš, kako lepo, si boš odpočila.« In res: družina obdeluje zemljo, malo popravlja. Jaz pa se prekladam naokrog, ker si ne morem najti mesta. Samo usmerjam ostale ali pa izražam mnenje o različnih rečeh. Pripravljam kosilo na mizi, prinašam in odnašam. Nasploh pa ne delam nič, ker ne znam. O vsem kaj povem, vsako stvar na parceli predebatiram, ampak ničesar se ne dotaknem, ker se mi obudi v spominu.

Otroštvo, v vsakem kotu moja preteklost.

Ne vem, kako na vašem dvorišču, ampak na mojem se je temu reklo skrivnosti. Vem pa, da so temu včasih rekli tudi razgledki. Izkopal si luknjico, jo postlal s kosom blaga, na to pa si položil kamenčke, cekine, vejice ali celo fotografije. In to si pokril s stekelcem, na primer od razbite steklenice. Lahko si ustvaril celo galerijo ali pa natečaj s prijateljicami, katera jo je lepše uredila. Razgledke razumem, ker je notri nekaj zanimivega za videti. Ampak skrivnosti so vseeno nekaj drugega. Tajinstvenega, kar ni za vsake oči. Tako smo na stekelca polagali še listje ali jih celo zasipali z zemljo in z nečim označili, da je tukaj ta galerija. Naš izdelek je bil za izbrane.

Pol parcele je polne skrivnosti. Če bi jo prekopali, bi se pokazalo na stotine razbitih stekelc. Pod njimi pa vsa moja otroštva, oskubljen pomena. Skrivnost naj bi po navadi bila umazana, nezaželen, takšna bolj pankrtska. Moje pa so nasprotno krasne, brokatne in dišeče. Kot v Ameriki ali delikatesi.

Čistim listje s parcele, močno pritiskam na ročaj. Ostre grablje rijejo po podrašti in razkrivajo golo zemljo, pod katero vendar ni ničesar. Plevem vrtiček, vse pomečem ven. Tudi tam ni več ničesar. Konec zabave.

Kako dolgo bo vse to trajalo, minili sta skoraj dve leti, kako dolgo se bom vlačila po terenu kot smrkelj po robčku. Muha v kozarcu. In se čudim, začudena, s takimi izbuljenimi očmi. Ojej, kako se je to lahko zgodilo? Kako se je lahko tako končalo?

Alica spet nemočno stoji na sredi sveta in si popravlja predpasniček. Mačka Režalka se ji podrgne ob nogo.

»Kako pa veš, da si ti nora?«

»Izhajajva iz dejstva,« je začela Mačka, »da psi niso nori. Se strinjaš s tem?«

»Bi rekla,« je odvrnila Alica.

»No, vidiš,« je povzela Mačka, »in kot veš, pes renči, kadar je jezen, in maha z repom, kadar je vesel. Jaz pa renčim, kadar sem vesela, in maham z repom, kadar sem jezna.«²

Alica torej postane mačka. Joka in si briše nos v rep. Misli si:

»Le zakaj sem tako dolgo jokala,« si je rekla Alica, ko je plavala okoli in se trudila, da bi kako prišla ven, »zdaj bom pa najbrž kaznovana za to, in to tako, da se bom utopila v lastnih solzah.«³

Joka in se smeje, nora na kvadrat.

Punca, ravnokar se utapljaš, škoda je tvojih besed in solza. Loti se dela, ker je toliko tega nanese od zunaj, da te je lahko sram kar koli delati v kuhinji, saj so v njej listje, zemlja, blato. Prah.

Ampak jaz grem v delavnico. Rada bi si iz stare letvice naredila knjižno kazalo. Obrezujem in žagam, namesto dedka si žvižgam v brk. Dotikam se njegovih moških stvari, nujnih za popravila.

Kaj je novega pri tebi? Pri meni pa so
vijaki, cevi, silikon
Rokavice, umazane od barve, kopirni svičnik
Verižna žaga
Motorna kosilnica
Primež srednje velikosti
Komplet ključev v vseh velikostih
Zaloga smirkovega papirja, grablje
Pumpice, samokolnica, akrilni emajl
Škarje, upogibnik, sekira, nožiček
Zaprta vrata in
Ostanki vonja po brezovi vodi na blazini
Ker so se dedku zadnje čase redčili lasje
Kaj je novega pri tebi?
Pri meni vse te reči, ki izgubljajo smisel.

Prevedla Lara Unuk

² Lewis Carroll, *Aličine dogodivščine v čudežni deželi*, prevedla Gitica Jakopin, Ljubljana 1990, str. 72 (op. prev.).

³ Prav tam, str. 26 (op. prev.).

In Wonderland

(excerpt from the novel)

When I was very young, I was also little, but nothing surprised me.

When I was very young, I wrote poems in a notebook. I discovered the death of a dark and cold stairwell. I discovered the death a lot of different things. Now I know that death can also be found in the bushes, the leaves, and the soft grass – up until now reserved for nixies, ants, and cigarette butts. She – Death – can be found even in something as innocent as nature. Could someone look into this, some government or a social movement? I'd really like someone to do something about this, because personally, I was deeply shocked when Jan Stanisław C. died. Just like that, in the grass. Lying there like an afternoon shadow. Lying there, scattered beside the pieces of a tree.

I couldn't believe that it happened to him, because Jan was strong and mighty. He sometimes towered over me, and it was like standing in the shadow of a mountain. It blocked everything there was to be seen. He'd say then that he could lift anything up in his hand: a huge pipe, car tires, or me. I believed him, because he looked like a superhero from a comic book. All he needed was a cape and tights, and he could have been Batman. He'd climb a ladder and I believed he could have climbed all the way up to Heaven. He didn't, because he didn't feel like it, and besides, he wasn't too fond of God.

I'm sorry, but... People like him don't just die. I think you'll agree with me on that.

I feel like Alice, with not enough wonder, growing and shrinking nervously whenever something in her life doesn't go right. A frightened little girl in too-tight shoes and a too-big dress.

I close my eyes whenever a black cat with a wide grin walks past me. I freeze in my own little cocoon of responsibilities and commitments. I feel like I'll always fit under the flower stem. And then a giant comes along and mows the lawn. Left to right, there's nothing left. The flower is cut, and there's nothing to hide under.

Another expulsion from paradise.

The allotment. It was the subject of many family discussions. That we had to go, we had to cut the grass, we had to pay the fees. We'd usually leave on Friday evening, but when Poland changed and people started driving everywhere, Friday didn't make any sense anymore. Terrible traffic on the road to Siedlce. So we'd go early

Saturday morning, or Friday, but earlier. At the beginning there was a white Fiat 126p, with a faux-wood steering wheel. Brown pleather upholstery that would burn your bum and thighs in the summer, because it was crude plastic, some kind of FSO piece of crap.

Jan Stanisław and Barbara C. bought the allotment in the same year I was born. Initially, it was just a vacant plot, unfenced and overgrown. Single posts driven in by a municipal surveyor showed the boundaries of the purchase. It was a lot of land for strictly recreational purposes. Surrounded by woods, mostly pines, and a lot of mushrooms: porcini, scaber stalks, chanterelles, and bay boletus. People walked all over the unfenced plot, thinking it was public land, but it was already ours. We'd pitch a tent, park the car nearby, and set up a portable cooler with dairy and drinks. Slowly, gradually, Jan Stanisław fenced the land and built the house. It was delivered in pieces, the Mikołajki model, but it was quickly altered, reframed, and improved. The roof was the apple of Jan's eye, since he had been a roofer by profession for many years.

A roof provides an archetypal sense of security. It's safety motif insurance, protection from the rain, thunder, and the Evil Eye. You start to build your own place in the world from the foundations, but it is the roof that's the finishing touch, the dot over the "i," the final summing up. Jan Stanisław would climb the ladder with roofing tar, dissolve various goos in a bucket, and pour them in between the shingles. He'd straddle the very top of the roof, huge and powerful. He quietly whistled old songs, about Czarna Mańka, about Stachu, about Górka, about Antek Cwaniak. Raised on the border of Ochota and Wola, between the tracks of Warszawa Zachodnia and Górka Szczęśliwicka, he was stuck in the lumpenproletariat all his life. Losers from the intelligentsia never understood his nails, smeared with paint, or the tattoos that covered his whole body. They couldn't understand blowing his nose without a tissue, or telling people straight up what he thought. Oh, Mister Janek, what are you saying? I'm saying what I'm thinking, that this cake is not your best work, that I don't like it, what do you want me to say?

Grandpa, let it be, the lady will be offended.

Offended, what's there to be offended about? I'm just telling it like it is.

Months passed and the house grew. My young self spent practically the whole summer there, between the trees and the woodpecker knocking on them. I was a little bored and a little wild. I crawled under chairs and the table, and then I became so tiny I was practically nothing.

Sometimes I stared into the mirror for hours, because then I didn't feel lonely. I didn't want to go through to the other side at all.

I just needed company, and couldn't stop imagining that new characters would come from me, and invite me to tea, just like Alice. That they'd astonish and shake her out of her stupor.

As an only child, I knew how to play by myself. I'd gotten hooked on books fairly early, and measured out the minutes with book pages. I have flashes of myself at eight, lying on a sunbed, and reading *Lassie Come Home*. I can also remember an inflatable pool, and a dollhouse made out of fabric. Sometimes I got a visit from the neighbor from across the street, Mariusz. He was older, and a boy, so we didn't really play together that much.

The sun burned off the pattern on the increasingly faded fabric, and I could barely fit in the fold-out dollhouse. I'd traded in my Barbie dolls for cassette tapes and first rebellions. Strange outfits, favorite music. It was a story of growing up, a wave of changes. Inscribed into the history of the allotment, but also very urban. Everything was happening in turn, like in some great big book of wisdom in the attic or at the library, of the "we have everything you want, and your whole life written on parchment as well" type. So you'd better be careful.

The allotment was always the Summer House, subject to all the work involved in taking care of the land we walked on. Planting flowers, fertilizing them with wheelbarrows full of compost. A pair of gloves, soiled with dirt, hung on the fence by the porch. Watering things twice daily – oh, how much we poured into those sands, and everything just got sucked in, quick as anything. It was too dry for anything to grow there, and we had to replace the topsoil. A long green hose, connected to the faucet in the back of the addition, handed out water to the flowers and bushes. It fed the grass and the trees, and all of this took a long time, quite boring, really, but also solemn and dignified. Jan Stanisław standing there bowlegged, holding the nozzle stiffly.

Sylwia, straighten out the hose for me, it's gotten kinked.

Ah, there we go, thanks.

These days, when I look at the spot where he died, the wind stops.

Lying there
it's some kind of dream
I have to walk the dog
I have to paint the porch
I have to water the plants
I have to go take care of
the radio is playing the tea cup is waiting

and I'm lying here
 this is some kind of dream
 except I can't get up
 and then there's only
 night flashlight ambulance inspection stretcher mortuary
 cold for a week
 and very hot for two (to three) hours
 well this is just dandy
 I wonder
 who's going to walk the dog paint the porch water the plants

In the workshop, there is a wooden table with a vise and a million odds and ends. Plus a welding mask. All of this stuff wins the fight, there's too much of it, incomprehensible and useless. It's hard to appreciate it all, since I can't see into the boxes, trunks, and bags. A packrat would have left a mess, but here in the workshop, it only seems that way. In reality, everything has its internal logic, you just have to be open to their innovative combinations and uses. Like the margarine tub that holds nuts and bolts. Or the jar, smeared with some kind of goo, that can be filled up again.

There's also a special wide belt for climbing trees. You'd hug the tree and lean back thirty degrees. But you wouldn't fall, because you'd be fastened to the tree with the belt, and hang there, bent back. You could cut branches, collect pines, or clean out birdhouses. Old shoes on your feet, the kind you wouldn't wear out on the street, but here, nobody cares that there's a hole in the sole and the heel is all trodden down.

Old paint, something black. Probably for the roof. As far as that's concerned, there are all sorts of words associated with it: roofing tar, buzzsaw, gutter, roofing tile. Insulating materials, snow guards, hatches, steps and chimney benches, roof vents, roof ridge caps, hip and ridge sealing tape, chimney-finishing materials. All these terms flew around the porch as he slurped his coffee. He'd rest, go out to the workshop every now and then, and sit. He'd stare. Think. Grunt and plot. Yawn loudly and pat his belly. Look at the beer belly I've got, it's so big. The coffee was almost cold, I could never drink something like that, but he liked it, with two spoons of sugar.

And all that *stuff*. Everywhere. Now it's all useless, without a context, and empty in its disarray.

Especially these fucking coffee glasses. I'd like to break them all, one by one. Shatter them against the wall or the floor. Knock them

off the counter and stomp on the shards. Break them against the ground, and add the plates to them. I can't get them clean, and they only drive me crazy. They remind me. Every corner of this place reminds me, and it's enough to drive me fucking bonkers. You leave the city to relax. People say, "oh, you have an allotment, that's nice, you can get some rest." And of course: everyone works the soil, or fixes something. Except I'm just wandering around aimlessly, because I can't find a place for myself. I just tell the others what to do, or speak up about various things. I get dinner ready, set the table, and bring things and take them out. But in general, I do nothing, because I don't know how. I have something to say about everything, I can talk about every single object here, but I can't pick anything up, because everything reminds me.

Childhood. A bit of my past in every corner.

It might have been different for you, but we called them secrets. Other people called them little landscapes. You'd dig a hole, line it with a piece of fabric, and then arrange rocks, sequins, flowers, candy wrappers, or even pictures. All of this was covered with a piece of glass, for example from a broken bottle. Little landscapes I understood, there was something interesting to see there. But secrets, they were a whole other thing. Mysterious, not for everyone. You'd cover the glass with leaves or even throw dirt over them, and mark the spot of the gallery. A masterpiece, only for the chosen few.

Half the plot is covered with secrets. If you were to dig it up, there'd be hundreds of pieces of glass. And under all of them, all my childhoods, gutted and stripped of meaning. A secret should be something dirty, unwanted, like a bastard child. These ones were wonderful, shiny and fragrant. Like in America, or a deli.

I'm cleaning up the leaves, gripping the rake handle tightly. The sharp tines rip up the litter and expose the bare ground. There's nothing under it. I weed the garden, throw everything out. And then there's nothing left there, either. Game over.

How long will this last? It's been almost two years, how long am I going to blubber around here? There's a fly in the glass. Surprised, its eyes bulging out, and I'm wondering how it could have happened? How could it end like this?

Alice stands in the middle of the world again, fixing her apron. The Cheshire Cat rubs up against her leg.

"How do you know I'm mad?" said Alice.

"You must be," said the Cat, "or you wouldn't have come here."

Alice didn't think that proved it at all; however, she went on, "And how do you know that you're mad?"

"To begin with," said the Cat, "a dog's not mad. You grant that?"

"I suppose so," said Alice.

"Well, then," the Cat went on, "you see, a dog growls when it's angry, and wags its tail when it's pleased. Now I growl when I'm pleased, and wag my tail when I'm angry. Therefore I'm mad."

Thus Alice becomes a cat. She cries and wipes her nose on her tail. She thinks:

I shouldn't have cried so much. Now I'm being punished, I could drown in my own tears.

She cries and she laughs, mad as a hatter.

You're drowning, girl. Stop wasting words and tears. Get to work instead, there's so much stuff in here, it's a disgrace to try and do anything in the kitchen, there's leaves and dirt and mud all over the place. Dust.

But I go into the workshop. I want to make a bookmark from an old piece of wood. I cut and saw, whistling under my breath like my grandfather used to. Touching his manly stuff, necessary for repairs.

What's going on with you? I've got

Screws, pipes, silicone

Paint-spattered gloves, indelible pencil

Chainsaw

Lawnmower

Medium-sized vise

A full set of wrenches in all sizes

Some extra sandpaper, a rake

A pump, a wheelbarrow, alkyd enamel

Scissors, bender, axe, pocket knife

Closed doors and

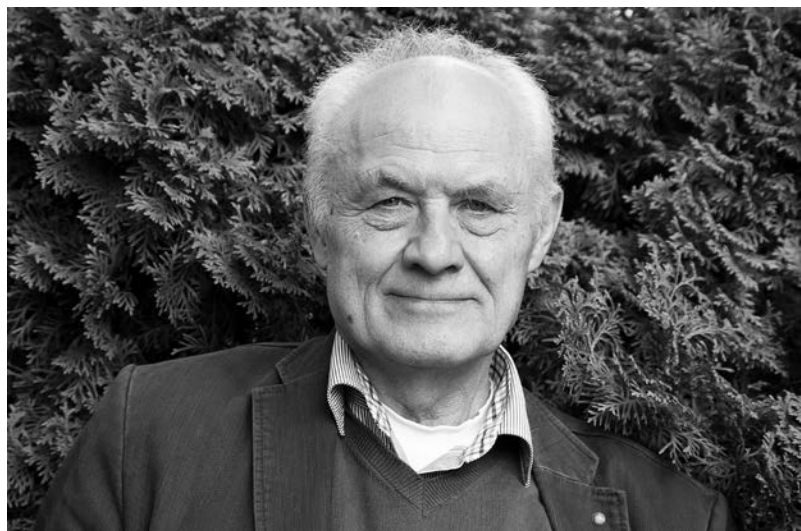
The lingering smell of birch water on the pillow

Because lately, grandpa started to go bald in the front

What about you?

I've got all these things that make no sense.

Translated by Paulina Bożek



Antanas Gailius

Antanas Gailius se je rodil leta 1951 v Švendriškiaiju v Litvi. Leta 1973 je diplomiral iz nemške filologije na Univerzi v Vilni. Bil je urednik prevodov, pomočnik glavnega urednika in odgovorni urednik pri različnih založbah; nekaj jih je tudi sam ustanovil. Je pesnik in prevajalec. Od leta 1994 je svobodni pisatelj in prevajalec iz nemščine in nizozemščine. Svojo prvo zbirko poezije z naslovom *Peizažas su žmogum* (Krajina s človekom) je izdal leta 1987. Omenjeni zbirki so sledile še *Sonetai* (Soneti, 1990), *Šičia* (Prav tukaj, 1997) in *Penkiapėdžio sugrįžimas* (Vrnitev pentametra, 2013). Leta 2001 je izdal tudi zbirko izbranih prevodov poezije z naslovom *Ketvirtoji knyga* (Četrta knjiga). Med letoma 2000 in 2007 je bil predsednik Strokovne komisije za književnost in založništvo na Ministrstvu za kulturo Republike Litve, med letoma 2003 in 2008 pa tudi predsednik kuratorija Kulturnega centra Thomasa Manna. Je član Litovskega centra PEN. Leta 2004 je prejel nagrado Prevajalčev stol, leta 2005 pa je bil odlikovan z Železnim križem litovskega nadvojvode Geminasa za zasluge na področju litovske kulture. Leta 2008 je prejel tudi nagrado Republike Litve za kulturo in umetnost.

Antanas Gailius was born in 1951 in Švendriškiai, Lithuania. He obtained a degree in German Philology at Vilnius University in 1973. He worked as the translation editor, assistant editor-in-chief, and senior editor for various publishing houses, some of which he had founded himself. He has worked as a freelance writer and translator from German and Dutch since 1994. He published his first collection of poems, *Peizažas su žmogum* (A Landscape with a Man), in 1987; this was followed by the collections of poetry *Sonetai* (Sonnets, 1990), *Šičia* (Right Here, 1997) and *Penkiapėdžio sugrįžimas* (The Return of the Pentameter, 2013). He also published a volume of selected poetry translations titled *Ketvirtoji knyga* (The Fourth Book) in 2001. He served as the Chair of the Literature and Publishing Experts Committee at the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Lithuania between 2000 and 2007, and as the Chair of the Curatorium of the Thomas Mann Cultural Centre between 2003 and 2008. He is a member of the Lithuanian PEN Centre. He was awarded the "Translator's Chair" prize in 2004 and received the Officer's Cross of the Order of Gediminas, Grand Duke of Lithuania, for contributions to Lithuanian culture in 2005. In 2008 he was honoured with the National Prize for Culture and Arts of the Republic of Lithuania.

Psalmės

Pirmoji

Šiais ir kitais laikais, kol mūsų dienos yra
 Sniego ar lapo spalvos, ir murziną kovą ar lapkritį
 Slėniu tamsiuoju žengiu, ir būna baisu, bet kartoju,
 Net jeigu būtų tamsesnis, vis tiek nebijosiu, nes Tu
 Sergsti mane ir vedi, kur vešlios ganyklos žaliuoja.

Suka ir suka ratus riaumodamas liūtas aplinkui
 Mūsų stovyklą po Tavo žvaigždėm. O rytui išaušus
 Godžiai žvelgia į mus akim stiklinėm peslys.
 Niekas čia mums nepriklauso: ne mūsų vasaros trumpos,
 Ilgosios žiemos ne mūsų, ne mūsų namai laikini;
 Užvakar Petras kalbėjo, kad net ir vaikai juk ne mūsų,
 Tik laikina dovana; o vis dėlto, vis dėlto:

Kaip visada netikėtas pavasaris, Viešpatie, Tavo.
 Krokai lysvėj pražydo: koks trumpas, graudus ir laimingas
 Šitas žydėjimas – nieko mums nebereikia daugiau.
 Palapines pastatysim: kiek nori – gal tris, gal vienuolika,
 Ant akmenų atsisėdę, į dangų žiūrėsime ir lauksim,
 Kol ateis valanda, kai laikas ištirps būtyje.

Visa tai buvo, žinau; tačiau nuostabu ir kartoti,
 Kaip kartoja kasmet giesmę ta pačią nedailią
 Rupūžės patinas temstant.

Jau laikas rožę nudengti,
 Laikas pasveikinti kiemą, iškentusį žiemą: žolė
 Kalasi taip, lyg manęs nebūtų nė buvę po saule.

Dovanas Tavo visas laikau po akių pasidėjęs,
 Kad nė vienos nepamirščiau: kaip medį mane auginai
 Palei šaltinį, kad nieko man nepristigtų, davei
 Tėvą ir motiną man, davei Raseiniuos kapus,
 Protėvių mano prigulusius, kad nereikėtų man vargti,
 Ieškant tėvynės, ir visko tiek dovanojai, kad kartais
 Daros baisu nepanešti, kad kartais prieblandos valandą,

Baimė apninka: juk tyko kampe tamsiausiam vagis
Ir nenuleidžia akių ir laukia, kad užsimirščiau,
Laukia, kad užsimerkčiau, kad ranką nuleisčiau pavargęs,
Alpulio suimtas, kad pamanyčiau Tave pasitraukus
Ten, už juodosios žvaigždės, suryjancios būtį ir nebūtį,
Į chaoso tamsas, iš kur šviesa neateina,
Kad sudvejočiau nors kartą ir savo turtu pavadinčiau
Dovanas Tavo.

 Todėl ir kartoju kas rytą:

Nieko čia mano nėra, tik Tavo pavasaris dūzgia
Bičių pirmuoju pulku, tik Tavo kaštonas pražydo,
Tavo galybė žalia, asfaltą pralaužusi, kelias.
Nieko čia mano nėra. Todėl ir dangui apniukus,
Audrai Tavo užėjus ar tamsai akių užslinkus,
Vis su Tavim kalbuos, kitiems nesakydamas nieko,
Vis sakau pašnibždom, šaukiu, kol balsas man duotas:

Ne nebijosiu, juk Tu priebėga man ir stiprybė,
Būstas man ir padangtė, varguos paguoda veikiausia,
Tas, kuris vakarui stojus, man taurę sklidiną pila.

Antroji

Kokiu vardu man Tave pašaukti, kad išgirstas būčiau?
Ne tarp teisuolių buvau, iš degančio krūmo
man nekalbėjai, tik gandą ir gando
aidą apie Tave man vėjas paliko, šią naktį
siautęs lauke, tik kelis rašmenis knygoj, tik paukščio
giesmę rytinę, tik ženklus mano menkystės
Tavo šviesoj.

(Koks ilgas šis kovas,
kol su Jokūbu kalbuos, su gimine Tavo, o šičia
demonai burias galingi, jie karą, badą ir marą
neša padebesiais, ir jau nežinia iš tikrųjų,
ar besuspės angelai iš dūžtančių mūsų lėktuvų,
iš mūsų karo laukų, iš bokštų rugsėjo, iš upių,
miesto kloakų, iš mūsų stiklo vamzdelių ir kolbų
sielas surinkti visas. Ir kaipgi Tu jas pašauksi,
jeigu mes ne vienai net vardo nenorime duoti?
Mes juk iškraipėme viską, ką Tu sumanei kitados.
Štai pažiūrėk: jau seniai daugiskaitom virto, kas buvo
Tavo vienaskaitos ženklas.)

Buvo vyras, Tave kaimynu vadinęs, žadėjęs
Gerti paduoti, jei tu ranką ištiesi, bet aš
Taip nedrįstu, juk žinau, kad mano kaimynas už sienos
Vos praaušus kasdien rūsy saksofoną kankina,
Vis tas pačias natas lėtai, negrabiai, be širdies
Groja, groja ir groja. Nejaugi ten būtumei Tu?

Paskutinioji

Viešpatie, dešinę savo patrauk truputį į šalį,
Duok atsikvėpti pavargėliui, antrąjį tūkstantį metų
Vaikščiančiam Tavo keliais.

Tiek negerų ženklų gal tik prieš Didžiąją Schizmą
Žmonės regėjo visur: danguj, vandenuos ir medžiuos,
Paukščiai – ir tie mus paliko, išskrido, vaikus pasiėmę,
Virš rugsėjo laukų, per Tavo didelį dangų,
Šviečiant žvaigždėms, rėkdami, lyg būtų šmėklas išvydę
Vėstančiuos mūsų namuos. Tik vėjas bulvienose blaško
Dūmus laužų, tik pėdsakas batų guminių,
Molin įspaustas giliai, per vidurį lauko vingiuoja.

Būta ženklų ir kitų: po dangų blaškės kometos,
Saulė buvo užtemus, ir buvo užtemęs Mėnulis,
Žemė drebėjo mieste Konstantino, ir spalį pražydo
Vyšnios kaimyno sode.

Ar būna ženklų baisesnių?

Dar negirdėjau, tiesa, kad būtų kur nors pasirodę
Niūrūs pulkai flagelantų, tačiau nenustebčiau visai,
Eiseną kraupią išvydęs vieškely, ten, už kalnelio.

Taip, čia laikai lyg prieš marą: per visą Adventą Kalėdos,
Paikos ir gaudžios, ir žiaurios linksmybės, ir juokdario veidas
Žvelgia kasdien į tave, vos laikraštį rytą praskleidus:
Naujas kasdien ir kasdien vakarykščiais, paikais ir rėksmingais,
Dar pradvokęs juokais, nors nieko jau neima juokas.

Baigės istorija! – šūkteli scenoj artistas guvus,
Salė jam ploja smagi, o gatvėj, lauke, pro teatrą
Traukia ir traukia, ir traukia pabėgėlių vilkstinės ilgos:
Tavo albanai tenai, čėčėnai Tavo, lietuviai,
Traukia Jokūbo vaikai ir dingsta, tirpsta ore,
Lyg nė gyvenę nebūtų, visi jau pakilę nuo žemės,
Kojom basom, kruvinom...

Iš vandenų sietuvos

Kyla balsai lyg migla, o vėjas juos bloškia pakriaušėn,

Neša ir sklaido laukuos – andai mieste jau girdėjau
Kalbant, kad niekados jie Tavęs nepasieks, kad Tavęs
Gal ir iš viso nėra, kad mums virš galvų ne paskliautė
Skaistvario gryno, tvirta, tik dieną nuo oro pasmėlus,
Bet vaiski vakarais ir rytmetį ankstų, Tavasis
Būstas, buveinė, kurion ir mus kada nors pasiimsi
Į kareivijų pulkus, ugnies kalavijais ginkluotus, -
Ne, kad ten tik ertmė, tamsi, juoda ir ledinė
Iš kurios mum nėra ko laukti – nebent prapulties.

Štai kokie vaikšto gandai, ir man neramu, kad užgrius mus
Tavo rūstybė, kuri jau buvo ne kartą užgriuvus,
Tad ir meldžiu, kad šiek tiek patrauktumei dešinę savo
Ne dėl penkių dešimčių, kurių gali ir nerasti,
Ne – dėl to Vieno, kuris, po mūsų molynę klampos, -
Skurdą mūsų regėjęs, šalin nenusuko akių.

Psalmi

Prvi

Zdaj ali ob drugem času, ko imajo naši dnevi
barvo snega ali listov in se v umazanem marcu ali novembru
sprehajam po temačni dolini, je vzdušje srhljivo, toda povem vam,
naj bo še tako temno, se vendar ne bojim, zakaj Ti
paziš name in me vodiš tja, kjer bujni pašniki zelené.

Rjoveči lev kar naprej kroži okoli
našega tabora pod Tvojimi zvezdami. In ko se jutro zasniva,
nas mrhovinar lačno gleda s steklenimi očmi.
Tu nam nič ne pripada: niso naša kratka poletja
in tudi zime niso naše, prav tako ne tisti začasni domovi;
Peter je predvčerajšnjim rekel, da naši niso niti otroci,
saj so le kratkotrajen dar; pa vendar, pa vendar:

Kakor vselej je Tvoja nepričakovana pomlad, o, Gospod.
Žafrani v cvetličnih gredicah cvetó: kako kratko, žalostno
in hkrati srečno je to cvetenje – ničesar več nam ni treba.
Postavili bomo šotore: kolikor jih srce poželi: morda tri ali enajst,
posedli se bomo na kamne, zrlji v nebo in čakali,
da pride ta ura, ko se bo čas razblinil v obstoju.

Vem, vse to je že mimo; toda ni slabo, kadar se kaj ponovi,
tako kot se vsako leto, ko pada mrak,
ponavlja tista nelepa pesem krstačjega samca.

Čas je že, da razprem vrtnico,
čas, da pozdravim vrt, ki je preživel to zimo: trava
brezbrižno kali, kakor da jaz ne bi nikoli obstajal pod soncem.

Vse tvoje darove sem hranil pod svojimi vekami,
da ne bi nikoli nobenega pozabil: vzgajal si me kakor drevo
ob potoku, skrbel, da nisem trpel pomanjkanja, dal si mi
očeta in mater, dal si mi pokopališče v mestu Raseiniai,
kjer ležijo moji predniki, da se ne bi mučil
pri iskanju domovine, toliko vsega si mi podaril, da se včasih
bojim, da ne bom zmogel vsega odnesti s seboj, kdaj pa kdaj

me v somraku popade strah: v najtemnejšem kotu preži tat,
ne umakne pogleda in čaka na trenutek nepazljivosti,
čaka, da zaprem oči in mi roke omahnejo od utrujenosti,
da padem v omedlevico in pomislim, da si se Ti umaknil
tja daleč za črne zvezde, ki goltajo obstoj in neobstoj,
v temo kaosa, od koder svetloba ne pride,
čaka, da vsaj enkrat podvomim in svojemu imetju rečem
Tvoj Dar.

Zato vsako jutro ponavljam:

tu ni nič mojega, samo Tvoja pomlad pribrenči
s prvim rojem čebel, samo Tvoj kostanj cveti,
Tvoja zelena moč pa se prebija skozi razpokan asfalt,
ne, tu ni nič mojega. Zato se bom tudi tedaj, ko se bo zmračilo nebo,
ko bo prišlo Tvoje neurje in bo tema spolzela na moje oči,
vedno pogovarjal s Teboj, ne da bi drugim pravil o tem,
šepetal bom in kričal, dokler mi bo dan glas:

Ne, ne bom se bal, zakaj Ti si moje pribežališče in moč,
moje bivališče in zatočišče, najzanesljivejša tolažba v trpljenju,
ta, ki mi natoči polno čašo, ko pride večer.

Drugi

Po katerem imenu naj Te kličem, da me boš slišal?
 Nisem pripadal pravičnikom, iz gorečega grma
 mi nisi govoril, le glas o Tebi in odmev
 tega glasu mi je zapustil veter, ko je zunaj tiste noči
 divjal, samo nekaj črk v knjigi, samo jutranjo
 ptičjo pesem, samo znamenja moje krhkosti
 v Tvoji svetlobi.

(Kako dolg je ta marec,
 ko se pogovarjam z Jakobom, tvojim sorodnikom, in tu
 se že zbirajo mogočni demoni, ki z neba prinašajo
 vojno, lakoto in kugo, in tako ni več jasno,
 ali se bo angelom posrečilo pobrati vse duše iz naših raztreščenih letal,
 z naših bojnih polj, iz septembrskih stolpov, iz rek,
 mestnih kloak, iz naših steklenih cevi in stekleničk.
 Le kako jih boš mogel priklicati,
 ko pa sami nobeni od njih nočemo dati imena?
 Mi smo namreč izmaličili vse, kar si si bil Ti izmislil nekoč.
 Zatorej poglej: vse, kar je bilo nekoč znak Tvoje ednine,
 se že dolgo spreminja v množino.)

Bil je možki, ki Ti je pravil sosed, obljubljal je,
 da bo dal piti vsakomur, ki bo iztegnil svojo roko, toda
 sam si tega ne upam, saj vem, da moj sosed
 vsak dan ob svitu tam onkraj stene v kleti trpinči saksofon,
 kar naprej počasi ponavlja isti ton, okorno, brezsrčno
 igra, igra in igra. Mar je mogoče, da si to Ti?

Zadnji

O, Gospod, umakni malce stran svojo desnico
in pusti siromaku, ki že dve tisočletji hodi po Tvojih poteh,
da si opomore.

Nemara so ljudje samo pred veliko shizmo videli
toliko slabih znamenj: na nebu, v vodah in na drevesih.
Tudi ptiči so nas zapustili, s seboj so vzeli otroke in poleteli
nad oktobrskimi polji po tvojem Velikem nebu, na katerem
so sijale zvezde, vreščali so, kakor da bi uzrli prikazen
med našimi hladnimi domovi. Ostal je le veter, ki zdaj na
krompirjevih poljih razpihuje dim pogorišč, le sledi gumijastih
škornjev, ki se pogrezajo globoko v ilovnato prst in vijugajo sredi polja.

Bila so tudi druga znamenja: po nebu so švigali kometi,
sonce je mrknilo in mrknila je Luna,
Zemlja se je stresla v Konstantinovem mestu in oktobra so zacvetele
višnje na sosedovem vrtu.

Mar obstajajo grozovitejša znamenja, kakor so ta?
Res je, nisem še slišal, da bi se pojavile
temačne skupine flagelantov, toda sploh se ne bi čudil,
če bi zagledal srhljivo procesijo na poti čez hrib.

Kakor da bi se spet vrnili časi pred kugo, vsak dan adventa je božič,
tu so nore, žalostne in krute zabave, in klovnov obraz,
ki zre vate vsak dan, kakor hitro odpreš časopis:
vsak dan je drugačen, vsak dan zaudarja po starih, neumnih
in predrznih šalah, čeprav ni več nikomur do smeha.

Zgodba je končana! – živahno vpije igralec na odru,
ki mu dvorana navdušeno ploska, toda zunaj na ulici zraven gledališča
se vleče in vleče dolga vrsta ubežnikov:
tam so Tvoji Albanci, Čečeni, Tvoji Litovci,
Jakobovi otroci gredo mimo in izginejo, razblinijo se v zraku,
kakor da ne bi nikoli živeli, vsi že lebdijo nad zemljo
bosih, krvavih nog ...

Iz vodnih globočin
se kakor megla dvigajo glasovi, veter pa tolče z njimi ob strmo obalo,
nosi jih in trosi po poljih – nedolgo tega sem v mestu

slišal govorice, da Te nikoli ne bodo dosegli, da nemara
sploh ne obstajaš, da nad našimi glavami ni oboka iz
čiste medi, trdega in podnevi zapredenega v meglico,
toda prosojno čistega ob večerih in zgodnjih jutrih, ni Tvojega
bivališča, stanovanja, v katerem nas boš nekoč sprejel
v svoje čete, oborožene z ognjenimi sabljami –
ne, tam je samo luknja, temna, črna in ledena,
iz katere ne bo prišlo nič drugega kakor poguba.

Takšne govorice se širijo, jaz pa se bojim, da nas bo
popadla Tvoja jeza, ki nas je že večkrat popadla,
zato te rotim, da malce umakneš svojo desnico,
ne zaradi tiste petdeseterice, ki je najbrž ne boš več našel,
ne zaradi tistega Enega, ki je nekoč taval po naši ilovnati zemlji
in gledal naše uboštvo, ne da bi odvrnil oči.

Prevedel Klemen Pisk

First One

I keep all of Your gifts under my eyes,
So that I won't forget a single one: You raised me as though
I were a tree near a spring, so I would want for nothing,
You gave me a father and mother, you gave me a cemetery in Raseiniai
Where my ancestors lay to rest so that I would not be troubled
Searching for a homeland, and you have given me so much that sometimes
I fear not being able to carry it all, that sometimes in the hours of twilight

Fear grips me: a thief hides in the darkest corner
Not lowering his eyes and waits for me, unsuspecting,
Waits for me to close my eyes, to lower my arm in weariness,
Overcome by faintness, that I would think You had withdrawn
Beyond the black star which swallows being and non-being,
Into the darkness of chaos from which no light emerges,
So that I would hesitate once and call Your gifts
My treasures.

That is why each morning I repeat:
Nothing here is mine, only Your spring buzzes
With the first swarm of bees, only Your chestnut has bloomed,
Your green might rises, having broken through the asphalt.
Nothing here is mine. That is why when the sky is overcast,
When Your storm comes or darkness slides over the eyes
I always talk to You, without saying anything to anyone,
I whisper, I shout while a voice has been given me:

I will not be afraid, You are my refuge and my strength,
My abode and my refuge, most effective consolations in my tribulation,
He who when evening comes pours an overflowing cup.

Second One

By what name shall I call You so that I might be heard?
I was not among the righteous, You did not speak to me
from a burning bush, the wind left only a rumor
or an echo of a rumor while blistering outside this night,
only a few letters in a book,
only a morning birdsong, only signs of my frailty
in Your light.

(How long this March is,
while I speak with Jacob your relative, and here
powerful demons are gathering, they bring war, famine, and pestilence
from the skies, and it is uncertain
that the angels will have time to gather all the souls from our exploding
airplanes,
our battlefields, from September towers, from rivers, from city
sewers, from our glass tubes and flasks. And what will You call them
if we do not want to name many of them?
We have mangled everything You had conceived a long time ago.
Look: what was once Your singular sign
has been turned into plurals for a while now.)

There was a man – he called You his neighbor – who promised
To fill Your cup and put it in Your fingers,
But I don't have the courage, though I know that my neighbor,
On the other side the wall, every day at daybreak, tortures
a saxophone in the cellar
Always the same notes slowly, clumsily, callously
He plays, plays, and plays. Could that be You?

Final One

Lord, move Your right hand aside,
And give respite to the beggar
One who has trodden Your path for the second millennium.

It was perhaps only before the Great Schism,
That people saw so many bad omens: in the sky, in the waters and
the trees,
Even the birds left us – they flew away taking their young,
Above September fields, across Your vast heavens
Where the stars shone, screeching, as though they had seen ghosts
In our cooling homes. Only the wind remains,
scattering fire smoke in the potato fields, only the footprints from
rubber boots sink
deeply in the clay winding through the middle of the fields.

There were other omens: comets flung themselves across the sky,
There was a solar eclipse, and a lunar eclipse,
There was an earthquake in the city of Constantine, and in October
Cherries bloomed in the neighbor's yard.

Could there be worse omens?

It's true, I've not heard that dismal groups of flagellants appeared
anywhere
Though I would not be at all surprised if I saw the dreadful procession
On the road over the hill.

Yes, the times are as if before the plague:
It's Christmas on every day of Advent,
Silly, sad and cruel amusements, and a clown's face
Stares at you each day as soon as you open the newspaper:
A new one each day and each day stinking of yesterday's
Foolish and brazen jokes, although no one is amused.

History is finished! – shouts a vigorous actor on the stage,
The pleased audience applauds, and outside on the street by the theater
A long file of refugees passes, passes and passes:
Those are Your Albanians, Your Chechens, Lithuanians,
The children of Jacob pass by and disappear, melt in the air,
As though they had never lived, all hovering above the ground,

Feet bare and bloody...

Voices rise from the depths like a mist
And the wind casts them against a bluff.

It carries and scatters them across the fields – the other day
I already heard talk in the city, that they will never reach You, that You
May not exist at all, that above our heads is not the firmament
Of pure brass, sturdy, but hazy in the daytime air,
Clear in the evening and in the early morning, Your
Abode, Your dwelling, where You will welcome us one day
Into the battalions, bearing fiery swords, –
No, it is only a cavity, dark, black and icy
From which no hope comes – only devastation

These are the current rumors, and I am afraid that
Your wrath will fall upon us, as it has fallen more than once,
Thus I implore that You move Your right hand aside
Not for the fifty, whom You may not even find,
No – for the One, who once plodded through our clay
Saw our privations, and did not turn His eyes away.

Translated by Ada Valaitis



Foto © Jure Močnik

Polona Glavan

Polona Glavan se je rodila leta 1974 v Ljubljani. Študirala je primerjalno književnost na Univerzi v Ljubljani. Je pisateljica in prevajalka. Pri založbi Beletrina je izdala romaneskni prvenec: *Noč v Evropi* (2001), ki je bil nominiran za nagrado Kresnik za najboljši slovenski roman in bil doslej preveden v češčino, madžarščino in makedonščino, zbirko kratke proze *Gverilci* (2004), za katero je prejela nagrado Zlata ptica za izjemne dosežke mladih umetnikov, in najnovejši roman *Kakorkoli* (2014), ki je bil nominiran za nagrado Kritiško sito za najboljšo knjigo. Njena besedila so bila uvrščena v slovenske antologije *Čas kratke zgodbe* (1999), *O čem govorimo* (2004) in *The Key Witnesses: The Younger Slovene Prose at the Turn of the Millennium* (Ključna priča: Mlajša slovenska proza na prelomu novega tisočletja, 2003), ki je bila objavljena v angleškem jeziku; v ameriški antologiji *Angels Beneath the Surface – A Selection of Contemporary Slovene Fiction* (Angeli pod površjem – Izbor sodobne slovenske proze, 2008); v poljski antologiji *Noc w Lublanie. Antologia współczesnej krótkiej prozy słoweńskiej* (*Noč v Ljubljani. Antologija sodobne slovenske kratke proze*, 2009) in v irski antologiji *Dva: Díolaím de Nua-Litríocht na Slóivéine* (*Dva: Izbor sodobne slovenske književnosti*, 2010). Polona Glavan je prevedla tudi več del sodobne angleške, ameriške in irske književnosti.

Polona Glavan was born in 1974 in Ljubljana, Slovenia. She studied Comparative Literature at the University of Ljubljana's Faculty of Arts. She is a writer and translator. With the Beletrina publishing house she published her debut novel, *Noč v Evropi* (Night in Europe, 2001), which was nominated for the "Kresnik" Award for the best Slovenian novel and has since been translated into Czech, Hungarian, and Macedonian, the short story collection *Gverilci* (Guerillas, 2004), for which she received "Zlata ptica" Award for distinguished young artists, and her latest novel, *Kakorkoli* (No Matter How, 2014), which was nominated for the "Kritiško sito" Award for the best Slovenian book of the year. Her texts have been featured in the Slovenian anthologies *Čas kratke zgodbe* (Time of the Short Story, 1999), *O čem govorimo* (About What We Speak, 2004) and the anthology *The Key Witnesses: The Younger Slovene Prose at the Turn of the Millennium* (2003), which was published in English; the American anthology *Angels Beneath the Surface – A Selection of Contemporary Slovene Fiction* (2008); the Polish anthology *Noc w Lublanie. Antologia współczesnej krótkiej prozy słoweńskiej* (A Night in Ljubljana. An Anthology of Contemporary Slovenian Short Prose, 2009); and the Irish anthology *Dva: Díolaím de Nua-Litríocht na Slóivéine* (Dva: A Collection of Modern Slovenian Literature, 2010). Polona Glavan has also translated many works of contemporary English, American, and Irish literature.

Kakorkoli

(odlomek iz romana)

In pol nas imaš tukaj zbrane, nas dvajset pa nekaj iz tretjega ce, kao naključno spravljene na en kup, v en klas, ampak ko nas takole pogledaš, ti hitro potegne, da enega hudega naključja tukaj niti ne more bit. Par idiotov, par osebkov, ki sami ne vejo, kaj so, pa par nas, ki so nam stvari malo bolj jasne. Vsaj toliko, da se jih zavedamo. Pa par čefurjev, itak. Nimaš ti klasa brez par čefurjev. Posebna kategorija ti je to. Itak, vsi nam že od rojstva nabijajo, kako smo po difoltu isti, mi pa oni, kako ne smeš človeka soditi po tem, od kje je pa kako zgleda, ampak po tem, kaj dela. Ampak sori, s tem bi še lahko nategovali enega, ki prihaja s sela, tako ko Špela, ki se vozi iz enih brd okrog Horjula, en tak ti to lahko kupi pa magari pozabi že na pol poti nazaj v svojo vukojobino, kjer se itak ne rabi ukvarjat s tem. Enega takega ko sem jaz, ki je že cel lajf med njimi pa zgleda, da še cel lajf bo, se pa pač ne da, jebi ga. Ker point je glih v tem, da čefurji *delajo* take stvari, da te provocirajo. Glej Halilovičko pa njen dnevniki šov, glej trenirkarje, ki se pretegujejo po klopcah okrog Mercatorja pa ne znajo gobca držat, čim gre mimo bilo katera baba pod sto let, *Ej, lutkice, de si mi*; enkrat sem to slišala, pa mi je bilo zadosti, od takrat grem rajši okrog desetih blokov, samo da jih ne vidim. Lahko bi rekla, da mi kvarijo kvaliteto življenja, pizda, da res. Pa ne daj bože, da komu kaj rečeš, ne, takoj jih imaš celo vojsko za sabo, potem se jih pa probaj rešit. Tako je enkrat najebal Zajc, frend od Braneta, ki živi dva bloka naprej. En Cvijanović, bivši oficir JNA, ki misli, da je še zmeraj ta glavni šef pa mu nobeden nič ne more, mu je na parkingu direkt pred očmi butnil avto z vrati, da se mu je naredila luknja. Pol se je pa hotel najprej delat, ko da ni bilo nič, itak, ne moreš ti od takega modela drugega pričakovat, ko je pa Zajc dokončno popizdil, da bo klical policijo, je pa tip samo skomignil pa šel, nikome ništa. Ampak potem ko se je Zajc čez dan, dva skuliral pa si rekel, da ni vredno, potem se je pa šele začelo. En dan mu je manjkal brisalec, en dan je imel razrukan odbijač, en dan so mu sredi noči napopali čigumi na zvonec, da se je zbudil cel štuk, preden mu je ratalo dol prit pa ga odlepiti. Pa cel čas je srečeval tistega prasca, zgledalo je, ko da zanalašč dežura za vsakim vogalom, režal se mu je v faco pa očitno čakal, da ga bo Zajc na gobec pa da bo končno dobil izgovor, da skliče svojo bando četniško pa da ga prefukajo na mrtvo. Zajc je bil na srečo zadosti pameten, da ni naredil

nič, samo živcev mu je šlo pa za deset let. Ja, provokacija, tukaj so ti čefurji svetska liga. Evo ti ga, naš Založnik iz klasa. Po imenu ga itak ne pogruntaš, pa rojen je valjda tukaj pa vse to, za povrh je pa še plavook pa blond pa skravžljan ko kakšen angelček na cerkveni fasadi, skratka, ko ga vidiš, si rečeš, ta najbolj originalen Slovenec, tukaj ni druge. No, pa je tip zgleda doživel eno bližnje srečanje v Bosni, kjer živi žlahta od mat, ali se je pa zatreskal v kakšno pičko od dol, kaj pa jaz vem, no, skratka, po počitnicah se je pojavil v leder jakni, s ketno okrog vratu pa briljantino po lobanji pa začel celemu svetu razglašat, da je v bistvu čefur. Ej. Z Mino sva jasno crknile od smeha, ko sva ga zagledale, svetska fora nama je bila, tu ni kaj, Založnik naju je pa samo pogledal, ko da sva pasji drek sredi pločnika, pa mrtvo hladno rekel, če imava mogoče probleme z njegovo identiteto. *Ne, stari*, je rekla Mina, *samo z imidžem*. Ja, *valjda*, je odvrnil Založnik pa pogledal nekam čez naju, *glupim pičkam, ko sta vidve, itak nič drugega ni važno*. Potem se je obrnil pa odšuškals s svojo jakno pa odružil s svojo ketno, me z Mino sva se pa spogledale pa skomignile pa nisva več rekle nič o tem, čeprav se je Mini videlo, da ji je malo bed. Saj je bilo meni tudi, tako čisto na kratko, ampak sem se potem takoj vprašala, pa dobro, kaj ima tip zdaj za bit čefur? Koji kurac ima od tega? V bistvu še drugačen ne more bit zaradi tega, ko je pa takih ko on itak že na milijone. Že samo v klasu trije, Bešić pa Muamerović pa Dokić, nobene razlike med njimi, itak. Nekaj sikajo pa provocirajo pa se glupirajo pa to. Hadžipašićka, no, ta je pa iz čisto drugega vica. Sponzorša direkt iz učbenika. Kakšno leto nazaj si je našla enega Šiptarja, ki jo hodi iskat s črnim audijem, zatemnjene šipe pa vse to, ko se spodobi za perspektiven mafijski kader, pa ki ji kupuje manolke pa vuittonke pa zlatnino pa vse te scene. V bistvu Hadžipašićki sploh ne bi bilo treba hodit v šolo, itak si je lajf že zdaj porihkala tako, da ji nikoli ne bo treba delat, ampak jo Bakljavi očitno pošilja sem, da se lahko ta čas v miru posveča biznisu. Pa da se lahko še mi malo zajebavamo na ta račun. Ampak res, če mi je še eno leto nazaj šlo na kozlanje, ko sem jo pogledala, mi je zdaj že cel žur. Njena frizura s podaljški v porno blond niansi, oranžna koža original iz solarija, top s tigrovim vzorcem pa izrezom, v katerem so maksimalno našponani joški – da ti rata vse to zadet točno po predpisih, je že fakat umetnost. Enkrat bi ji to res rekla, brez heca. Ampak Hadžipašićka se seveda ne pogovarja z nobenim, mogoče po Bakljavijevem ukazu, kaj pa vem. Zija čez okno pa tapka z umetnimi nohti po mizi pa drsa s štiklami po tleh pa čaka, da cajt mine. Ne jebe,

pa v bistvu tudi prfoksi ne jebejo nje. Pol je pa tukaj še Spasojevička. Ta je pa adijo. Kurba direkt. Da čisto vsakemu, vseeno, če je pod meter petdeset ali nad sto kil ali mozoljast, da ne vidiš, kakšno barvo kože ima v resnici. Saj po pravici rečeno, noben drug je niti maral ne bi. Foksa mi je rekla, da je enkrat, ko sta še hodila z Andražem pa se zunaj med odmorom za roke držala, prišla zraven pa se postavila direkt pred njih pa rekla, *Ej, Andraž, a ti veš, kako meni paše seksat*. Čisto u izi, ko da ga sprašuje, koliko je ura. Andraž ji je hvala bogu rekel, naj spizdi, Fokso je pa skoraj kap, pa še takrat, ko mi je vse to samo govorila, ji je šlo na jok. Je rekla, da ne bo več hodila v šolo, da ne more te prasice gledat, da jo bo enkrat direkt zadavila, pa čisto vseeno, kaj se ji potem zgodi. Tako bed mi je bilo zanjo, da sem šla direkt do Spasojevičke pa ji rekla, kaj se ima za nastavljat tipom od drugih. Ona me je pa samo pogledala pa skomignila pa rekla, *ej, sori, saj ne bom več*, pa v naslednjem momentu že naprej prepisovala nalogo za mato ali kar je že imela. Zajela sem sapo, da bi popizdila tako, ko je edino prav, ampak me je v isti sekundi zadelo, da tukaj enostavno ni kaj, da se s takimi modeli ne da normalno menit, pa da se jebeš. Pa sem se lepo obrnila pa šla do Fokse pa ji povedala isto to, pa je še ona kar nekako dojela pa se skulirala. Ker tako je, eni ljudje imajo narobe naštelan mozak pa je brez veze zapravljat energijo za to, ker bodo oni še naprej isto prifuknjeni, ti pa samo znerviran pa zmatran od vsega skupaj. Pa Spasojevička ima narobe naštelan mozak, to se itak iz aviona vidi, v klasu je zmeraj cela pridna pa zagrebena, dela naloge pa roke dviguje pa vse to, čim je odmor, se ji pa strga pa gre težit tipom na hodnik. Za eno tako pojavo pa živ bog ne more reč, da je normalna. Dobro, okej, kdo je normalen pa zakaj, to je itak zmeraj vprašanje, tudi jaz bi najbrž izpadla prifuknjena po kakšnih merilih, ampak sigurno ne po tolikih ko ta modelka. Bit Spasojevička je diagnoza, kot bi rekla Mina. Pa bit čefur zgleda tudi. Mars je čuda tega preštudiral, celo zgodovino od bivše Juge pa od vojne pa še bolj nazaj, pa pravi, da ima cel ta folk od dol v glavi eno pobrkano logiko, da v bistvu zmaga, tudi če zgubi, pa da od tukaj potem izhaja ta filing, da so kar nekaj več vredni ko drugi pa seveda cel šit, ki se potem dogaja. In valjda, če ti starci pa njihovi starci pa tete pa strici pa sploh cela žlahta od rojstva nabija, da si car, pa magari ko si največji luzer, boš mislil, da si lahko glavni povsod, kamor prideš. Mislim, kaj naj pa rečeš enemu, ki je izgubil, pa trdi, da je zmagal? S tankom ga lahko speštaš, pa bo še zmeraj tupil, da je živ pa zdrav. Pa ko to takole laufa čez leta pa stoletja, ni več fora samo v

tem, kaj vidiš pa slišiš, ampak gre dejansko že v gene. To je tudi rekel Mars. Pa si seveda ni sam zmisllil, cel kup knjig imaš o tem napisanih, debatirajo o tem stalno pri Orgi, skoraj vsak je kaj takega bral. Če se nekaj zadosti dolgo ponavlja, rata genetsko. Žirafam so druge živali odžirale listje pri tleh, pa jim je zrasel vrat. Čefurjem se je zdelo, da niso zadosti dobri, pa so si kar zmislili, da so. Mi, ki smo bili od nekdaj navajeni na eno logiko pa ferplej, smo se jim pa pustili nategnit. Najprej na foro, da bomo lahko govorili slovensko, ko to pod Avstrijo kao nismo smeli, potem pa na tisto, da smo zdaj neki bratje pa skupaj močnejši pa si bomo pomagali pa bo vse krasno. En tak dolgoročen plan je to bil, pa na žalost je ratal tako dobro, da je folk vse to kupil brez vprašanj. Še nam je prišlo v gene, mater, to fuliranje, da smo zdaj sami svoji pa nam nobeden nič ne more pa nas končno pustijo na miru. Ja, itak da nas pustijo na miru. Povsod so se zrinili, v vsako luknjo, jebemti, težijo s svojo muziko pa jezikom pa navadami, ti jim pa ne smeš nič reč, ker si potem takoj kao rasist pa nacionalist pa praktično negativec, samo zato, ker bi rad živel v svoji državi pa govoril po svoje pa ker pričakuješ, da bodo tudi drugi upoštevali ta pravila, ki tukaj veljajo. Kot pravi Mars, zajebat nas mislijo na lep način. Tak fin. Neopazen. Najbolj grozno pri celi tej stvari pa je, da se folku ne da dopovedat, kaj se v bistvu dogaja. Da se jim ne da pomislit pa kaj naredit. Da se jim ne da niti poslušat. Da so, čisto tako ko mi zdajle v klasu, jebeno *vmes*. Pa če prav pomislim, se zdi to že skoraj tako ko *nikjer*.

No Matter How

(excerpt from the novel)

And here we are, the twenty-odd of us from 3C, thrown together as if randomly into one pile, one class, but when you look at us it doesn't take a genius to see it can't be that much of a coincidence. A few idiots, a few plonkers who don't know what the fuck they are and a few of us who know a bit more about how things stand. Just enough to be aware of them. Oh yeah, and a few *cefurs*, of course. There's no class without a few *cefurs*. They're a special breed, that lot. Of course, we've been told since we were born how we're all totally the same, us and them, how you can't judge a person by where they come from or what they look like but by what they do. But hell, they can preach that to country folk like Špela who commutes from some hilltop village near Horjul, people like her might actually buy it and forget about it halfway back to their godforsaken hole where they don't have to deal with these things anyway. But someone like me who's been living among them her entire life and I guess always will – well, they can't sell that shit to me. 'Cause the point is that *cefurs*, they *do* shit that provokes you. Just look at Halilović and her daily show, look at the trackies yawning on the benches outside the shop, unable to keep their mouths shut if a broad under a hundred walks past them, *Hey doll, where ya at*; I heard that once and that was it; from then on, I prefer to detour around ten blocks of flats just to avoid them. You could say they spoil my quality of life, hell if they don't. And god forbid you ever say something, no, then you have a whole army of them after you and good luck getting them off your back. That's what happened to Zajc, Brane's mate who lives two buildings down. One time, this guy Cvijanović, an ex-Yugoslav National Army officer who thinks he's still a big shot and no one can touch him, slammed his door into Zajc's car in the car park right before his eyes. He hit it so hard it left a dent. At first he pretended like nothing happened of course, what else can you expect from a guy like him, and when Zajc finally lost it, saying he was going to call the police, the bloke just shrugged and walked away, just like that. Then, after a couple of days when Zajc cooled off and told himself it wasn't worth it, things were only just getting started. One day he was missing a wiper, then his bumper was torn off, then someone stuck some gum to his doorbell in the middle of the night, waking the entire building before he managed to get down and

scrape it off. And he kept seeing that bastard around, he seemed to be patrolling every corner on purpose, laughing in his face. He was obviously waiting for Zajc to punch him so he would finally have an excuse to get his *cetnik* crew together and beat him to a pulp. Luckily, Zajc was smart enough to let it go but it gave him ten years' worth of grey hair. Yep, *cefurs* are in a class of their own when it comes to provocation. Take this guy Založnik from our class. You wouldn't know it from his name, and he was born here and all, and on top of everything he has blue eyes and blond curly hair like an angel looking down from the façade of some cathedral, anyway, when you see him you say to yourself, now he's an original Slovenian, no doubt about it. Well, I guess the guy had a close encounter in Bosnia where his mum's family lives or fell in love with a Balkan chick or something, I don't know, anyway, after the summer holidays, he walked into school wearing a leather jacket, a chain around his neck and brilliantine on his skull and started telling everybody he was actually a *cefur*. Man, Mina and I fell down laughing when we saw him, we thought it was the best joke ever, but Založnik just looked at us like we were a pile of dog shit in the middle of the pavement and asked us, dead cool, if we had a problem with his identity. *No, man*, said Mina, *just with your look*. *Yeah, sure*, said Založnik looking past us, *that's the only thing stupid bitches like you care about*. Then he turned around, scrunching and clanking away in his jacket and chain, and Mina and I looked at each other with a shrug and said nothing more about it, even though it was obvious Mina felt a little bad about it. I felt bad too for a little while, but then I said to myself, fuck it, what's the deal with this guy, wanting to be a *cefur* all of a sudden? What the hell does he get from it? It doesn't even make him special or anything because there's already millions like him. There's three of them in our class, Bešić and Muamerović and Dokić, all the same, of course. They bark at you and hassle you and act stupid and shit. And Hadžipašić, well, she's a whole different story. A textbook gold digger. About a year ago, she found herself some Albanian *siptar* who comes and picks her up in his black Audi, tinted windows and all, like you would expect from an aspiring young mobster, and buys her Manolo Blahniks and Louis Vuittons and bling and all that shit. Hadžipašić doesn't really need to go school, she's already sorted it out so she'll never have to work a day in her life, but Bakljavi obviously sends her here so he can focus on his business in peace in the meantime. And so we get something out of

it too. I mean, really, only a year ago, looking at her made me want to puke but now I find it hilarious. Her porn-blond extensions, her orange skin straight from the tanning salon, her tiger-stripe top with a cleavage with maximum push-up effect – that's fucking art to be able to do that exactly by the book. I'd tell her that one day, really I would. But of course, Hadžipašić doesn't speak to anyone, maybe Bakljavi told her not to, I don't know. She looks out the window, tapping her fake nails on the table, drawing circles on the floor with her high heels, waiting for the time to pass. She doesn't give a fuck and, in fact, the teachers don't give a fuck about her either. Then there's Spasojević. She's out of this world. A straight up whore. She gives it up to anyone, it doesn't matter if he's less than five feet tall or if he weighs three hundred pounds or if he's so pimple-faced you can't even tell what his skin colour is. Truth be told, no other bloke would have her. Foksa told me that, one time when she was still going out with Andraž and they were standing outside during break time holding hands, she walked up to them, planted herself straight in front of them and said, *Hey Andraž, you know, I really feel like having sex*. Just like that, as if she was asking him what time it was. Andraž was smart enough to tell her to fuck off and Foksa almost had a heart attack; she looked like she was about to cry as she was telling me this. She said she wasn't going to come to school anymore, that she couldn't stand looking at that bitch, that she was going to strangle her one day, she didn't give a fuck what happened to her. I felt so bad for her I walked straight up to Spasojević and asked her what business she had going round hitting on other chicks' men. And she just looked at me shrugging her shoulders and said, *I'm sorry, I won't do it anymore*, and went on copying her math homework or whatever she had next. I took a deep breath to let her have it with both barrels, but it suddenly struck me there was nothing I could do about it, it's impossible to have a normal conversation with people like her no matter what the fuck you do. So I just turned around and went to Foksa and told her that, and she kind of got it and cooled off. Because that's just the way it is, some people's brains aren't wired properly and there's no point wasting your energy on them because, at the end of the day, they're still crazy and you're pissed off and exhausted from the whole thing. And Spasojević's brain isn't wired properly, anyone can see that, she's always all good and eager in class, doing her homework and raising her hand before speaking and all that shit but as soon as the bell rings, she flips out

and walks out into the hallway to pester guys. No one in their right mind would say that she's normal. Alright, ok, who is normal and why, that's always the question, I would probably be labelled as crazy by certain criteria but not nearly as many as this cow. Being a Spasojević is a diagnosis, as Mina would say. And I guess the same goes for being a *cefur*. Mars has read a lot about this shit, the whole history of former Yugoslavia and the war and further back, and he says that all Balkan people have this twisted logic in their heads, that they won even if they actually lost and that that's where they get that feeling that they're better than the rest of us and of course all the other shit that comes with it. And obviously, if your parents and their parents and your uncles and aunts and the whole family have been telling you since you were born that you're a hotshot even if you're the biggest loser, you're going to think you can play the boss wherever you go. I mean, what can you say to someone who's lost but claims they've won? You can run them over with a tank and they'll go on saying they're alive and well. And when this has been going on for years and centuries, it's no longer just a matter of what you see and what you hear, it gets in your genes. Mars said that too. And of course he's not making this stuff up, there are tons of books on the subject, they're always discussing it at Orga, almost everybody's read something about it. If something keeps getting repeated long enough, it becomes genetic. Giraffes grew long necks because other animals would eat all the leaves near the ground. *Cefurs* felt they weren't good enough, so they made up they were. And us, who have always been used to a certain logic and fair-play, we let ourselves fall for it. First for the tale that we would be able to speak Slovenian, which we couldn't do before when we were under Austria, and then the one that we were brothers and that we were stronger together and that we would help each other and everything would be just great. That was kind of the long-term plan but unfortunately, it went so well people bought the whole thing no questions asked. We have it in our genes too, for fuck's sake, fooling ourselves that we're our own people now and that no one can touch us and that they're finally letting us be. Sure, they let us be. They're everywhere, they got into every fucking hole, ramming their music and their language and their customs down our throats and you can't say shit because then you're a racist and a nationalist and practically a bad guy just because you want to live in your own country and speak your mind and because you expect other people to play by the

rules that apply here. Like Mars says, they want to fuck us over the nice way. Subtly. Inconspicuously. And the worst part is that people don't want to see what's really going on. That they're too lazy to think and do something about it. That they're too lazy to even listen. That they're, just like us, the people in this class, fucking *in between*. Now that I think about it, it's almost as if we're *nowhere*.

Translated by Špela Bibič

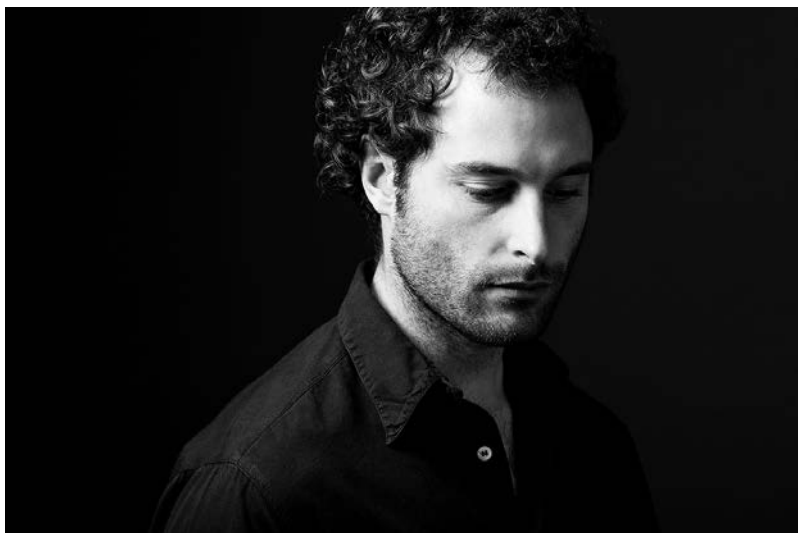


Foto © Aleš Rosa

Karlo Hmeljak

Karlo Hmeljak se je rodil leta 1983 v Kopru. Je pesnik, prevajalec poezije in mednarodno uveljavljen športni jadrallec. Leta 2008 je Slovenijo zastopal na poletnih olimpijskih igrah v Pekingu, kjer je v dvosedu razreda 470 v posadki z Mitjo Nevečnyjem osvojil 18. mesto. Svoj pesniški prvenec *Dve leti pod ničlo* je izdal leta 2007. Omenjena zbirka je bila nominirana za najboljši prvenec in uvrščena na Festival Pranger. Je tudi avtor pesniških zbirk *Ljubavne* (2012) in *Krčrk* (2013), slednja je prejela Veronikino nagrado za najboljšo pesniško zbirko leta. Poezijo in prevode objavlja v reviji *Idiot*, pri kateri tudi urednikuje. Njegove pesmi so bile objavljene v antologiji poezije iz Kopra *Maestral 21* (2009). Prevodi njegovih pesmi v angleščino so izšli v mednarodni reviji za vizualno umetnost, prozo in poezijo *The Dirty Goat* (2010), prevodi v italijanščino pa v antologiji Založništva tržaškega tiska *Loro tornano la sera – Sette autori della giovane poesia slovena* (Oni se vrnejo zvečer – Sedem avtorjev mlade slovenske poezije, 2011).

Karlo Hmeljak was born in 1983 in Koper, Slovenia. He is a poet, translator of poetry, and a world class competitive sailor. He represented Slovenia at the Summer Olympic Games in Beijing in 2008, where he competed in the two-man 470 class dinghy together with Mitja Nevečny, finishing in 18th place. He published his debut collection of poetry, *Dve leti pod ničlo* (Two Years below Zero), in 2007. It was nominated for the best debut book and selected for the Pranger Festival. He has also authored the collections of poetry *Ljubavne* (Love Songs, 2012) and *Krčrk* (A Convulsion of Letters, 2013), for which he won the Veronika Prize for the best poetry book of the year. He publishes his poems and translations in the literary magazine *Idiot*, of which he is also a co-editor. His poems have been featured in the anthology of poetry from the Koper area, *Maestral 21* (2009). English translations of his poems have been included in the international journal of visual art, poetry and prose *The Dirty Goat* (2010), while translations of his poetry into Italian have been featured in the anthology *Loro tornano la sera – Sette autori della giovane poesia slovena* (They Will Return in the Evening – Poetry by Seven Young Slovenian Authors, 2011), published by the “Založništvo tržaškega tiska” publishing house.

Sočasnost bega

(izsek)

Vez.

Zev.

V njej te
zagledam,
vidim izginjati
ves
sev.

Vse vzel, da nimam kam,
da nekoč, daljno in spev,
da brez tišine, brez tišine
spiše.

Piše:
temna jadra.
Ti še
ostajaš in z obzorjem.
In morje molči.
Bi še z vsakim vetrom.
Bi vse tiše, hroma jadra
piše razparane piše.

Šipe
v tleh.
Tako čiste in razbite.
Njihovo drobljenje pod mano
in drobljenje pod tabo.
Tako tiho in moje.

Tako obupujem –
nezaznavno.

Tako oprt,
 tako odprt,
 da stvari –
 ki gredo
 vame ali
 skozme
 padajo –
 gredo mimo.
 In njihov
 dotik je
 njihovo
 izginevanje,
 njihova
 največja
 prisotnost,
 samo sled,
 samo dokaz
 zgrešenosti –
 tega, kako manjkam,
 kako vztrajam neobstoječ.

»Tekst je naključno zaporedje besed.« Marko Čeh

Kako me lahko ne bi bilo,
 kako bi ta zimska jutra
 in vrhovi, obrazi v temi, tvoj
 šepet, tlakovci, odtisi rok,
 mesta, donosi in pomnjenje,
 zvon, vsa neoprijemljiva
 ugibanja, cele opeke, pojmi:
 politika, nemost, kriterij,
 kako bi vsiljeno, trki posode, glas,
 neizbežno oziranje, sledi, loki,
 pokanje sten, pokanje udov, napor,
 dvig, nepremičnost in ose, zate, ta
 potek, daljni pesek, priklicevanje vonja,
 vonja tebe, teže, teka, teksta, telesa oči,
 telesa rok, telesa kože, telesa ponavljanja,
 njegove moči, tega, kako se opira name,
 se mi upira pičlo, se zrašča, kako roke čutijo
 same, odznotraj, me osamijo in moje

stegovanje je kot rezanje, mi moje stegovanje
ne prizanaša, poln sem krikov, nobenih omam,
vseh bolečin brez imetij, brez vas,
vsega razpadlega, davno, in teptanj.

[...]

Čistoča mojih videnj.
Hodim po ulicah in v
mislih raznese avtobus.
Kosi trupel so razneseni,
dan je počasen in topel in
prekinjen.
Perem posodo in v mislih
se sosed razstreli na tržnici,
potem se objokuje vse
mogoče, jeza je za, žal ne,
tu se žaluje po svoje, se sme.
Obešam perilo in v mislih
se mi sence kažejo kot
obešenci, ki so lahki kot
sveže oprane majice, in
za trenutek izginem.
In srečevanje ljudi, govor,
prostori, to mesto ob morju,
to vreme v nasprotju, ta tla,
preluknjana na več mestih,
na več mestih dotiki, oziranja,
oziranja stran, dotikanja stran,
gledanje v stvari in samota stvari
in padanje nečesa neopazno,
zidovi neopazno, lažje neopazno,
neupravičeno neopazno,
preživetje neopazno.
Čistoča mojih misli,
moja odgnana videnja,
prevlada mojega življenja nad
resničnostjo.
Moja prilagoditev,
preživetje, tako utišano –
moje preživetje brez mene.

Same Time Start(le)s

(excerpt)

Tie.

Tight.

I glimpse you

within a gap,

I see disappearing

bright

light.

All taken and nowhere to go,

that once, far off, a song,

unstill, unstill

may thrill.

The quill:

tracing dark sails.

You hang

on, with the skyline.

The sea keeps its silence.

Wants more with each wind.

Wants stiller. Lame sails,

quills tracing ripped rills.

Traceried glass

in the ground.

So clean and ground.

Ground beneath me

and ground beneath you.

So still and mine.

So I despair –

unperceived.

So unbroken
and so open
that things –
sinking
within me or
dropping
clean through me –
pass by.
And their
touch is
their
fadeout,
their
most striking
presence,
mere trace,
mere proof
of a miss –
of how I am missing
and holding on, nonexistent.

“A text is a random sequence of words.” Marko Čeh

How could I not be,
how could these winter dawns
and peaks, the faces in darkness, your
whisper, the cobbles, the handprints,
the cities and profits and memory,
the bell, all ungraspable
guessings, whole bricks, such concepts
as: politics, dumbness, criterion;
how could the strictures, dish clashes, the voice,
unavoidable glances, the traces, the bows,
the cracking of walls, the cracking of limbs, the strain,
the rise, immobility, wasps, for you, this
course, far-off sands, evoking the scent,
the scent of you, new, next, text, texture of eyes,
texture of hands, texture of skin, texture of repetition,
of its strength, of how it leans on me,
struggling but little, growing together, of how hands feel
lonely, from inside, they set me apart and my
stretching's like cutting, my stretching's

unsparing, I'm crammed with screams, no dope,
all pains no possessions, no you,
all crumbled to dust, long ago, the treadings.

[...]

My cleanness of visions.

I'm roaming the streets and a

bus explodes in my thoughts.

The pieces of bodies are scattered,

the day is sluggish and warm and

broken.

I'm washing up: out in the market

a neighbour blows up in my thoughts,

then there is mourning for oodles of

things, outrage is all the rage, sadly it's not:

here one does and may mourn on one's own.

I'm hanging the washing: my thoughts

are showing me shadows like

hanged men, light just like

shirts, freshly laundered, and I

disappear for a moment.

The meeting of people, the talk,

the places, this town by the sea,

this weather in contrast, this ground,

riddled with holes here and there,

here and there touches and glancings,

glancings aside, touchings aside,

the looking at things and the loneliness of things

and the falling of something, unnoticed,

the walls gone unnoticed, more lightly unnoticed,

unfoundedly going unnoticed,

survival going unnoticed.

My cleanness of thoughts,

my visions cast off,

my life taking over

reality.

My adaptation,

survival, so muted –

my survival without me.



Foto © Maj Pavček

Andrej Hočevar

Andrej Hočevar se je rodil leta 1980 v Mariboru. Študiral je primerjalno književnost na Filozofski fakulteti Univerze v Ljubljani. Je pesnik, kritik, občasni prevajalec poezije iz angleščine in nemščine, glavni urednik knjižne zbirke *Prišleki* ter odgovorni urednik elektronskega medija *www.ludliteratura.si*. Hočevar je osnoval in vodil več literarnih in kulturnih projektov, med njimi tudi projekt »Slovenska literatura in tuji kritiki«, ki je med prvimi tovrstnimi kritiškimi povezavami v Sloveniji. Hočevar je izdal pet pesniških zbirk: *Vračanja* (2002), ki je bila nominirana za nagrado za najboljši prvenec, *Ribe in obzornice* (2005), *Pesmi o koscih in podobnostih* (2007), *Privajanje na svetlobo* (2009) in *Leto brez idej* (2011). Trenutno pripravlja novo zbirko. Ob poeziji piše tudi kritike in eseje, vključno z glasbenimi recenzijami za tisk in radio, predvsem o jazzu. Njegova poezija je bila prevedena v več jezikov in predstavljena na različnih mednarodnih festivalih. Poezijo včasih povezuje z glasbeno improvizacijo.

Andrej Hočevar was born in 1980 in Maribor, Slovenia. He studied Comparative Literature at the University of Ljubljana's Faculty of Arts. He is a poet, critic, occasional translator of poetry from English and German, editor-in-chief of the *Prišleki* book series and executive editor of the e-journal *www.ludliteratura.si*. Hočevar has conceived and headed several literary and cultural projects, among them the project "Slovenian Literature and Foreign Critics", which represents the first critics-related cooperation of its kind in Slovenia. Hočevar has published five collections of poetry: *Vračanja* (Returns, 2002), which was nominated for the Best Debut Book, *Ribe in obzornice* (Fish and Horizons, 2005), *Pesmi o koscih in podobnostih* (Poems about Mowers and Similarities, 2007), *Privajanje na svetlobo* (Adapting to the Light, 2009) and *Leto brez idej* (An Idealess Year, 2011). He is currently working on his next collection. In addition to poetry, he also writes essays, book reviews, and music reviews – particularly about jazz – for print media and radio. His poems have been translated into various languages and have been read at a number of international festivals. He occasionally combines poetry with improvised music.

Seznam

Rad imam ženske. Ena izmed njih
je celo moja žena. Ima vse prednosti
in slabosti žensk, kar oboje enako občudujem.
Poskušava se razumeti in to je težko.
Občasno, kadar nisem stisnjen med rezine
teme, kadar se ne sprašujem, ali bom
še kdaj sploh kaj napisal, seksava.
Ker sva poročena, seksava, kot si domišljava,
da to počnejo tudi drugi poročeni ljudje.
Po možnosti sproščeno in brez uvodnih
nerodnosti. V tem, kot v vsem drugem,
nimava zgleda. Nimava vzornikov. Nimava staršev.
To naju veseli. Zadovoljna sva, da ne veva,
kako so seksali najini starši. V tem smo si vsi,
ki imamo starše, nekoliko podobni. Sicer pa
se precej razlikujemo. Nekateri moški, denimo,
težijo drugim moškim ali drugim ženskam,
nekateri ženske težijo drugim moškim,
drugim ženskam ali sploh vsepovprek.
Žal to občasno velja tudi zame. In mi je hudo.
Neskončno mi je hudo. Kličem ljudi in se jim
opravičujem za včeraj. Oprosti, bil sem
raztresen, srce v grlu, neurje v trebuhu.
V stisnjeni pesti ostri pasji zobje. Prah
me žgečka v pljučih. Nočem biti moški,
ki teži svoji ženi. Mislim, da se ne bom zmotil,
če rečem, da si tega ne želi niti ona.
Vendar vse to še ne pomeni, da nimam rad
tudi nekaterih moških. Moj brat, na primer,
je bil eden izmed njih. Pomagal mi je,
ko sem imel težave z neko žensko.
Brez besed me je poslušal. Brez besed
me je poslušal tudi, ko je umiral.
In nisem mu mogel pomagati. Ne vem,
ali sem mu sploh kdaj lahko
pri čem pomagal, kot je on meni
na primer pri postavljanju pohišta.
Ko je negibno ležal na postelji

v bolnici, sem mu žalostno razlagal, kako napreduje sestavljanje mojega novega kolesa. Brez besed me je poslušal, vendar mislim, da se ni spomnil, o čem mu pripovedujem. Zamenjal sem temo. Se spomniš tistega dela te in te nadaljevanke? Brat odsotno prikima. Glavni junak v spanju odsanja celotno življenje sebe kot nekoga drugega. Njegov najljubši del! Kdo od naju zdaj sanja življenje sebe kot nekoga drugega? Ne vem, zakaj nekateri živimo svoje življenje kot življenje nekoga drugega. Zato si ne delam seznamov najljubših komadov, ljudi, filmov ali knjig. Ne vem, katera je moja najljubša nadaljevanka. In ne vem, zakaj so nekateri vedno tako jebeno napeti, da sem potem napet še jaz in začnem težiti svoji ženi in je sploh vse bedno in brezizhodno in nekam povsem običajno. Zadovoljen sem, da vem vsaj to, kateri je bil najljubši del te in te nadaljevanke mojega brata. Kar izberemo, izgubi vrednost. In četudi bi verjel v najljubše stvari, najbrž ne bi znal izbrati, tako kot mi je takrat poleti tik pred vrnitvijo v dolino prvič in enkrat za vselej uspelo izbrati svojo edino, potrpežljivo ženo.

Brez opozorila

Ne vem, kdaj se je
začelo. Zgodilo se je
brez opozorila. Vse je
isto, a drugače. Vseeno je,
ali pogled sega do obzorja
ali do naslednjega vogala;
razkriva moške in ženske,
ki bi radi drug na drugega
naredili vtis, tu in tam
še kakšnega psa. Svetloba
komaj opazno okleva,
preden se me dotakne
in me združi z drugimi.
Tla pod mojim korakom
zanihajo drugače,
ko odrinem vodo, razpade
na tisoč kapljic. Nisem
si mislil, da se bom kdaj znašel
tukaj. Kjer so bili pred mano
že mnogi. Večine niti ne
poznam. Nekateri so pometli
nesnago, naredili prostor
za nove navade in uspehe,
drugi niso spremenili ničesar.
Samo korakali so v svojo smer,
le da s stisnjenimi ustnicami.
Verjetno sem zgrešil
pravi izvoz. Ali pa pravi izvoz
nekaterim preprosto ni namenjen.
Zato, si rečem,
zapri oči in se razglej.
Vdihni in premešaj nekaj zraka.
Pomisli na skrbi in jih odmisli.
Tvoji dosežki so skromni,
zleknjeni ob tvoj hrbet
kot lenoben pes. Nanje
se zdaj ne moreš zanesti.
Če bi se kaj zalomilo,

se boš moral znajti
kako drugače.
Nebo se je umirilo
in leglo v svojo posteljo.
Poglej, kako počiva in
hladnokrvno pronica vse bliže.
Kmalu bo spet odprlo oči,
pokrčilo nogo in stopilo na tla,
kot da mu je prav malo mar.
Tam bo meja. Ljudje bodo
tam. In ti boš vedno tam,
samo tukaj.

Mačke ne poznajo lakote

Med ljudmi in ljudmi ni ničesar,
kar ne bi približevalo svoje govorice
suhemu listju zadaj za hišo –
nič drugega ne more biti tako pri miru,
odporno na iskanje povezav in
skrivnih prehodov. Večeri
nas počasi slačijo, zavezani napakam,
ki se zadovoljno sončijo na bližnjih
pobočjih. Vse, kar ni izgubljeno,
se bo kmalu zagrizlo v špranje
in zaspalo. Tudi mi bomo zaspali.
Lenobno opazujemo svoje nepredvidljive
misli. Bojimo se jih. Toliko je jasno.
Jezik prikriva poželenje.
Izda svojega gospodarja. Na nebo
izpljune zvezde, da se o njih sploh
lahko pogovarjamo in potem na samem
ugotavljamo, kako neusmiljeno nas
ignorirajo. Prazni krožniki nas
ignorirajo. Zrak nas ignorira. Pitje je
ritem, ki iz ene pesmi naredi dve. Ampak
zdaj se že ponavljam. Toliko je jasno –
če se bomo drug k drugemu
vrnili čisti in z znanimi potezami,
nismo pridobili ničesar.

A List

I like women. One of them is
even my wife. She has all the strengths
and weaknesses of women, both of which I admire equally.
We try to communicate and that causes problems.
Occasionally, whenever I'm not squeezed between slices
of darkness, whenever I'm not wondering if I'll
ever write again, we have sex.
Since we're married, we have sex the way we imagine
other married people do.
As casually as possible and without the awkward
foreplay. In this respect, as in most others,
we have no examples. No models. No parents.
This gives us pleasure. We're happy we don't know
how our parents had sex. In this respect all of us
who've had parents are somewhat alike. Otherwise
we're quite different. Some men, for instance, give
other men or other women a hard time,
some women give other men a hard time,
or other women, or everyone at once.
Occasionally, alas, this holds for me, too. And I feel bad.
Unbelievably bad. I call people up and apologize
for yesterday. Sorry, my mind was
preoccupied, my heart in my throat, my guts in an uproar.
Sharp canine fangs in my clenched fist. Dust
stinging my lungs. I don't want to be a man
who gives his wife a hard time. I suspect it's no mistake for me
to say she doesn't want that, either.
But none of this is to say there aren't also some men
that I like. My brother, for instance,
was one of them. He helped me
when I was having trouble with some woman.
He listened to me without saying a word. He also listened
without saying a word when he was dying.
And I couldn't help him. I don't know
if I was ever able to help him with anything
as much as he helped me
arrange the furniture, for instance.
As he lay motionless in his bed

in the hospital I sadly explained what
progress I had made assembling my new bicycle.
He listened without saying a word, but I think
he didn't remember what I was talking about.
I changed the subject. Do you remember
that episode of this or that series?
My brother nods absently. Where in his sleep the hero
dreams his whole life away as somebody
else? His favorite episode!
Which of us now is dreaming his life
away as somebody else?
I don't know why some of us live
our lives as though this was somebody
else's life. That's why I don't make lists
of my favorite songs, people, movies or books.
I wouldn't be able to name my favorite
series. And I don't know why some people
are always so all-fired uptight that I get
uptight as well and start giving my wife a hard time
and everything turns stupid and hopeless and
somehow quite ordinary. I'm glad
I at least know which episode of this or that
series was my brother's favorite.
What we choose loses its value. And even if
I believed in favorite things, I still wouldn't know
how to choose them the way that summer
right before going back to my valley on the very first try
I managed once and for all to choose
my one and only long-suffering wife.

Without Warning

I don't know when
it began. It happened without
any warning. With everything
the same, only different. It doesn't matter
if you look to the horizon
or the next corner;
you discover men and women
trying to impress
one another, here and there
maybe a dog. The light
hesitates barely perceptibly
before touching and
uniting me with the others.
The ground at my feet
sways differently,
when I part the water, it disintegrates
into a thousand droplets. I never
thought I would ever find myself
here. Where so many have been
before me. I don't even know
most of them. A few have swept the rubbish
away, making room for
new habits and successes,
while others have changed nothing.
Just marched in their own direction,
only now with their lips compressed tight.
I probably missed
the right exit. Or else the right exit
just isn't meant for some people.
In that case, I tell myself,
close your eyes and have a good look around.
Inhale and mix in some air.
Think of your cares and then think them away.
Your accomplishments are modest,
stretched out at your back
like a lazy dog. You can't
count on them now.
If something goes wrong,

you'll have to catch your balance
some other way.

The sky has calmed down
and climbed into its bed.

Look how it rests,
cold-bloodedly creeping closer and closer.

Soon it will open its eyes again,
bend a leg and set foot on the ground,
as if it couldn't care less.

That's where the border will be. People will be
there. And you'll always be there,
only here.

Cats Know No Hunger

Between people and people is there anything
that doesn't approximate its speech
to the dry leaves out behind the house –
nothing else can be so at peace,
resistant to the search for links
and hidden passageways. The evenings
undress us slowly, committed to mistakes
that contentedly sun themselves on nearby
slopes. Whatever hasn't been lost
will soon eat into the cracks and
fall asleep. We'll fall asleep, too.
We lazily watch our unpredictable
thoughts. Afraid of them. This much is clear.
Language conceals desire.
Betrays its own master. Spews stars
into the sky so we can talk
about them at all, and then alone
we realize how mercilessly they
ignore us. Empty plates
ignore us. The air ignores us. Drinking is a
rhythm that makes two songs out of one. But
now I'm repeating myself. This much is clear –
if we return to each other
clean and with the same, familiar features,
we've gained nothing.

Translated from the Slovenian by Michael Biggins



Foto © E. Resl

Elke Laznia

Elke Laznia se je rodila leta 1974 v Celovcu v Avstriji. Od leta 1994 živi v Salzburgu, kamor se je preselila zaradi študija na tamkajšnji univerzi. Piše romane, lirčno prozo in epsko poezijo. Od leta 2011 je svobodna pisateljica. Njen romaneskni prvenec *Kindheitswald* (Gozd otroštva) je izšel leta 2014. Zanj je prejela letno pisateljsko štipendijo dežele Salzburg (2014), avstrijsko državno projektno štipendijo za književnost (2014) in literarno nagrado dežele Koroške (2014). Njena besedila so bila objavljena v različnih avstrijskih literarnih revijah, kot so *manuskripte* in *Salzburger Literaturzeitschrift* (SALZ). Znana je tudi po svoji lirčni prozi in epskih pesnitvah, za katere je prejela številne nagrade, med drugim nagrado »Rauriser Förderungspreis« za književnost (2012), nagrado revije *manuskripte* za književnost (2012), nagrado Marie Zittrauer za poezijo (2013), nagrado Theodorja Körnerja za književnost (2013), literarno nagrado »rotahorn« (2013) in pisateljsko štipendijo Zveznega ministrstva za izobraževanje, umetnost in kulturo Republike Avstrije (2013).

Elke Laznia was born in 1974 in Klagenfurt, Austria. She moved to Salzburg in 1994 to study at the university there and has lived in that city ever since. She is a novelist and writer of lyrical prose and prose poetry. She has worked as a freelance writer since 2011. Her debut novel *Kindheitswald* (Childhood Forrest), for which she received the Salzburg Annual Literary Grant (2014), the national "Projektstipendium für Literatur" grant for literature (2014), and the "Förderpreis für Literatur" prize of the State of Carinthia (2014), was published in 2014. Her texts have been published in various literary magazines, such as *manuskripte* and the *Salzburger Literaturzeitschrift* (SALZ). She is also acclaimed for her lyrical prose and prose poetry, for which she has won several awards, including the "Rauriser Förderungspreis" prize for literature (2012), the *manuskripte* Magazine Prize for literature (2012), the Maria-Zittrauer Poetry Award (2013), the Theodor Körner Prize for literature (2013), the "rotahorn" award for literature (2013), and a literary grant from the Austrian Federal Ministry for Education, Arts and Culture (2013).

kindheitswald

(Auszug aus dem Roman)

marjan

Die Sehnsucht erwachte wieder, als mich der nächste Mann liebte, der hieß Oskar und war Architekt. Er sagte am ersten Abend, dass er mich liebt und bewundert, ich war glücklich und hielt es für möglich, dass etwas werden könnte, nahm ihn mit nach Hause und mochte seinen warmen Körper, seine Umarmung zog mich in den Schlaf, das war nie vorher möglich, ich konnte umarmt nicht einschlafen, bei ihm schon, in dieser ersten Nacht, und wenn ich kurz erwachte und seinen Körper nicht spürte, nahm ich seine Arme und legte sie mir um, legte mir seinen warmen Körper wie einen Mantel um. Das war schön. Es berührte mich. Bevor meine Sehnsucht wieder erwachte, fühlte ich mich weniger einsam als sonst, fragte und erzählte viel, wie man so fragt und erzählt, wenn man sich kennenlernt, wie man sich so annähert mit wachen Augen und Gesten, bis sie zusammenschmelzen, die Blicke und die Hände und die Körper, da fühlte ich mich eine kurze Zeit nicht einsam und müd und freute mich darüber. Oskar war lieb und aufmerksam und konnte gut erzählen und zuhören, wurde oft unsicher und lachte, um es auszugleichen. Das mochte ich. Ich mochte, wie er auf mich reagierte.

Er tastete nach mir, wie nach den Scherben von Zerbrochenem. Nur mit den Fingerspitzen. Er hinterließ zehn Fingerabdrücke auf meinem Körper. Eine Art Lächeln wie sonst nie, wie ich es nie bekommen hatte und nehmen und stehen lassen konnte. Er hatte lächelnde Augen. Ein schönes, freundliches Wesen.

Oskar nannte mich Mein Herz, einmal sagte er Liebes, das mochte ich besonders.

Man kann ruhig Namen erfinden und man kann sich ruhig erkennen. Man erfindet neue Worte, überhaupt eine neue Sprache. Man glaubt, es sei eine neue Sprache, dabei ist es die alte, die wird nur neu verkleidet und wiederverwertet, es sind immer dieselben Worte, die werden wiederholt, immer wiederholt. Einmal ist es vielleicht der Schoß oder das Haar, die Kniekehle, oder sind es die Augen, die Hände oder die Brüste, einmal ist es der Rücken oder der Atem auf der einen Schulter, einmal ist es der Schwung des Schlüsselbeins oder des Hüftknochens im Liegen, ein anderes Mal das eine geflüsterte Geheimnis hinterm Ohr. Aber die Worte sind dieselben. Immer.

Ich sei sein Schmuck, sagte er und nahm mich stolz bei der Hand, küsste mich, und wir trafen Leute, seine Freunde, die fingen uns ab, als wir die Reihen des großen Theatersaales bis zur neunten hinaufzählten, wir begrüßten uns und sagten uns Du und die Vornamen, sie waren Robert und Karina mit K, beides bekannte Juristen, das erfuhr ich später, die luden uns ein, kommt doch zum Essen, sagten sie, und ich tat, als meinten sie nicht mich, als hörte ich nicht, suchte mit den Blicken die neunte Reihe und die vielen Leute ab, fühlte mich unwohl, und sie sagten ihm, ich sei schön, nickten ihm lächelnd mit hochgezogenen Augenbrauen Anerkennung zu, das habe er gut gemacht und sein Blick (...), aber da war ich schon weiter, hatte mich grüßend und lächelnd vorbeigeschoben, suchte die Sitze in Reihe neun, er sprach noch, bis die Lichter ausgingen, und kam dann zum Platz Nummer vier in der Reihe neun und war mir nicht böse und küsste mich, nahm meine Hand, er nahm meine Hand und sagte, bei so was wolle er immer die Hand halten, ob es mir recht sei, und ich gab ihm meine Hand und war verlegen und traurig, entzog sie ihm wieder und gab sie ihm wieder, einmal hin und einmal her bis zum Ende des Stücks (welches Stück war es?). Als wir gingen, umarmte er mich an der Türschwelle und küsste mich, er roch nach Fisch, wir verstellten den Leuten den Ausgang, sie stießen an uns und drängten sich vorbei. Ich fühlte mich lahm und müd. Aber er hielt mich.

Und ich dachte an Marjan, er war immer wie ein Schatten, wie mein Schatten, zwar neben mir, aber er berührte mich nicht in der Öffentlichkeit, weil ich es nicht wollte, ein Meter Abstand, stellte mir Leute vor, wenn er in meinem Blick Zustimmung las, oder schwieg, wenn ich, wie meistens, Ruhe wollte, und ich kam allein und ging allein, wollte nicht, dass jemand wusste, dass wir einander lieben, und wir liebten uns, und ich fühlte mich allein, und er fühlte sich allein, und ich wollte es trotzdem so. Bis ich es nicht mehr wollte, weil ich mich zu oft allein fühlte, glaubte, die Liebe sei vergangen, mich trennte, wir werden uns nicht mehr sehen, sagte ich, hast mich immer allein gelassen, hast mich nicht gerettet. Wir haben viel geweint. Beide.

Oskar hatte einen Hund, einen Flat Coated Retriever, ich mochte ihn, er hieß Benben, und er war alt und krank und bekam frisch gekochtes, püriertes Fleisch mit Gemüsereis, Oskar kochte täglich für Benben. Als er kränker wurde (sehr krank sogar) und Oskar dem Einschläfern nicht zustimmen wollte, pflegte er ihn, und ich besuchte

die beiden, weil Oskar nicht mehr aus dem Haus konnte. Ich mochte Benben und er tat mir leid. Er hatte kein Gesicht mehr, war nur Haut und Knochen und Augen. Oskar hielt ihm die Hundeschüssel zum Maul, sonst fraß er nicht. Benben fraß ihm nur mehr aus der Hand. Die Nacht über blieb ich nicht mehr. Ich sagte, dass er sich in Ruhe um Benben kümmern sollte, aber in Wahrheit wollte ich nur weg. Als Oskar zwei Mal einen vereinbarten Spaziergang, für den ich mir freigenommen hatte, absagte und ein Konzert am Abend, weil er Benben nicht allein lassen wollte, begann die Sehnsucht nach Marjan wieder. Davor nicht, die Zeit vor Oskar war sehnsuchtsfrei und angenehm, ich war mir selbst genug gewesen. Aber dann begann eine nagende Sehnsucht.

Marjan hatte mich so sehr gewollt, nicht ohne mich können, mich bedrängt, was ich nicht ertragen hatte, jetzt wollte ich es wieder, wollte gewollt, bedrängt werden, wollte Marjans Hände überall. Marjan hat große Hände. Dunkle tiefe Augen. Es lag auf der Hand. Dass ich Marjan vermisste, ach, läge es auf der Hand, läge mein Gesicht auf seiner Hand oder in seinen Händen, ach, könnte ich mein müdes Gesicht in seine kühlen Hände legen, ausrasten, in seinen Händen, ich atmete die Kraft von seinen Händen in meinen Körper, legte mein Gesicht in seine Hände wie in eine Waagschale, er wöge es auf, wie viel Gewicht hat mein Gesicht in seinen Händen, wie schwer ist sein Herz als Gegengewicht, damit es sich ausgleicht. Mein Gesicht. Sein Herz. In seinen Händen mein Gesicht. Dass er es nicht verliert. Sonst geht es zu Bruch. Wie sein Herz. Damals. (Durch mich.) Ich brauchte Marjan.

Wenn ich die zwei besuchte, sprachen wir fast nur mehr über Benben, ich erzählte nichts mehr von mir, fragte Oskar aus, der bereitwillig und ausführlich antwortete, wie es um Benben stand, welche Therapien, welche Schmerzmittel anschlugen, wann er erbrochen oder verdaut, wie oft er in der Nacht gebellt oder gejault hatte. Ich fragte, weil es mich wirklich interessierte, ich Benben mochte und mich Oskars Leid rührte, und weil ich selbst nichts mehr zu sagen hatte, ich wollte nichts erzählen, ich sehnte mich so verzweifelt nach Marjan, es war so leer ohne ihn, ich war wie ausgehöhlt, wie amputiert, der Schatten neben mir fehlte, seine Hände, sein Blick. Da kam mir der sterbende Hund gerade recht.

Wenn ich müde und wortlos gewesen war und ganz und gar überfordert, war Marjan immer zu mir gekommen und hatte geschwiegen, er war gekommen, und ich war böse und wortlos gewesen, und

er hatte mitgemacht, geschwiegen mit mir, wir waren viele Stunden am Küchentisch gesessen und hatten geschwiegen (das waren noch Zeiten), im Nachhinein vermisste ich jede Minute. Ich hab es nie mehr erlebt, dass mir einer im Schweigen und im Reden so nahe kommt. Und alles erträgt. Mitträgt.

Benben sah uns zu, wenn wir miteinander schliefen, es schien ihn weder zu interessieren noch zu stören, seine Haltung und seine Augen blieben unverändert, ich achtete darauf. Die Vorhänge wollte Oskar nicht schließen, es könnten ruhig die Nachbarn sehen, sagte er, und mir war es egal, ich kannte keinen von ihnen, aber manchmal war ich ein wenig abgelenkt, Oskar bemerkte es nicht. Es schien ihn weder zu interessieren noch zu stören.

Es ist alles so beliebig. Wie Mann und Frau sind, was sie einander sind, einer sucht und findet und glaubt zu lieben, eine andere lässt sich finden und liebt zurück und sie schlafen miteinander, manchmal geht es mit einem, mit einem anderen wieder nicht. Es gibt bessere Liebhaber und schlechtere, und man geniert sich nicht einmal mehr, wenn man nackt ist voreinander, man lacht nicht mehr verlegen, man zieht sich einfach aus und schläft miteinander oder auch nicht, man berührt einander und kommt nicht wirklich bis zur Seele, einer dringt ein, kommt tief, aber nie tief genug. Es sind nur die Körper, die sich öffnen und ineinander vergraben, nur die Körper begehren einander. Das ist nicht viel. Wir sind nicht viel Körper. Die Seele ist hundertmal tiefer. Hundertmal nackter. Viel mehr Berührung und Innigkeit gäbe es, wenn meine Seele einen nahekommen, tief einsickern ließe, wenn ich einen liebte. Ich glaube, ich liebte Marjan einmal.

Benbens Todeskampf zog sich lange hin. Er fraß nur mehr im Liegen und immer aus Oskars Hand, nur kleine Mengen. Die Schmerzmittel halfen. Manchmal nahm ich mir selbst eine Flasche Wein mit, weil ich sonst oft eine Stunde warten musste, bis mir etwas angeboten wurde. Er richtete sich nicht nach mir. Das war mir recht, so konnte ich mich ganz unauffällig aus dem Staub machen, ich lenkte von mir ab, das ist nicht so wichtig, ich bin nicht so wichtig und verzehrte mich nach Marjan, wir sprachen über Benben, und ich fuhr nach Hause, kümmere dich bitte ganz uneingeschränkt um Benben und sag mir morgen, wie es ihm geht und wie die Nacht war, ich fuhr weg und schaute immer, dass ich keine Spuren hinterließ, ging die Wohnung noch einmal durch mit den Blicken, um nichts vergessen zu haben, das ich hätte holen müssen, wenn ich

nicht wieder käme. Ich fuhr nachts allein fort, ohne Spuren hinterlassen zu haben. Einmal weinte ich auf der Fahrt, weil mir einfiel, dass ich noch Socken bei Marjan hatte, er selbst hatte sie für mich gestrickt und mir immer angezogen, wenn ich sein Haus betreten hatte. Ich sehnte mich nach Marjan und hatte so kalte Füße.

Als Benben starb, tröstete ich Oskar. Wir begruben den Hund unter dem Apfelbaum, sogar die drei Nachbarn kamen und warfen gepflückte Blumen in das offene Grab und sahen mich dabei an. Ich küsste den toten Hund Benben auf die knochige kalte Stirn, und ich küsste Oskar. Wir weinten alle. Am nächsten Tag trennte ich mich von Oskar per SMS. Es ist aus, schrieb ich. Er akzeptierte es. September war's.

gozd otroštva

(odlomek iz romana)

marjan

Hrepenenje je zopet vzniknilo, ko me je ljubil naslednji moški, ki mu je bilo ime Oskar in je bil arhitekt. Prvi večer je rekel, da me ljubi in občuduje, bila sem srečna in zdelo se mi je verjetno, da iz tega lahko še kaj nastane, povabila sem ga domov in vseč mi je bilo njegovo toplo telo, v njegovem objemu sem potonila v sen, to nikoli prej ni bilo mogoče, v objemu nisem mogla zaspati, pri njem pa sem, v tej najini prvi noči, in ko sem se za trenutek zbudila in nisem več čutila njegovega telesa, sem prijela njegove roke in jih položila okoli sebe, njegovo toplo telo sem si odela kot plašč. Bilo je lepo. Ganiło me je. Preden je v meni zopet vzniknilo hrepenenje, sem bila manj osamljena kot drugače, veliko sem spraševala in pripovedovala, kar se po navadi sprašuje in pripoveduje, ko se spoznaš, ko se drug drugemu približuješ s široko odprtimi očmi in gestami, dokler se ne zlijejo v eno, pogledi in dlani in telesa, takrat za hip nisem bila osamljena in trudna in to me je veselilo. Oskar je bil ljubezniv in pozoren in znal je dobro pripovedovati in poslušati, pogosto je bil negotov in se je smejal, da bi to prikril. To mi je bilo vseč. Vseč mi je bilo, kako se je odzival name.

Tipal je za menoj kot za črepinjami razbitin. Le s konicami prstov. Na mojem telesu je pustil deset prstnih odtisov. Povsem drugačen smeh, kakršnega še nikoli nisem bila deležna in na katerega sem se lahko odzvala ali ne. Njegove oči so se smejale. Lepo, prijazno bitje.

Oskar mi je pravil Srčece moje, enkrat mi je celo rekel Srčece ljubo, to mi je bilo še posebno vseč.

Imena si lahko mirno izmišljaš in mirno se lahko spoznaš. Izmišljaš si nove besede ali celo nov jezik. Misliš, da je nov jezik, pa je v resnici star, le v novi preobleki in recikliran, besede so vselej iste, ponavljamo jih, samo ponavljamo. Včasih so mogoče naročje ali lasje, kolenska jamica, ali pa oči, dlani ali prsi, včasih je hrbet ali sapica na rami, včasih je sunkovit gib ključnice ali kolka, ko ležiš, spet drugič za ušesom zašepetana skrivnost. Toda besede so iste. Vselej.

Ti si moj okras, mi je rekel in me ponosno prijel za roko, me poljubil, in srečevala sva ljudi, njegove prijatelje, ki so naju prestrezali, ko sva se vzpenjala po veliki gledališki dvorani do devete vrste, pozdravljali smo se, se tikali in klicali po imenih, to sta Robert in Karina s K, oba ugledna pravnik, sem izvedela pozneje, povabila sta naju,

pridita na večerjo, sta rekla, in pretvarjala sem se, da ne mislita mene, kot da ne slišim, s pogledom sem preiskovala deveto vrsto in ljudi, nelagodno mi je bilo, in onadva sta mu rekla, da sem lepa, smeje je pokimal s privzdignjenimi priznavajočimi obrvmi, da je to dobro naredil, in njegov pogled (...), toda takrat sem bila že predaleč, pozdravljala sem in se nasmihala in se prerinila naprej, iskala najina sedeža v deveti vrsti, on se je še pogovarjal, dokler luči niso ugasnile, in nato prišel do sedeža štiri v deveti vrsti in ni bil jezen name, poljubil me je in prijel za roko in rekel, da bi me ob takih trenutkih vselej rad držal za roko, naj mi bo prav ali ne, in jaz sem mu dala roko in bila v zadregi in žalostna, jo spet potegnila k sebi in jo spet dala njemu, sem in tja do konca predstave (katera predstava je bila pravzaprav?). Ko sva odhajala, me je na pragu objel in me poljubil, dišal je po ribah, ljudem sva ovirala izhod, zaletavali so se v naju in se drenjali mimo. Bila sem ohromela in utrujena. Toda držal me je.

In pomislila sem na Marjana, zmeraj je bil kot senca, kot moja senca, sicer poleg mene, a v javnosti se me ni nikoli dotikal, ker tega nisem hotela, en meter razdalje, predstavljal mi je ljudi, ko je v mojem pogledu razbral odobravanje, ali pa molčal, kadar sem kot po navadi hotela mir, in prihajala in odhajala sem sama, nisem hotela, da bi kdo vedel, da se ljubiva, in ljubila sva se in bila sem osamljena in on je bil osamljen in kljub temu sem hotela, da je tako. Dokler sploh nisem več hotela, ker sem se prepogosto počutila osamljeno, verjela sem, da je ljubezen minila, razšla sva se, nikoli več se ne bova videla, sem rekla, vedno si me puščal samo, nikoli me nisi rešil. Veliko sva jokala. Oba.

Oskar je imel psa, gladkodlakega prinašalca, rada sem ga imela, ime mu je bilo Benben in bil je star in bolan in jedel je samo še sveže kuhano, pretlačeno meso z zelenjavnim rižem, Oskar je kuhal za Benbena vsak dan. Ko je še bolj zbolel (celo zelo) in se Oskar ni strinjal s tem, da bi ga dal uspavati, ga je negoval in obiskovala sem oba, kajti Oskar ni več mogel iz hiše. Benbena sem imela rada in žal mi je bilo zanj. Sploh ni imel več obraza, bile so ga samo še kost in koža in oči. Oskar mu je pred gobcem držal pasjo skledo, sicer ni jedel. Benben mu je jedel samo še iz roke. Nisem več ostajala čez noč. Dejala sem, naj se v miru posveti Benbenu, a v resnici sem hotela le proč. Ko je Oskar dvakrat odpovedal sprehod, za katerega sva bila zmenjena in za katerega sem si vzela prosto, in odpovedal večerni koncert, ker Benbena ni hotel pustiti samega, sem zopet začela hrepeneti po Marjanu. Pred tem pa ne, čas pred Oskarjem je bil

brez hrepenenja in prijeten, bila sem samozadostna. Toda nato se je začelo razjedajoče hrepenenje.

Marjan me je tako zelo hotel, ni mogel brez mene, silil je vame, česar nisem prenesla, zdaj pa sem spet hotela prav to, da si me nekdo želi, da sili vame, povsod sem si želela Marjanove roke. Marjan je imel velike dlani. Temne globoke oči. Bilo je na dlani. Da sem pogrešala Marjana, ah, ko bi le ležalo na dlani, ko bi moj obraz ležal na njegovi dlani ali v njegovih dlaneh, ah, ko bi lahko svoj utrujeni obraz položila v njegove hladne dlani, se odpočila v njegovih dlaneh, vdihnila moč iz njegovih dlani v svoje telo, obraz položila v njegove dlani kot v skledico na tehtnici, on bi stehal, koliko tehta moj obraz v njegovih dlaneh, koliko tehta njegovo srce kot protiutež, da sta v ravnovesju. Moj obraz. Njegovo srce. V njegovih dlaneh moj obraz. Da ga ne bo izgubil. Če ne, se bo razbil. Kot njegovo srce. Takrat. (Zaradi mene.) Rabila sem Marjana.

Kadar sem ju obiskala, sva govorila skoraj samo o Benbenu, nič več nisem pripovedovala o sebi, zasliševala sem Oskarja, ki si je tega želel in je podrobno odgovarjal, kako je z Benbenom, katere terapije, katera sredstva proti bolečinam so prijala, kdaj je bruhal in kdaj prebavil, kolikokrat je ponoči zalajal in zatulil. Spraševala sem, ker me je zares zanimalo, rada sem imela Benbena in Oskarjeva žalost me je ganila, in ker sama nisem imela več kaj reči, ničesar več nisem hotela povedati, obupana sem hrepenela po Marjanu, tako prazno je bilo brez njega, kot da bi bila votla, amputirana, manjkala je senca poleg mene, njegove dlani, njegov pogled. Umirajoči pes je prišel kot naročen.

Kadar sem bila utrujena in obnemela in do kraja preobremenjena, je Marjan zmeraj prišel k meni in molčal, prišel je, in jaz sem bila jezna in brez besed, in on je razmišljal, molčal z menoj, dolge ure sva presedela za kuhinjsko mizo in molčala (to so bili časi), zdaj pogrešam vsako minuto. Nikoli več nisem doživela, da bi mi nekdo z molkom in z govorjenjem prišel tako blizu. In čustvoval. Sočustvoval.

Benben naju je gledal, ko sva se ljubila, zdelo se je, da ga niti ne zanima niti ne moti, njegova drža in njegove oči se niso spremenile, to sem opazila. Oskar ni hotel zagrinjati zaves, sosedje naj kar gledajo, je rekel, in meni je bilo vseeno, nikogar od njih nisem poznala, ampak včasih sem bila malce odsotna, Oskar ni opazil. Zdelo se je, da ga niti ne zanima niti ne moti.

Vse je povsem poljubno. Kakšna sta moški in ženska, kaj sta drug drugemu, on išče in najde in verjame, da ljubi, ona se pusti najti in

vrača ljubezen in skupaj spita, včasih s kom gre, s kom drugim pa spet ne. Obstajajo boljši in slabši ljubimci, in človek se svoje golote pred drugimi sploh ne ženira več, nič več ni sramežljivih nasmeškov, preprosto se slečeš in spiš z njim ali pa tudi ne, drug drugega se dotikata, a do duše zares ne prideš, nekdo prodre notri, pride globoko, a ne dovolj globoko. So zgolj telesa, ki se odpirajo in zakopljejo drug v drugega, le telesa si poželijo drug drugega. To ni veliko. Telo je le majhen del nas. Duša je stokrat bolj globoka. Stokrat bolj gola. Bilo bi več dotikov in globine, če bi moja duša komu pustila bliže, pustila, da pronica globlje, in če bi jaz ljubila. Mislim, da sem ljubila Marjana.

Benbenov smrtni boj se je vlekel. Jedel je samo še leže in samo iz Oskarjeve roke, le majhne količine. Sredstva proti bolečinam so pomagala. Včasih sem si tudi sama prinesla steklenico vina, kajti pogosto sem morala čakati eno uro, preden mi je kaj ponudil. Ni se menil zame. To mi je bilo prav, tako sem se lahko povsem neopazno izmikala, preusmerila pozornost proč od sebe, to ni tako važno, jaz nisem tako pomembna, in koprnela sem po Marjanu, govorila sva o Benbenu, in odšla sem domov, prosim, ti se kar povsem posveti Benbenu in mi jutri sporoči, kako mu gre in kakšna je bila noč, odšla sem in vselej pazila, da za seboj nisem pustila kakršne koli sledi, stanovanje sem še enkrat preiskala s pogledom, da ne bi česa pozabila, po kar bi morala v primeru, če se ne bi nikoli več vrnila, nujno priti. Ponoči sem odhajala sama, ne da bi puščala sledi. Nekoč sem se med vožnjo zjokala, ker sem se spomnila, da imam pri Marjanu še nogavice, sam mi jih je spletel in mi jih obul, ko sem vstopila v njegovo hišo. Hrepenela sem po Marjanu in imela tako mrzla stopala.

Ko je Benben umrl, sem tolažila Oskarja. Psa sva pokopala pod jablano, prišli so celo trije sosede in v odprt grob metali cvetje in pri tem gledali mene. Mrtvega psa sem poljubila na koščeno, mrzlo čelo in poljubila sem Oskarja. Vsi smo jokali. Naslednji dan sem ga pustila preko SMS-a. Konec je, sem napisala. Sprejel je. Bil je september.

Prevedla Tina Štrancar

childhood woods

(excerpt from the novel)

marjan

The yearning re-awakened when the next man, Oskar by name and an architect, loved me. On the first night, he said he loved and adored me, and I was happy and thought perhaps something could come of this, and I took him home and liked his warm body, followed his embrace into sleep, something never before possible, I'd never been able to fall asleep with someone's arms around me, but with him, that very first night, I could, and when I briefly awoke and couldn't feel his body, I took his arms and draped them over me, draped his warm body over me like a cloak. That was lovely. Touching. Before my yearning re-awakened, I felt less alone than usual, asked plenty and told plenty, the way people ask and tell when getting to know each other, the way people approach each other with watchful eyes and gestures, before the gazes and the hands and the bodies melt together, and for a little while I didn't feel alone and tired and was pleased. Oskar was sweet and attentive and could talk and listen well, often becoming unsure and laughing to make up for it. I liked that. I liked how he reacted to me.

He reached out for me as if reaching out for shards of something that had broken. Just with the tips of his fingers. He left ten fingerprints on my body. A sort of smile I had never seen, had never been given, never been able to take or leave. He had smiling eyes. A nice, friendly way about him.

Oskar called me My Darling, once he added Dear, and I particularly liked that.

You can calmly go about inventing names and you calmly can go about recognizing each other. You invent new words, even a new language. You believe it to be a new language, but in fact it's the old one, just given a new guise, recycled, still the same old words being repeated, again and again. One time it's perhaps the lap or the hair, the hollow of the knee, or it's the eyes, the hands or the breasts, one time it's the back or it's the breath on a shoulder, one time it's a sway of the collar bone or the hip bone as you lie there, another time it's the secret whispered behind the ear. But the words remain the same. Always.

I was his jewellery, he said, and proudly took me by the hand, kissed me, and we ran into some people, his friends, they intercepted

us as we were counting up to row nine in the theatre's great hall, and there were greetings and we said *Du* and first names to each other, they were called Robert and Karina with a K, both well-known lawyers, I found out later, and they invited us over, come for dinner, they said, and I acted like they didn't mean me, like I hadn't heard, my eyes still looking out for the ninth row and scanning all the people, I felt uncomfortable, and they told him I was lovely, nodded to him smilingly and with raised approving eyebrows, he'd done well for himself, and his gaze (...) but by that time I had already moved ahead, greeting and smiling, had pushed past, searching for our seats in row nine. He was still talking to them when the lights dimmed, and then he came to me in row nine, seat four, and wasn't mad and he kissed me, held my hand, held my hand and said he would always want to hold such a hand, was I ok with that, and I gave him my hand and was embarrassed and sad, took it back again, then gave it back to him, and this to-and-froing went on until the end of the play (which play was it?). As we were leaving, he hugged me in the doorway and kissed me, he smelled like fish, we were blocking the exit for other people, they jostled us as they pushed past. I felt lame and tired. But he held me.

And I thought about Marjan, who was always like a shadow, like my shadow, by my side but never touching me in public, because I didn't want that, off at a distance of one metre, and he'd introduce me to people if he could read consent in my eyes, or keep quiet if I, usually the case, wanted peace, and I would show up alone and leave alone, didn't want anybody to know that we were lovers, were loving each other, and I felt alone and he felt alone, but that's how I wanted it to be. Until I no longer wanted it to be because too often I felt alone, believed the love was gone and I left him, we would no longer see each other, I said, you always left me on my own, you didn't save me. We cried a lot. Both of us.

Oskar had a dog, a Flat-Coated Retriever, I liked him, his name was Benben and he was old and sick and fed freshly-cooked, pureed meat with vegetables, rice, Oskar cooked daily for Benben. When Benben got sicker (very sick in fact) and Oskar wouldn't consent to putting him down, he cared for him and I'd go see the two of them, because Oskar could no longer leave the house. I liked Benben and felt sorry for him. His face was gone, just skin and bones and eyes. Oskar would hold the dog's bowl up to his mouth because otherwise he wouldn't eat. Now Benben would only eat from his hand. I no

longer stayed the night. I said that he should have peace to care for Benben, but in truth I just wanted out of there. When Oskar, twice, cancelled after I'd taken time off for a walk with him, and when he cancelled an evening concert because he didn't want to leave Benben all alone, the yearning for Marjan began again. Not beforehand, the time before Oskar was pleasant and free of yearning, and I was quite content with myself. But then a gnawing yearning began.

Marjan wanted me so much, couldn't do without me, he smothered me, which I couldn't bear, and now I wanted that back, wanted to be wanted, to be smothered, wanted Marjan's hands everywhere. Marjan had large hands. Dark, penetrating eyes. That went without saying. That I missed Marjan, ah, if only that too went without saying, if only my face were resting in his hand or in his hands, ah, if I could rest my tired face in his cool hands, rest up, in his hands, I would breathe the strength from his hands into my body, rest my face in his hands as if on a set of scales, he would weigh it, weigh my face in his hands, how heavy would the counterweight, his heart, have to be to balance things out. My face. His heart. In his hands, my face. So he wouldn't lose it. Otherwise it would break. Like his heart. Back then. (Through me.) I needed Marjan.

Now whenever I'd go to see the two of them, Benben was pretty much all we'd talk about, I never said anything more about myself, I'd quiz Oskar, and he'd reply readily and thoroughly about how Benben was doing, about which therapies, which pain medications, had worked, when he'd vomited, when he'd digested, how many times he'd barked or yowled in the night. I asked because it really did interest me and because I liked Benben and Oskar's suffering was touching, and because I myself didn't have anything more to say, nothing more I wanted to relate, and I yearned so desperately for Marjan, everything was so empty without him, like I was hollowed out, amputated, and I missed the shadow by my side, his hands, his gaze. So the dying dog came in handy for me.

Whenever I was tired and mute and completely overburdened, Marjan would always come by to say nothing, he'd come by and I'd be angry and mute, and he'd join, say nothing with me, we'd sit for hours and hours at the kitchen table and say nothing (those were the days), and in hindsight I miss every minute. Never since have I had anyone come so close to me in silence and in speaking. And bear everything. Co-bear.

Benben watched us whenever we slept together, it seemed neither to interest nor to bother him, his posture and his eyes remained unchanged, I was vigilant. Oskar never wanted to close the curtains, let the neighbours watch, he said, and I didn't care, I didn't know any of them, and though sometimes I was a little distracted Oskar never noticed. It seemed neither to interest nor to bother him.

It's all so random. What man is, what woman is, what they mean to each other. One seeks and finds and believes to be in love, another consents to being found and loves back and they sleep together, and sometimes things work out with one guy, but not with the next. There are better lovers and worse lovers, and you're not even embarrassed anymore about standing naked in front of each other, no more of the embarrassed laughs, you just take off your clothes and sleep with each other or you don't, you touch each other and don't really come to the soul, one penetrates, goes deep, but never deep enough. Just bodies opening up and burying themselves in each other, just bodies desiring. That's not much. Our bodies are not much. The soul is a hundred times deeper. A hundred times more naked. There would be much more touching and intimacy if my soul came close to someone, let itself seep in deeply, if I loved somebody. I believe I once loved Marjan.

Benben's mortal agony went on for a long time. Now he only ate lying down and from Oskar's hand, only tiny portions. The painkillers helped. Sometimes I'd take my own bottle of wine along, because often I'd have to wait an hour before being offered something. Oskar wasn't taking his cues from me. That was fine by me, since this let me get out of there unnoticed, I'd steer his attention away from me, it's not so important, I'm not so important, and I'd be consumed with Marjan, and we'd talk about Benben and I'd drive home, please, now you take really good care of Benben and let me know tomorrow how he's doing and how the night was, and I'd drive away and make sure not to leave any tracks behind, give the apartment another onceover so as not to forget anything that would have to be retrieved if I never came back this way. I'd drive home alone at night, having left no tracks. Once I cried during the drive because I realized that I still had some socks at Marjan's, socks he'd knitted for me and always pulled onto my feet whenever I entered his house. I yearned for Marjan and had such cold feet.

When Benben died, I consoled Oskar. We buried the dog under the apple tree, and even the three neighbours came and threw

flowers into the open grave and were watching me. I kissed Benben, the deceased dog, on his bony, cold forehead, and I kissed Oskar. We all cried. The next day I broke up with Oskar by SMS. It's over, I wrote. He accepted that. It was September.

Translated by Jason Blake



Foto © Verners Kalniņš

Artis Ostups

Artis Ostups se je rodil leta 1988 v Madoni v Latviji. Leta 2013 je magistriral iz filozofije na Latvijski univerzi v Rigi. Je pesnik, literarni kritik in urednik spletne literarne revije *Punctum*. Izdal je dve pesniški zbirki: *Biedrs Sniegs* (Tovariš sneg, 2010), ki je bila nominirana za latvijsko nagrado za književnost »Literatūras gada balva« za najboljši prvenec, in *Fotogrāfija un šķēres* (Fotografija in škarje, 2013). Izid njegove tretje zbirke je predviden za leto 2016. Objavil je tudi številne literarne kritike in prevedel nekaj del Walta Whitmana in Walterja Benjamina. Trenutno živi in dela v Rigi.

Artis Ostups was born in 1988 in Madona, Latvia. He obtained a Master's degree in Philosophy at the University of Latvia in Riga in 2013. He is a poet and literary critic, and current editor of the online literary magazine *Punctum*. He has published two collections of poetry: *Biedrs Sniegs* (Comrade Snow, 2010), which was nominated for the Latvian Annual Prize for Literature "Literatūras gada balva" for the best debut book of the year, and *Fotogrāfija un šķēres* (Photography and Scissors, 2013). His third collection is due to be published in 2016. He has also published many book reviews as well as translations of works by Walt Whitman and Walter Benjamin. He currently lives and works in Riga.

Vasara pie aizas

„Arvien vairāk gaismas,” tu saki, stāvēdama loga zaļajā četrstūrī. Bez skaņas vējš piepūš putnu buras, migla grimst aizā kā caura laiva. Kad paslēpju galvu spilvenā, šķiet, dzirdu visus ciemata modinātājus – mans rīts ir arī miesnieka un priekšsēdētāja rīts, mūsu saule aust satrauktā pīkstoņā, pasaule dzimst ciparnīcā, ielas izripo no sekundes kā rieksts no čaumalas, ko pāršķeļ ar kurpi pret karsto asfaltu. – Kaut visu varētu teikt vienkāršāk – nokļūt nulles punktā vai uz robežas, rakstīt: „Bija grūti bez tevis,” tālāk: „Cik labi, ka atbrauci,” bet tā vietā: „Tu stāvi loga zaļajā četrstūrī; āboli atgādina kristālus,” vai: „Tu atkal aizbrauksi, tava smarža pametīs šo istabu lēni un mokoši kā galvassāpes pēc garas dienas.” Melns suns ienāk mājā no dārza, ceļš virmo savā tukšumā un tveice atver verandās mazas kafejnīcas. „Arvien vairāk.” Bērza rādāmkociņš pieskaras mēnesim, kas, izsūcis nakti, atkāpjas zilgmē. Sienāži tikšķ zālē kā pazaudēti pulksteņi. No aizas nāk putnu saucieni. – „Mūsu laime ir nejauša.”

Aplī

Mēs metām akmeņus – kurš tālāk pāri upei. Dažkārt tie lidoja augstu gaisā, pēc mirkļa nočūkstot lēnajos viļņos kā karstas dzelzs lodes. Citkārt – taisni uz pretējo krastu, kur koki tos pārtvēra ar savām daudzزارu plaukstām, vai tie izšāvās cauri lapotnēm, klusi paziņodami uzvarētāja vārdu. Metot akmeni pār upi, kurā slīdēji uz plostā ar pirātu karogu, tu atceries, kas esi. Ar vienu sviedieni tu pārspēj laiku. Uzrodas aplī vai pārlūst zars. Krastu nesasniegušie akmeņi sēž gultnē kā zvaigznājs. Kā tu domā, vai, apguļoties tiem blakus, var redzēt krēslaino dambi, pa kuru, rokām kabatās, aizsteidzas ļaudis?

Pēc neatkarības atgūšanas

Kad iznācām no baznīcas, vīrs pasta sarkanās dzegas ap mēness apdrupušo ragu pulcējās zvaigznes, skatītas caur nospeķotām brillēm. Mana māte ģērbās melnā filca mētelī – ziema vilka tam šķērsām krītu kā skolēns pār tāfeli. Vēlāk uz guļamistabas sienas es uzzīmēju vārtus, kamēr no skapjaugšas mani vēroja ģipša sievietes biste. Vai tāli skaņas pārsitieni – no dzelzceļa un šosejas – viesa cerības uz citu, plašāku ainavu? Dārzi dega ar kraukļu tumšo, ķērcošo liesmu.

Apolona mehanizētais krūšutēls

Rainera Marijas Rilkes motīvs

– viss pusvārdā paliks, bet reiz kāds rakstīja – manas krūtis ir kā lampa, ko aizdedz skatiens, un tās nudien spīdēja cikādēm par prieku, kad es elpoju kalnu naksnīgās smaržas. Tagad ielplīsis ekrāns – piesnidzis kā pēc smaga belziena – rāda naftā ieķepušu kraukli un liru pārrautiem nerviem, sašvīkātu lapeli, nomestu zālē, un es pats arī kā papīrs – līdz pusei sadedzis, bet acis klusēs kā skābē iemīti augļi. Kas bija mūzika un gaisma, toņi un kaskādes, tagad vārgs čuksts un šķiltavu liesma, lūk, nodziest pēdējās mūzas sejā, pirms viņa nāk un pārgriež –

Dūmu cisternas

Izpūtēju hidra veļ pelēkus, smacīgus mākoņus, kuru mutuļos virmo sniegpuitenis, – tas plīvurs namu iekaisušajām acīm, kas raugās man pakaļ, kad noklīstu, adresi meklējot. Pārāk vāja ir spuldze, kas kā noslēpumaina zivs peld gaitenā dzelmē un apspīd skaitļus virs durvīm. Kādā bārā man blakus sēž puisis, kura pirkstos reiz sprāgusi petarde, un tāpēc arī telpās – dūmu cisternās – viņš nēsā melnu cimdu. Iztrūkstot īkšķim, tas atgādina mazu grābekli, ar ko savākt naudu no lipīgās letes. Ai, pelnu un garlaicības sezona!

Liebestod: post factum

Atraktas, lūk, mūsu mīlošās atliekas: pirksts iekrampējies pirkstā vien skaista motīva dēļ, matu sprādzes mēmās slūžas blakus notrūkušām kājiņām greznotiem vaigiem – lepnā trūdu svīta, kaut tikai atblāzma no zudušā spožuma, un spoguļa pusmēnesī kā ļauns joks pagaist mūsu neizturamie vaibsti, jo samīts tika īsumīšais brīdis, kad krūtīs – no iekšpuses, kā atslēga tumšā istabā – vēl cirtās piedošanas knābis.

Hanzas iela

Stāvēt naktī uz balkona – pa kreisi starp skursteņiem bēguļo mēness, pa labi kāds pāris nozūd Aleksandra vārtos – un vientuļas ārišķības dēļ grozīt pirkstos karafes korķi no dzidra Bohēmijas stikla. Stāvēt kā muižniekam rītasvārkos ainavas priekšā un pat nenojaust, ka šis brīdis, it kā vienīgi *tavs*, pieder pavisam citai dzīvei, kas negaidīti – kā brāzmā ierauta lente – te ievijusies, lai jau pēc mirkļa atgrieztos tumsā. – Kādas šķembas sevī glabā šī pilnīgā forma?

Janāčeka krastmalas logi

Tomam un Laurai

Prāga pirms Ziemassvētkiem. Aizrautīgs gids, par eņģeli pārgērbies, demonstrē spilgti gaismotas namu fasādes, kailus dievus un bruņotus svētos. Tūristi sačukstas zem izplesto spārnu stērbelēm. Es patveros šķērsielā ar apsnigušu katafalku un baznīcas vitrāžu. Betlēmes zvaigzne šūpojas starp sarkanu un zilu; ticība zaudē jebkādu nopietnību. Janāčeka krastmalas logos ģimene pulcējas zem lustras – trūkst tikai liegas mūzikas, kamēr es stāvu lejā uz ietves, aklis no snieputeņa. Un pat nakts tramvajā, kas mani, viegli iereibušu, nes atpakaļ kalnā, nav vietas netraucētām skumjām. Jo vagona dziļumā kāds mizo mandarīnu.

Poletje ob grapi

»Še več svetlobe,« praviš, ko stojiš v zelenem okenskem pravokotniku. Veter neslišno pihlja v jadra ptic, megla se potaplja v sotesko kot luknjast čoln. Kadar skrijem glavo pod blazino, se mi zazdi, da slišim vse budilke v vasi – moje jutro je tudi jutro mesarja in predsednika, naše sonce živčno cvili, medtem ko vzhaja, svet je rojen na številčnici ure, ulice se prikotalijo iz sekund kakor orehi iz lupine, ki jih s čevljem stremo na toplem asfaltu. – Želim si, da bi bilo mogoče s preprostejšimi besedami povedati, da je bila dosežena točka nič ali skrajna točka, da bi bilo mogoče reči: »Tako hudo mi je bilo brez tebe,« ter dodati: »Hvala bogu, da si prišla,« namesto: »Stojiš v zelenem okenskem pravokotniku; jabolka so videti kot kristali,« ali pa: »Spet boš odšla proč, tvoj vonj bo počasi in mučno kot glavobol po dolgem dnevu zapustil to sobo.« Črn pes priteče v hišo z vrta, cesta vibrira v svoji praznini in vročina odpira male kavarnice na verandah. »Še več.« Konica breze se dotakne lune, ki do konca posrka noč in se umakne v modrino. Kobilice tiktakajo v travi kakor izgubljene ure. Iz grape vreščijo ptiči. – »Najina sreča je naključna.«

Krogi

Tekmovali smo, komu uspe najdlje čez reko zalučati kamen. Včasih so kamni zleteli visoko v zrak le zato, da bi se v počasni vodi potopili kakor vroče krogle in zasikali. Včasih pa so prileteli naravnost na drugo stran, kjer so jih ujela drevesa s svojimi številnimi rokami, ali pa so padli v listje in tiho razglasili ime zmagovalca. Kadar vržeš kamen čez reko, po kateri si nekoč plul na splavu s piratsko zastavo, se spomniš, kdo si. Z enim samim metom si premagal čas. Pojavijo se krogi ali pa se zlomi veja. Kamni, ki ne uspejo pasti na drugi breg, ležijo v rečnem koritu kot kakšno ozvezdje. Ali misliš, da bi lahko videl mračen nasip, čez katerega z rokami v žepu hitijo ljudje, če bi se ulegel poleg njih?

Po pridobitvi samostojnosti

Ko smo prišli iz cerkve, so se zvezde, ki smo jih gledali skozi umazana očala, zbirale okoli srpastega meseca, ki se je krušil nad rdečim napuščem pošte. Moja mama je nosila črn polsteni plašč – zima je po njem potegnila s kredo kakor učenec po tabli. Pozneje sem na steni spalnice narisal vrata. Mavčni doprnski kipec ženske me je opazoval z vrha omare. Mar oddaljeni neritmični udarci – ki prihajajo z železnice in avtoceste – dajejo upanje na drugačno, večjo pokrajino? Vrtovi so goreli z vranje črnim krakajočim plamenom.

Mehaniziran Apolonov doprnski kip

po motivu Rainerja Marije Rilkeja

– vse bo ostalo napol izrečeno, toda nekoč je nekdo zapisal – moje prsi so kakor svetilka, ki se jo prižge s pogledom, in res so žarele na veliko veselje škržatov, medtem ko sem vdihaval nočne vonjave gora. Počen zaslon – prekrit s snegom kakor zaradi močnega udarca – prikazuje krokarja, ki se je ujel v nafto, in liro z zlomljenimi živci, počekčan list je vržen v travo, in jaz sem tudi kakor papir – napol pogorel, in moje oči kakor stisnjeno sadje v kislini. Kar je bilo prej glasba in svetloba, toni in kaskade, je zdaj rahel šepet in blag plamen vžigalnika, glej, kako pojema na obrazu zadnje muze, preden pride in odreže –

Rezervoarji dima

Izpušna hidra kotali sive, zadušljive oblake, znotraj katerih utriplje snežni metež – to je tančica za razdražene oči, ki se ozirajo proti meni, medtem ko zaman iščem pravi naslov. Žarnica je prešibka, kakor skrivnostna riba plava v ozadju hodnika in osvetljuje številke nad vrati. V nekem baru zraven mene sedi moški, ki mu je nekoč med prsti počila petarda, zato celo notri – v tem rezervoarju dima – nosi črno rokavico. Nima palca, njegova roka je podobna grabljam, s katerimi grabi denar z lepljivega pulta. Oh, sezona pepela in dolgčasa!

Liebestod: post factum

Glej, izkopali so najine ljube ostanke: en prst se zaradi lepote motiva oklepa drugega, tih kaveljček sponke ob licu, okrašen s polomljenimi nogami – ponosna družčina prahu, četudi je samo odraz izgubljenega sijaja, in v ogledalu, ki spominja na polmesec, najine neznosne poteze na obrazu usahnejo kot kruta šala, kajti mimobežni trenutek je bil pohojen – v notranjosti, kot ključ v temni sobi – prav tedaj, ko je kljun odpuščanja še vedno kljuval.

Hanzeatska ulica

Stati na balkonu ponoči – na levi ubežnica luna, na desni par, ki izginge skozi Aleksandrova vrata – stati in se osamljeno ter bahavo vrteti skupaj z zamaškom brušene steklenice, narejenim iz čistega češkega stekla. Stati kakor plemič v svečani obleki pred pokrajino, ne da bi vedel, da je ta trenutek najbrž samo *tvoj* in pripada popolnoma drugemu življenju, ki se je nepričakovano – kakor trak, podvržen sunkom vetra – razprostrlo tu le zato, da bi se hip pozneje vrnilo v temo. Le kakšne črepinje se skrivajo za to popolno obliko?

Janačkova okna na nabrežju

Tomu in Lauri

Praga pred božičem. V angela oblečen vodič navdušeno kaže osvetljena pročelja zgradb, gole bogove in oborožene svetnike. Turisti si nekaj šepečejo pod resicami razprostrtih peruti. Pobegnem v stransko ulico z zasneženim mrtvaškim odrom in cerkvenim vitražem. Betlehemska zvezda utriplje med rdečo in modro; verovanje izgubi vso resnost. Pri Janačkovih oknih na nabrežju se pod lestenci zbere družina – samo še nežna glasba manjka, ko stojim spodaj na pločniku, zaslepljen od snežnega meteža. In celó ponoči, ko me tramvaj rahlo opitega nosi nazaj po hribu navzgor, ni prostora za mirno žalost. Nekdo zadaj v vagonu lupi mandarino.

Prevedel Klemen Pisk

Summer on the abyss

“Ever more light,” you say standing in the green rectangle of the window. Soundlessly, the wind blows into the sails of birds, fog sinks into the abyss like a leaky boat. When I bury my head in the pillow, I seem to hear all the alarms of the village – I share my morning with the butcher and the chairman, our common sun rises accompanied by excited beeping, the world is born on the clock face, streets roll out of the second like a nut out of its shell when it’s broken by a shoe against the hot pavement. – If only it all could be said simpler – to get to point zero or on the border and write: “It was tough without you” to be followed by: “How good of you to come” but instead: “You are standing in the green rectangle of the window; apples resemble crystals” or: “You will leave again, your scent will abandon this room slowly and painfully, like headache after a long day.” A black dog walks into the house from the garden, the road vibrates in its emptiness and the heat opens small cafés in verandas. “Ever more.” Birch’s pointer touches the moon, which, having sucked the night dry, recedes into the blue. Grasshoppers are ticking in the grass like lost watches. Birdcalls come from the abyss. – “Our luck is accidental.”

Circles

We were throwing stones to see who would make it farthest across the stream. At times they flew high up in the air, only to sink in the slow water like hot iron bullets, with a hiss. At other times they flew straight to the other side where trees caught them with their manifold hands or they darted through the foliage silently announcing the name of the winner. When you throw a stone across a stream in which you floated on a raft under a pirate’s flag, you remember who you are. With a single throw you have conquered time. Circles appear or a branch breaks. The stones that failed to reach across, sit in the riverbed like a constellation. If one lay next to them, could one see the shadowy dike across which, hands in their pockets, people rush? What do you think?

After regaining independence

When we walked out of the church, stars viewed through grimy glasses were gathering round the crumbling crescent of the moon above the red cornice of the post-office. My mother wore a black felt coat – winter dragged its chalk across it like a pupil across a blackboard. Later, on the bedroom wall, I drew a gate while a plaster bust of a woman was watching me from the top of the wardrobe. Did the faraway off-beat – from the railroad and highway – raise hopes for a different, larger landscape? Gardens burned with the ravens' dark, cawing flame.

Mechanized bust of Apollo

After Rainer Maria Rilke

– it will all remain in a word cut short, yet at one time someone wrote – my chest is like a lamp ignited by a glance, and it really did glow for cicadas to enjoy as I was breathing the night-time scents of the mountains. The cracked screen – snowed up as if after a heavy blow – shows a raven stuck in oil and a lyre with broken nerves, a scribbled-on page thrown in the grass, and I too am like paper – half burnt, but my eyes silent like fruit trampled down in acid. What once was music and light, tones and cascades is now a feeble whisper and the flame from a lighter, see, how it fades on the face of the last muse before she comes and cuts –

Smoke cisterns

The exhaust hydra blows gray, suffocating clouds billowing with a blizzard – it is a veil for the reddened eyes of buildings following me when I wander searching for the address. Too weak is the bulb swimming like a mysterious fish in the deep of the corridor and throwing light on the numbers on doors. In a bar, a guy sits next to me, a cracker once detonated in his hand and therefore even inside – in these cisterns of smoke – he wears a black glove. The thumb missing, it resembles a small rake with which to collect money from the sticky counter. Oh, season of ashes and boredom!

Liebestod: post factum

See, they have been dug up, our loving remains: a finger digging into another finger for the sake of a nice motif, the mute sluice of a barrette next to cheeks adorned with broken off legs – the proud coterie of dust, even if it's just a reflection of the lost glory, and in the crescent of the mirror our intolerable features fade like a cruel joke, for the briefer than brief moment was trampled when – on the inside, like a key in a dark room – the beak of forgiveness was still hacking.

Hanza Street

To stand on the balcony at night – to the left, there is the fugitive moon, to the right, a couple disappears through Alexander's Gate – and, in a lonely show-off, to twiddle with the stopper of a carafe made of clear Bohemian glass. To stand like an aristocrat dressed in a robe in front of a landscape, not knowing that this moment, supposedly only *yours*, belongs to a totally different life, which unexpectedly – like a ribbon caught in a gust of wind – has unfurled here to return to darkness a brief moment later. – What kind of shards are hidden by this perfect form?

The Janacek Embankment windows

For Toms and Laura

Prague before Christmas. An enthusiastic guide, dressed as an angel, demonstrates the brightly lit façades, naked gods and armed saints. Tourists whisper among themselves under the tatters of spread wings. I escape to a side street with a snow covered hearse and the stained glass of a church. The star of Bethlehem quivers between red and blue, faith loses all seriousness. In the Janacek Embankment windows, a family gathers under a chandelier – only gentle music is missing while I am standing down on the pavement, blinded by the blizzard. And even in the night tram that takes me, slightly tipsy, back up the mountain, there is no place for undisturbed sadness. For in the depth of the car someone's peeling a tangerine.

Translated by Ieva Lešinska-Geibere



Foto © Ridvan Slivova

Blerina Rogova Gaxha

Blerina Rogova Gaxha se je rodila leta 1982 v Đakovici na Kosovu. Dela kot asistentka za albansko književnost na Univerzi v Đakovici, opravlja doktorski študij na Filološki fakulteti Univerze v Prištini in piše članke in reportaže za nevladno organizacijo BIRN Kosovo. Pred tem je na zasebni šoli poučevala albansko književnost in kot novinarka delala za uredništvo radia BBC. Med letoma 2009 in 2014 je bila urednica rubrike za umetnost in kulturo pri časopisu *Zëri*. Pesnica, esejistka in novinarka je za pesniški prvenec *Gorgonë* (Gorgona, 2009) prejela albansko državno nagrado za najboljšo knjigo leta 2010. Svojo drugo pesniško zbirko z naslovom *Kate* je izdala leta 2013. Njene pesmi in eseji so bili objavljeni v številnih priznanih avstrijskih, nemških, bosanskih in romunskih revijah ter v več antologijah albanske poezije. Leta 2014 je prejela štipendijo Zveznega ministrstva za izobraževanje, umetnosti in kulturo Republike Avstrije in organizacije »KulturKontakt Austria« ter kot rezidenčna pisateljica dva meseca ustvarjala na Dunaju. Blerina Rogova Gaxha je tudi članica Kosovskega centra PEN.

Blerina Rogova Gaxha was born in 1982 in Gjakova, Kosovo. She works as a teaching assistant for Albanian Literature at the University of Gjakova, while pursuing her doctoral studies at the Faculty of Philology at the University of Prishtina and writing columns and for the non-governmental organisation BIRN Kosovo. She used to teach Albanian literature at a private college, and she has worked as a journalist for BBC radio. She edited the arts and culture section of the newspaper *Zëri* between 2009 and 2014. The poet, essayist and journalist received for her first book, the collection of poetry *Gorgonë* (Gorgon, 2009), the Albanian National Prize for the best book of the year 2010. Her second book of poetry, *Kate*, was published in 2013. Her essays and poems have been featured in several renowned Austrian, German, Bosnian, and Romanian literary magazines and in several anthologies of Albanian poetry. She received the "Writers in Residence" programme scholarship offered by the Federal Ministry for Education, the Arts and Culture and the Literary Network "KulturKontakt Austria" in 2014 and attended a two-month literary residence in Vienna. Blerina Rogova Gaxha is also a member of the Kosovo PEN Centre.

N.

N ishte një grua e bukur
Pati dy fëmijë dhe një mashkull që e dhunonte dhe e rrihte përditë
Jetonin në një ndërtesë me qira të lirë
Të vetmin ilaç pati punën dhe bukën për fëmijë
Ai i prekte butë ata. Asaj ia fuste kah ta zinte
Kurvë, mos fol kurvë! Më fal, isha i dehur. Nuk punonte
N nuk fliste kurrë. Shtrëngonte fëmijët
S'e kqyrte asnjëherë në sy mashkullin e saj
Një ditë e rrahu fort pse nuk i bëri gojore
N kish ardhur nga puna bashkë me shafen e shoferin për të marrë një letër
Kurvë, ti qihesh me të tjerë. Kush është ai që po të pret jashtë
Shoferi, ia kthen ajo. Ai i rrah fëmijët dhe atë
N e lut të mos i prek.
Janë edhe të mitë, apo mos janë të atij që po pret jashtë?
I kap dhe i mban skaj dritares së banesës pesëkatëshe
Thuaj se do të martohesh me mua kurvë ose i lëshova
N bërtet e i ngjitet pas shpine për t'i shpëtuar... I lëshon
N ishte një grua e bukur.
Të nesërmen del për ta pastruar gjakun e dy fëmijëve
Pasdite hidhet dhe ajo me një të tretë që mbante në bark

Pijaneci i qytetit të kuq

Ato që ndodhin në rrugë janë historitë e mia, thoshte pijaneci më i popullarizuar në qytet
 Kishte shprehur femrave t'ua prekte sisët e bythët.
 Të gjitha femrat janë të miat! Dua t'i shtrij e t'i dhunoj një nga një, përsëriste sa kalonte pranë
 Kundërmonte raki rrushi, raki ftoi, raki dardhe e turlifarë rakish
 Gjoksin kish me lesh dhe një pallto lëkure mbante gjithë kohës
 Thonin se ish çmendur pas vajzës e cila e la për një tjetër.
 Thonin edhe se dikur ishte i pashëm dhe i zgjuar.
 Njëherë më kapi të dy sisët. Sa turp më erdh! Isha katërmbëdhjetë vjeç
 Kur mbaroi lufta ishte prapë aty. Asgjë s'e kish gjetur.
 Disa thanë se kish kaluar kufirin, disa thanë se kohën e kish çuar në mëhallën e romëve
 Disa thanë se policia e ushtria s'i bënin gjë. Mbase përtonin të vrisnin një pijanecë të zakonshëm
 Edhe në kohë paqeje vazhdoi të prekte sisët e bythët
 Ali quhej. Dashnia e kish luajtur mendsh
 Ajo e kish tradhëtuar, ose ky e kish tradhëtuar atë, kështu diçka
 Ajo që ndodhte në rrugë ishte tortura dhe historia e tij
 Aliu i këndonte dashurisë gjithmonë. Qe njeri me guxim
 Një pasdite e kishin zënë duke ia futur një të sëmure mentale
 Në skaj të një ure, aty ku e dashura e re rrinte zakonisht. Aliu i këndonte dashurisë
 Vdekja e tij u bë lajm në qytetin me më pak se njëqind mijë banorë
 Telalli bërtiste: I çmenduri ka vdekur. Vajzat mund të ecin lirshëm
 Në kohë paqeje s'do i prek më askush. Armiku i fundit vdiq
 Nuk pati ceremoni varrimi. Kush e varrosi o një copë toke ku ia ndan
 Por të gjithë e mbajnë mend në qytetin që s'do të ketë më një Ali të dytë
 Pijanecit që dinte çdo histori rrugësh e që merak kishte
 Sisët e bythët që kalonin nëpër rrugët e tij
 Ato që ndodhin në rrugë janë historitë e mia
 Tapinë e të cilave sigurisht se do ta ketë marrë me vete
 Ky do të duhej të ishte dhunuesi i fundit në qytetin e kuq

E vërteta njëjës

ç'kuptim ka nëse dita është e bukur

A nëse shiun e dëgjon bashkë me hallelujah-n, në kullën e katedrales
Netët janë të bukura e plotë trishtim, por ç'kuptim ka, kur veten
s'mund ta mbash afër

Harresa është e gjatë. Në netë si këto nuk e kam mbajtur
ndonjëherë në krahë.

Në asnjë lloj nate në fakt.

Nëse ka pasur diçka ndërmjet, si mund ta quajë atë?

E kam ndierë, nuk e di ai ç'ndiente. Nuk mbërrita ta kuptoj.

Të ndiesh se dikë e ke humbur përgjithmonë

Nuk arrin më ta kuptosh ndryshimin mes ditëve

E vërteta është njëjës thonë. Të gjitha versionet e saj janë të pavërteta

Si mund ta quajmë të vërtetën mes nesh?

Nëse e vërteta është njëjës, një emër do të duhej të kishte.

Nuk e pyeta asnjëherë kush isha unë për të.

Dhe ai s'pyeti kurrë kush ishte për mua.

Thonë se e bukura është e padukshme, shfaqet papritmas dhe po
ashtu ikë.

A ishte kjo barriera për ne?

Nuk e kam përqaftuar asnjëherë në netët me hënë a në netët me shi.

Sonte qielli është plot yje. Shpirti i tij duhet të jetë diku atje.

Ndoshta mund të më çojë ndonjë shenjë. Vetën s'mund ta mbajë afër.

Sikur vetëm njëherë të mund të ndieje trupin dhe sytë,

Sikur vetëm njëherë të ikje përtej tyre

Dhe të arrish të kuptosh se cila ishte e vërteta njëjës.

Ndoshta e kam dashur. Ndoshta edhe më ka dashur

Por nuk e kam mbajtur ndonjëherë në krahë. Harresa është e gjatë
megjithatë

Në netët si këto nuk arrin ta kuptosh kurrë.

Zi

Të zinj janë sytë e tu
E zezë është këmisha jote
I zi është dheu jonë
E zeza unë-i ziu ti

Un' me tym të zi mushkëritë i mbush

Të zinj janë flokët tu
I zi është numri yt
Dhe muzika që dëgjojmë e zezë është

Sa i zi është malli për ty
Këtu në t'zezën shtëpi
Kur do të perëndojë e zeza

Në mesin e të zhdukurve ishte edhe një njeri¹

Në mesin e trupave të shtrirë ishte edhe një njeri i konsideruar i
zhdukur

Në mesin e tyre u zvarrit për të dalë nga ajo gropë
Në mesin e tyre kuptoi se kryet ia kishin çarë
Sikur të mos ishin veç eshtrat e deformuara që i kishin mbet
Në mesin e tyre e ndiente se mishin ia kishin bërë copë
Në zgavrrat që ia kishin çelë dhe gjakun që i rridhte e ndiente se
nuk do të linte asnjë shenjë
Në mesin e lloj-lloj grupesh gjaku e dinte se gjaku i tij s'do të
kishte më shumë vlerë
Një njeri i konsideruar i zhdukur në mesin e trupave të shtrirë
ishte edhe ky

¹ Dylan Thomas, "Among Those Killed in the Dawn Raid was a Man Aged a Hundred".

Kanceri i shpirtit ballkanik

Ishte viti 1990 kur në shkollë mësonim për kancerin e shpirtit ballkanik
 E përsërisnim vit për vit, me ditë dhe me orë
 Dhe nuk e kishim të qartë cilat shpirtra lëviznin mushkërive të Ballkanit
 Derisa kaluan vitet me nëntëshe
 Dhe faji mbeti në mushkëritë e trupave të palëvizshëm
 Ishte viti 1990 kur mësuesja na e vizatoi në tabelë këtë sëmundje të
 pashërueshme
 Dhe vazhdoi ta bëjë këtë vit për vit
 Në mesin e mijëra pyetjeve

Kishte gjithmonë një përgjigje që mungonte – I kujt ishte ky shpirt
 Ishin vitet me nëntëshe. Loznim duke i vizatuar ato mbrapsht
 Pa e ditur se përgjigjet tona do t'i merrnin me vete trupat e palëvizshëm
 Ishin vitet nëntëdhjetë kur në lëndën e gjuhës shqipe e lakonim
 emrin 'kancer'
 Pa e ditur cilin mbiemër t'i vinim
 Dhe loznim më pas e qeshnim duke i kthyer numrat nëntë në gjashtë
 Duke e imagjinuar vitin e dreqit

N.

N je bila lepotica.

Imela je dva otroka in moškega, ki jo je vsak dan zlorabljal in tepel.

Živel so v poceni najetem stanovanju.

V tolažbo sta ji bila le služba in kruh za otroke.

Do njiju je bil nežen. Njo je pofukal, kadar jo je le lahko.

Ne govori, kuzla! Žal mi je, bil sem pijan. Službe ni imel.

N ni govorila. Tesno je objela svoja otroka.

Nikoli ni pogledala svojega moškega v oči.

Nekoč jo je na mrtvo pretepel, ker mu ga ni potegnila.

N je prišla domov s svojim šefom in šoferjem, da bi vzela dokumente.

Kuzla, kurbaš se z drugimi. Kdo je ta moški, ki te čaka zunaj?

Šofer, je rekla. Pretepel je otroka in njo.

N ga je rotila, naj ne položi roke nadnju.

Moja sta, ali pa sta morda od onega tipa, ki te čaka zunaj?

Zagrabil ju je in ju podržal ob oknu petega nadstropja.

Reci, da se boš poročila z mano, ali pa ju vržem čez.

N je zakričala in ga poskušala potegniti stran, ju rešiti. Vseeno ju je spustil.

N je bila lepotica.

Naslednji dan je šla ven počistit s tal kri svojih dveh otrok.

Popoldne se je vrgla iz petega nadstropja s tretjim, ki ga je nosila pod srcem.

Pijanec iz Rdečega mesta

Na ulicah se godijo moje zgodbe, je govoril najbolj priljubljen pijanec v mestu.

Imel je navado grabiti ženske za joške in riti.

Vse ženske so moje! Polegel jih bom in posilil, eno po eno, je ponavljal, ko je šel mimo.

Smrdel je po slivovici, sadjevcu, hruškovcu in vseh drugih vrstah žganja.

Imel je kosmate prsi in vedno je nosil usnjen plašč,

govorilo se je, da je znorel, ker ga je dekle pustilo zaradi drugega.

Pravijo, da je bil nekoč lep in bister.

Nekoč me je zgrabil za prsi. Tako me je bilo sram! Imela sem štirinajst let.

Ko je bilo vojne konec, je bil še vedno tam. Nič se mu ni zgodilo.

Nekateri so pravili, da je šel čez mejo, in drugi, da je v ciganskem naselju.

Nekateri so povedali, da so ga policaji in vojaki pustili pri miru.

Morda se jim ni dalo ubiti navadne pijandure.

Še v mirnem času je šlatal ženske za joške in riti.

Ime mu je bilo Ali. Zaradi ljubezni je znorel.

Izdala ga je, ali pa je on izdal njo, nekaj takega.

Mučenje in njegova zgodba, to se je godilo na ulici.

Ali je vedno pel o ljubezni. Bil je korajžen moški,

nekega popoldnega so ga dobili natepavati noro dekle

na robu mosta, kjer je živela njegova nova ljubezen. Ali je pel o ljubezni.

Njegova smrt je postala novica v mestu z manj kot sto tisoč prebivalci,

mestni kričač je vpil: Norec je mrtev. Dekleta lahko hodijo brez skrbi,

v mirnem času se jih ne bo nihče dotaknil. Zadnji sovražnik je umrl.

Pogreba ni bilo. Kdo ga je pokopal, kje so mu odstopili kos prsti.

Toda spominjajo se ga, v mestu, kjer ne bo drugega Alija,

pijanca, ki je poznal zgodbe z vsake ulice in imel rad

joške in riti, ki so hodile mimo.

Kar se godi na ulicah, so moje zgodbe.

Zagotovo je volilo svojih zgodb vzel s sabo.

Moral bi biti zadnji posiljevalec v Rdečem mestu.

Resnica je ena

Kaj potem, če je dan lep
ali če lahko prisluhneš dežju skupaj z alelujo v stolpu katedrale.
Noči so tako lepe in polne žalosti, toda kaj potem, če ti ne morem
biti blizu.
Pozabljanje traja. V nočeh, kot je ta, ga nisem nikoli držala v objemu.
V nobenih nočeh, če sem natančna.
Če je bilo kaj vmes, kako naj temu rečem?
Čutila sem, ne vem, kaj sem čutila. Ni mi več jasno.
Čutiti, da si izgubil nekoga za zmeraj.
Potem je težko razumeti razliko med dnevi.
Ena je resnica, pravijo. Vse njene različice neresnične.
Kako lahko poimenujemo resnico med nama?
Če je resnica ena, bi morala imeti ime.
Nikoli ga nisem vprašala, kaj sem mu pomenila.
In nikoli ni vprašal, kaj je bil on meni.
Pravijo, da je lepota nevidna, pojavi se nenadoma in enako hitro zbeži.
Je bila za naju ovira?
Niti enkrat ga nisem objela v noči, polni mesečine ali dežja.
Nocoj je nebo polno zvezd. Njegova duša mora biti nekje tam zgoraj.
Morda bi mi lahko poslal znamenje. Ne morem ti ostati blizu.
Če bi lahko vsaj enkrat začutil telo in oči,
če bi jim lahko le enkrat ubežal
in ugotovil, da je resnica res ena.
Morda sem ga ljubila. Morda me je ljubil.
Toda nikoli ga nisem objela. Pozabljanje je dolgo,
a v nočeh, kot je ta, tega ne moreš razumeti.

Črna

Črne so tvoje oči.
Črna tvoja srajca.
Črna tvoja dežela.
Ubožec ti, ubožica jaz.

Črn dim nama polni pljuča.

Črni so tvoji lasje.
Črna je tvoja številka
in glasba, ki jo poslušava, je črnogleda.

Preplavlja me črna, ko hrepenim po tebi
v tej črni hiši,
ko se črnina konča.

Med pogrešanimi je bil tudi mož¹

Tam, ležeč med trupli, je bil mož, ki je bil pogrešan,
med njimi se je izvlekel iz brezna,
med njimi, vedel je, da bi mu razčesnili lobanjo,
kot da pohabljene kosti, ki so mu jih pustili, niso dovolj,
med njimi je začutil svoje meso, razmesarjeno,
čutil je, da iz zevajoče rane, iz katere je lila kri, ne bo zrasla brazgotina
sredi tolikšne krvi, vedel, da njegova kri nima več pomena,
bil je razglašen za pogrešanega, ležeč med trupli.

¹ Dylan Thomas, »Med ljudmi, ki so bili ubiti pri zračnem napadu, ko se je delal dan, je bil stoleten mož« (prev. Jože Udovič, *Praprotni grič*, CZ, 1965, str. 46).

Rak balkanskega duha

Hodila sem v šolo, ko smo leta 1990 izvedeli za rakotvorni duh Balkana,
potem smo to ponavljali, leto za letom, dneve in ure.

Toda nismo vedeli, kakšen duh polni pljuča Balkana,
dokler niso devetdeseta minila,

in pljuč negibnih teles se je držala krivda.

Bilo je leta 1990, ko nam je učiteljica pokazala preglednico
smrtonosnih bolezni.

In to je počela, leto za letom,

med tisoč vprašanji

je vedno manjkal en odgovor – čigav je ta duh
devetdesetih. Za hec smo ga narisali narobe.

Nismo vedeli, da bodo naše odgovore odnesla negibna telesa.

Bila so devetdeseta, ko smo pri pouku albanščine sklanjali besedo *rak*.

Nismo vedeli, katero ime bi mu najlepše pristajalo.

In smo se hihitali in hecali tako, da smo devetico spremenili v šestko,
in si zamišljali hudičevo leto.

Po angleškem prevodu poslovenila Veronika Dintinjana

N.

N was a beautiful woman
She had two kids and a man who abused and beat her daily
They live in an apartment where the rent was cheap
The only consolation was her job and bread for children
He touched them softly. He fucked her whenever he had a chance
Bitch, don't talk, bitch! I'm sorry, I was drunk. He didn't have a job
N never talked. She was holding her kids tightly
She never looked at her man in the eyes
One day he beat the shit out of her because she didn't give him a
 blowjob
N came home with her boss and a driver to get a paper
Bitch, you are fucking others. Who's the man waiting for you outside?
The driver, she said. He beats the kids and her
N begged him not to touch them.
They are my kids, or maybe they are the children of the guy who
 is waiting outside?
He grabs them and keeps them near a window on the fifth floor
 of the building
Say you'll marry me or I'll push them down
N cries out and tries to pull him back and save them... He drops
 them down
N was a beautiful woman.
The next day she went out to clean the blood of her two kids
In the afternoon she threw herself from the fifth floor with
 the third one she was carrying in her womb.

The Drunkard of the Red City

What's happening on the streets are my stories, used to say the most
popular drunkard in the city
He had a habit of touching women's tits and ass.
All women are mine! I want to lay them down and rape them
one by one, he kept repeating while passing by
He stank of grape brandy, quince brandy, pear brandy and all kinds
of brandies
He had a hairy chest and he wore a leather coat all the time
Rumor has it that he went nuts after a girl who left him for another man.
They say that once he was handsome and smart.
Once he grabbed my tits. I was so ashamed! I was fourteen years old
When the war was over he was still there. Nothing happened to him.
Some said that he had crossed the border and some said that he was
staying in gypsies' quarter
Some said that police and soldiers didn't touch him at all. Perhaps
they were too lazy to kill an ordinary drunkard
Even in peacetime he kept touching women's tits and ass
His name was Ali. Love has driven him mad
She had betrayed him, or he had betrayed her, something like that
What was happening on the streets was the torture and his story
Ali always sang about love. He was a man of courage
In an afternoon they caught him fucking a mentally ill girl
At the edge of a bridge, there where his new love used to stay. Ali sang
about love
His death became news in town with less than one hundred thousand
inhabitants
The town-crier yelled: The madman has died. Girls can walk freely
In peacetime no one will touch them. The last enemy died
There was no funeral. Who buried him or where they gave him a
piece of land
But they all remember him in the city that there won't have another Ali
The drunkard who knew stories of every street and who liked
The tits and ass that were passing through his streets
What's happening on the streets are my stories
For sure the deed of them he took with him
He should be the last rapist in the red city

The Truth is Singular

What's the point if the day is beautiful
Or if you listen to the rain together with the Hallelujah, in the
tower of the cathedral
The nights are so beautiful and full of sadness, but what's the point,
when I can't keep myself close to you
Forgetfulness is long. On nights like these I never held him in my arms.
Nor in any kind of nights, in fact.
If there was anything between, how can I call it?
I felt it, I don't know what he felt. I could not figure out.
To feel that you have lost someone forever
Then it's hard to understand the difference between days
The truth is singular, they say. All its versions are untrue
How can we call the truth between us?
If the truth is singular, it should have a name
I never asked him who I was to him.
And he never asked who he was to me.
They say that beauty is invisible, it appears suddenly and flees
in the same way.
Was it an obstacle for us?
Not even once I hugged him in the moonlight nights or in rainy nights.
Tonight the sky is full of stars. His soul must be somewhere up there.
Perhaps he could send me a sign. I can't keep myself close to you.
If only once you could feel the body and eyes,
If only once you could flee beyond them
And to figure out that the truth is singular.
Perhaps I've loved him. Perhaps he loved me
But I did not ever hold him in my arms. Forgetfulness is long, however,
On nights like these you never understand it.

Black

Black are your eyes
Black is your shirt
Black is our land
Poor me, poor you

Black smoke fills our lungs

Your hair is black
Black is your number
And the music that we listen sounds black

I am overwhelmed in black while I long for you
Here at the black house
When the black will end

Translated by Fadil Bajraj

***Among the missing, there was also a man*¹**

Lying among the bodies, was a man considered missing
Among them, he dragged himself to get out of that pit
Among them, he knew they'd split his skull apart
As if the deformed bones he was left weren't enough
Among them, he felt his flesh chopped into pieces
From the gaping wound, where the blood flowed, he felt no scar
 would linger
Among so much blood, he knew his blood mattered no more,
He was a man considered missing, lying among the bodies

¹ Dylan Thomas, "Among Those Killed in the Dawn Raid was a Man Aged a Hundred".

Cancer of the Balkan spirit

It was in school in 1990 when we learnt about the cancerous
Balkan spirit
We repeated this, year on year, for days and hours
But, we didn't know which spirit filled the Balkan's lungs
Until the nineties passed
And to the lungs of motionless bodies, the fault clung
It was 1990 when the teacher showed us a table of fatal diseases
And she did this, year on year
Among the thousands of questions

There was always one absent answer— whose is this spirit
It was the nineties. We drew it backwards for fun
We didn't know our answers would be taken away by motionless bodies
It was the nineties when we declined the name 'cancer' in Albanian
language class
We didn't know what surname would fit it best
And then, we giggled and made fun by turning the number nine
into six
Imagining the year of the devil

Translated by Alexandra Channer



Foto © Adrian Moser

Christoph Simon

Christoph Simon se je rodil leta 1972 v Emmentalu v Švici. Srednjo šolo je dokončal v Thunu. Po popotovanju po Izraelu, Jordaniji, Egiptu, Poljski, Južni Ameriki, Londonu in New Yorku se je ustalil v Bernu. Po prekinitvi študija jazza leta 1997 se je posvetil pisanju, medtem ko se je preživljal z začasnim delom na pošti in banki. Švicarski pisatelj, pisec slam poezije in kabaretist je svoje prvo delo, roman *Franz oder Warum Antilopen nebeneinander laufen* (Franz ali Zakaj antilope tečejo druga ob drugi), ki je bil prodan v več kot 10.000 izvodih, objavil leta 2001. Med njegova dela sodijo tudi romani *Luna Llena* (2003), *Planet Obrist* (2005), ki je bil nominiran za nagrado Ingeborg Bachmann ter nagrajen z nagrado za književnost kantona Bern (2006), in *Spaziergänger Zbinden* (Sprehajalec Zbinden, 2010), za katerega je prejel nagrado za književnost kantona Bern (2010), zbirka kratkih zgodb *Viel Gutes zum kleinen Preis* (Veliko dobrega za nizko ceno, 2011), knjiga za otroke *Häsin Mels und Hase Fritz* (Zajklja Mels in zajec Fritz, 2008) in zbirka pesmi za otroke *Ein pony in nachbars park, ein rennpferd in meinem* (Poni v sosedovem parku, dirkalni konj v mojem, 2008). Trenutno živi v Bernu in dela kot svobodni pisatelj.

Christoph Simon was born in 1972 in Emmental, Switzerland. He completed his high school education in Thun. After travelling to Israel, Jordan, Egypt, Poland, South America, London and New York, he settled in Bern. After abandoning his jazz studies in 1997, he began to write, while making ends meet by finding temporary employment at a post office and a bank. In 2001, the Swiss writer, slam poet, and cabaret artist published his first work, the novel *Franz oder Warum Antilopen nebeneinander laufen* (Franz or Why Antelopes Run in Herds), which sold over 10 000 copies. His other works include the novels *Luna Llena* (2003), *Planet Obrist* (2005) (which was nominated for the Ingeborg Bachmann Prize and received the Canton of Bern Literature Prize in 2006) and *Spaziergänger Zbinden* (*Zbinden's Progress*, 2010) (for which he won the Bern Literature Prize in 2010), the short story collection *Viel Gutes zum kleinen Preis* (A Lot of Good at a Small Price, 2011), the children's book *Häsin Mels und Hase Fritz* (Mels the Doe and Fritz the Hare, 2008), and the book of poetry for children *Ein pony in nachbars park, ein rennpferd in meinem* (A Pony in the Neighbour's Park and a Race Horse in Mine, 2008). He currently lives and works as a freelance writer in Bern.

Planet Obrist

(Auszug aus dem Roman)

Franz Obrist und MC der Dachs verlassen die Stadt

Mein Name ist Franz Obrist. Früher war ich Kleinstadtbengel, Selbstmörder, Gelegenheitsarbeiter, heute bin ich der Reisebegleiter von MC dem Dachs, morgen bin ich Tagemelker, übermorgen Kastanienbrater und später vielleicht ein biederer Familienvater, eine Luftspiegelung, ein Narrenschatten, irgendetwas Schlichtes, Ruhiges, Schönes.

[...]

Nach Ljubljana

MC grollt mir so ziemlich den ganzen Weg nach Kranjska Gora wegen der lauernden Bären.

„Sie treiben ein hilfloses Tier in den Tod.“

„Sind Sie denn schwächer oder ängstlicher als andere Dachse?“

„Ja.“

Bis ich schließlich zu singen anfangе, *Fressen im Frühling*, weil das sein Lieblingslied ist. Danach stimmt er an: *Als ich einst nach Warschowitz zur Kirchweih mich begab*, weil das mein Lieblingslied ist. Er hat begriffen, dass ich zu seinem Schutz jeden Bären töten werde, der sich uns in den Weg stellt (außer wenn ich entdecken muss, dass der Bär gerade unter einer entsetzlichen Erkältung leidet oder einen Brief von seiner kleinen Tochter aus den Karpaten liest). Am Ende trällern wir unser gemeinsames Lieblingslied *Mica Kovačeva, piva, nič plačala* (Die Mitzi vom Kovač hat, gesoffen und nichts gezahlt), und alles ist wieder gut.

Fressen im Frühling ist ein Lied über einen Mann, der einen Bergkamm nach dem anderen überquert und unaufhörlich verspricht, er werde wieder zu seiner Liebsten ins Dorf zurückkehren. Schlichte Melodie, die sich langsam in die Höhe schraubt.

Touristensaison in Slowenien: Der Triglav Nationalpark (völlig übergrünt) lockt, man sieht Autokennzeichen westlicher Staaten, Menschen auf der Suche nach einem Supermarkt oder einem Lokal mit bodenständiger Atmosphäre. Ungünstiger Wechselkurs in Kranjska Gora. Denke über das Wort Wechselkurs nach. Spreche es so oft vor mich hin, bis mir seine Bedeutung entgleitet. Aus einem

Wohnmobil auf dem Parkplatz vor dem Mercator stürzen plötzlich ein Mann und eine Frau, sie läuft hinter ihm her, wirft ihn zu Boden und fängt an, ihn zu würgen. Umstehende bringen sie auseinander, und ein Mädchen kommt aus dem Wohnmobil gelaufen. Es dauert eine Weile, bis der Mann und die Frau das Mädchen getröstet und wieder in den Wagen gebracht haben.

Beim Versuch, eine neue Variante des Diebstahls anzuwenden, beweise ich gar kein Geschick, außerdem erfordert diese Variante mehr Aufwand an Zeit und birgt die Gefahr, wenig lukrativ zu sein: Ich setze mich im Pri Martinu oder im Pri Žerjavu an die Bar und fange mit einem Triglavtouristen eine Unterhaltung an. Dabei passe ich den Augenblick ab, der mir günstig scheint, um dem Mann sein Geld zu stehlen. Zwei Tage verliere ich auf diese Weise, um nichts weiter davonzutragen als ein bisschen Wechselgeld und ein paar Glas eisgekühltes Bier im Bauch.

Ich staune selbst, dass ich noch ein freier Mann bin. Eigentlich müsste ich schon längst in einer Zelle sitzen. Oder beim Dienst habenden Sozialarbeiter, der mich voller Zartgefühl dorthin einweist, »wo wir Ihnen helfen können«. Irgendwo passt jemand nicht auf.

»Allet klar?«, fragt der Gebirgler in Manchesterknickerbockers vor dem Pri Martinu, den ich an der Bar eben noch ausnehmen wollte. »Allet in Butta?«

»Nee, leere Hose.«

Beim Weggehen öffnet er seine Bauchgurttasche und steckt mir einen Geldschein zu, klein gefaltet.

Auf einer Landstraße aus Teer und Zement nach Ljubljana. Eine abgesicherte Unfallstelle, Rettungsdienst, Polizei. Ein verunglückter PKW wird per Seilwinde aus einer Leitplanke geborgen.

Was hat es für einen Sinn zu gehen, unablässig zu gehen? Fernlaster, Abgase, Motorengedröhn, Unfallstellen, schmerzende Beine. Straßen, Feldwege, Ortschaften, Aufenthalte, Blasen und Druckstellen an den Füßen, Tagesanbrüche und Zufallsbekanntschaften. Wie ein Irrer rede ich mit mir selbst. Vagabund Obrist folgt keinem geraden Weg, übt keinen nützlichen Beruf aus, verbraucht seine Talente. Läuse wird er kriegen, werden sich in die Ringellöckchen seines Schamhaars graben. Habe ständig das Gefühl, als hätte das Leben noch gar nicht richtig angefangen, als würde ich drauf warten, dass es endlich losgeht. Als wäre ich eine DC-9 der Aeroflot und kreiste endlos über Basel-Mulhouse und wartete darauf, dass

ich landen kann, um irgendwelche Leute und Fracht aufzunehmen. Ein Leben von Stunde zu Stunde, wozu ist das gut? Ich brauche Leute, einen Standort, einen Plan. Ich will mich verstricken lassen. Nur das eigene Echo ist auf die Dauer nicht genug.

»Hören Sie auf damit, Herr Obrist.«

»Himmel Arsch, Herr Dachs, ich wollte doch meinen Rekord brechen. Achtzig Schritte, ohne Luft zu holen. Fast hätte ich's geschafft.«

Ein Mann, der Ideen in Wirklichkeit verwandeln kann

Ein Trip nach Ljubljana steht im Prestigewert weit hinter einer Budapest- oder Pragueise zurück, deshalb fahren die meisten nicht hin. Die vielen Cafés und Restaurants am Fluss sind allem andere als überfüllt. Der Fluss, die Ljubljanica, ist ein bisschen wie mein momentanes Innenleben: ganz grün und trübe und voller dunkler Schemen – was mir ausgesprochen gefällt. Wir werden eine Weile in Ljubljana bleiben. Werde mich verstricken lassen. Werde mir eine Arbeit suchen und eine Entscheidung treffen.

»Tief im Innern, wo ich sie nicht sehen kann, bewegen sich die Dinge auf einen Punkt hin, an dem sie zusammentreffen und sichtbar werden, Herr Dachs.«

»Es ist ein großes Entgegenkommen meinerseits, mir diesen Mist anzuhören, Herr Obrist.«

Lasse mir im Hot-Horse im Stadtpark Tivoli eine doppelte Portion Zwiebeln in den Pferdeburger legen. Die Burgerverkäuferin fragt: »Fremd hier?« Was zu einer freundlichen Einladung führt, bei ihr zu übernachten.

Die Verkäuferin heißt Jana, ist klein gewachsen, blond und von einer Rundlichkeit, die bei den Frauen irgendwann wieder Mode werden wird. Ihre Stimme klingt wundervoll. Beruflich gesehen muss Jana noch lernen, dass Leute verhungern, wenn man sie zu lange warten lässt.

»Hör zu, du kannst doch nicht einfach irgendwen von der Straße zu dir mitnehmen. Ich meine, ich könnte weiß Gott was sein, ein Steuerfahnder, ein Irrer ...«

»Nun komm schon rein.«

In Janas Wohnung in der Jesenkova, fünf Minuten von ihrem Burgerstand entfernt. Ich klettere aus der Badewanne von der Größe eines Dachsbaus. Lege mir ein im Pri Martinu entwendetes Handtuch um

die Schultern, trödle mit dem Kamm vor dem Spiegel herum. Mache mich parfümiert und desinfiziert daran, die von Kitzbühel bis Kranjska Gora erworbenen oder aufgelesenen Schätze aus der Umhängetasche zu holen: zwei T-Shirts (JETZT BRAUCHST NO AN MENSCHEN, DER DA EINPASST UND LEGALIZE PRIVATE MURDER, WHY SHOULD THE GOVERNMENT HAVE ALL THE FUN?), eine Flanellhose, Unterzeug und ein halbes Dutzend Paar Socken, ein batteriebetriebenes Transistorradio (aus einer illegalen Müllkippe Ecke Salzach / Gasteiner Tal gerettet), Toilettenartikel, ein Bündel Notizhefte mit volkswissenschaftlichen Eintragungen. Genug Besitztümer, um die Reise in Luxus und Bequemlichkeit fortzusetzen. Denn ich muss die Reise fortsetzen, MC geht als Statthalter nach Damaskus und lädt mich ein, mit ihm zu ziehen.

»Ihre Lügen sind Nägel zu meinem Sarg, Herr Obrist.«

»Dieser Bürgerstand im Tivoli gehört nicht zu einer größeren Kette, die im ganzen Land Niederlassungen hat? Er gehört dir also ganz allein?«, frage ich Jana, während wir Salat und Hamburger essen.

Jana und ich sprechen ein Mischmasch aus Deutsch, Englisch, Slowenisch, letzteres mit höchst mangelhaften Kenntnissen meinerseits. Es ist eine Wohltat zu reden, ich habe eine Menge aufzuholen. Wir reden über das Hot-Horse, über Ljubljana, über die Frage, ob in einen Hamburger Essiggurkenscheiben gehören, reden über uns.

»Vielleicht möchte ich kein Wanderer mehr sein«, sage ich.

»Was kannst du denn so?«

»Artillerieschach.«

»Und was noch?«

»Von Stunde zu Stunde denken und planen.«

Später, mit der Zahnbürste im Mund, fragt Jana: »Bas bögdet du denn bern mal bein?«

Mitten in der Nacht rattern die Seile des Fahrstuhls, in der Nachbarwohnung grölt ein Unbekannter im Schlaf. Die Stimmen der Betrunknen aus den Bars um die Union Brauerei hören sich an wie das Geräusch ermatteter Jäger, die auf Wild aus waren. Nach der Stille der Sternenzelt Nächte in Kärnten und Kranjska Gora ist der nächtliche Stadtlärm beängstigend.

»Was ich gern mal sein möchte, Herr Dachs ...«

»Gemüsebauer? Kamelzüchter? Bürgerstand-Betreiber?«

»Unternehmer im Dienstleistungssektor. Befähigt, das Gute zu tun und das Böse zu verhindern. Was halten Sie von dem Plan?«

»Einen Plan sehe ich zwar nicht, aber ich rate Ihnen, ohne Bedenken loszulegen. Sie sind ein Mann, der Ideen in Wirklichkeit verwandeln kann.«

»Richtig, Herr Dachs.«

Ich hätte im Schlaf gesprochen, behauptet Jana am Morgen, ich hätte eine Riesenschildkröte zu einem Duell herausgefordert. (Der Traum war verdammt gut.) Um ihre Ruhe zu haben, überlässt Jana mir den Schlüssel zu ihrem Materialdepot in Šiška am Trg Prekomorskih Brigad, wo ich auf einer Rosshaarmatratze, zwischen Kisten, überzähligem Grillzubehör und einem Getränkeautomaten, der vor sich hin rostet, auch nicht besser schlafen werde.

Befähigt, das Gute zu tun und das Böse zu verhindern: Die Agentur für gewöhnliche und ungewöhnliche Aufträge – WIR ERLEDIGEN ALLES, WAS MACHBAR, LEGAL UND BEZAHLBAR IST. Je ungewöhnlicher der Auftrag, desto höher die Vorauszahlung. Jemand, der eine kenianische Giraffe für seinen Privatzoo in Maribor haben will, muss sich das etwas kosten lassen – das leuchtet ein. Alles, was ich für den Start benötige, sind ein paar Anzeigen in *Delo Revije*, *Dnevnik*, *Slovenske novice* und *Mladina*, die die Firma gebührend vorstellen, und ein Telefon für die Auftragsannahme.

Jana beglückwünscht mich zu meinem Entschluss, ein paar Monate auf eigene Rechnung zu arbeiten und mich damit etwas unter Menschen zu bringen, bevor ich, die Taschen voller Tolars, weiterziehe. Sicher würde ich mich mit slowenischen Behörden, Bestimmungen, Gesetzen und Verordnungen herumschlagen müssen, meint sie. Sicher fehlten mir am Anfang die detaillierten Sprachkenntnisse, um mit Kunden und Partnern optimal zu verhandeln. Vielleicht würde ich mich über etwaige Konkurrenten informieren und herausfinden müssen, wie deren Angebot preislich und qualitativ sei. Müsste eine Bank überzeugen, um an Kredite zu kommen. Wie ich die Buchhaltung abwickeln, wie ich eventuell anfängliche Durststrecken überwinden würde – alles Fragen, die ich nicht vernachlässigen dürfe.

»Du weißt, wovon du sprichst, wie?«

»Und du brauchst richtige Kleider. Dieser Schlafanzug ...« »Ist ein Trainingsanzug, Jana. So was tragen Milaim Rama und alle Spieler vom FC Thun.«

»Wie auch immer. Du musst respektabel aussehen, wenn du hier Geschäfte machen willst. Mit dem passenden Anzug und ein wenig Glück wirst du bald erfolgreich den eigenen Betrieb führen.«

»Ich trage bestimmt keinen bescheuerten Anzug.«

Schließlich handelt es sich nicht um ein Vorhaben, das die slowenische Wirtschaft verändern, sondern lediglich von meiner Reise-müdigkeit ablenken soll.

Im Schwindel erregenden Fragebogen kreuzt Jana das Feld, das die Herkunft des Bewerbers um den Gewerbeschein anzeigt, mit B an. Sie weist mich auf dieses hin und auf jenes, noch nie habe ich mich so intensiv mit etwas Gedrucktem beschäftigt.

Vor den Gitterschaltern auf dem Einwohneramt unterhalten sich die Schlange stehenden Antragsteller.

»Ich bin Kategorie C, und Sie?«

»Ich bin B.«

»Na, dann müssen Sie aber zum anderen Schalter. Ist denn niemand A?«

»Ich.«

»Sie kommen also nach mir dran.«

Ich warte zwei Wochen. Dann mache ich mich gemeinsam mit dreiundvierzig neuen Gewerbescheinbesitzern in diesem Monat auf, die Gunst der slowenischen Kundschaft zu gewinnen.

Die slowenische Sprache ist leicht und lernt sich mit einem Wörterbuch und einer geduldischen Lehrerin im Handumdrehen. Dober dan: guten Tag; sranje: Scheiße; hvala: danke; avgust: August; tablete za grlo: Halswehtabletten; življenjska nevarnost: Lebensgefahr; vikend: Wochenende; seks: Sex; jazbec: Dachs; jezikovni talent: Sprachbegabung; vstop prost: Eintritt frei; Švicar: Schweizer; astronautski bluz: Astronautenblues; kava z mlekom: Milchkaffee; sreča: Glück; samomorilec: Selbstmörder; Mongolija: Mongolei. Ena, dva, tri, štiri, pet, šest, sedem, osem, devet, so zählen Sloweninnen und Slowenen bis deset. Wir lesen die Straßenschilder, die Namen der Läden, die Inschriften an Bauwerken, sprechen über das Gelesene, die Unterschiede in Aussprache und Verständnis werden deutlich, Jana schüttelt sich vor Lachen.

WIR ERLEDIGEN ALLES, WAS MACHBAR, LEGAL UND BEZAHLBAR IST. Jana hilft mir, die Windschutzscheiben parkender Autos auf Großparkplätzen mit Flyern zu bestücken. Sie lässt mich nicht nur ihr Materialdepot, sondern auch ihr Auto benützen.

»Danke, Jana.«

»Nichts zu danken. Ich mache hier ein Geschäft. Was zahlst du mir an Miete und Benutzungsgebühr?«

»Nichts. Es ist ein Twingo.«

»Was hat denn die Marke damit zu tun?«

»Ein einziges Mal im Leben solltest du dir den Luxus der Unterstützung einer edlen und verlorenen Sache gestatten, Jana.«

Sie lacht, ich muss etwas gesagt haben, was die slowenische Grammatik nicht kennt.

»Ich kriege von jedem Auftrag zwanzig Prozent. Und zum letzten Mal: Wann ziehst du den dämlichen Trainingsanzug aus?«

Auto fahren fällt schwer. Ich habe mich in den letzten Wochen so ans Gehen gewöhnt, dass ich mich unwohl fühle und ungeduldig werde, wenn ich eine Zeit lang nicht gehe.

Planet Obrist

(odlomek iz romana)

Franc Obrist in jazbec MC zapuščata mesto

Ime mi je Franc Obrist. V prejšnjih časih sem bil fantalin na ulicah majhnega mesta, samomorilec, priložnostni delavec, danes spremljam jazbeca MC-ja na njegovi poti, jutri bom molzel krave, pojutrišnjem bom kostanjar in nekoč morda vrl družinski oče, fatamorgana, norčeva senca, nekaj preprostega, mirnega, lepega.

[...]

V Ljubljano

MC se skoraj celo pot proti Kranjski Gori jezi name zaradi medvedov, ki prežijo nanj.

»Medvedi pehajo v smrt nemočne živali.«

»Mar ste Vi šibkejši ali bolj plahi kot drugi jazbeci?«

»Da.«

Končno pričnem peti njegovo najljubšo pesem *Pomladno hranjenje*, nakar zapoje še on mojo najljubšo pesem: *Ko sem se nekoč odpravil na proščenje v Warszovice*. Jasno mu je, da se bom zanj postavil v bran in ubil vsakega medveda, ki nama bo prekrizal pot (razen če bi ugotovil, da je medved grozno prehlajen ali pa da bere pismo svoje male hčerke s Karpatov). Na koncu skupaj popevava najino skupno najljubšo pesem *Mica Kovačeva, piva, nič plačava* in vse je spet dobro.

Pomladno hranjenje je pesem o moškem, ki pleza z vrha na vrh in svoji ljubici nenehno obljublja, da se bo vrnil v vas. Preprosta melodija, ki počasi narašča.

V Sloveniji je turistična sezona: (popolnoma pozeleneli) Triglavski narodni park vabi. Opaziti je registrske tablice zahodnih dežel in ljudi, ki iščejo supermarket ali gostilno z domačim vzdušjem. V Kranjski Gori je menjalni tečaj neugoden. Premišljujem o besedi menjalni tečaj. Besedo izgovarjam toliko časa, da se mi njen pomen izmuzne. Iz avtodoma na parkirišču pred Mercatorjem nenadoma pritečeta moški in ženska. Ona teče za njim, ga vrže na tla in ga prične daviti. Bližnji ljudje ju spravijo narazen in iz avtodoma priteče dekletce. Kar nekaj časa traja, preden moški in ženska pomirita punčko in jo spravita nazaj v avtodom.

Ko poskusim uporabiti novo različico kraje, sem zelo nespreten; poleg tega pa ta različica zahteva več časa in ni tako všečna: Pri Martinu ali Pri Žerjavu sedem k šanku, se pričnem pogovarjati s triglavskim turistom in čakam na ugoden trenutek, ko možu končno lahko ukradem denar. Tako zapravim dva dneva, bogatejši samo za malo drobiža in nekaj kozarcev hladnega piva v želodcu.

Še sam se čudim, da sem še vedno na prostosti. Pravzaprav bi že zdavnaj moral biti za zapahi ali pa pri socialnem delavcu, ki bi me zelo nežno napotil tja, kjer »Vam lahko pomagamo«. Nekje nekdo ni dovolj previden.

»A ste v redu?« vpraša gornik v mančesterskih pumparicah pred gostilno Pri Martinu, ki sem ga še pred kratkim hotel okraati. »Vse ok?«

»Figo je ok.«

Ko odhaja, odpre torbico za pasom in mi da na malo zložen bankovec.

Po podeželski cesti iz katrana in cementa grem v Ljubljano, mimo zavarovanega kraja nesreče, reševalcev in policije. Prevrnjeno vozilo vlečejo z vitlom iz varovalne ograje.

Kakšen smisel ima hoja, kontinuirana hoja? Tovornjaki, izpušni plini, hrup motorjev, kraji nesreč, boleče noge. Ceste, poljske poti, kraji, postanki, žulji in otiščanci na nogah, svitanja in naključna poznanstva. Kot kak norec govorim sam s seboj. Vagabund Obrist ne hodi po ravni poti, ne opravlja nobenega koristnega poklica in ne izkorišča svojih talentov. Dobil bo uši, ki se bodo zarile v kodre njegovih sramnih dlak. Nenehno se mi zdi, da se življenje še ni prav začelo, kot da bi čakal, da se bo končno pričelo. Kot da bi bil DC-9 Aeroflota in bi krožil nad letališčem Basel-Mulhouse ter čakal, da bom končno lahko pristal in pobral neke ljudi in tovor. Življenje iz ure v uro – za kaj je to dobro? Potrebujem ljudi, neko stališče, nek načrt. Rad bi se v kaj zapletel. Dolgoročno sam sebi nisi dovolj.

»Nehajte s tem, gospod Obrist.«

»Sveta nebesa, gospod jazbec, hotel sem podreti svoj rekord. Osemdeset korakov, ne da bi zajel zrak. Skoraj bi mi uspelo.«

Mož, ki zna uresničiti ideje

Izlet v Ljubljano se po prestižu seveda ne more kosati z izletom v Prago ali v Budimpešto, zato večina ljudi tja ne potuje. Množica barov in restavracij ob reki je na pol praznih. Reka Ljubljanica je

nekaj podobnega kot moje trenutno duhovno življenje: čisto zelena in kalna in polna temnih prividov – kar mi je neznansko všeč. Nekaj časa bova ostala v Ljubljani. Poskusil se bom s kom zaplesti. Poiskal si bom delo in se za nekaj odločil.

»Globoko v notranjosti, kjer jih ne morem videti, se premikajo stvari k neki točki, na kateri se srečajo in postanejo vidne, gospod jazbec.«

»Zelo ljubezniv sem, ker poslušam te neumnosti, gospod Obrist.«

V Hot-horsu v Tivoliju prosim konjski burger z dvojno porcijo čebule. Vprašanju prodajalke burgerjev: »Vi pa niste od tu?« sledi prijazno povabilo, da lahko prespim pri njej.

Prodajalki je ime Jana. Je majhna svetlolaska in ima okroglo postavo, ki bo pri ženskah nekoč spet postala moderna, in čudovit glas. Poklicno se mora Jana še naučiti, da ljudje umrejo od lakote, če jih pustiš predolgo čakati.

»Poslušaj, saj vendar ne moreš kar nekoga pobrati z ulice in ga peljati k sebi domov. Saj bi lahko bil ne vem kaj, kakšen davčni inšpektor, norec ...«

»No, pridi že noter.«

Sva v Janinem stanovanju na Jesenkovi, ki je pet minut oddaljena od njenega kioska za prodajo burgerjev. Splezam iz banje, ki ni večja od jazbine. Okrog ramen si ovijem brisačo, ki sem jo izmaknil Pri Martinu, in z glavnikom postopam pred ogledalom. Ves nadišavljen in dezinficiran jemljem iz torbe zaklade, ki sem jih dobil ali pobral na poti od Kitzbühla do Kranjske Gore: dve majici (SEDAJ POTREBUJEMO SAMO ŠE USTREZNO VSEBINO in LEGALIZE PRIVATE MURDER. WHY SHOULD THE GOVERNMENT HAVE ALL THE FUN?), flanelaste hlače, spodnje perilo in pol ducata parov nogavic, tranzistor na baterije (ki sem ga rešil z ilegalnega smetišča na stičišču dolin Salzach in Gastein), toaletne potreščine, sveženj notesov z etnografskimi zapisi – dovolj lastnine, da bi potovanje nadaljeval luksuzno in udobno, kajti moram naprej. MC gre kot upravitelj dežele v Damask in me je povabil s seboj.

»Vaše laži so žebliji v mojo krsto, gospod Obrist.«

»Se pravi, da ta kiosk z burgerji v Tivoliju ne sodi k večji verigi kioskov, ki imajo izpostave po vsej deželi? Je torej čisto tvoj?« sprašujem Jano, medtem ko jeva solato in burger.

Z Jano govoriva nek mišmaš iz nemščine, angleščine in slovenščine – slednjo seveda z mojim skrajno pomanjkljivim znanjem.

Pogovarjati se je prav blagodejno, saj moram veliko nadoknaditi. Pogovarjava se o Hot-horsu, o Ljubljani, o vprašanju, če v burger sodijo rezine kislih kumaric, pogovarjava se o naju.

»Mogoče več ne bi želel biti popotnik,« pravim.

»Kaj pa obvladaš?«

»Hitropotezni šah.«

»In kaj še?«

»Razmišljati in načrtovati od ure do ure.«

Pozneje Jana z zobno krtačko v ustih vpraša: »Kaj pa bi nekoč rad postal?«

Sredi noči drdrajo vrvi dvigala, v sosednjem stanovanju pa neznanec rjove v spanju. Glasovi pijancev iz barov okrog pivovarne Union so slišati kot hropenje onemoglih lovcev, ki so lovili divjad. Po tišini šotorskih noči pod zvezdami na Koroškem in v Kranjski Gori je mestni nočni hrup zastrašujoč.

»Nekoč bi rad postal, gospod jazbec, ...«

»Pridelovalec zelenjave? Rejec kamel? Lastnik kioska z burgerji?«

»Podjetnik v storitveni dejavnosti; usposobljen za to, da delaš dobro in preprečuješ slabo. Kaj menite o tem načrtu?«

»Sicer ne vidim nobenega načrta, toda svetujem vam, da nemudoma pričnete z delom. Ste mož, ki zna uresničiti ideje.«

»Pravilno, gospod jazbec.«

Jana zjutraj trdi, da sem v spanju govoril. Pravi, da sem izzval na dvoboj želvo velikanko. (Sanje so bile presneto dobre.) Da bi spet imela svoj mir, mi Jana da ključ od svojega skladišča na Trgu Prekomorskih brigad v Šiški, kjer na žimnici iz konjske dlake, med škatlami, odvečnim priborom za peko na žaru in rjavečim avtomatom za pijačo ne bom spal nič bolje.

Znamo delati dobro in preprečevati slabo: Agentura za običajne in neobičajne naloge – OPRAVLJAMO VSE, KAR SE DA OPRAVITI, KAR JE LEGALNO IN PLAČLJIVO. Kolikor bolj neobičajno je naročilo, toliko višje je predplačilo. Nekdo, ki bi rad v svojem privatnem živalskem vrtu v Mariboru imel kenijsko žirafa, pač ne sme skopariti – to je jasno. Vse, kar potrebujem za začetek, je nekaj oglasov v *Delu Revije*, v *Dnevniku*, v *Slovenskih novicah* in v *Mladini*, ki bodo primerno predstavili firmo, in telefon, da bom lahko sprejemal naročila.

Jana mi čestita za odločitev, da bom nekaj mesecev delal na lasten račun in da bom na tak način spoznaval nove ljudi, preden se bom s polnimi žepi tolarjev odpravil naprej. Seveda se bom moral ubadati

s slovenskimi upravnimi organi, določili, zakoni in predpisi, pravi Jana. Na začetku se s strankami in partnerji ne bom optimalno dogovarjal, ker ne znam slovensko. Morda bi se moral pozanimati o eventualnih konkurentih in ugotoviti, kakšne cene imajo in kako kvalitetna je njihova ponudba. Moral bi prepričati banko, da mi bo dala kredit. Kako bom imel urejeno knjigovodstvo, kako bom premostil morebitno začetno sušno obdobje – vse to so vprašanja, ki jih po njenem mnenju ne smem zanemariti.

»Saj veš, o čem govoriš, mar ne?«

»In pravo obleko potrebuješ. Ta pižama ...«

»Jana, to je trenirka. Tako nosijo Milaim Rama in vsi igralci NK Thun.«

»Me ne zanima. Če želiš tukaj sklepati posle, moraš izgledati ugledno. S primerno obleko in nekaj sreče boš kmalu uspešno vodil lastno podjetje.«

»Gotovo ne bom nosil nobene butaste obleke.«

Končno ne gre za projekt, ki naj bi spremenil slovensko gospodarstvo, ampak bi me naj samo zamotil, da ne bi čutil utrujenosti od potovanja.

Jana v vrtoglavem vprašalniku na mestu, kjer je treba navesti izvor prosilca za obrtno dovoljenje, označi B. Opozarja me na to in ono – še nikoli se nisem tako intenzivno ukvarjal s tiskovino.

Pred zamreženimi okenci na upravni enoti se prosilci v dolgi vrsti zabavajo.

»Jaz sem kategorija C, pa Vi?«

»Jaz sem B.«

»Potem morate pa k drugemu okencu. Mar ni nihče A?«

»Jaz sem A.«

»Vi ste torej na vrsti za mano.«

Čakam dva tedna. Potem se s triinštiridesetimi drugimi novopečenimi lastniki obrtnega dovoljenja v tem mesecu odpravim iskat naklonjenost slovenskih strank.

Slovenski jezik je lahek in se ga s slovarjem in s potrpežljivo učiteljico naučiš, kot bi mignil.

Guten Tag: dober dan; Scheiße: sranje; danke: hvala; August: avgust; Halswehtabletten: tablete za grlo; Lebensgefahr: življenjska nevarnost; Wochenende: vikend; Sex: seks; Dachs: jazbec; Sprachbegabung: jezikovni talent; Eintritt frei: vstop prost; Schweizer: Švicar; Astronautenblues: astronavtski bluz; Milchkaffee: kava z mlekom;

Glück: sreča; Selbstmörder: samomorilec; Mongolei: Mongolija. Ena, dva, tri, štiri, pet, šest, sedem, osem, devet, tako Slovenci štejejo do deset. Bereva obcestne napise, imena trgovin, napise na zgradbah, se pogovarjava o prebranem – očitne postajajo razlike v izgovoru in razumevanju. Jana se trese od smeha.

OPRAVLJAMO VSE, KAR SE DA OPRAVITI, KAR JE LEGALNO IN PLAČLJIVO. Jana mi pomaga za brisalce avtomobilov na velikih parkiriščih zatikati letake. Razen svojega depoja mi dovoli uporabljati tudi svoj avto.

»Hvala, Jana.«

»Ni za kaj. Delam posel. Koliko mi boš plačal za najemnino in za stroške?«

»Nič. Saj imaš vendar Twinga.«

»Kaj pa ima znamka opraviti s tem?«

»Enkrat samkrat v življenju si moraš privoščiti luksuz, da podpiraš plemenito in izgubljeno zadevo, Jana.«

Jana se smeje. Gotovo sem rekel nekaj, česar slovenska slovnica ne pozna.

»Od vsakega naročila dobim 20 %. In še zadnjič: kdaj boš končno slekel to butasto trenirko?«

Težko mi je voziti avto. V zadnjih tednih sem se tako navadil na hojo, da se počutim slabo in postanem nestrpen, če nekaj časa ne hodim.

Prevedla Vesna Kondrič Horvat

Planet Obrist

(excerpt from the novel)

Franz Obrist and MC the Badger leave town

My name is Franz Obrist. I used to be a small town punk, a suicider, a doer of odd jobs, but today I'm the travel companion of MC the badger, tomorrow a day-milker, the day after tomorrow a chestnut-roaster and later perhaps a regular old father, a mirage, a fool's shadow, something simple, calm, beautiful.

[...]

To Ljubljana

MC grumbles at me pretty much the whole way to Kranjska Gora because of the bears waiting to ambush him.

"They drive a helpless animal to its death."

"So you're frailer or more frightened than other badgers?"

"Yes."

This grumbling finally stops when I begin to sing *Fressen im Frühling*, since that's his favourite song. Then he starts up with *Als ich einst nach Warschowitz zur Kirchweih mich begab*, since that's my favourite song. He has realized that to protect him I'd kill any bear that crossed our path (unless I were to discover that the bear happened to be suffering from a terrible cold or was reading a letter from his little daughter over in the Carpathians). In the end we warble our collective favourite song, *Mica Kovačeva, piva, nič plačala* (the smith's Mitza has drunk plenty but not paid), and everything is good again.

Fressen im Frühling is a song about a man who crosses one mountain ridge after another and constantly promises that he'll return to his sweetheart in the village. A simple melody that gradually cranks itself up.

Tourist season in Slovenia: Triglav National Park (green as green can be) beckons. You see license plates from Western countries, people in search of a supermarket or a restaurant with a native ambience. Unfavourable exchange rates in Kranjska Gora. I think about the phrase *exchange rate*. I say it to myself again and again, until its meaning slips away from me. In the parking lot in front of Mercator a man and a woman suddenly burst out of a camper, she in pursuit;

she throws him to the ground and sets to throttling him. Bystanders separate them and a little girl comes running out of the camper. It's some time before the man and the woman can calm the girl down and get her back into the van.

When I try to implement a new theft variant, I'm clumsy, and in any case the variant demands more time and effort and doesn't promise to be particularly lucrative: I sit down at the bar in Pri Martinu or Pri Žerjavu and strike up a conversation with a Triglav-tourist. While doing this I watch out for the right moment to steal his money. I lose two days to this technique, getting nothing more out of it than a bit of change and a few glasses of ice-cold beer in the belly.

I myself am amazed that I'm still a free man. Strictly speaking, I should long since be sitting in a cell. Or with an on-duty social worker who, full of tenderness, directs me to "somewhere where we can help you." Somewhere someone's not paying attention.

"How goes it?" asks a mountain man in corduroy knickerbockers, the man I'd just wanted to rip off in front of Pri Martinu. "Everything good?"

"Nope. Empty pockets."

As he leaves, he opens his fanny pack and hands me a bank note, folded up small.

To Ljubljana on a country road of tar and cement. A cordoned-off accident scene, rescue teams, the police. A smashed-up car is being winched away from a guardrail.

What's the point of walking, walking incessantly. Trucks, exhaust fumes, raging motors, accident sites, aching legs. Streets, dirt roads, towns, abodes, blistered and tender feet, dawns and random acquaintances. Like a madman I talk to myself. Vagabond Obrist does not follow the straight-and-narrow, does not practice a useful profession, does not put his talents to use. He'll get lice, they'll dig into the little locks of his pubic hair. I constantly feel like life hasn't really gotten started, like I'm waiting for it to finally get going. Like I'm an Aeroflot DC-9, endlessly circling over Basel-Mulhouse and waiting for permission to land and pick up some people and cargo. A life from hour to hour, what is it good for? I need people, a stead, a plan. I want to be entangled in something. Over the long haul a solitary echo doesn't cut it.

"Give it a rest, Mr. Obrist."

“Damn it, Mr. Badger, I was going for a new record. Eighty steps without taking a breath. I almost made it.”

A man who can transform ideas into reality

A trip to Ljubljana ranks far below Budapest or Prague on the prestige scale, which is why most people don't go there. All those cafés and restaurants by the river sit half-empty. The river, the Ljubljanica, is not unlike my inner life at the moment: all green and cloudy and full of dark schemes – which pleases me very much. We'll stay a while in Ljubljana. I'll let myself get entangled. I'll look for a job and make a decision.

“Deep inside, where I cannot see, things are moving towards a point where they will converge and become visible, Mr. Badger.”

“It is a great act of kindness for me to listen to this shit, Mr. Obrist.”

In Hot-Horse in Tivoli City Park I have a double portion of onions put on my horse burger. The woman selling the burgers says, “You a stranger here?” and this leads to a friendly invitation to spend the night with her.

Her name is Jana, she's petite, blond and of a plumpness that sooner or later will once again become fashionable among women. Her voice sounds marvellous. In her professional life, Jana still has to learn that people starve if you make them wait in line too long.

“Listen, you can't just take anyone off the street back to your place. I mean, I could be God knows what, a tax inspector, a madman...”

“Come on, just get in here.”

Jana's apartment in Jesenkova, five minutes away from her burger stand. I climb out of the bathtub the size of a badger's sett. Around my shoulder I drape a towel stolen from Pri Martinu, dawdle in front of the mirror and comb my hair. Perfumed and disinfected, I begin extracting treasures I've acquisitioned or picked up between Kitzbühel and Kranjska Gora: two t-shirts (NOW WE JUST NEED THE PEOPLE TO MAKE IT HAPPEN and LEGALIZE PRIVATE MURDER. WHY SHOULD THE GOVERNMENT HAVE ALL THE FUN?), a pair of flannels, underpants and half a dozen pairs of socks, a battery-powered transistor radio (rescued from an illegal dump in the Salzach/Gastein Valley), toiletries, a

bunch of notebooks with ethnographic entries. Enough belongings to continue the journey in luxury and comfort. For I must continue the journey. MC is going to be governor in Damascus and has invited me to go along.

“Your lies are nails in my coffin, Mr. Obrist.”

“That burger stand in Tivoli doesn’t belong to some big chain with branches all over the country, does it? It’s entirely yours?” I ask Jana over a salad and hamburger.

Jana and I speak a mishmash of German, English, Slovenian, the last with entirely insufficient skill in my case. Talking is a relief. There’s much I have to catch up on. We talk about Hot-Horse, about Ljubljana, about the question of whether pickle slices belong in a hamburger, and we talk about us.

“Perhaps I no longer wish to be a wanderer,” I say.

“What are you good at?”

“Speed chess.”

“And what else?”

“Thinking and planning from hour to hour.”

Later, her toothbrush in her mouth, Jana asks: “Wha-i-i-you-like-oo-oo?”

In the middle of the night the elevator cables rattle, and in the next apartment a stranger bellows in his sleep. The voices of the drunks from the bars around the Union Brewery sound like the wheezing of exhausted hunters back from chasing wild game. After the silence of the starry nights in Carinthia and Kranjska Gora the noise of the city is spooky.

“What I’d like to be, Mr. Badger...”

“Vegetable farmer? Camel-breeder? Owner of a burger stand?”

“Service sector entrepreneur. Capable of doing the good and preventing the bad. What do you think of the plan?”

“I don’t actually see a plan, but I recommend that you start with no further ado. You’re a man who can transform ideas into reality.”

“That’s right, Mr. Badger.”

In the morning Jana claims that I was talking in my sleep, that I had challenged a giant turtle to a duel. (It was a damned good dream.) In order to get some peace, Jana leaves me the key to her storage room in Šiška on Trg Prekomorskih Brigad, where I sleep on a horsehair mattress, among boxes, surplus barbecue tools and a rusty old drink machine. I don’t sleep any better.

Capable of doing the good and preventing the bad: The agency for common and uncommon jobs – WE HANDLE EVERYTHING THAT IS DOABLE, LEGAL AND PAYABLE. The more uncommon the job, the higher the pre-payment. Someone who wants a Kenyan giraffe for his private zoo in Maribor has to be willing to foot the bill – goes without saying. All I need to get started is a few ads in *Delo's* magazines, *Dnevnik*, *Slovenske novice* and *Mladina* duly introducing the company, and a telephone for taking orders.

Jana wishes me luck on my resolution to work for a few months at my own expense and getting out among the people before I, my pockets full of Tolars, move on. Sure, I'd have to wrestle with the Slovenian authorities, regulations, laws and more regulations, she said. Sure, at first I wouldn't have the specific language skills for optimally dealing with customers and partners. Perhaps I'd have to find out from competitors what they offered in terms of price and quality. I'd have to convince a bank to give me some credit. How would I do the bookkeeping? How would I get through the initial dry spells? These were all questions I couldn't neglect.

"You know what you're talking about, no?"

"And you need some proper clothes. These pyjamas..."

"It's a tracksuit, Jana. This is what Milaim Rama and all the players on FC Thun wear."

"Whatever. You'll have to look respectable if you want to do business here. With the right suit and a little luck soon you'll be running your own thriving business."

"There's no way I'm wearing some ridiculous suit."

After all, the intention was not to transform the Slovenian economy. This was a mere distraction from my travel fatigue.

On a dizzying questionnaire displaying the origins of the candidate for a business license Jana ticks a box marked B. She points to this and that. Never have I occupied myself so intensively with printed matter.

In front of the counter and grille at the Residents' Registration Office the applicants chat as they wait in line.

"I'm category C, you?"

"I'm B."

"Well, then you have to go to another counter. Isn't anybody A?"

"I am."

"You're right after me then."

I wait for two weeks. Then I, along with this month's forty-three other new business license owners, set out to win the favour of Slovenian customers.

Slovenian is an easy language and can be learned in a jiffy with a dictionary and patient teacher. Dober dan: good day; sranje: shit; hvala: thank you; avgust: August; tablete za grlo: throat lozenges; življenjska nevarnost: life-threatening danger; vikend: weekend; seks: sex; jazbec: badger; jezikovni talent: linguistic talent; vstop prost: free entry; Švicar: a Swiss; astronavtski bluz: astronaut blues; kava z mlekom: coffee with milk; sreča: luck; samomorilec: a suicider; Mongolija: Mongolia. Ena, dva, tri, štiri, pet, šest, sedem, osem, devet is how Slovenian men and women count to devet. We read street signs, the names of shops, the inscriptions on buildings, talk about what has been read, the differences in pronunciation and comprehension become clear, and Jana shakes with laughter.

WE HANDLE EVERYTHING THAT IS DOABLE, LEGAL AND PAYABLE. Jana helps me place the flyers under the wind-shield wipers of cars parked at the big lots. She lets me use not only her storage room but also her car.

"Thank you, Jana."

"There's nothing to thank me for. I'm doing business here. How much are you going to pay me in rent and service charges?"

"Nothing. It's a Renault Twingo."

"What does the model have to do with it?"

"Just once in your life you should allow yourself the luxury of supporting a noble and lost cause, Jana."

She laughs. I must have said something that's alien to Slovenian grammar.

"I get twenty per cent from each job. And, for the last time: When are finally going to lose that stupid tracksuit?"

Driving is difficult. I've gotten so used to walking these past weeks that I don't feel right, and I get impatient when I haven't walked for a while.

Translated by Jason Blake

Gostje
Vilenice 2015

Vilenica

Guests 2015



Órfhlaith Foyle

Órfhlaith Foyle se je rodila irskim staršem v Adaziju v Vzhodni Nigeriji. Preden se je preselila v Avstralijo, kjer je diplomirala iz družboslovnih študij, je živela v Keniji in Malaviju. Potovala je po Rusiji in Izraelu in dve leti poučevala tudi v londonski četrti East End, nato se je preselila na Irsko, kjer je postala svobodna novinarka in urednica lokalnega časopisa. Živi v Galwayu. Piše romane, poezijo in kratko prozo. Njen prvi roman *Belios* je izšel leta 2005. Prvo pesniško zbirko *Red Riding Hood's Dilemma* (Zagata Rdeče kapice), ki je bila nominirana za nagrado »Rupert and Eithne Strong Award« (2011), je izdala leta 2010. Njen kratkoprozni prvenec *Somewhere in Minnesota* (Nekje v Minnesoti) je izšel leta 2011. Naslovna zgodba omenjene zbirke je bila prvič objavljena v antologiji *New Irish Short Stories* (Nove irske kratke zgodbe, 2011). Njena druga in obnem najnovejša zbirka kratkih zgodb *Clemency Browne Dreams of Gin* (Clemency Browne sanja o džinu) je izšla leta 2014. Avtoričina besedila so bila objavljena v različnih literarnih revijah, med drugim v *The Stinging Fly*, *The Dublin Review*, *The Manchester Review*, *New Irish Writing* in *Wales Arts Review*.

Órfhlaith Foyle was born in Adazi, Eastern Nigeria to Irish parents. She lived in Kenya and Malawi before emigrating to Australia, where she received a Bachelor of Humanities. She travelled to Russia and Israel and also taught in London's East End for two years before moving to Ireland to work as a freelance journalist and as editor of a community magazine. She lives in Galway. She is a novelist, poet and short-story writer. Her first novel, *Belios*, was published in 2005. Her first full collection of poetry, *Red Riding Hood's Dilemma*, was published in 2010 and short-listed for the Rupert and Eithne Strong Award in 2011. Her debut short fiction collection, *Somewhere in Minnesota*, was published in 2011. The title story of the volume was first published in the anthology *New Irish Short Stories* (2011). Her second and most recent short story collection, *Clemency Browne Dreams of Gin*, was published 2014. Her work has also been featured in various literary magazines such as *The Stinging Fly*, *The Dublin Review*, *The Manchester Review*, *New Irish Writing*, and in *Wales Arts Review*.

Husk

I have written a number of letters to my brother. I have asked him to ask my husband to allow me home. The letters come back to me unopened, but I still go down to the privy, and I cough up bits of bread and blood and oatmeal and I press my womb against the privy wall because there cannot be a baby in me. My husband would not want a baby in me.

Mr Olson comes at night. He wears his moustache thick. His suit is yellow with brown threads. The Shit-Colour Man, old Katie calls him. She squats on her bed and squawks down, "Hey there Mr Shit-Colour Man, which one of us is for you tonight?"

Katie tells me that she is fifty but she looks older. The food here is slowly killing her, she says. When she opens her mouth to laugh I can see where the tip of her tongue has been snipped into two pieces, like a snake's. Some men did that to her. They said she talked too much. They said they'd fix her tongue good.

Katie had a life before here. She lived in Morgantown and she had petticoats with tiny gold ribbons that her lover unloosed through his fingers.

I'm here my love, she croons to him in her sleep.

Mr Olson sits on my bed some nights. He says I am a good woman. I don't believe him. If I was good or even if I pretended to be good, I would not be here. I would have my children. I would have my husband.

Mr Olson says my mind is like a dark room and he is just trying to light it up for me.

Katie says Mr Olson tells that story to everyone.

Mr Olson has three children. Sometimes they come to the asylum and look at us. They prefer the ones who are madder than I am. The ones who don't wash and the ones who scoot naked on the ground like monkeys, and trail their female blood so that Mr Olson's children giggle and dance.

Once I touched Mr Olson's youngest boy. He was barely six. When he looked at me, I thought his blue eyes turned like wheels inside his head. They had grey spokes. They turned and I screamed.

Men beat me after that.

Mr Olson told me to braid my hair. He said I looked neater that way. He meant saner. He told me to sit next to a window and read a book.

I read Washington Irving. Kate sat at my feet and chewed the hem of my new dress. Mr Olson appreciated this tableau. He said it had pathos and a shiver of gore. He approved of my reading material. I did not bother to remind me that he chose it for me as he had chosen my dress.

Mr Olson asked me if I recognised the dress and I had to say that I did not.

“You were wearing it when you first arrived here, Florence.”

I studied the butterflies on the material. They had faded. They were old.

Brother, talk to my husband. Bring me home.

Katie is playing with spiders. She trails their webs through her tongue.

Mr Olson says, “Come now ladies, let us welcome our guests!”

The guests enter the room. I am sitting by the window, the book is in my hands. My old dress is too large and my breasts drop down inside it.

“The Legend of Sleepy Hollow,” murmurs a man in a paisley cravat. He leans down close to my face and I marvel at the colours wrapped around his throat.

“Forty-two,” I hear Mr Olson say to a woman in a purple travelling coat. I can smell the outside air on her, the drench of autumn leaves.

“Ten years a patient,” Mr Olson is saying, “but younger looking than when she was brought here. It’s the air and the food we nourish them with.”

Katie grins up at me. She collects phlegm in her mouth then spits it at the lady in the purple coat. The lady squeals. The man with the cravat fingers my chin.

“Smooth skin,” he murmurs.

He checks my eyes and presses around them.

“Good orbital depth,” he says.

I glance at Mr Olson while the other man reaches in between the buttons of my gown. I close my eyes. My husband has thin hands. He ordered me to shut my womb after my second baby. He did not like my body. My hips were too wide. My babies dripped saliva like puppies and I went mad for a kind touch. I begged for love. I begged the bread boy once. His breath was full of stale yeast, and later when my husband learned from the cook of what I had done, he told my brother to find me another home.

"I must go home," I tell the man who is still rubbing his fingers on my skin inside my gown. "I have children to feed."

He is shocked at my voice, at my diction I would say.

"Educated," Mr Olson explains.

"And forgotten?" The visiting man enquires as he pulls away his fingers and wipes them with a handkerchief from his coat pocket.

Mr Olsen answers, "Yes, forgotten. And now..." He coughs into his hand. He coughs again.

"Aha," says the man in the paisley cravat.

That night, Mr Olson does not come to my bed but Katie does. She squats near my pillow. Her stink is warm. Other women chatter and cry in their beds. Some dig their hands in between their legs and move in the dark, mumbling their made-up love words.

"I know who he is," Katie whispers in my ear. Her eyes are big and cross-eyed this close to my face. "He's the Mummy-Man."

She holds up her hand in the dark.

"He keeps a dead man's hand under a glass case in his house."

I laugh but I watch Katie's hand.

"And he invites people to dinner and gives them dead vegetables to eat!"

Katie nestles into me and goes to sleep but I lie awake. I press my womb down. Like a husk, I had promised my brother. Like a husk, I had pleaded as he carried me to this place. Like a husk, I had kissed him. I had clasped his shoulders, his arms and his waist until finally he was standing far away from me.

Mr Olson tells me that the gentleman with the paisley cravat is Mr Hamrick. He is a farmer and a part-time undertaker, and he has perfected mummification by using a recipe from the Bible. He and Mr Olson believe in scientific progress. Mr Hamrick will surpass the Egyptians.

Mr Olson presents me with a turnip. He says, "Mr Hamrick makes an incision in the turnip, places it in an airtight box, and through a tube drains the vegetable of water. Through the same tube he injects saltpetre dissolved in water back into the vegetable. The fumes dry out the turnip perfectly, Florence."

Over the next few days Mr Olson shows me a "pumpkin still bright and juicy from last year – the year of Our Lord 1886," also a collection of green apples and an orange from which he cuts one segment and eats it pith and skin. He peels another segment and my mouth waters.

I used to eat oranges so readily when I was a wife.

I bite in. There is juice but it is thin. It is like old water from a covered barrel.

Mr Olson stares at me. There is something he is not saying, but I can see it behind his eyes. When you are dead, Florence, when you are dead.

Mr Hamrick visits again He brings cheap picture books of men fighting Algonquin Indians on the Virginia coastal plains. He tells me that Pocahontas was sold to the English for a copper kettle. He doesn't speak of what he has done with vegetables. He does not answer my questions about a preserved hand under a glass case, or of a man's head, or a dead but perfect baby lying in a blanketed cot.

Instead he watches how I move my face and he measures the length of my bones and the depth of my flesh. He listens to my lungs.

I tell him I want to go home. I tell him I have a husband. I show him how well I can write. How the words follow one another in the correct manner.

"Educated surely," Mr Hamrick admits.

Mr Olson denies me my pen. He says I am dying. He says my lungs are giving out. He still comes to my bed and he settles himself inside my legs. He grunts and pushes. I close my eyes and I close my womb.

I cough up my food. I cough up my blood. I imagine that I am coughing up Mr Olson as well. I write my letters in my head. I write them every day. Husband, I will be good. Brother, come for me.

But Mr Hamrick is sitting in the corner of the room while I sit in a chair. He is telling me that he is an inventor and an experimenter. He is telling me I am someone he has chosen. He tells me all of this as if I am nothing more than a page he writes his words on.

He tells me that when I die, he will make my body live forever.

Pleva

Veliko pisem sem napisala bratu. Prosila sem ga, naj prosi mojega moža, da mi dovoli priti domov. Pisma dobivam nazaj neodprta, še zmeraj pa hodim na latrino, kjer izpljuvam koščke kruha in kri in ovseno kašo in se s trebuhom pritiskam ob steno latrine, ker v meni zagotovo ni otroka in ga ne sme biti. Moj mož noče, da bi bil v meni otrok.

Gospod Olson prihaja ponoči. Goste brke ima. Njegova obleka je rumena z rjavimi nitmi. Stara Katie mu pravi Osraneč. Katie čepi na postelji in zakraka z nje: »Hej, ti, Osraneč, katera od nas bo pa danes zate?«

Katie mi govori, da je stara petdeset, ampak izgleda starejša. Tukajšnja hrana jo počasi ubija, mi reče. Kadar odpre usta in se zareži, vidim, kje ima konico jezika razcepljeno na dvojce, kot kača. Neki moški so ji to naredili. Rekli so, da preveč govori. Da ji bodo jezik enkrat za vselej spravili v red.

Katie je imela življenje pred tem tukaj. Živel je v Morgantownu in imela je spodnja krila s tankimi zlatimi trakovi, ki jih je njen ljubi zategoval s prsti.

Tukaj sem, ljubi moj, mu gruli v spanju.

Gospod Olson ponoči včasih sedi na moji postelji. Pravi, da sem pridna. Ne verjamem mu. Če bi bila pridna ali če bi se vsaj delala, da sem pridna, ne bi bila tukaj. Imela bi svoje otroke. Imela bi svojega moža.

Gospod Olson pravi, da je moj duh kot temnica in da mi bi ga on rad samo razsvetlil.

Katie pravi, da gospod Olson vsem pove to zgodbo.

Gospod Olson ima tri otroke. Včasih pridejo v norišnico in si nas ogledujejo. Najraje imajo tiste, ki so bolj zmešane od mene. Tiste, ki se ne umivajo, in tiste, ki nage skačejo po dvorišču kot opice, da se za njimi vleče sled ženske krvi, otroci gospoda Olsona pa se hihitajo in plešejo.

Enkrat sem se dotaknila najmlajšega sina gospoda Olsona. Komaj šest let je imel. Ko me je pogledal, se mi je zdelo, da so se mu modre oči obrnile kot kolesa v glavi. Sive špice so imela. Obračala so se, jaz pa sem zavpila.

Po tistem so me moški topli.

Gospod Olson mi je rekel, naj si lase spletem v kitke. Rekel je, da sem tako bolj čedna. Hotel je reči bolj pri pravi. Rekel mi je, naj sedem k oknu in berem knjigo.

Brala sem Washingtona Irvinga. Katie mi je sedela pri nogah in žvečila rob moje nove obleke. Gospodu Olsonu je bila ta živa slika zelo pri srcu. Rekel je, da je v njej patos in srh groze. Tudi moje čtivo mu je ugajalo. Ni se mi dalo, da bi ga spomnila, da mi ga je on izbral, kakor mi je izbral tudi obleko.

Gospod Olson me je vprašal, ali prepoznam svojo obleko, in morala sem mu reči, da ne.

»V tej obleki si bila, ko si prišla sem, Florence.«

Zatopila sem se v metulje na blagu. Zdaj so že čisto obledeli. Stari so. Brat, govori z mojim možem. Spravi me domov.

Katie se igra s pajki. Pajčevine si vleče skozi jezik.

Gospod Olson reče: »No, pridite, gospe, da bomo pozdravili naše goste!«

Gostje vstopijo v sobo. Jaz sedim pri oknu, v rokah imam knjigo. Obleka mi je prevelika in prsi pod njo se mi povešajo.

Legenda o Speči dolini zamrmra moški z ovratno ruto v kašmirskem vzorcu. Nagne se mi tik k obrazu, jaz pa se čudim barvam, ki jih ima ovite okoli vratu.

»Dvainštirideset,« slišim reči gospoda Olsona ženski v vijoličastem popotnem plašču. Na njej zaduham zunanji zrak, mokroto jesenskega listja.

»Deset let je že pacientka,« govori gospod Olson, »ampak je zdaj videti mlajša, kot je bila, ko so jo pripeljali. Zahvaljujoč zraku in hrani, s katero jih tukaj redimo.«

Katie se mi zareži. Zbere sluz v ustih in jo izpljune v gospo v vijoličastem plašču. Gospa zavrešči. Moški z ovratno ruto me s prsti tapka po bradi.

»Gladka koža,« zamrmra.

Pregleduje mi oči in pritiska okoli njih.

»Solidna globina očesnih votlin,« reče.

Ošinem gospoda Olsona, ko mi moški seže med gumbe na halji. Zaprem oči. Moj mož ima ozke roke. Po drugem otroku mi je ukazal, naj zaprem svoj trebuh. Moje telo mu ni bilo všeč. Moji boki so bili preširoki. Moja otroka sta se slinila kot kužka, meni pa se je začelo mešati od želje po ljubečem dotiku. Prosjčila sem za ljubezen. Nekoč sem preprosila fanta, ki je delal pri peku. Sapa mu je zaudarjala po starem kvasu, in ko je moj mož od kuharja izvedel, kaj sem naredila, je rekel mojemu bratu, da mi mora poiskati nov dom.

»Domov moram,« rečem moškemu, ki se mi s prsti še zmeraj drgne ob kožo pod obleko. »Otroke moram nahraniti.«

Osupel je nad mojim glasom, nad mojo izgovarjavo, bi rekla.

»Šolana,« pojasni gospod Olson.

»In pozabljena?« se pozanima obiskovalec, ko umakne prste in si jih briše z robcem, ki ga je potegnil iz žepa na plašču.

Gospod Olson odgovori: »Da, pozabljena. In zdaj ...« Zakašlja v pest. Še enkrat zakašlja.

»Aha,« reče moški z ovratno ruto s kašmirskim vzorcem.

Tisto noč ne pride k meni v posteljo gospod Olson, ampak Katie. Počepne k mojemu vzglavniku. Topel vonj se širi od nje. Druge ženske čenčajo in jokajo v posteljah. Nekatere zakopljajo roke med noge in se premikajo v temi in momljajo izmišljene besede ljubezni.

»Vem, kdo je on,« mi zašepeta Katie na uho. Njene velike oči škilijo vame tik ob obrazu. »On je Mumifikator.«

V temi dvigne roko predse.

»Doma ima v stekleni vitrini roko mrtvega moškega.«

Zasmejem se, vseeno pa strmim v Katiejino roko.

»Ljudi vabi k sebi na večerjo in jim da jesti mrtvo zelenjavo!«

Katie se stisne tesno obme in zaspi, jaz pa ležim budna. Trebuh si pritisnem navzdol. Kot pleva, sem obljubila svojemu bratu. Kot pleva, sem ga rotila, ko me je odpeljal sem. Kot pleva, sem ga poljubila. Oklepala sem se ga okoli ramen, rok in pasu, dokler ni nazadnje stal daleč stran do mene.

Gospod Olson mi pove, da je gospod z ovratno ruto v kašmirskem vzorcu gospod Hamrick. Da je farmar, občasno pa tudi pogrebnik in da je s pomočjo recepta iz Biblije izpopolnil mumifikacijo. Gospod Olson in on verjameta v znanstveni napredek. Gospod Hamrick bo prekosil Egipčane.

Gospod Olson mi podari repo. In reče: »Gospod Hamrick zareže v repo in jo zapre v neprodušno škatlo in po cevki izcedi vodo iz zelenjave. Skozi taisto cevko vbrizga vanjo vodno raztopino solitra. Njegovi hlapi repo izsušijo do konca, Florence.«

V naslednjih dneh mi gospod Olson pokaže »bučo, ki je sveža in sočna še od lani – leta Gospodovega 1886«, pa tudi nekaj zelenih jabolk in pomarančo, od katere si odreže krhelj in ga poje z belo kožico in lupino vred. Nato olupi še en krhelj, meni pa se začnejo cediti sline.

Ko sem bila žena, sem rada jedla pomaranče.

Zagrizem vanjo. Nekaj malega soka ima, a je zelo voden. Kot postana voda iz pokritega soda je.

Gospod Olson bulji vame. Nekaj mora biti, česar ne izreče, jaz pa to vidim za njegovimi očmi. Ko boš mrtva, Florence, ko boš mrtva.

Gospod Hamrick spet pride na obisk. Prinese poceni slikanice mož, ki se borijo z algonquinskimi Indijanci na obalnih planotah Virginije. Pove mi, da so Pocahontas Angležem prodali za bakren kotel. O tem, kaj je naredil z zelenjavo, ne govori. Ne odgovori mi na vprašanje o ohranjeni roki v stekleni vitrini ne o moški glavi ne o mrtvem, a popolnoma ohranjenem dojenčku, ki leži pokrit z odejo v svoji postelji.

Namesto tega si me ogleduje, kako premikam obraz, in meri dolžino mojih kosti in debelino mojega mesa. Posluša mi pljuča.

Rečem mu, da bi šla rada domov. Rečem mu, da imam moža. Pokažem mu, kako dobro znam pisati. Kako si besede sledijo na pravilen način.

»Vsekakor šolana,« prizna gospod Hamrick.

Gospod Olson mi noče dati pisala. Pravi, da umiram. Pravi, da mi odpovedujejo pljuča. Še zmeraj pa prihaja v mojo posteljo in se mi uleže med noge. Hrope in poriva. Zaprem oči in zaprem trebuh.

Izbruham hrano. Izbruham kri. Domišljam si, da izbruham tudi gospoda Olsona. V glavi pišem pisma. Vsak dan jih pišem. Mož, obljubim, da bom pridna. Brat, pridi me iskat.

Gospod Hamrick pa sedi v kotu sobe, ko sedim na stolu. Govori mi, da je izumitelj in eksperimentator. Govori mi, da je izbral ravno mene. Vse to mi govori, kot da nisem drugega kot list papirja, po katerem piše svoje besede.

Pove mi, da bo, ko bom umrla, moje telo večno živelo.

Prevedla Tina Mahkota



Aleksandar Hemon

Aleksandar Hemon se je rodil leta 1964 v Sarajevu v Bosni in Hercegovini. Študiral je književnost na Univerzi v Sarajevu. Leta 1992 je obiskal Chicago, kjer je nameraval ostati nekaj mesecev, vendar se je začelo obleganje Sarajeva in se ni mogel vrniti. Delal je kot natak, akviziter, knjigarnar, kurir na kolesu, vodja centra za opismenjevanje, pisec prispevkov za mladinski program Radia Sarajevo in učitelj angleščine za tujce. Bosansko-ameriški romanopisec in avtor kratkih zgodb je svojo prvo zgodbo v angleškem jeziku objavil leta 1995. Leta 2000 je izšel njegov kratkoprozni prvenec *The Question of Bruno* (Vprašanje Bruna), ki so mu sledili: dva romana – *Nowhere Man* (*Nowhere Man: Pronekove fantazije*, 2002), izbran za najboljšo knjigo leta po izboru revije *New York Magazine*, in *The Lazarus Project* (*Projekt Lazar*, 2008), ki je bil nominiran za nagradi »National Book Critics Circle Award« in »National Book Award« – nato pa še kratke zgodbe *Love and Obstacles* (Ljubezen in ovire, 2009) in avtobiografsko esejistično delo *The Book of My Lives* (*Knjiga mojih življenj*, 2013). V slovenskem prevodu Irene Duša so pri založbi Modrijan izšla dela *Nowhere Man: Pronekove fantazije* (2006), *Projekt Lazar* (2010) in *Knjiga mojih življenj* (2013). Njegova besedila izhajajo v številnih priznanih ameriških revijah, kot so *The New Yorker*, *Esquire*, *Granta*, *The New York Times*, *Playboy*, *The Wall Street Journal* in *The Paris Review*. Je dobitnik več štipendij in nagrad, med njimi štipendije Guggenheimovega sklada (2003) in štipendije ZDA (2012) ter švicarske nagrade Jana Michalskega za književnost (2010) in nagrade W. G. Sebald Ameriškega centra PEN (2011).

Aleksandar Hemon was born in 1964 in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina. He studied Literature at the University of Sarajevo. He visited Chicago in 1992, intending to stay for just a few months. While he was visiting, Sarajevo came under siege, and he was unable to return home. He worked as a waiter, canvasser, bookseller, bike messenger, as well as a supervisor at a literacy centre, a writer for Radio-Sarajevo Youth Program and a teacher of English as a second language. The Bosnian-American novelist and short story writer published his first story in English in 1995. His first collection of short stories, *The Question of Bruno*, was published in 2000. It was followed by two novels: *Nowhere Man* (2002), which was chosen as the New York Magazine's best book of the year, and *The Lazarus Project* (2008), which was a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award and the National Book Award, and the book of short stories *Love and Obstacles* (2009), and the autobiographical non-fiction book *The Book of My Lives* (2013). Three of his books – *Nowhere Man*, *Project Lazarus*, and *The Book of My Lives* – have been translated into Slovene by Irena Duša and published by the Modrijan in 2006, 2010 and 2013 respectively. His work has been featured in a number of noted magazines, such as *The New Yorker*, *Esquire*, *Granta*, *The New York Times*, *Playboy*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *The Paris Review*. He has also been the recipient of a number of grants and awards, among them the Guggenheim Fellowship (2003), the 2012 USA Fellowship as well as the Swiss Jan Michalski Prize for Literature (2010) and the W.G. Sebald Award (2011) of PEN American Center.

The Making of Zombie Wars

(excerpt from the novel)

John Wayne goes to Sarajevo. They feed him, they get him drunk, they show him around. There's this, there's that, this is where World War One started, here's an old mosque. But John Wayne is walking funny, and he finally says: Man, I really gotta piss. They take him to a public toilet. He goes, comes back, his cowboy hat soaked with piss, boots full of it. What happened? they ask him. Well, John Wayne said, I walk into the men's room and all these guys are at the urinals and they scream: John Wayne! and they all turn to me with their dicks in their hands.

Bega had started grunting with laughter even before he swung his torso to replicate the pissing guys' turn. He'd clapped his hands following the punch line, his mouth open so wide for the roar that Joshua could see his raspberry-red tonsils. It was still funny: walking down Magnolia on his way home, Joshua kept chuckling to himself. So immersed in a vision of regaling someone with the joke was he that only as he stopped by Kimiko's place did he realize his bike remained locked up outside the Westmoreland.

He considered stopping by to see Kimmy before sleep. The glow in her bedroom window suggested she was reading. Kee-mee-ko. He relished the sound of her name, shaped exactly like her: the long legs, the curved hips, the long hair. He liked her confidence, the peace with which she made decisions. She was a child psychologist, specializing in divorce trauma. Also, molestation trauma. She'd been married once before, right out of college, to a self-professed guy named Haskell Something the Third. She mentioned him rarely, but whenever she did she referred to him as the Third. *The Third liked three things: his Porsche, lacrosse, and Newt Gingrich.* She never explained the role of the Third in her life, as though the marriage happened to someone else. She analyzed others, but not herself. She read Harry Potter because it helped her better understand her little patients better. She always referred to the kids as little patients.

Joshua adored the way she laughed: she constricted her mouth, shook her head, then snorted, then exploded. He wanted to serenade her with the John Wayne joke, so he dialed her number from the street: perhaps she would invite him up for a triple-header of laughter, BJ, and full intercourse. But the network was down and his calls were repeatedly dropped and then her light went out. He

would've rung her doorbell if it wasn't for his fear of her finding the joke stupid. Moreover, the piss aspect of the joke put extra pressure on his buckling prostate, which now insisted that he quicken his step. By the time he reached his door, merely two blocks down Magnolia, his bladder was bulging to the point of pain. The mind strives to imagine those things that increase the body's power. Say, urination.

He hastily unlocked his front door, dropped the keys and the phone on the table under the cracked mirror, and hurried on to the bathroom. Before he reached it, he noticed the billowing curtains in the living room; he heard the tiny peals of oriental chimes. He was almost sure he hadn't left any windows open – it was, after all, the end of March. A deep memory of the way late-night ninjas sensed presences was consequently activated and like a ninja he did tiptoe. All flimsy skin and hollow bones, Joshua was practically weightless: he cast no shadow; the floor did not creak. The living room was empty, but dust balls led him, levitating, to his bedroom.

No deep movie memory was available to help him decide what to do if indeed there was someone in the bedroom. Hence he became instantly paralyzed when he discovered a man kneeling on the floor, weeping with his face buried in what was, without a shred of a doubt, a pair of Joshua's boxer shorts patterned with stars and stripes. He'd dropped the shorts in the dirty-laundry basket this morning, and there was indeed the wicker basket, pitilessly knocked over, and there was the rest of his dirty underwear lined up on the floor for some perverse inspection. The man's ponytail was tightly pulled back, fluttering in concert with his sobs; he wore a sleeveless denim jacket, so that the tattoo of an eagle with the earth in its talons was blazingly visible on his sinewy biceps. I know this man, Joshua realized – for a fleeting micromoment, the realization was soothing.

"Stagger! What the fuck are you doing?"

Stagger leapt to his feet and charged toward the open window, managing to wipe away his tears with Joshua's underwear, as if the real problem were that he'd been caught crying. He batted the billowing curtains apart and slipped out like a true ninja and the former Marine that he was. Stagger, it might be pertinent to mention, was Joshua's landlord and downstairs neighbor.

The room was cold as a morgue. Joshua sat down on his bed, gasping for breath, and stared at the boxer shorts array on the floor as if it contained a message that needed to be urgently decoded.

His heart was galloping toward a heart attack, his brain away from comprehension. He let out a primally inarticulate scream at the still-billowing curtains and went over to shut the window. He kicked up the boxer shorts arrangement and dropped his ass on the bed. The heart was pounding, the prostate collapse imminent, but Joshua lay down to look up at the motionlessly indifferent ceiling fan.

When Joshua had signed the lease the previous summer, Stagger had appeared as stolid and reliable, his cut-off denim jacket notwithstanding, as one would expect from a Marine who'd proudly served his country. But soon after moving in, Joshua could occasionally hear Guns N' Roses blasting from downstairs, accompanied with the sound of things being smashed and Stagger's screaming *I'll bring you to your knees* and such in unison with Axl Rose. More than once, the party would go on for an entire night. The following morning Stagger would come up to apologize and ascribe his appetite for destruction to his alleged Desert Storm trauma. It made him act crazy, he'd said. It hadn't always been clear to Joshua whether that was a concealed threat or a way to invite pity and forgiveness. Either way, Joshua's continued understanding had kept the rent low. As a way of additional reconciliation, Stagger had offered to show him his samurai sword, so sharp, he'd said, it could slice a running dog in half and both halves would still jump at the same time to catch the Frisbee..

A siren wailed down the street to remind Joshua that time sometimes did flow forward on its way to consequences. He did wish the police to come by, but that was all he was going to do about it. In the mind there is no free will, but the mind is determined to will this or that by a cause which is also determined by another, and this again by another, and so to infinity. He would've watched the ceiling to infinity, had his prostate not actually started leaking.

When the going gets tough, the tough might find comfort in the smallest of pleasures: Joshua's urine stream was thick and steady with relief. He was moving out of this fucking place, he decided, come the weekend. He should have already moved out for the Guns 'N Roses abuse alone. Above the toilet hung an inexplicable reproduction of a foxhunt painting: red coats and black bubble caps and tall horses and a few clouds bumbling forth over a composed Victorian landscape. Joshua heard his front door clicking, whereupon something shifted in the corner where the fox was frozen in her escape, her future forever foreclosed. The voice Joshua instantly identified as Stagger's said: "What's going on in here?"

In a lightning move, Joshua turned, swinging the dick in his trembling hand to spray – from right to left – the upright toilet seat, the toilet paper roll next to it, *A Spinoza Reader*, and a basket full of magazines, until he – still emitting spurts onto his own thigh – faced Stagger, who stood akimbo under the hallway light, his face calm and composed to the sharp point of insanity.

“Everything okay, Jonjo?” Stagger lowered his gaze to grin at Joshua’s trickling dick.

Joshua broke out of the bathroom, bouncing off Stagger’s flank to fly through the front door, conveniently unclosed. He raced down the stairs, not stopping until he found himself in the middle of Mag-nolia, where he finally returned his penis to its natural habitat. His groin and pant legs were completely wet, his left hand sticky with panic and urine. With his right one he groped for his cell phone to call the police (another siren wailed up Clark) only to recall the very motion of dropping the keys and the phone on the front-door table. He rolled up into a squatting pose of pain, but then unrolled like a fern in sped-up footage, because a cab hit the brakes not to run him over. The cabbie, grim as a nightmare, stepped out of the car and said: “Hey, man!” – and Joshua, his mind loosened by the combination of alcohol and Stagger, retorted: “Hay is for horses!”

Kako so nastale Vojne zombijev

(odlomek iz romana)

Pride John Wayne v Sarajevo. Dajo mu za jest, napijejo ga, razkažejo mu naokrog. Tole tu, tisto tam, tukaj se je začela prva svetovna vojna, tole je stara mošeja. John Wayne pa nekam čudno hodi in nazadnje reče: Stari, res moram scat. Peljejo ga v javni vece. Gre on noter, pride nazaj ven, tisti njegov kavbojski klobuk je premočen s scalnico, škornji so je polni do roba. Kaj se je zgodilo? ga vprašajo. Ja, reče John Wayne, stopim noter v moško stranišče, neki tipi pri pisoarjih, pa začnejo vpit: John Wayne! In se vsi skup s tiči v rokah obrnejo k meni.

Bega je začel hripati od smeha, še preden je zavrtel trup in ponovil obrat tipa, ki ščije. Po poanti je zaploskal, ob tem pa tako zazeval v krohot, da mu je Joshua videl malinasto rdeče mandlje. Še vedno je bilo smešno: ko je šel po ulici Magnolia proti domu, se je Joshua sam pri sebi ves čas hahljal. Tako se je poglobil v predstavo, kako bo nekoga pozabaval s tem vicem, da se je šele, ko se je ustavil pred Kimikino stavbo, zavedel, da je kolo pozabil zaklenjeno pred Westmorelandom.

Pomislil je, da bi pred spanjem skočil še do Kimmy. Soj v oknu njene spalnice je dajal vedeti, da bere. Kii-mii-ko. Užival je v zvoku njenega imena, ki je bilo prav take oblike kot ona; dolge noge, zaobljeni boki, dolgi lasje. Všeč mu je bila njena samozavest, ritem, s katerim se je odločala. Bila je otroška psihologinja, specializirala se je za ločitvene travme. Za travme zaradi zlorab tudi. Enkrat je bila že poročena, takoj po faksu, s samozvanim tipom po imenu Haskell Nekaj Tretji. Redko ga je omenjala, kadar pa ga je, ga je vedno imenovala Tretji. *Tretji je imel rad tri stvari: svojega Porscheja, lacrosse in Newta Gingricha.* Nikoli ni razložila, kakšno vlogo je Tretji igral v njenem življenju, kot da bi se ta zakon zgodil nekomu drugemu. Analizirala je druge, ne sebe. Prebrala je Harryja Potterja, ker ji je to pomagalo razumeti njene male paciente. Otrokom je vedno rekla mali pacienti.

Joshua je oboževal njen smeh: zategnila je usta, stresla z glavo, potem prhnila, potem eksplodirala. Hotel jo je presenetiti s podoknico o Johnu Waynu, na ulici je odtipkal njeno številko: mogoče ga bo povabila gor na trojček smeha, fafanja in kompletnega spolnega odnosa. Pa je bilo nekaj narobe z omrežjem in je bil klic vsakič znova prekinjen, potem pa je luč pri njej ugasnila. Saj bi ji pritisnil

na zvonec, če se ne bi bal, da se ji bo vic zdel bedast. Poleg tega je skalniški vidik vica še dodatno pritiskal na njegovo napeto prostato, ki ga je silila, da pospeši korak. Ko je prišel do svojih vrat, le dve ulici od Magnolije, se mu je mehur raztegnil že do bolečine. Razum si hoče predstavljati tisto, kar krepi moč telesa. Uriniranje, recimo.

V naglici je odklenil vhodna vrata, odvrigel ključ in telefon na mizico pod počenim ogledalom in pohitel v kopalnico. Še preden jo je dosegel, je opazil napihujoče se zavese v dnevni sobi; zaslišal je tiho pozvanjanje orientalskih zvončkov. Skoraj prepričan je bil, da oken ni pustil odprtih – ne nazadnje je bilo konec marca. Globoko v njem se je prebudil spomin na to, kako nindže v nočnem programu zaslučijo navzočnost, in res je šel po prstih, kot nindža. Bile so ga sama tanka koža in votle kosti, tako da je bil Joshua praktično breztežen: niti sence ni metal in tla niso škripala. Dnevna soba je bila prazna, a so ga prašne kroglice, lebdeče, peljale do njegove spalnice.

Ničesar filmskega se ni spomnil, kar bi mu pomagalo pri odločitvi, kaj storiti, če bo res kdo v spalnici. Zato je v hipu otrpnil, ko je odkril na tleh klečečega moškega, ki je ihtel z obrazom zakopanim v, brez sence dvoma, par Joshuevih boksaric z ameriško zastavo. Hlače je ravno zjutraj odvrigel v koš za umazano perilo in res je tam neusmiljeno prevrnjen ležal pleten koš, ostale njegove umazane spodnjice pa so bile razvrščene po tleh, kot bi čakale na sprevrženo preiskavo. Možakar je imel lase tesno spete v čop, ki je drhtel v ritmu njegovega ihtenja; oblečen je bil v jakno iz jeansa brez rokavov, da je tetovaža orla z Zemljo med kremplji žarela na žilavih bicepsih. Tega tipa poznam, se je zavedel Joshua – za bežen mikrotrenutek ga je to spoznanje pomirilo.

»Stagger! Kaj, kurac, pa ti počneš tu?«

Stagger je skočil pokonci in se pognal proti odprtemu oknu, medtem si je uspel obrisati solze z Joshuevim spodnjim perilom, kot da je težava dejansko v tem, da ga je nekdo zasačil pri joku. Razmahnil je plapolajoče zavese in švignil ven kot pravi nindža in bivši marinec, kar je tudi bil. Stagger, morda bi bila omemba na mestu, je bil Joshuev stanodajalec in spodnji sosed.

V sobi je bilo mrzlo kot v mrtvašnici. Joshua je sedel na posteljo, lovil je sapo in buljil v po tleh razporejene boksarice, kot da se v njih skriva sporočilo, ki ga je nujno treba dekodirati. Srce mu je galopiralo proti srčni kapi, možgani pa proč od dojemanja. V zavese, ki so še vedno plapolale, je spustil prvinsko nerazločen krik in stopil do okna, da ga je zaprl. Odbrcnil je aranžma iz boksaric in parkiral rit

na posteljo. Srce mu je razbijalo, prostata je bila tik na tem, da popusti, a Joshua je legel in se zagledal v negibno brezbrizni ventilator na stropu.

Ko je prejšnje poletje podpisal najemno pogodbo, se mu je Stagger zdel miren in zanesljiv, kljub jakni iz jeansa z odrezanimi rokavi, prav kakor bi človek pričakoval od marinca, ki je ponosno služil domovini. Kmalu po vselitvi pa je Joshua iz spodnjega nadstropja občasno slišal navijanje Guns N' Roses ob zvočni spremljavi razbijanja predmetov in Staggerjevega vpitja *I'll bring you to your knees* in podobnega, v enoglasju z Axlom Roseom. Neredko se je zabava nadaljevala vso noč. Naslednje jutro se je Stagger prišel opravičevat in svojo slo po destruktiji¹ pripisoval domnevni travmi iz operacije Puščavski vihar. Od tega da počne nore reči, je rekel. Joshui ni bilo vedno povsem jasno, ali gre za prikrito grožnjo ali išče pomilovanje in odpuščanje. Kakor koli že, Joshueva trajna strpnost je držala najemnino nizko. Kot dodatno spravno dejanje je Stagger ponudil, da mu pokaže svoj samurajski meč, tako oster, je rekel, da bi lahko psa v teku presekalo, pa bi še vedno obe polovici hkrati skočili za frizbijem.

Po ulici je zatulila sirena in Joshuo opomnila, da čas včasih dejansko teče naprej proti posledicam. Saj si je želel, da bi prišla policija, a dlje od tega ni bil pripravljen iti. Um nima svobodne volje, je pa voljan narediti to ali ono iz nekega razloga, ki ga določa neki drug razlog, in tako naprej do neskončnosti. Do neskončnosti bi opazoval strop, če mu ne bi prostata dejansko začela puščati.

Ko gre za nohte, trdoživi najdejo uteho v najdrobnejših užitkih: Joshuev curek urina je bil močan in enakomeren od olajšanja. Odselil se bo iz te jebene luknje, se je odločil, čez vikend. Odseliti bi se moral že samo zaradi zlorabe z Guns N' Roses. Nad straniščem je visela nerazložljiva reprodukcija slike, ki je prikazovala lov na lisice: rdeči kožuhi in črne okrogle kape in visoki konji in nekaj oblakov, ki so se prebijali čez zadržano viktorijansko pokrajino. Joshua je zaslišal klik vhodnih vrat, potem pa se je nekaj premaknilo v kotu, kjer je lisica z večno zaseženo prihodnostjo sredi bega otrpnila. Glas, ki ga je v trenutku prepoznal kot Staggerjevega, je rekel: »Kaj se pa tukaj dogaja?«

Joshua se je s svetlobno hitrostjo obrnil, s tresočo roko je zavihtel tiča in pošprical – od desne proti levi – dvignjeno straniščno školjko, toaletni papir ob njej, knjigo *A Spinoza Reader* in polno košaro

¹ Nanaša se na album skupine Guns N' Roses »Appetite for Destruction« – op. p.

revij, dokler se ni – medtem ko je še kar brizgal po lastnem stegnu – znašel iz oči v oči s Staggerjem, ki je z rokami, uprtimi v boke, z mirnim in neprizadetim izrazom na obrazu, ki je že mejil na norost, stal pod lučjo na hodniku.

»Vse v redu, Jonjo?« je Stagger spustil pogled in se zarežal Joshuevemu curljajočemu tiču.

Joshua je planil iz kopalnice, se odbil od Staggerjevega boka in poletel skozi vhodna vrata, priročno odprta. Zdirjal je po stopnicah, ni se ustavil, dokler se ni znašel sredi Magnolije, kjer je končno vrnil penis v njegovo naravno okolje. Dimlje in hlačnice je imel čisto premočene, levo roko lepljivo od panike in urina. Z desno je potipal za mobilcem, da bi poklical policijo (še ena sirena je odtulila po Clarkovi), ko se je natanko spomnil giba, s katerim je odložil ključ in telefon na mizico ob vhodnih vratih. Zvil se je od bolečine in se nato odvil kot praprot v hitrem posnetku, ker je taksi pohodil zavore, da ga ne bi povozil. Taksist, srhljiv kot môra, je stopil iz avta in rekel: »Ej, stari!« – in Joshua, z umom, zrahljanim od kombinacije alkohola in Staggerja, mu je zabrusil: »Ej je za v štalo!«

Prevedla Irena Duša



Foto © Yanai Yechiel

Etgar Keret

Etgar Keret se je rodil leta 1967 v Ramat Ganu v Izraelu. Velja za najbolj priljubljenega in mednarodno priznanega predstavnika mlajše generacije izraelskih pisateljev. Piše kratke zgodbe, grafične romane, knjige za otroke ter scenarije za film in televizijo. Njegova besedila so bila objavljena v časopisih in literarnih revijah, kot so *The New York Times*, *Le Monde*, *The New Yorker*, *The Guardian*, *The Paris Review* in *Zoetrope*. Njegova prva zbirka kratkih zgodb *Tzinorot* (Cevovod) je izšla leta 1992. Med njegova dela sodi več zbirk kratkih zgodb, kot so *Ga'agu'ai le-Kissinger* (Pogrešani Kissinger, 1994), *Anihu* (Cenena luna, 2002), *Pitom Defikah Ba-delet* (Nenadno trkanje po vratih, 2010), knjiga za otroke v angleškem jeziku *Dad Runs Away with the Circus* (Očka pobegne v cirkus, 2004) in dva grafična romana. Izbor avtorjeve kratke proze *Še zadnja zgodba in konec* je v slovenskem prevodu Julije Potrč in Andreja Blatnika izšel leta 2014 pri LUD Literatura. Za svoje delo je prejel več nagrad, med njimi nagrado izraelskega premierja za književnost (1996), britansko nagrado »Jewish Quarterly Wingate Prize« (2008) in nagrado Mestne knjižnice v Sankt Peterburgu za najbolj priljubljenega tujega avtorja (2010). Leta 2007 sta z ženo Shiro Geffen prejela Zlato kamero filmskega festivala v Cannesu za film *Meduzot* (Meduza) in nagrado francoskega združenja filmskih umetnikov in scenaristov za najboljšo režijo. Leta 2010 je bil odlikovan s francoskim viteškim redom za umetnost in književnost. Njegova dela so prevedena v 36 jezikov. Trenutno živi v Tel Avivu in predava na Negevski univerzi Ben Gurion v Beer Shevi.

Etgar Keret was born in 1967 in Ramat Gan, Israel. He is the most popular, internationally acclaimed representative of the young generation of Israeli writers. He is a writer of short stories, graphic novels, children's books, and scripts for film and television. His writings have been published in literary magazines, such as *The New York Times*, *Le Monde*, *The New Yorker*, *The Guardian*, *The Paris Review* and *Zoetrope*. His first collection of short stories, *Tzinorot* (Pipelines), was published in 1992. His works include a number of collections of short stories, among them *Ga'agu'ai le-Kissinger* (Missing Kissinger, 1994), *Anihu* (Cheap Moon, 2002), *Pitom Defikah Ba-delet* (Suddenly, a Knock on the Door, 2010), the English-language children's book *Dad Runs Away with the Circus* (2004), as well as two graphic novels. A collection of his selected short prose was translated to Slovenian by Julija Potrč and Andrej Blatnik and published by the LUD Literatura publishing house under the title *Še zadnja zgodba in konec* (One More Story and That's It) in 2014. He has received a number of awards for his work, including the Israeli Prime Minister's Prize for Literature (1996), the British Jewish Quarterly Wingate Prize (2008), and the St. Petersburg Public Library's Foreign Favorite Award (2010). In 2007, Keret and his wife Shira Geffen won the Cannes Film Festival's Golden Camera Award for their movie *Meduzot* (Jellyfish), and Best Director Award of the French Artists and Writers' Guild. Keret also received the French national order of merit "Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres" in 2010. His books have been translated into 36 languages. Etgar Keret resides in Tel Aviv and lectures at the Ben-Gurion University of the Negev in Beersheba.

איזה חיה אתה?

המשפטים שאני כותב עבשיו הם לרווחת צופי הטלוויזיה הציבורית הגרמנית. כתבת הטלוויזיה שהגיעה לביתי היום ביקשה שאקליד משהו במחשב, כי זה תמיד מצטלם נהדר: סופר כותב. זאת קלישאה, היא יודעת, אבל קלישאות הן בסך הכל מצב צבירה לא סקסי של האמת, והתפקיד שלה, בתור כתבת, זה להפוך את האמת הזאת לסקסית, לשכור את הקלישאה בעזרת אור וזוויות צילום מפתיעות. והאור אצלי בבית נופל נהדר, בלי שתצטרך להדליק אפילו פנס אחר, כך שכל מה שנותר זה שאכתוב.

בהתחלה העמרתי פנים שאני כותב, אבל היא אמרה שזה לא זה. שישור רואים שאני עושה כאילו. "תכתוב כאמת," היא ררשה, ואחר כך הדגישה, "סיפור. לא סתם רצף של מילים. תכתוב את זה סבעי, כמו שאתה תמיד כותב." אמרתי לה שזה לא סבעי בשבילי לכתוב בזמן שמצלמים אותי לטלוויזיה הציבורית הגרמנית, אבל היא התעקשה. "או תשתמש בזה," היא אמרה. "תכתוב את הסיפור על זה בדיוק. על איך שזה לא סבעי, ואיך מהאי סבעיות הזאת מתפרץ פתאום משהו: אמיתי, מלא תשוקה. משהו שמציף אותך מהמוח ועד אזור החלציים. או ההפך, אני לא יודעת איך זה עובד אצלך. זאת אומרת, מאיפה בדיוק היצירה מתחילה אצלך בגוף. זה מאוד אינריבידואלי." היא סיפרה לי שראיינה פעם סופר בלגי שתמיד כשכתב היה במצב של זקפה. משהו בכתיבה "הקשה לו את האיבר" – זה הביטוי שהשתמשה בו. זה בסח היה איזה תרגום מילולי מגרמנית אבל באנגלית זה נשמע מוזר מאוד.

"תכתוב," היא דרשה שוב. "יופי. אני אוהבת את היציבה הגרועה שלך כשאתה כותב, את הצוואר המכווץ. זה פשוט נהדר. תמשיך לכתוב, מצוין. ככה, טבעי. אל תהיה מודע אלי, תשכח שאני כאן." אז אני ממשיך לכתוב, ולא מודע אליה, ושוכח שהיא כאן, ואני טבעי. כמה שאני רק יכול. יש לי חשבון פתוח עם קהל הצופים של הטלוויזיה הציבורית הגרמנית אבל זה לא הזמן ליישב אותו. זה הזמן לכתוב. לכתוב דברים של טעם, כי לכתוב שטויות, היא כבר הסבירה לי, מצטלם מאד לא טוב.

הכן שלי חוזר מהגן. הוא רץ אלי ומחבק. תמיד כשיש בבית צוותי טלוויזיה הוא מחבק. בהתחלה הכתבים היו צריכים לכקש את זה ממנו, אבל עכשיו הוא כבר מתדגל: לרוץ, לא להביט למצלמה, לחבק, לומר, "אבא, אני אוהב אותך." הוא עוד לא בן ארבע וכבר מבין איך הדברים עובדים, הכן המתוק הזה שלי.

אשתי פחות מוצלחת, הכתבת של הטלוויזיה הציבורית הגרמנית אומרת. פחות זורמת. היא מסדדת את השיער שלה כל הזמן, מגניבה מבטים למצלמה. אבל זאת לא ממש בעיה, תמיד אפשר להוריד אותה אחר כך בעריכה. זה מה שיפה בטלוויזיה. בחיים זה לא ככה. בחיים אתה לא יכול להוריד אותה, למחוק. רק אלוהים יכול, או אוטובוס, אם הוא דורס אותה. או מחלה קשה. השכן שמעלינו אלמן, מחלה חשובת מרפא לקחה ממנו את אשתו. לא סרטן, משהו אחר. משהו שמתחיל כמעיים ונגמר רע. חצי שנה היא חירבנה דם. זה לפחות מה שהוא סיפר לי. חצי שנה עד שהקב"ה הוריד אותה לגמרי בעריכה. מאז שהיא מתה נכנסות אלינו לבניין כל מיני נשים על עקבים גבוהים שמריחות מבושם זול. הן באות בשעות הכי לא צפויות, לפעמים אפילו בצהריים. הוא פנסיונר, השכן שלנו מלמעלה, הזמן שלו גמיש. והן, על פי אשתי בכל אופן, זונות. כשהיא אומרת "זונות" זה יוצא לה טבעי כזה, כאילו היא אומרת "סלרי". אבל כשמצלמים אותה או לא. אף אחד לא מושלם.

הבן שלי אוהב את הזונות שבאות אל השכן שלנו מלמעלה. "איזה חיה אתה?" הוא שואל אותן כשהוא נתקל בהן בחדר המדרגות. "אני היום עכבר. עכבר זריז וחמקמק." וישר הן מבינות וזורקות שם של חיה: פיל, רוב, פרפר. כל זונה והחיה שלה. זה מוזר, כי אנשים אחרים, כשהוא שואל על החיות, לא ממש מבינים מה הוא רוצה מהם. אבל הזונות פשוט זורמות עם זה.

מה שמעלה אצלי את המחשבה שאולי בפעם הבאה שצוות צילום יגיע אני אביא אחת מהן במקום אשתי, וזה יצא טבעי יותר. הן נראות מצויין, זול אבל מצויין, וגם הבן שלי מסתדר איתן טוב יותר. כשהוא שואל את אשתי איזה חיה היא, היא תמיד מתעקשת, "אני לא חיה, מתוקי, אני אדם. אני אמא שלך." ואז הוא תמיד מתחיל לבכות.

למה היא לא זורמת, האישה שלי? למה להגיד על נשים עם בושם זול "זונות" זה קל לה, אבל להגיד לילד קטן "אני ג'ירפה" זה גובל בשכילה בבלתי אפשרי? זה מכעיס אותי, זה גורם לי לרצות להכות. לא אותה, אותה אני אוהב, אבל מישהו. לפרוק את התסכולים שלי על אחר שמגיע לו. ימניים יכולים להוציא את כל הועם הזה על ערכים. גזענים על כרשים. אבל אנחנו בשמאל הליברלי לכורים. חישקנו את עצמנו, אין לנו על מי להתפוצץ. "אל תקראי להן זונות," אני מתגולל על אשתי, "הרי את לא יודעת שהן זונות, את לא ראת שמישהו משלם להן או משהו, אז אל תקראי להן ככה, טוב? איך את היית מרגישה אם מישהו היה קורא לך זונה?"

"יופי," אומרת הכתבת הגרמנייה, "אני אוהבת את זה. הקמט במצח. הקצב המהיר של ההקלדה. עכשיו רק נשאר לצלם אינטרקאט של כמה מהתרגומים של הקבצים שלך לשפות זרות, כדי שהצופים שלנו ירעו שאתה מצליח, ועוד פעם את החיבוק הזה של הבן – בפעם הראשונה הוא רץ מהר מדי, והצלם שלנו, יורג, לא הספיק לשנות את הפוקוס במצלמה בזמן." אשתי שואלת אם הגרמנייה צריכה שגם היא תחבק שוב, וכלב אני מתפלל שהיא תגיד שכן. אני כל כך רוצה שאשתי

תחבק אותי שוב, שהזרועות החלקות שלה יתהדקו סביבי, כאילו אין שום דבר בעולם מלבדנו. "לא צריך," אומרת לה הגרמנייה בטון קר, "כבר יש לנו את זה." "איזה חיה את?" הבן שלי שואל את הגרמנייה, ואני ממחרת לתרגם לאנגלית. "אני לא חיה," היא צוחקת ומעבירה יד ארוכת ציפורניים בשערו, "אני מפלצת. מפלצת שהגיעה מהצד האחר של האוקיינוס כדי לאכול ילדים קטנים ויפים כמוך." "היא אומרת שהיא ציפור שיר," אני מתרגם לבן שלי בשיא הטבעיות, "היא אומרת שהיא ציפור שיר אדומת נוצה שעפה לכאן מארץ רחוקה."

Katera žival si ti?

Stavki, ki jih ravnokar zapisujem, so namenjeni gledalcem nemške javne televizije. Televizijska novinarka, ki je prišla danes k meni domov, je prosila, naj nekaj napišem na računalnik, ker to pač vedno odlično izgleda na posnetku: pisatelj piše. To je seveda kliše, kar je njej popolnoma jasno, toda klišeji so dejansko nič kaj seksi nakopičena resnica, njena naloga, se pravi naloga televizijske poročevalke, pa je spremeniti to resnico tako, da bo seksi; razbiti klišeje s pomočjo osvetljave in presenetljivih smeri, iz katerih se snema. In tudi osvetljava pri meni doma je enkratna, tako da ni treba prižgati niti ene luči in mi ne preostane nič drugega, kot da pišem.

Na začetku sem se pretvarjal, da pišem, vendar mi je rekla, da to ne gre, da se takoj vidi, da se pretvarjam. »Zares napišite nekaj,« je zahtevala in nato celo poudarila: »Zgodbo, ne samo nekaj nepovezanih besed. Pišite tako naravno, kot to vedno počnete.« Odvrnil sem ji, da zame ni ravno naravno, da pišem, ko me snemajo za nemško javno televizijo, vendar je vztrajala. »Pa uporabite prav to,« je rekla. »Prav to zgodbo napišite. Kako to ni naravno, kako se iz te neobičajnosti nenadoma razvije nekaj resničnega, polnega strasti. Nekaj, kar vas preplavi vse od možganov pa do drobovja. Ali pa ravno obratno. Pač ne vem, kako to deluje pri vas, se pravi, kje v telesu se pri vas začne ustvarjanje. To je zelo individualna reč.« Povedala mi je, da je nekoč intervjuvala belgijskega pisatelja, ki je vedno, kadar je pisal, imel erekcijo. Pri pisanju »mu je nekaj otrdilo ud« – prav to je bil izraz, ki ga je uporabila, kar je bil gotovo dobesedni prevod iz nemščine, ki pa je v angleščini zvenel zelo čudno.

»Pišite,« je spet ponovila. »Lepo. Prav rada vas gledam, kako grozno sedite, ko pišete. Ta vaš skrčeni vrat. To je preprosto enkratno. Prosim, nadaljujte. Odlično. Tako, ja. Naravno. Ignorirajte me, pozabite, da sem tu.«

Tako nadaljujem s pisanjem in se ne zavedam njene prisotnosti, pozabim, da je tu, in sem preprosto naraven. Kolikor sem pač lahko. Sicer z gledalci nemške javne televizije nimam poravnanih računov, toda to ni pravi čas, da ga poravnam. To je čas za pisanje, za pisanje okusnih reči, ker pisanje neumnosti pač ne izgleda dobro na posnetku.

Moj sin se vrne iz vrtca. Steče k meni in me objame. Vsakič, ko so doma snemalne ekipe, me objame. Na začetku so ga morali novinarji prositi za to, zdaj pa je že navajen: steči, ne gledati v kamero,

me objeti in reči: »Oči, rad te imam.« Niti štiri leta še ni star pa ta moj zlati sin že ve, kako stvari delujejo.

Moji ženi pri tem ne gre tako dobro, pravi novinarka nemške javne televizije. Manj gladko ji gre. Ves čas si popravlja lase in kradoma pogleduje proti kameri, toda to sploh ne predstavlja problema, saj se jo da izbrisati pri montaži, kar je pri televiziji res krasno. V življenju ni tako. V življenju je ne moreš kar tako izbrisati, odstraniti. Samo Bog lahko to naredi ali pa avtobus, če jo povozi. Ali pa težka bolezen. Naš zgornji sosed je vdovec, ženo mu je pobrala neozdravljiva bolezen. Ne rak, nekaj drugega. Nekaj, kar se začne v črevesju in se konča slabo. Pol leta je na stranišču šla od nje kri. Vsaj tako nam je povedal. Pol leta, dokler je ni Gospod v nebesih v montaži dokončno izbrisal. Odkar je umrla, v našo zgradbo kar naprej prihajajo različne ženske v visokih petah, ki dišijo po cenених parfumi. Prihajajo ob najbolj neobičajnih urah, včasih celo opoldne. On, se pravi naš zgornji sosed, je upokojenec in ima veliko časa. One pa so, vsaj tako pravi moja soproga, prostitutke. Ko ona reče »kurbe«, to izusti tako naravno, kot da bi rekla »peteršilj«. Toda ko jo snemajo, takrat pač ne. Nihče ni popoln.

Moj sin ima rad prostitutke, ki prihajajo k zgornjemu sosedu. »Katera žival ste ve?« jih sprašuje, ko jih srečuje na stopnišču. »Jaz sem danes miš. Urna in izmuzljiva miš.« One to takoj razumejo in navržejo kakšno živalsko ime: slon, medved, metulj. Vsaka prostitutka s svojo živaljo. Res nenavadno, kajti drugi ljudje, ki jih sprašuje po živalih, ne razumejo prav dobro, kaj hoče od njih. Prostitutke pa s tem nimajo težav.

Prišel sem na idejo, da bi naslednjič, ko pride kakšna televizijska ekipa, namesto svoje žene privedel katero izmed njih, kar bi izpadlo čisto naravno. Izgledajo odlično, ceneno, vendar odlično, in tudi moj sin se z njimi prav dobro razume. Ko mojo ženo vpraša, katera žival je, ona vedno vztraja: »Jaz nisem žival, pišek, jaz sem človek, tvoja mama.« Nakar začne on vedno jokati.

In zakaj moja žena ne sprejme igre? Zakaj tako zlahka reče ženskam s cenеним parfumom, da so »kurbe«, reči svojemu malemu otroku, da je žirafa, pa je zanjo nekaj nemogočega? To me vedno razjezi. Kar udaril bi kaj. Ne nje, njo ljubim, ampak nekaj bi vseeno udaril. Sprostiti svojo jezo nad nekom, ki si to zasluži. Desničarji lahko vso svojo jezo sprostijo nad Arabci, rasisti nad črnci, mi, liberalni levičarji pa smo ujeti. Same sebe smo omejili in nimamo se nad kom razpočiti. »Ne govori jim kurbe,« se zgražam nad ženo, »saj

ne veš, če so kurbe. Saj nisi nikogar videla, da bi jim plačal ali kaj podobnega, tako da ne moreš o njih tako govoriti, kajne? Kako bi se ti počutila, če bi tebi kdo tako rekel?»

»Lepo,« pravi nemška novinarka. »Tole mi je prav všeč. Guba na čelu. Hiter tempo tipkanja. Zdaj je treba narediti samo še nekaj vmesnih posnetkov vaših datotek, ki so prevedene v tuje jezike, da bodo gledalci videli, da ste uspešen, in še en posnetek, kako vas objema vaš sin – prvič je tekel malo prehitro in našemu snemalcu Jörgu ni uspelo pravočasno spremeniti fokusa na kameri.« Moja soproga vpraša, če Nemka potrebuje, da me tudi ona še enkrat objame, in sam pri sebi molim, da bi rekla ja. Tako zelo si želim, da bi me moja žena še enkrat objela, da bi se okoli mene prižele njene gladke roke, kot da ni nič drugega na tem svetu razen naju. »Ni treba,« s hladnim tonom odvrne Nemka. »To že imamo.« »Katera žival si ti?« moj sin vpraša Nemko, jaz pa hitro prevedem v angleščino. »Jaz nisem žival,« se zasmije in gre s svojo dlanjo z dolgimi nohti čez njegove lase. »Jaz sem pošast. Pošast, ki je prišla z druge strani oceana, da bi pojedla majhne in lepe otroke, kot si ti.« »Pravi, da je ptica pevka,« povsem brez zadrege prevedem svojemu sinu. »Pravi, da je ptica pevka z rdečim perjem, ki je sem priletela iz daljne dežele.«

Prevedel Klemen Jelinčič Boeta

What animal are you?

The sentences I'm writing now are for the benefit of the German Public Television viewers. A reporter who came to my home today asked me to write something on the computer because it always makes for great visuals: an author writing. It's a cliché, she realizes that, but clichés are nothing but an unsexy version of the truth, and her role, as a reporter, is to turn that truth into something sexy, to break the cliché with lighting and unusual angles. And the light in my house falls perfectly, without her having to turn on even a single spot, so all that's left is for me to write.

At first, I just made believe I was writing, but she said it wouldn't work. People would be able to tell right away that I was just pretending. "Write something for real," she demanded, and then, to be sure: "A story, not just a bunch of words. Write naturally, the way you always do." I told her it wasn't natural for me to be writing while I was having my picture taken for German Public Television, but she insisted. "So use it," she said. "Write a story about just that – about how unnatural it seems and how the unnaturalness suddenly produces something real, filled with passion. Something that permeates you, from your brain to your loins. Or the other way around. I don't know how it works with you, what part of your body gets the creative juices flowing. Each person is different." She told me how she'd once interviewed a Belgian author who, every time he wrote, had an erection. Something about the writing "stiffened his organ" – that's the expression she used. It was probably a literal translation from German and it sounded very strange in English.

"Write," she insisted again. "Great. I love your terrible posture when you write, the cramped neck. It's just wonderful. Keep writing. Excellent. That's it. Naturally. Don't mind me. Forget I'm here."

So I go on writing, not minding her, forgetting she's there, and I'm natural. As natural as I can be. I have a score to settle with the viewers of German Public Television but this isn't the time to settle it. This is the time to write. To write things that will appeal, because when you write crap, she's already reminded me, it comes out terrible on camera.

My son returns from kindergarten. He runs up to me and hugs me. Whenever there's a television crew in the house, he hugs me. When he was younger, the reporters had to ask him to do it, but by

now, he's a pro: runs up to me, doesn't look at the camera, gives me a hug, and says: "I love you, Daddy." He isn't four yet, but he already understands how things work, this adorable son of mine.

My wife isn't as good, the German Television reporter says. She doesn't flow. Keeps fiddling with her hair, stealing glances at the camera. But that isn't really a problem. You can always edit her out later. That's what's so nice about television. In real life it isn't like that. In real life you can't edit her out, undo her. Only God can do that, or a bus, if it runs her over. Or a terrible disease. Our upstairs neighbor is a widower. An incurable disease took his wife from him. Not cancer, something else. Something that starts in the guts and ends badly. For six months she was shitting blood. At least that's what he told me. Six months before God Almighty edited her out. Ever since she died, all kinds of women keep visiting our building, wearing high heels and cheap perfume. They arrive at unlikely hours, sometimes as early as noon. He's retired, our upstairs neighbor, and his time is his own. And those women, according to my wife at least, they're whores. When she says "whores" it comes out natural, like she was saying "turnip." But when she's being filmed, it doesn't. Nobody's perfect.

My son loves the whores who visit our upstairs neighbor. "What animal are you?" he asks them when he bumps into them on the stairs. "Today I'm a mouse, a quick and slippery mouse." And they get it right away, and throw out the name of an animal: an elephant, a bear, a butterfly. Each whore and her animal. It's strange, because with other people, when he asks them about the animals, they simply don't catch on. But the whores just go along with it.

Which gets me thinking that the next time a television crew arrives I'll bring one of *them* instead of my wife, and that way it'll be more natural. They look great. Cheap, but great. And my son gets along better with them too. When he asks my wife what animal she is, she always insists: "I'm not an animal, Sweetie, I'm a person. I'm your mommy." And then he always starts to cry.

Why can't she just go with the flow, my wife? Why is it so easy for her to call women with cheap perfume "whores" but when it comes to telling a little boy "I'm a giraffe" it's more than she can handle? It really gets on my nerves. Makes me want to hit someone. Not her. Her I love. But someone. To take out my frustrations on someone who has it coming. Right-wingers can take it out on Arabs. Racists on blacks. But those of us who belong to the liberal left are trapped.

We've boxed ourselves in. We have nobody to take it out on. "Don't call them whores," I rail at my wife. "You don't know for a fact that they're whores, do you? You've never seen anyone pay them or anything, so don't call them that, okay? How would you feel if someone called you a whore?"

"Great," the German reporter says. "I love it. The crease in your forehead. The frenzied keystrokes. Now all we need are an intercut with translations of your books in different languages, so our viewers can tell how successful you are – and that hug from your son one more time. The first time he ran up to you so quickly that Jörg, our cameraman, didn't have a chance to change the focus." My wife wants to know if the German reporter needs her to hug me again too, and in my heart I pray she'll say yes. I'd really love my wife to hug me again, her smooth arms tightening around me, as if there's nothing else in the world but us. "No need," the German says in an icy voice. "We've got that already." "What animal are you?" my son asks the German, and I quickly translate into English. "I'm not an animal," she laughs, running her long fingernails through his hair. "I'm a monster. A monster that came from across the ocean to eat pretty little children like you." "She says she's a songbird," I translate to my son with impeccable naturalness. "She says she's a red-feathered songbird, who flew here from a faraway land."

Translated by Miriam Shlesinger

**Avtorja v
rezidenci 2015**

***Authors in
Residence 2015***



Claire-Louise Bennett

Claire-Louise Bennett se je rodila v Wiltshiru na jugozahodu Anglije. Po študiju književnosti in dramatike na Univerzi Roehampton v Londonu se je ustalila v Galwayu. Njene kratke zgodbe in eseji so bili objavljeni v številnih revijah in časopisih, kot so *The Stinging Fly*, *The Penny Dreadful*, *The Moth*, *Colony*, *The Irish Times*, *The White Review*, *3:AM Magazine* in *gorse*. Leta 2013 je prejela tedaj prvič podeljeno nagrado »White Review Short Story Prize« britanske revije *The White Review* za najboljšo kratko zgodbo. V letih 2014 in 2015 je prejela štipendijo Mestnega sveta v Galwayu, v letih 2013 in 2015 pa tudi štipendijo Umetniškega sveta Republike Irske »Arts Council of Ireland«. Njen literarni prvenec, zbirka kratkih zgodb z naslovom *Pond* (Ribnik), je izšel aprila 2015 pri irski založbi Stinging Fly Press. Omenjena zbirka bo jeseni 2015 izšla tudi v Združenem kraljestvu pri založbi Fitzcarraldo, spomladi leta 2016 pa še v Združenih državah Amerike pri založbi Riverhead.

Claire-Louise Bennett was born in Wiltshire, in the southwest of England. After studying literature and drama at the University of Roehampton in London, she settled in Galway. Her short fiction and essays have been published in many magazines and newspapers, such as *The Stinging Fly*, *The Penny Dreadful*, *The Moth*, *Colony*, *The Irish Times*, *The White Review*, *3:AM Magazine*, and *gorse*. In 2013 she won the inaugural White Review Short Story Prize presented by the British literary magazine *The White Review*. In 2014 and 2015 she was awarded grants from Galway City Council and a bursary of the Arts Council of Ireland in 2013 and 2015. Her literary debut, a collection of short stories titled *Pond*, was published by the Irish Stinging Fly Press in April 2015. The collection is also scheduled to be published in the UK by Fitzcarraldo in autumn of 2015 and by Riverhead in the United States of America in spring of 2016.

Morning, Noon & Night

(excerpt from the story)

As with most measurable areas of life I demonstrated no ambition whatsoever as a grower and selected to cultivate low-maintenance crops only. Potatoes, spinach, and broad beans. That was it. That was enough. People told me what a cinch it was to grow courgettes, squash, marrow, carrots, but nothing had changed really – I hadn't suddenly become a gardener, and I resented being spoken to as though I had. The plants were coming on quite nicely when I received an invitation to speak at a very eminent university across the water upon a subject I was very interested in indeed – though not necessarily in a meritorious way. That's to say my interest was far too personal and not strictly academic and so my methodology came across as nostalgic and my perspective rather naive since I ignored the usual critical frameworks which were anyhow quite incomprehensible to me and instead pilfered haphazardly from the entire history of Western literature in order to strengthen my argument, which I cannot now recall. It had something to do with love. About the essential brutality of love. About those adventitious souls who deliberately seek out love as a prime agent of total self-immolation. Yes, that's right. It attempted to show that in the whole history of literature love is quite routinely depicted as an engulfing process of ecstatic suffering which finally, mercifully, obliterates us and delivers us to oblivion. Dismembered and packed off. Something like that. Something along those lines. I am mad about you. I am going out of my mind. My soul burns for you. I am inflamed. There is nothing now, nothing except you. Gone, quite gone. That kind of thing. I don't think it went down very well.

In fact I think it was considered rather unsophisticated and I remember feeling, despite my new floral chemise, suddenly sullen and practically Gothic. Actually, now that I come to think of it, I think the gist of my argument was simply that love is indeed a vicious and divine disintegration of selfhood and that artistic representations of it as such aren't at all uncommon or outlandish and have nothing whatsoever to do with endeavouring to shock an audience. There was an awful lot of violence you see in the work of the playwright the conference was reputedly reassessing and by and large that violence had hitherto been widely interpreted as nothing more than a dramatic strategy designed to shock, which I could never

quite accept because how on earth is there anything shocking about violence? Anyway, I must confess, in order to establish a perennial language of love that testified to the abominable emancipation that is brought on by want of another I did in fact reference not only Sappho, Seneca, Novalis, Roland Barthes, Denis de Rougemont and Dutch historian Johan Huizinga, I also included lyrics by PJ Harvey and Nick Cave, with the somewhat misplaced intention of demonstrating that it just never stops. That the desire to come apart irrevocably will always be as strong, if not stronger, than the drive to establish oneself. As deep as ink and black, black as the deepest sea.

Afterwards, when people were milling about and nodding in little groups, and I wasn't sure which of the several exits to make immediate use of, one of the academic big guns approached me and commented upon my paper. This all happened several years ago by the way – and I'm not absolutely sure why I'm recounting it here since it hardly situates me in a very flattering light – anyway, I don't recall exactly what he said to me, but it was exceedingly condescending and I very very clearly remember thinking why don't you fall over. Why don't you become tangled in some cables near the screen at the front on your way out and fall over and why don't you smack your head off a very sharp corner of the desk where earlier I sat and delivered my oh so charming missive and cut your head open ever so slightly so that a little bit of blood drops out. Just a little trickle of blood so that you don't look injured, only stupid and a bit iffy. Thank you very much, I said. And suddenly my back went cold so I deduced that the outside must after all be right there behind me; I turned around and walked towards it and very soon the ground did in fact change. It was wet and the car park was almost empty and smelt exclusively of dishcloths.

I may as well mention that I was staying with a girl I'd met in London the previous year. She was a very gifted academic and her ability to formulate a rousing opinion in response to something that had just happened or had just been said never ceased to impress and baffle me. How anyone could sally forth thoughts that were unfailingly well-formed and *de rigueur*, so soon and in any situation, was quite beyond me. She lived in a terrace house with several other postgraduate students, one of whom was a bloke as a matter of fact, and later, when my friend had gone to bed, he came into the sitting room where I sat with a large book flopped in my lap and put a hot water bottle underneath my toes. We didn't kiss then; we kissed

later, a few weeks later. I flew home first and then we wrote to each other and then we really needed to see each other. So I went back, and then we kissed.

None of that has anything to do with now by the way. Despite how promising I seem to have made the encounter with the man and the hot water bottle sound it was in fact an ill-starred liaison and, perhaps less surprisingly, the inviability of my academic career eventually acquired a palpability of such insidious force that one day I came out of a shop unwrapping a pack of cigarettes and went nowhere for approximately half an hour. My wherewithal had quite dried up you see, I'd snubbed it for so long it had completely dried up and so I had come to a standstill, not knowing at all whether to turn left or go right. And the chief reason why I moved after approximately half an hour is because people continually approached me to enquire if the bus had already come and gone. I don't know, I said. I don't know, I said again. I don't know. And then it was as though they backed away and vanished completely and I was left standing absolutely and purposelessly alone – I don't think I've experienced a sense of fundamental redundancy to that extent since. The hopelessness of everything I was trying to occupy myself with was at last glaringly crystal clear.

But the potato plants were still growing! I went over to see my upbeat boyfriend many times and the potatoes and spinach and broad beans didn't mind one bit and sometimes while I was away I would lie in bed next to him unable to sleep and think of the potatoes and spinach and broad beans out there in the dark and I'd splay my fingers towards the ceiling and feel such yearning! I could recall the soil very well, how dark it was and the smell of it – as if it had never before been opened up, and the canal was nearby, and the moon was always overhead, and spiders would get off their webs for a bit and tentatively come into contact with the still edges of things. We didn't get along very well but this had no bearing whatsoever on our sexual rapport which was impervious and persuasive and made every other dwindling aspect of our relationship quite irrelevant for some time. We wrote each other hundreds of lustful emails, and by that I mean graphic and obscene. It was wonderful. I'd never done that before, I'd never written anything salacious before, it was completely new to me and I must say I got the hang of it really very quickly. I wish I'd kept them, I wish I hadn't become quite so unhinged when finally we acknowledged that eighteen months was pretty well as much as we could expect from a relationship based almost entirely upon

avid fornication, and thereupon rashly expunged our complete correspondence, which, by then, amounted to almost two thousand emails. I won't be able to write emails like that again you see – that's to say I won't be able to write emails like that for the first time again. And that really was what made them so exciting – using language in a way I'd not used it before, to transcribe such an intimate area of my being that I'd never before attempted to linguistically lay bare. It was very nice I must say to every now and then take a break from cobbling together yet another overwrought academic abstract on more or less the same theme in order to set down, so precisely, how and where I'd like my brains to be fucked right out.

It wasn't all one way of course. He came to see me, and in fact he ate some of the vegetables I'd grown and he said they were lovely, which they were. We ate oranges too, quite often – in fact eating Spanish oranges became a bit of a thing. They are very nice to eat, oranges, when you've been having sex for ages. They cut through the fug and smell very organised, and so a sort of structure resumes and then it is perfectly possible to make a plan, such as going out somewhere nice for dinner.

Still, as I've said, none of this has anything to do with now whatsoever. I don't know what it has to do with and as a matter of fact I'm not sure what now is about either. I can say that I'm waiting for the delivery of two Japanese tapestries I bought in France earlier this year, but even that is off-the-mark and could very well proffer a misleading impression of me, a rather grand impression perhaps, as if I were supremely but subtly well-off and presided over quite the sequestered emporium of exotic whatnots and *recherché objets d'art*. Castles in the clouds I'm afraid, truth is, they can hardly be thought of as tapestries at all – they aren't much more than two pieces of old black cloth in two separate frames with some rose-gold flecks here and there, amounting, in one, to a pair of hands, and to a rather forlorn profile in the other. From what I remember of them it seems there had originally been many more stitches and thus a more complete and detailed image but for a reason I cannot at all decipher most of the stitches have been removed. Yet the trace of where they once were is discernible with some effort, as of course are the very small holes, where silken thread, presumably, moved deftly in and out of the cloth. I should think that in here especially they will only ever look like two framed fragments of black cloth. That's if they ever arrive of course – the man bringing them over was due at seven o'clock and it is now gone half past.

Jutro, poldne in noč

(odlomek iz zgodbe)

Podobno kot na mnogih drugih merljivih področjih življenja nisem bila kot pridelovalka niti malo ambiciozna in odločila sem se, da bom gojila le vrtnine, ki zahtevajo čim manj truda. Krompir, špinačo in bob. To je bilo to. Bilo je dovolj. Ljudje so mi govorili, kako otročje lahko je vzgajati cukete, jedilne buče, bučke, korenje. A me dejansko to ni prav nič spremenilo – nisem čez noč postala vrtičkarica in jezilo me je, če so se z menoj pogovarjali, kakor da sem. Rastline so prav lepo uspevale, ko sem prejela vabilo; na zelo ugledni univerzi na drugi strani morja naj bi predavala o temi, ki me je resnično zanimala, čeprav zanjo najbrž ne bi ravno žela pohval. Hočem reči, da je bilo moje zanimanje veliko preosebno in še zdaleč ne strogo akademsko, zato se je moja metodologija mnogim zdela nostalgичna in moji nazori dokaj naivni, ker sem zanemarila običajne kritične okvire, ki so mi bili tako ali tako precej nerazumljivi, in sem raje brez reda napaberkovala prgišče poudarkov iz celotne zgodovine zahodne književnosti, da bi bili moji argumenti trdnjši, čeprav se jih zdaj ne spomnim več. Bilo je nekaj v zvezi z ljubeznijo. O temeljni brutalnosti ljubezni. O tistih izkrivljenih dušah, ki načrtno iščejo ljubezen kot sprožilec popolnega žrtvovanja jaza. Da, tako je. Poskušala sem ponazoriti, da so skozi celotno zgodovino literature ljubezen precej samodejno prikazovali kot vseobsegajoč proces zamaknjenega trpljenja, ki nas nazadnje milostno izniči in odplavi v pozabo. Razčetrverjene in v povojih. Nekaj takega. Nekaj v tem smislu. Nora sem nate. Meša se mi. Duša mi gori zate. Plamenim. Ničesar več ni, ničesar razen tebe. Spodnaša me, čisto me bo odneslo. Takšne stvari. A mislim, da niso bile najboljše sprejete.

V resnici sem prepričana, da se jim je moj referat zdel precej primitiven, in spominjam se, da sem se kljub novi ohlapni obleki s cvetličnim vzorcem nenadoma počutila čemerno in domala srednjeveško. Če bolje pomislim, bi zdaj lahko rekla, da so moji argumenti želeli v bistvu sporočiti le, da je ljubezen v resnici nasilen in božanski razkroj individualnosti in da umetniško predstavljanje ljubezni kot take ni niti najmanj neobičajno ali bizarno in nikakor ne poskuša šokirati občinstva. V delih dramatika, ki ga je konferenca bojda ponovno odkrila, vidiš ogromno nasilja in praviloma so to nasilje dotlej na dolgo in široko tolmačili, češ da ni drugega kot dramska strategija, ki hoče šokirati, česar pa nikakor nisem mogla sprejeti,

ker kaj za božjo voljo pa naj bi bilo pri nasilju šokantnega? Kakor koli, priznati moram, da sem se, ker sem hotela ponazoriti večni jezik ljubezni, ki bi pričal o neznosni osvobojenosti, ki jo prinaša odsotnost drugega, v resnici sklicevala ne le na Sapfo, Seneko, Novalisa, Rolanda Barthesa, Denisa de Rougemonta in nizozemskega zgodovinarja Johana Huizingo, temveč sem vključila tudi besedila PJ Harvey in Nicka Cava, da bi – čeprav je bil moj namen nekoliko zgrešen – dokazala, kako se preprosto nikoli ne konča. Da bo želja po dokončnem razkroju vedno enako močna, če ne celo močnejša, kot želja po uveljavitvi samega sebe. *As deep as ink and black, black as the deepest sea.*

Pozneje, ko so ljudje postopali sem ter tja in si prikimavali v majhnih skupinah, jaz pa se še nisem odločila, skozi katerega od mnogih izhodov naj nemudoma izginem, se mi je približal eden od akademskih pomembnežev in komentiral moj referat. Vse to se je zgodilo pred leti in pravzaprav ne vem, zakaj zgodbo pripovedujem tukaj, ker me res ne kaže v najbolj laskavi luči, ampak kakor koli – ne spominjam se natančno, kaj mi je dejal, a je bilo nadvse pokroviteljsko, in zelo jasno se spominjam, da sem pomislila, zakaj se ne zvrneš. Zakaj se na poti ven ne zapleteš v kable pred zaslonom, zakaj se ne prekucneš in z glavo udariš v ostri rob tiste pisalne mize, za katero sem malo prej sedela in prebirala svoje očarljivo pisanje, in si vsaj malo ne razčesneš betice, da bi iz nje priteklo nekaj krvi. Le drobcen potoček krvi, da ne boš videti ranjen, le butast in nekoliko negotov. Najlepša vam hvala, sem rekla. In nenadoma me je po hrbtu močno zmrzilo in doumela sem, da je zunaj navsezadnje očitno tik za meno; obrnila sem se in se napotila v tisto smer in že kmalu so se tla dejansko spremenila. Bila so mokra in parkirišče je bilo skoraj prazno in je vonjalo izključno po kuhinjskih krpah.

Lahko povem še to, da sem stanovala s punco, ki sem jo leto poprej spoznala v Londonu. Bila je zelo nadarjena študentka in njena sposobnost oblikovanja ognjevitih mnenj kot odziv na tisto, kar se je pravkar zgodilo ali je bilo pravkar izrečeno, me je nenehno navduševala in hkrati begala. Resnično nisem razumela, kako lahko kdo kar bruha misli, do popolnosti izoblikovane in *de rigueur*, tako hitro in v vsakršnih okoliščinah. Živela je v vrstni hiši s kopico drugih podiplomskih študentk, no, v bistvu je bil med njimi tudi tip, in ko je moja prijateljica odšla spat, je prišel v dnevno sobo, kjer sem sedela z veliko knjigo v naročju, in mi pod nožne prste podložil termofor. Takrat se nisva poljubila; poljubila sva se pozneje, šele tedne pozne-

je. Najprej sem odletela domov in potem sva si pisala in potem sva se resnično morala videti. Zato sem se vrnila in takrat sva se poljubila.

A nič od tega nima prav nobene zveze s sedanjostjo, mimogrede. Naj sem srečanje s tipom in termofor opisala še tako obetavno, je šlo v resnici za razmerje, spočeto pod nesrečno zvezdo, in – kar je morda manj presenetljivo – brezcilnost, v katero je težila moja akademska kariera, je nazadnje postala tako zelo očitna, da sem nekega dne prišla iz trgovine, odprla zavojček cigaret in približno pol ure peščila nikamor. Moja sredstva za preživetje so namreč povsem presahnila, če me razumete; tako dolgo se nisem zmenila za njih, da so se čisto izčrpala, in prišla sem do mrtve točke, ko se mi niti sanjalo ni, ali naj zavijem levo ali se napotim desno. Glavni razlog, zakaj sem se čez približno pol ure sploh premaknila, je bil, da so k meni kar naprej pristopali ljudje in me spraševali, ali je avtobus že prišel in odšel. Ne vem, sem dejala. Ne vem, sem ponovila. Ne vem. In potem je bilo, kot bi se odmaknili in popolnoma izginili, in nena doma sem bila absolutno in povsem brezcilno čisto sama – mislim, da od takrat še nisem izkusila občutka tako temeljne odvečnosti. Brezupnost vsega, s čimer sem se poskušala zamotiti, je bila končno slepeče kristalno jasna.

Krompir pa je še kar rasel! Večkrat sem šla obiskat svojega optimističnega fanta in krompir in špinača in bob niso imeli čisto nič proti in včasih, ko me ni bilo doma, sem ležala poleg njega v postelji in nisem mogla spati in sem premišljevala o krompirju in špinaci in bobu, kako so sami tam v temi, in iztegnila sem prste proti stropu in začutila nepopisno hrepenenje! Zelo dobro sem si lahko priklivala v spomin prst, kako temna je bila in kako je dišala – kot da še nihče ne bi zakopal vanjo, in blizu je bil kanal in nad njim je bila vedno luna in pajki so za hip splezali s svojih mrež in se obotavljivo dotikali mirnih robov stvari. Nisva se dobro razumela, a to ni niti najmanj vplivalo na najino spolno razmerje, ki je bilo nepredirno in prepričljivo in je vse druge hirajoče vidike najine zveze vsaj za nekaj hipov naredilo povsem nepomembne. Drug drugemu sva napisala na stotine pohotnih mejlov in s tem hočem povedati, da so bili res nazorni in obsceni. Čudovito je bilo. Tega prej nisem nikoli počela, še nikoli poprej nisem napisala ničesar opolzkega, bilo je nekaj čisto novega in priznati moram, da sem se res zelo hitro vživela. Želim si, da bi jih bila obdržala, želim si, da me ne bi bilo tako vrglo iz tira, ko sva si končno priznala, da je osemnajst mesecev pravzaprav vse, kar sva lahko pričakovala od razmerja, ki je skoraj v celoti temeljilo na

hlastnem parjenju, in takrat sem prenačljeno izbrisala celotno najino korespondenco, ki je do takrat narasla na skoraj dva tisoč elektronskih sporočil. Takšnih mejlov nikoli več ne bom mogla pisati, veste – hočem reči, da ne bom mogla še enkrat pisati takšnih mejlov, kot bi bilo prvič. In prav zato so bili tako vznemirljivi – povsem nova uporaba jezika za opisovanje intimnega dela svojega bivanja, ki ga nisem še nikoli prej poskušala jezikovno tako zelo razgaliti. Bilo je lepo, moram priznati, ko sem si med packanjem še enega prenapetega akademskega povzetka o bolj ali manj enaki temi vsake toliko vzela odmor, da bi čim natančneje opisala, kako in kje natančno bi si želela, da me v tistem trenutku pofuka do nezvesti.

Seveda ni bilo vse skupaj zgolj enostransko. Tudi on me je obiskoval in celo pojedel nekaj zelenjave, ki sem jo vzgojila; rekel je, da je okusna, in res je bila. Tudi pomaranče sva jedla, kar pogosto – v bistvu so španske pomaranče postala ena taka najina stvar. Zelo prijetno jih je jesti, pomaranče, potem ko si celo večnost seksal. Zarežejo skozi zatohlost in dišijo zelo organizirano, zato se ponovno vzpostavi nekakšna struktura in spet je povsem mogoče kovati načrte, kam bi lahko šla na prijetno večerjo, denimo.

A kljub temu, kot sem že povedala, nima nič od tega prav nobene zveze s sedanostjo. Ne vem, s čim ima zvezo, in pravzaprav ne vem niti tega, za kaj naj bi pri sedanosti sploh šlo. Lahko pa povem, da zdajle čakam na dostavo japonskih tapiserij, ki sem ju v začetku leta kupila v Franciji, a niti to ni čisto točno in bi lahko o meni ustvarilo zavajajoč vtis, morda precej nobel vtis, kot da bi bila silno, a prefinjeno premožna in bi vodila samotno blagovnico z vso mogočo eksotično navlako in *recherche objets d'art*. Gradovi v oblakih, se bojim, resnica je takšna, da bi tisto le težko imeli za tapiseriji – v bistvu sta komaj kaj več od dveh kosov stare črne tkanine v ločenih okvirjih z rožnato-zlatimi packami tu in tam, ki se na prvi zlijejo v par dlani, na drugi pa v precej ubog profil. Kolikor se ju spominjam, se mi zdi, da sta imeli prvotno izvezenih veliko več šivov in torej celovitejša in podrobnejša prizora, a so iz razloga, ki ga sploh ne morem dognati, večino šivov odstranili. Toda če se vsaj malo potrudiš, lahko še vedno razbereš njihove sledi in seveda luknjice, kjer je domnevno svilen nit nekoč spretno tekla skozi tkanino. Mislim si, da bosta – še zlasti tukaj – najverjetneje videti zgolj kot uokvirjena kosa črnega blaga. Če bosta sploh kdaj prispeli, seveda – moški, ki naj bi ju prinesel, bi moral biti tukaj ob sedmih, zdaj pa je že pol osmih.



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Goran Ferčec

Goran Ferčec se je rodil leta 1978 v Koprivnici na Hrvaškem. Študiral je umetnostno zgodovino in poljski jezik s književnostjo na Filozofski fakulteti Univerze v Zagrebu ter dramaturgijo na Akademiji dramske umetnosti (ADU). Je pisatelj, dramatik, dramaturg, asistent pri različnih gledaliških projektih in član uredniškega odbora revije za gledališko umetnost *Frakcija*. Je tudi soustanovitelj Dramaturškega kolektiva (dk) – pobude za promocijo dramskih besedil mladih avtorjev in avtoric. Gledališka in teoretična besedila objavlja v številnih revijah, kot so *Frakcija*, *Kretanja*, *Kazalište* (Zagreb), *TkH-TeorijaKojaHoda* (Beograd), *Scena* (Novi Sad) in *Buchkultur* (Dunaj), ter na 3. programu Hrvaškega državnega radia (HRT). Njegov romaneskni prvenec *Ovdje neće biti čuda* (Tukaj ne bo čudežev) je izšel leta 2011. Istega leta je bilo v režiji Bojana Đorđeva v Mladinskem gledališču Zagreb (ZKM) krstno uprizorjeno njegovo dramsko besedilo *Pismo Heinerju Müllerju*, ki je bilo nagrajeno s prvo nagrado dramskega natečaja »Über Grenzen Sprechen« Avstrijskega kulturnega foruma (2007) in z dekanovo nagrado Univerze v Zagrebu (2008). Njegovo drugo dramsko besedilo *Radnice u gladovanju* (Delavke na gladovni stavki) je bilo v sodelovanju z zasedbo fringe ensemble (Bonn) in gledališčem Schaubühne Lindenfels Theatre (Leipzig) krstno uprizorjeno leta 2014 v okviru projekta »Vor den Hunden«.

Goran Ferčec was born in 1978 in Koprivnica, Croatia. He studied Art History and Polish Language and Literature at the Faculty of Arts at the University of Arts in Zagreb, and Dramaturgy at the Academy of Dramatic Arts (ADU). He is a writer, playwright, dramaturge, and assistant with various theatre projects, and a member of the editorial board of the *Frakcija* theatre arts magazine. He is also one of the co-founders of the "Dramaturški kolektiv (dk)" – an initiative promoting plays written by young authors. He publishes his theatre and theoretical texts in various magazines, such as *Frakcija*, *Kretanja*, *Kazalište* (Zagreb), *TkH-TeorijaKojaHoda* (Belgrade); *Scena* (Novi Sad), *Buchkultur* (Vienna), and on the 3rd programme of the Croatian National Radio (HRT). His debut novel, *Ovdje neće biti čuda* (There Will Be No Miracles Here), was published in 2011. The same year saw the premier of his play *Pismo Heineru Mülleru* (A Letter to Heiner Müller), directed by Bojan Đorđev, in the Zagreb Youth Theatre (ZKM). The play was awarded with the first prize of the "Über Grenzen Sprechen" drama contest of the Austrian Cultural Forum (2007) and the Dean's Award of the University of Zagreb (2008). His second play, *Radnice u gladovanju* (Female Workers on Hunger Strike), premièred in collaboration with fringe ensemble (Bonn) and the Schaubühne Lindenfels Theatre (Leipzig) as part of the "Vor den Hunden" project in 2014.

Ovdje neće biti čuda

(odlomak iz romana)

Otac pita: Je li pas otišao? Bender pogleda niz obnovljenu mokru cestu u čijem crnilu nestaju sve stvari, bića i pojave koji više nisu potrebni i uvjeri se da je pas otišao. Otišao je, kaže Bender. Otac produži situaciju još nekoliko trenutaka i potom otvori vrata. Otac najprije šuti nagoviještajući moguću tišinu kao znak tvrdoglavosti, a zatim upita: Imaš li cigaretu? Bender odmahne glavom. Otac spusti pogled na džepove Benderovih hlača ne bi li provjerio istinitost njegove tvrdnje. Razočaranje zbog nepostojanja cigarete otac popрати nadimanjem i grimasom koja otkriva gastroenterološki poremećaj, stanje vječnog podrigivanja. Prije osam godina dijagnosticiran mi je ulcerozni kolitis, koji se manifestirao kroz krvave i učestale stolice. U posljednjih šest godina stanje mu je više-manje stabilno (nema krvi u stolici). Razlog očevoj grimasi ipak nije ulcerozni kolitis, već poremećaj sfinktera na ulazu u želudac, koji se u očevu slučaju ne zatvara. Sfinkter je otvoren, i otac ispušta zrak poput balona, ubacujući u kontinuirano istjecanje zraka riječ po riječ. Kisela izjava koju otac istiskuje vezana je uz nešto što više nije tu. Otac kaže: To nije moj pas, ne znam čiji je, ali moj nije, treba ga otjerati. Benderu se učini da bi se otac mogao ispuhati ako ga ne prekine. Zvao si, kaže Bender. Otac zatvori usta, prekine istjecanje zraka pa počne pomicati glavu lijevo-desno, poput djeteta koje u ustima rastapa nedozvoljeni bombon. Otac izađe iz kuće zatvarajući za sobom vrata. Udahne veću količinu zraka i skoro ispuni okvir ulaznih vrata. Bender oduстане od inzistiranja na tome je li otac zvao ili nije. Nepodudaranje onoga što je očekivao i onoga što ga je dočekalo očigledno je. Umjesto da se smanji, otac je narastao. Otac podsjeti Bendera na Juliana Schnabela s fotografije koju je vidio u avionu. Otac ima glavu identičnu Zeusovoj i ruga mu se svojom snagom. Rukama debelim kao cjepanice. Glavom koja je progutala vrat. Tijelom otpornim na udarce, bol i raspadanje. To je trenutak slučajnosti u kojem je otac samo objekt u dosluhu s nesigurnošću Benderove želje. Možda ispred Bendera stoji Julian Schnabel. Fizičku prisutnost jednog čovjeka moguće je zamijeniti pričom o drugom. Bender se odmakne nekoliko koraka da bi imao bolji odnos prema onome u što gleda. Je li otac veći od stvari koje ga okružuju, ili su se stvari u međuvremenu smanjile. Bender uspoređi veličine. Kako opravdati opis Juliana Schnabela koji se ugrauio između Bendera i njegova oca? Otac podi-

gne ruke i nasloni ih na okvir vrata. Rocka Hudsona uvijek su fotografirali iz donjeg rakursa, tako da ispunja cijeli format slike i izgleda poput diva, kaže Bender. Otac ne odgovori, ali zadrži gestu kojom želi pokazati da je preživio. Ruševine oko njega izgledaju kao ostaci njegova bijesa. Otac je Zeus u selu iz kojeg su svi otišli. Njemu pripada sve. On vlada ostacima stvari. Nema s kime voditi borbe jer su drugi između borbe i bijega odabrali bijeg. Otac izgleda velik jer je svijet nakon kaosa ostao malen. Očeva kuća jedina se nije pretvorila u kućicu za pse. Ili dvorac za lutke. Kuća je ostala jer sam ja ostao, kaže otac i udari rukom u okvir vrata. Otpadne nekoliko trunaka žbuke i prljavštine, koje vjetar unese Benderu u oko. Nečistoća u oku natjera ga da pred ocem spusti glavu i pokuša si pomoći. Otac kaže: Trepći, izaći će sám. Što uđe, mora i izaći. Bender trepće po zamućenoj slici oca dok mu oko pokušava izbaciti strano tijelo. Vjetar stalno mijenja smjer. Oko i slika u neprekidnoj su opasnosti da im se dogodi privid. Sunce je odgodilo svoj zalaz dok ne dođe do susreta koji svi iščekuju. Doputovao sam vlakom, kaže Bender. Ne umirem, kaže otac i udahne da bi se povećao. Širenje i povećavanje dijelova tijela u životinjskom svijetu znače ili prijetnju ili zavođenje ili poziv na borbu. Bender odluči stvar shvatiti doslovno. Treba se izboriti na pravo da stoji među ruševinama nakon što je kaos prošao. Bender se udalji od ulaznih vrata i stane na izgaženu čistinu pred kućom. Vrhom cipele po vlažnoj zemlji napravi krug, stane unutar njega i kaže: Tu. Skine jaknu, zatim majicu i potkošulju. Najprije osjeti vjetar pa tek onda sram, iako mu tijelo u odnosu na stvari koje ga okružuju izgleda živo i mlado. Otac stoji na vratima kao da se zaglavio i ne može se pomaknuti. Zbunjen je pozivom na borbu. Bender napravi nekoliko skokova i rastegne mišiće ramena šireći ruke unazad. Osjeća snagu kakvu već dugo nije osjetio. To je sasvim subjektivan osjećaj, pomisli Bender, ali neupitno je da će upravo on odnijeti pobjedu. Mahne rukom prema ocu, pozivajući ga da stane u ring. Nagnuta tijela, otac neko vrijeme oklijeva, a onda zakorači prema Benderu. Zastane izvan kruga i skine tanku ljetnu košulju. Očevo je tijelo dlakavo. Linija sivih dlaka širi se preko prsa i u tankom viru spušta preko trbuha. Bender prepozna tijelo. Očeve su bradavice izgubile boju i vise kao da su othranile četru razmetnih sinova. Otac zakorači u označeni krug i napadne. Prebaci ruke preko Benderovih ramena i pokuša stegnuti koliko može. Očev napad najprije izgleda kao pokušaj mirenja ili pozdravljanja nakon drugog vremena neviđanja. Bender pusti da otac pronađe položaj koji mu

najviše odgovara. Otac napada kao da nekog oplakuje. Bender uzvraća kao da pokušava oca održati na nogama. To je idealna usklađenost tijela jednakih po konstituciji i različitim po karakteru. Otac ispušta kratke izdahe koji proizvode zvuk sličan zvuku neke mehaničke naprave. Bender podigne ruke i uhvati oca oko struka. Iznenadi se koliko je očevo tijelo lagano. Odigne ga od zemlje i ponovo spusti. Učini to nekoliko puta samo da bi demonstrirao snagu koje ni sam nije bio svjestan. Bez tvrdog uporišta oca uhvati panika, pa počne mahati nogama. Podignute hlače otkrivaju bijele listove preslabe da bi se noge natjerale u bijeg pred vojskama, psima, nevremenom i drugim pojavama pred kojima bi trebalo bježati. Bender spusti oca na zemlju. Obojica su znojna. Na trenutak se svi pokreti zamrznu, kao da je slika čiji središnji dio čini njihova borba pronašla neki detalj zanimljiviji od borbe same. Sve je stalo. Listovi na stablima plošna su dekoracija. Svi dimnjaci hladni su i ispuhani. Ne pomiče se nijedan atom izmorenog i razrušenog svijeta. Osim što se između očevih nogu počinje širiti mrlja. Kad bi borbu pratio televizijski prijenos, kamera bi milijunskom auditoriju zumirala upravo taj, jedini živi detalj tople mrlje koja se širi između očevih nogu. Sve ostalo više nije važno. Ni grčko-rimski klasični stil hrvanja ispruženih ruku. Ni očigledna nespretnost očevih pokreta. Ni moguća Benderova hrvačka erekcija potaknuta strahom koji tijelo upisuje u mozak trenutak prije no što se dvije mase sudare. Očeva mrlja širi se kao shematski prikaz geodetskih mijena kontinenata u periodu od nekoliko milijuna godina. Milijun godina na mapi očevih hlača postaje sekunda i kontinent raste i postaje veći od svih poznatih kontinenata. Snaga u očevim rukama popušta. Bender ne primjećuje mrlju sve dok mokraća ne počne u tankome mlazu curiti u lokvu između očevih stopala. Barica u početku dovoljna za Palčicu, počinje rasti brže od bilo koje druge stvari u bajci. Mrlja na očevim hlačama koja se i dalje širi porazila je sve druge detalje svih prijašnjih katastrofa. Mrlja najavljuje poraz. Snaga u očevu tijelu naočigled popušta. Bender iskoristi priliku i akumuliranom snagom pobjednika prebaci oca na bok, a zatim na leđa. Očevo je prepuštanje znak predaje iako se tijelo još uvijek bori nagonima upisanim u mišićnu masu. Bender sjedi na očevim prsima i pokušava se obraniti od ruku koje neartikulirano izlijeću prema njegovoj glavi. Dok otac pomiče glavu lijevo-desno pokazujući da još uvijek nije naučio gubiti, Bender ne odustaje da svoju pobjedu dovede do kraja i potvrdi je. Podigne očeve ruke iznad njegove glave i pritisne ih u zemlju sjedeći

mu na prsima. Obojica su na zemlji, ali pobjednik je samo jedan. I možda upravo zbog te činjenice otac najprije ispusti tanak i piskutav ton, za kojim uslijedi krivljenje usana i masovno nabiranje kože oko očiju. Suze dolaze tek nakon svih drugih najava da će poteći. Otac plače. Literarizirana scena mita dovedena je do svoje katarze. Veliki div počeo je puštati suze dok mu potomak sjedi na golim prsima. Ovdje bi mogao uslijediti kraj televizijskog prijenosa, prije nego sunce zađe. Zamrznuti kadar traje vječno. Sunce nikada neće zaći. Bender nikada neće ustati s očevih prsa. Očeve suze nikada neće prestati teći. Bender pusti očeve ruke, koje ovaj podigne i njima prekrije lice kao da se skriva pred svjedocima iako nikoga nema kilometrima uokolo. Približavanje noći gledatelje je odavno otjeralo kućama. Stari nogama pokušava zbaciti mladoga sa sebe. Uspije mu. Otac ustane, prstima otre nos i okrene se oko sebe pokušavajući pronaći košulju koju je skinuo prije ulaska u ring. Podigne je i blatnjavih leđa krene prema kući. Uđe ostavljajući za sobom mokre tragove.

Tu ne bo čudeža

(odlomek iz romana)

Oče vpraša: Je pes odšel? Bender pogleda po obnovljeni mokri cesti, v katere črnini se izgubijo vse reči, bitja in pojavi, ki več niso potrebni, in se prepriča, da je pes odšel. Odšel je, pravi Bender. Oče situacijo podaljša še za nekaj trenutkov in potem odpre vrata. Oče sprva molči in tako napove morebitno tišino, ki bi bila znamenje trme, nato pa vpraša: A imaš cigareto? Bender odkima. Oče pogleda dol, kjer so žepi Benderjevih hlač, da bi vseeno preveril resničnost njegove trditve. Razočaranje zaradi cigaretnega neobstoja oče pospremi z napihovanjem in grimaso, ki razkriva gastroenterološko motnjo, stanje neprestanega spahovanja. Pred osmimi leti so mu diagnosticali ulcerozni kolitis, ki se je manifestiral s krvavim in pogostim odvajanjem. Zadnjih šest let je njegovo stanje bolj ali manj stabilno (v blatu ni krvi). Vendar očetove grimase ne povzroča ulcerozni kolitis, ampak motnja zapiralke na vhodu v želodec, ki se v očetovem primeru ne zapira. Zapiralka je odprta, oče izpušča zrak kot balon in pri tem v kontinuirano uhajanje zraka vstavlja posamezne besede. Kisla izjava, ki jo oče iztisne, je povezana z nečim, česar ni več tu. Oče pravi: To ni moj pes, ne vem, čigav je, ampak moj ni, treba ga je spoditi. Benderju se zazdi, da bi se oče lahko izpihal, če ga ne prekine. Klical si, pravi Bender. Oče zapre usta, ustavi uhajanje zraka in začne z glavo krožiti levo in desno, kot bi bil otrok, ki v ustih raztaplja nedovoljen bonbon. Oče gre iz hiše in pri tem zapre vrata za seboj. Vdihne večjo količino zraka in skoraj zapolni vratni podboj. Bender opusti spraševanje o tem, ali je oče klical ali ne. Neskladje med tistim, kar je pričakoval, in tistim, na kar je naletel, je očitno. Namesto da bi postal manjši, je oče zrastel. Oče Benderja spominja na Juliana Schnabla s fotografije, ki jo je videl na letalu. Očetova glava je prav takšna kot Zevsova in s svojo močjo se mu posmehuje. Z rokami, debelimi kot klade. Z glavo, ki je pogoltnila vrat. S telesom, odpornim na udarce, bolečino in razpadanje. Gre za naključni trenutek, v katerem je oče le objekt pajdašenja z negotovostjo Benderjeve želje. Morda pred Benderjem stoji Julian Schnabel. Fizično navzočnost enega človeka je moč nadomestiti z zgodbo o drugem. Bender se za nekaj korakov odmakne, da bi ujel boljše razmerje do tistega, kar opazuje. Je oče večji od reči, ki ga obkrožajo, ali pa so se medtem zmanjšale reči? Bender primerja velikosti. Kako opravičiti opis Juliana Schnabla, ki se je vrnil med Benderja in

njegovega očeta? Oče dvigne roke in jih nasloni na podboj. Rocka Hudsona so vedno fotografirali iz spodnjega rakurza, da je bil izpolnjen celoten format slike in je bil videti kot velikan, pravi Bender. Oče ne odgovori, vendar zadrži gesto, s katero želi pokazati, da je preživel. Ruševine okrog njega so videti kot posledice njegovega besnila. Oče je Zevs v vasi, iz katere so vsi odšli. Pripada mu vse. Upravlja z ostanki reči. Nima se s kom bojevati, saj so se vsi drugi med bojem in begom odločili za beg. Oče je videti velik, ker je svet po kaosu ostal majhen. Edino očetova hiša se ni spremenila v pasjo uto. Ali hišico za punčke. Hiša je obstala, ker sem obstal jaz, pravi oče in z roko udari ob podboj. Odpade nekaj koščkov ometa in umazanije, ki jih veter odnese Benderju v oko. Nesnaga v očesu ga prisili, da pred očetom skloni glavo in si skuša pomagati. Oče pravi: Mežikaj, samo bo prišlo ven. Kar pride noter, mora tudi ven. Bender mežika v motno sliko očeta, medtem ko poskuša njegovo oko izločiti tujek. Veter kar naprej spreminja smer. Oko in slika sta v neprestani nevarnosti, da bi se jima zgodil privid. Sonce je odložilo svoj zahod, dokler ne pride do srečanja, ki ga vsi pričakujejo. Pripotoval sem z vlakom, pravi Bender. Ne umiram, pravi oče in vdihne, da bi postal večji. Širjenje in večanje telesnih delov pomenita v živalskem svetu bodisi grožnjo bodisi zapeljevanje ali pa bojni poziv. Bender se odloči zadevo razumeti dobesedno. Potrebno si je izboriti pravico do tega, da lahko stoji med ruševinami, potem ko je minil kaos. Bender se odmakne od vhodnih vrat in stopi na shojen in neporaščen kos zemlje pred hišo. S konico čevlja zariše krog v vlažno prst, stopi vanj in pravi: Tukaj. Sleče jakno, nato majico in spodnjo majico. Najprej začuti veter in šele nato sram, čeprav je njegovo telo v primerjavi z rečmi, ki ga obkrožajo, videti živo in mlado. Oče stoji na vratih, kot bi se tam zataknil, in se ne more premakniti. Zmeden je zaradi bojnega poziva. Bender naredi nekaj skokov in si z iztezanjem rok za trupom pretegne ramenske mišice. Čuti moč kakor že dolgo ne. To je povsem subjektiven občutek, pomisli Bender, a nesporno je, da bo zmago odnesel prav on. Z roko zamahne proti očetu in ga tako pozove, naj stopi v ring. Sklonjeni telesi, oče nekaj časa okleva, potem pa zakoraka proti Benderju. Pred začrtanim krogom se ustavi in sleče tenko poletno srajco. Očetovo telo je poraščeno. Pas sivih dlak se širi prek prsi in se po ozkem vrtinčastem prehodu spušča čez trebuh. Bender prepozna to telo. Očetove bradavice so izgubile barvo in visijo, kot bi spravile gor četo izgubljenih sinov. Oče stopi v označeni krog in napade. Roke vrže čez Benderjeva ramena in jih poskuša

stisniti, kolikor more. Očetov napad sprva deluje kot poskus pomiritve ali pozdrava, ko se z nekom dolgo nismo videli. Bender dovoli očetu najti položaj, ki mu najbolj ustreza. Oče napada, kot bi koga objokoval. Bender odgovarja, kot bi hotel očeta obdržati na nogah. Gre za popolno usklajenost teles, ki sta enaki po konstituciji in različni po karakterju. Oče izpušča kratke izdihe, ki ustvarjajo zvok, podoben zvoku kake mehanske naprave. Bender dvigne roke in prime očeta okrog pasu. Preseneti ga lahkost očetovega telesa. Dvigne ga od tal in spet spusti. To naredi še nekajkrat, samo da bi pokazal moč, ki se je niti sam ni zavedal. Brez trdne opore očeta zajame panika, zato začne zamahovati z nogami. Dvignjene hlačnice razkrivajo bela meča, ki so preslabotna, da bi noge lahko pripravila k begu pred vojskami, psi, neurjem in drugimi pojavi, pred katerimi bi bilo treba bežati. Bender spusti očeta na tla. Oba sta preznojena. Za trenutek vse gibanje obstane, kot da bi se na sliki, katere glavni del je njun boj, našel nek detajl, bolj zanimiv od samega boja. Vse se je ustavilo. Listi na drevesih so ploskovita dekoracija. Vsi dimniki so hladni in izpihnjeni. Ne premika se niti en atom utrujenega in razdejanega sveta. Razen vse večjega madeža, ki nastaja med očetovimi nogami. Če bi boj prenašala televizija, bi kamera milijonskemu avditoriju približala prav ta, edini živi detajl toplega madeža, ki nastaja med očetovimi nogami. Vse drugo ni več pomembno. Niti grško-rimski klasični slog rokoborbe z iztegnjenimi rokami. Niti očetovi očitno nespretni premiki. Niti Benderjeva morebitna rokoborska erekcija, spodbujena s strahom, ki se s telesa prenese v možgane, hip preden se spopadeta dve masi. Očetov madež se širi kot shematski prikaz geodetskega spreminjanja kontinentov v obdobju nekaj milijonov let. Milijon let na zemljevidu očetovih hlač postane sekunda in kontinent raste in postaja večji od vseh poznanih kontinentov. Moč v očetovih rokah popušča. Bender opazi madež šele takrat, ko se začne urin v tenkem curku cediti v lužo med očetovimi stopali. Lužica, ki je v začetku dovolj velika za Palčico, se razrašča hitreje kot katera koli druga bajna reč. Madež na očetovih hlačah, ki se še naprej širi, je premagal vse druge detajle vseh prejšnjih katastrof. Madež napoveduje poraz. Očetovo telo vidno zapušča moč. Bender izrabi priložnost in z akumulirano močjo zmagovalca prevrne očeta na bok, nato še na hrbet. Očetovo popuščanje je znamenje predaje, čeprav se telo še naprej bori s pomočjo nagonov, vpisanih v mišično maso. Bender sedi na očetovih prsih in se poskuša otresti rok, ki neartikulirano uhajajo proti njegovi glavi. Ko oče z glavo otresa levo in desno in

s tem kaže, da se še vedno ni naučil izgubljati, se Bender ne odreče temu, da bi svojo zmago pripeljal do konca in jo potrdil. Roke mu dvigne nad glavo in jih, medtem ko sedi na njegovih prsih, pritisne ob tla. Oba sta na tleh, zmagovalec pa je samo eden. In morda prav zaradi tega dejstva oče najprej izpusti tenek in piskajoč ton, ki mu sledita vihanje ustnic in močno gubanje kože okoli oči. Solze pritečejo šele potem, ko jih napovedo že vsi drugi znaki. Oče joče. Literarizirano mitični prizor je pripeljan do svoje katarze. Mogočni velikan začinja točiti solze, medtem ko mu na golih prsih sedi potomec. Temu bi lahko sledil konec televizijskega prenosa, še preden zaide sonce. Zamrznjeni kader traja večno. Sonce ne bo nikoli zašlo. Bender ne bo nikoli vstal z očetovih prsi. Očetove solze se ne bodo nikoli ustavile. Bender izpusti očetove roke, ki jih ta dvigne in si z njimi pokrije obraz, kot bi se skrival pred pričami, pa čeprav kilometre daleč ni nikogar. Bližajoča se noč je gledalce že zdavnaj pregnala domov. Stari poskuša mladega z nogami vreči s sebe. To mu tudi uspe. Oče vstane, si s prsti obriše nos in se obrne okrog, da bi našel srajco, ki jo je slekel pred vstopom v ring. Pobere jo in se z blatnim hrbtom nameni proti hiši. Ko vstopi, za seboj pušča mokre sledi.

Prevedel Urban Vovk

There Will Be No Miracles Here

(excerpt from the novel)

Father asks: Is the dog gone? Bender looks down the wet restored road whose blackness swallows all things, beings and occurrences that are no longer necessary and makes sure the dog is indeed gone. It's gone, says Bender. Father lets the situation linger a while before opening the door. He stays quiet at first, announcing perhaps a stubborn silence, then asks: Got a cigarette? Bender shakes his head. Father's gaze descends to the pockets of Bender's trousers to verify his claim. Disappointment over the cigarette's non-existence is accompanied by a distension of Father's cheeks, a tic resulting from a gastroenterological dysfunction, the condition of permanent belching. Eight years ago he was diagnosed with ulcerative colitis, which manifested itself through frequent and blood-ridden defecation. For the past six years his condition was more or less stable (no blood in the stool). Father's grimace, though, isn't caused by the ulcerative colitis but by the failure of the sphincter at the entrance to the stomach, in his case no longer able to close. The sphincter stays open, and Father is leaking air like a balloon, integrating the continuous airflow with the formation of individual words. The sour statement he is expelling is related to something no longer present. He says: It's not my dog. I don't know whose it is, but it needs to bugger off. Bender has the impression Father might blow himself out if left uninterrupted. You called, he says. Father closes his mouth, locking the release of air, and begins semi-circling his head left and right as if he were a child dissolving forbidden candy. He exits the house and closes the door behind him. Breathing in deeply, he extends himself to a shape nearly big enough to fill out the door frame. Bender decides to abandon his inquiry. The discord between what he was expecting and what he is facing is apparent. Instead of diminishing, Father has grown. He reminds Bender of Julian Schnabel from some photograph he saw on a plane. Father's head looks like that of Zeus, mocking him with its might. Hands thick as blocks. A head that swallowed its own neck. A torso resilient to blows, resistant to pain and decay. A moment of coincidence in which Father is merely an object of association with the uncertainty of Bender's wish. Perhaps it is in fact Julian Schnabel who is standing before Bender? The physical presence of one man can be replaced with the myth of another. Bender retreats a few steps to create a more suitable ratio

between himself and what he is seeing. Is Father bigger than the things that surround him, or did the things get smaller? Bender compares the sizes. How to justify this description of Julian Schnabel that wedged itself between Bender and his father? Father raises his arms and leans them against the doorframe. Rock Hudson was always photographed from a low camera angle so he'd take up the entire format of the image, making him look like a giant, says Bender. Father doesn't reply. He maintains a posture that signals he has survived. The ruins around him appear as if they were the consequences of his wrath. Father is Zeus in a village abandoned by everyone else. Everything belongs to him now. He rules the remnants of all that was. There is no one left to challenge, in choosing between fight or flight, the others all chose flight. That is why Father appears huge, because the world is small having been devoured by chaos. Father's house is the only one that hasn't become a doghouse. Or a dollhouse. The house stands because I stand, proclaims Father, banging his hand against the doorframe. Pieces of debris and plaster scatter from the frame and ride the wind into Bender's eye. The rubbish forces him to bow his head and administer self-assistance. Father advises: Wink, it'll come washing out. What goes in must come out. As the eye struggles to eject the foreign matter, Bender blinks into his father's hazy image. The wind keeps changing direction. The eyeball and the image are in constant danger of experiencing anomalies. The sun has postponed its setting, waiting for the meeting they've all been expecting. I came here by train, says Bender. I'm not dying, replies Father and inhales so as to make himself bigger. In the animal world, posturing and flaunting one's body parts indicates intimidation, sexual advances, a challenge. Bender decides to take it literally. When the chaos is done, it becomes necessary to earn one's right to stand amidst the ruins. He steps aside from the entrance door and heads out to the worn barren piece of land in front of the house. With the point of his shoe, he draws a circle in the moist soil, steps inside and utters: Here. He takes off his jacket, his shirt and undershirt. The first thing he feels is the wind, then shame in its wake, though his body appears young and vigorous compared to the things that surround it. Father stands at the door as if he were rooted, unable to stir. The challenge has left him perplexed. Bender does a few vertical jumps and stretches his shoulders by arching the arms behind his back. He feels powerful, stronger than he has felt in a long time. It's an entirely subjective sensation,

he realizes, but that doesn't make victory any less certain. He motions at Father, inviting him to step into the ring. Two bodies poised, father hesitates for a while then strides forward. Pausing before the borderline, he casts off his light summer shirt. His body is covered in hair. A belt of grey tufts, sprawled over his chest, descending across the belly along a narrow swirling passage. Bender recognizes this body. Father's nipples have lost their color, sagging as if they had nourished a company of lost sons. He shambles into the marked circle and engages, casting his arms around Bender's shoulders, grasping them as tightly as he can. At first, his move looks like an attempt at reconciliation, a heartfelt greeting for a person long unseen. Bender allows him to settle into position. Father attacks as if he were lamenting a ghost. Bender defends as if his intention was to keep Father afoot. A perfect harmony of two bodies similar by constitution, different by character. Father keeps making short gasps, sounds reminiscent of a mechanical contraption. Bender reaches forward, clasps Father around the waist. He is surprised by the lightness of his father's body, raising it from the ground and letting it fall back down, time and again, to display the strength he wasn't even aware of. Robbed of solid ground, Father panics, starts kicking his legs. The raised trousers reveal pale calves, too feeble to propel the legs into an escape from armies, dogs, storms and other occurrences that require flight. Bender lets Father back down. They are both covered in sweat. For a moment, all motion is suspended, as if the scene depicting their struggle has revealed another detail more captivating than the contest itself. Everything freezes in time. The leaves on the trees are flat decorations. All the chimneys are cold and blown out. Not a single atom of the weary and ruined world remains in motion. Except for the wet stain spreading between Father's legs. If their contest were televised, the broadcast would have treated millions to a close-up of this singular warm living detail. Nothing else matters. Not the Greco-Roman wrestling stances, arms outstretched, not the obvious clumsiness of Father's motions, not even Bender's potential wrestler's erection, fueled by fear signaled from the body to the brain when collision between two masses is imminent. Father's stain spreads like a schematic of tectonic continental shifts throughout the eons. The space of a million years becomes a second on the map of his pants, the continent growing unstopably, getting larger than all the known continents. Strength is leaving Father's hands. Bender only notices when the moisture starts to flow, a thin stream

forming a puddle between Father's feet. A tiny pool, barely big enough for Thumbelina at first, spreading faster than any other fantastical thing. The ever-expanding stain on his pants has outdone the highlights of all previous catastrophes. The stain heralds defeat. Father's body is visibly failing. Bender seizes the moment, with the accumulated capacity of the triumphant he tosses Father onto his side, then flat on his back. Father relents, signaling submission, though the body keeps struggling, commanded by instincts engraved in the muscle mass. Bender sits on his father's chest, swatting away the hands flailing at his head. Father keeps tossing around, proving he still hasn't learned how to lose. Bender does not relinquish the right to take his conquest to a decisive conclusion. Mounted, he grabs hold of Father's hands and yanks them forward, into the soil behind his head. Both of them are grounded, yet there is only one victor. Perhaps it is this very awareness that forces Father to emit a thin, squeaky sound, followed by a trembling of lips and the opulent wrinkling of skin surrounding the eyes. Tears finally flow, but only when they've been foretold by all the signs. Father is crying. The epic, mythical scene has reached its catharsis. With his progeny perched on his bare chest, the mighty giant is shedding tears. A fitting view to end the televised broadcast before sunset. The frozen shot lasts forever, the sun will never set. Bender will never rise from his father's chest, and Father's tears will never stop flowing. Bender releases his father's hands. The old man covers his face, as if trying to hide from the witnesses though there isn't anyone in sight for miles. The coming night has long scattered the viewers. Thrusting his legs, the old one tries to shake the young one off. He succeeds. Father gets up, wipes his nose with his fingers and turns to search for the shirt he tossed aside. Picking it up, he heads towards the house, his back smeared with mud. He walks inside, leaving a trail of damp footsteps behind.

Translated from Slovenian by Jeremi Slak

Mlada

Vilenica 2015

***Young Vilenica
Award 2015***

*Nagrajenka 15. Mlade Vilenice v kategoriji vrtec je **Kiara Sara Knafelc** iz vrtca Studenci iz Maribora za pesem »Jama Vilenica«. Mentorica: Matejka Dolinšek.*

Pesem »Jama Vilenica« Kiare Sare Knafelc je skoraj že prava mala izpoved, podana v izdelani zgradbi. Gre za zelo nazorno primerjanje lastnega jaza in naravnega pojava jame v ritmično preprostih verzih, ki bi zlahka postali pevni, če bi jih kdo uglasbil.

Jama Vilenica

Ti si jama,
jaz sem jaz,
obe se smejeva na glas,
ti velika, tudi jaz,
obe se smejeva na glas,
jaz klepečem, ti pa ne,
spet se smejeva na glas.

*The winner of the 15th Young Vilenica Award in the kindergarten category is **Kiara Sara Knafelc** from Kindergarten Studenci, Maribor, for the poem “Cave Vilenica”. Mentor: Matejka Dolinšek.*

The poem “Cave Vilenica” by Kiara Sara Knafelc comes close to a miniature confession, phrased in a well-formed structure. The graphic comparison of the author’s own ‘I’ and the natural phenomenon – the cave – is rendered in simple rhythmical lines, which could be easily sung if set to music.

Cave Vilenica

You’re a cave,
I am I, we both laugh out loud,
you are big, so am I,
we both laugh out loud,
I’m a chatterbox, you’re not,
again we laugh out loud.

*Nagrajenec 15. Mlade Vilenice v kategoriji prva triada osnovnih šol je **David Čop**, učenec drugega razreda Dvojezičnega varstva ABCČ iz Celovca (Avstrija), za pesem »Jama Vilenica«. Mentorica: Anja Ržišnik.*

Pesem »Jama Vilenica« Davida Čopa je imenitna jezična vaja – igra s precej zahtevnim progresivnim akrostihom, s pristrčnimi asociacijami, ki jih diktirajo rime, tudi notranje, in črkovni izpis zastavljenega geografskega in pesniškega pojma Vilenica. Avtor je eden najmlajših udeležencev v tej kategoriji.

J Jama je dama
A kApnik ni sapnik
M kaMen je vroč kot plamen
A strAšno ni tako plašno

V Velika je kot slika
I vIla ni preveč mila
L deLo narave je mačji kašelj
E pajEk ni čajek
N betoN je trd ton
I netopIr ni ravno mir
C VileniCa je velika kraljica
A razstavA ni zabava!

*The winner of the 15th Young Vilenica Award in the category of the first triad of elementary school is **David Čop**, a second-grader from Dvojezično varstvo ABCČ/Der zweisprachige Hort ABCČ, Klagenfurt (Austria), for the poem “Cave Vilenica”. Mentor: Anja Ržišnik.*

The poem “Cave Vilenica” by David Čop is a charming language exercise which plays with a challenging progressive acrostic, with endearing associations dictated by rhymes (internal ones as well), and with spelling out the geographical and poetic concept of Vilenica. The author belongs among the youngest members in his category.

Cave Vilenica

C A Cave is a dame
A stAlactite is no mite
V the Vault burns like salt
E but drEad is not scared

V Vast like a blast
I the sprIte is not slight
L and nature is simpLe as pie
E a spider's not tEa
N coNcrete sounds like *screech*
I a bat's flIght is not quiet
C a queen in state is the Cave
A but a displAy is no play!

*Nagrajenka 15. Mlade Vilenice v kategoriji druga triada osnovnih šol je **Chiara Lepore**, učenka IC Giovanni Lucio iz Milj (Italija), za pesem »Jama Vilenica«. Mentorica: Sanja Širec.*

»Jama Vilenica« Chiare Lepore je neverjetno neponarejena, toplo, nič šolsko, nič papirnato izpisana pravljica, ki kljub zgoščeni pripovedi uvodoma izkazuje tudi otroško čudenje ob veličastnem naravnem pojavu.

JAMA VILENICA

TA JAMA,
PRVA JAMA,
ČAROBNA JAMA,
KER VILE V NJEJ ŽIVIJO
IN SE VESELIJO,
MARINCO UGRABIJO
IN JI NAROČIJO
TRI ZLATE POMARANČE
KOT TRI ZLATA SONCA
ZA TRI DVORANE.
IN JO IZPUSTIJO.

*The winner of the 15th Young Vilenica Award in the category of the second triad of elementary school is **Chiara Lepore**, a student of the Istituto Comprensivo 'Giovanni Lucio', Muggia (Italy), for the poem "Cave Vilenica". Mentor: Sanja Širec.*

"Cave Vilenica" by Chiara Lepore is an amazingly artless and warmly told tale, never jejune or bookish. Despite the compactness of its narration it begins by evincing a childlike wonder at the splendid natural phenomenon.

CAVE VILENICA

THIS CAVE
THIS FIRST CAVE
A MAGICAL CAVE
BECAUSE HERE LIVE ELVES
ENJOYING THEMSELVES,
THEY CARRY OFF MARY
AND ORDER FOR HER
THREE ORANGES, GOLD,
LIKE THREE GOLDEN SUNS
AS BIG AS THREE HALLS.
AND THEY LET HER GO.

*Nagrajenka 15. Mlade Vilenice v kategoriji tretje triade osnovnih šol je **Špela Zadel**, učenka devetega razreda OŠ Toneta Tomšiča iz Knežaka, za pesem »Zamišljeno gledam v dneve pretekle«. Mentorica: Olga Novak.*

Gre za pesem, ki je morda uglašena na Jenkove »Obraze« in se napaja iz tesnobe pred minljivostjo ali morda res, kot je omenjeno v pesmi, iz smrti najbližjih. Gane nas njena preprostost in preseneti izjemno globoko čustvovanje, ki se zrcali v podobah narave, ne pa v tviteraško površnem, praznem besedovanju.

Zamišljeno gledam v dneve pretekle

Zamišljeno gledam v dneve pretekle
in čakam na sanje, da bodo kaj rekle.
Da bodo povedale, kam so odšli
vsi ti ljudje, ki so nekdej bili.

Zamišljeno gledam v dneve pretekle
in čakam na trate, da bodo kaj rekle.
Da bodo zašumele, kje spita vidva,
predragi moj oče in mamica.

Zamišljeno gledam v dneve pretekle
in čakam na ptice, da bodo kaj rekle.
Da bodo zapele mi pesem lepo,
ki rado bi jo slišalo srce bolno.

Zamišljeno gledam v dneve pretekle.
In čakam ...
Čakam, da bodo reke zopet stekle,
in tako ostajam brez sanj
iz dneva v dan.

*The winner of the 15th Young Vilenica Award in the category of the third triad of elementary school is **Špela Zadel**, a ninth-grader from Elementary School Tone Tomšič, Knežak, for the poem “I Muse upon the Bygone Day”. Mentor: Olga Novak.*

Possibly tuned to Simon Jenko’s “Faces”, the poem draws on the anxiety of mortality or perhaps even – as suggested – on the death of one’s nearest. We are moved by its simplicity and surprised by the exceptionally deep emotion, which is mirrored in images of nature rather than in superficial, empty Twitter-style chatter.

I Muse upon the Bygone Day

I muse upon the bygone day
and wait for what my dreams may say.
For them to speak up and disclose
where are those men from long ago.

I muse upon the bygone day
and wait for what the leas may say.
For them to rustle where you sleep,
my father and my mother dear.

I muse upon the bygone day
and wait for what the birds may say.
For them to sing me lovely songs
for which this ailing heart now longs.

I muse upon the bygone day.
And wait ...
I wait for rills to run again,
and so I’m left without
a dream, day in, day out.

*Nagrajenka 15. Mlade Vilenice v kategoriji srednje šole je **Lina Malovič**, dijakinja Gimnazije Ptuj, za pesem »Pokop Atlantide«. Mentorica: Marija Holc.*

Gre za rapersko izpisan baladni motiv usode/katastrofe v mitični Atlantidi: precej baročen, mestoma nadrealistično zastavljen tekst z drobcami iz antičnega sveta, ki pa v zadnjih šestih verzih zaobjame smisel v zrcalni podobi – primeri z lastno bojaznijo pred kaosom in temo. Gotovo bi v peti obliki pridobil smisel in – čar.

Pokop Atlantide

Prešibki zidovi okrog pristanišča,
strupeni valovi že butajo vanje,
se sence ne vidi, ni več prenočišča,
za glavo, za srečo, za umirjene sanje.
Zeus zmaguje, že ruši zidalce,
kot majhne drobtine izginjajo v prah.
In zvijajo v plesu hudobne se spake
in kuhajo misli, postrežejo strah.
Na dno potopi se svetla Atlantida,
zagrne ko svinec pretežka jo noč.
In žal ti postane nenavadnega uvida,
ki polni kotanjo kot potok deroč.
Zagledam v odsevu se temne poplave,
potegne me vase brez vsake sledi
in plavam v globino, ne, plavam v višave
in v tistem trenutku me srh spreleti.
Začutim se v zemlji, da, čutim, gorim,
prav kmalu se v morju črnine utopim.

*The winner of the 15th Young Vilenica Award in the high school category is **Lina Malovič**, a student of Gimnazija Ptuj, for the poem “The Burial of Atlantis”. Mentor: Marija Holc.*

The ballad theme, worded in a rap style, is the doom of mythical Atlantis: the text is strongly baroque and at times surrealistic, dotted with fragments from the ancient world. The last six lines encapsulate the meaning in the image of the reflection – a parallel with the narrator’s own fear of chaos and darkness. Sung, the poem would certainly gain additional meaning and – charm.

The Burial of Atlantis

The walls around the port, too weak,
are battered by the venom seas,
no shade, no shelter to be seen
for head or joy or peaceful dreams.
Triumphant, Zeus is toppling builders,
all crushed to dust like crumbs of bread.
And writhing, whirling things of evil
are brewing thoughts and serving dread.
Down is sunk Atlantis bright,
overwhelmed by night like lead.
You regret the curious sight
pouring in the hollow bed.
I catch sight in the murky flood
of my own image and, sucked deep,
I dive headlong down down – no, up,
and then my flesh begins to creep.
I feel I’m in the soil, on fire,
about to drown in the black mire.

Translated by Nada Grošelj

**Dosedanji
udeleženci in
nagrajenci
Vilenice**

Previous

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DISPUT / DISPUTATION: *Claudio Magris: Ewaldova bakla / Ewald's Torch*

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DISPUT / DISPUTATION: *Czesław Miłosz: Četrta učna ura / The Fourth Teaching Lesson*

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DISPUT / DISPUTATION: *György Konrad: S sredine / From the Centre*

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DISPUT / DISPUTATION: *Veno Taufer: Izziv ali zgaga? / Challenge or Hassle?*

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DISPUT / DISPUTATION: *Vlado Gotovac: Skica o Atlasu / Sketch of the Atlas*

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DISPUT / DISPUTATION: *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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DISPUT / DISPUTATION: *Georges-Arthur Goldschmidt, Vlado Gotovac, László*

Krasznahorkai, Antonin J. Liehm: Edvard Kocbek: Palica / Edvard Kocbek: The Stick

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DISPUT / DISPUTATION: *Alain Finkielkraut: Intelektualci, politika in vojna / Intellectuals, Politics and War*

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DISPUT / DISPUTATION: *Lojze Kovačič: Ali pisatelj potrebuje svet, ki njega ne potrebuje? / Does a Writer Need the World Which Doesn't Need Him?*

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DISPUT / DISPUTATION: *Svoboda imaginacije – imaginacija svobode / Imagination of Freedom – Freedom of Imagination:*

Branko Miljković: Poezijo bodo vsi pisali / Everybody Will Be Writing Poetry

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DISPUT / DISPUTATION: *Daimon zapeljevanja / Daimon of Temptation:*
Rainer Maria Rilke: Orfej • Evridika • Hermes / Orpheus • Eurydike • Hermes

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DISPUT / DISPUTATION: *Timothy Garton Ash: Konec stoletja, začetek tisočletja / The End of the Century, the Beginning of the Millennium*

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DISPUT / DISPUTATION: *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 20th Century: A Futuristic Utopia or Realistic Model of Trans-National and Creative Coexistence of People in the Common (Central) Europe*

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Slavko Mihalic

Utemeljitev nagrade / Laudation: *Veno Taufer*

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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 Konstantinov, Hasso Krull, Gary Lawless, Umberto Mangani, Erik Menkveld, Jaume Perez Montaner, Imre Oravecz, Silvana Paletti, Katherine Pierpoint, Angelina Polonskaya, Milorad Popović, Ana Ristović, Sudeep Sen, Marcin Sendekci, Ronny Someck, Marjan Strojan, Brina Švigelj Mérat, Yörgos Veis, Istvan Vörös, Gerald Zschorsch

DISPUT / DISPUTATION: *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 Cedrinš, Robert Davis, Michel Deguy, Ferida Duraković, Andreas Ehin, Hans Eichhorn, Mauro Faccioni Filho, Michael Farrell, László Garaczi, Greg Gatenby, Adam Globus, Adela Greceanu, Petr Hruška, Valdo Immovilli, Dragan Jovanović Danilov, Laurynas Katkus, Vladimir Kavčič, Katica Kjulavkova, Barbara Korun, Maruša Krese, Roman Ludva, Sonja Manojlović, Narlan Matos, Marián Milčák, Ban'ya Natsuishi, 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*

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 Dückers, 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 Möderndorfer, Herta Müller, Patricia Nolan, Knut Ødegård, 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, 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 Kapitaňová, 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 Renner, Brigita Berčon*

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, Drago Jančar*

KRISTAL VILENICE 2005 / 2005 CRYSTAL VILENICA AWARD – *Vladas Braziiunas*

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 Braziiunas, 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, Albierd 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, Térézia Mora, Birgit Müller-Wieland, Tõnu Õnnepalu, Claudio Pozzani, Gabriel Rosenstock, Goran Samardžić, Ostap Slyvynsky, Breda Smolnikar, 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?"

MODERATORICA / 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
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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, Edi Shukriu, Piotr Sommer, Igor Štiks, Ján Štrasser, Sami Tchak, Tomas Tranströmer, Christina Viragh, Matjaž Zupančič, Barys Žančak

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 Blašković, Cvetanka Elenkova, Iztok Geister, Andrej
Hadanovič, 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 Beňová, Ines Cergol, Kalin Donkov, Umberto Galimberti, Forrest Gander,
Andrea Grill, Miljenko Jergović, Štefan Kardoš, Yasmina Khadra, Herkus Kunčius,
Alejandra Laurencich, Luljeta Lleshanaku, Dan Lungu, Tone Partljič, Jana Putrle
Srđić, Peter Rezman, Víctor Rodríguez Núñez, Maria Šlehtičchi, Ewa Sonnenberg,
Vlada Urošević, Oksana Zabuzko*

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, Tamas 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

MODERATORICA / 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*

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
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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"

MODERATORICA / 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
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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 Heikkonen, 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"

MODERATORICA / MODERATOR: *Vesna Humar*

DOBITNIK ŠTIPENDIJE SEP 2013 / CEI FELLOWSHIP WINNER 2013: *Artem Čapaj / Artem Chapey, 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*

MEDNARODNO LITERARNO NAGRADO VILENICA DRUŠTVA SLOVENSКИH PISATELJEV ZA LETO 2014 JE PREJEL / THE SLOVENE WRITERS' ASSOCIATION AWARDED THE 2014 VILENICA INTERNATIONAL LITERARY PRIZE TO

László Krasznahorkai

Utemeljitev nagrade / Laudation: *Jutka Rudaš*

KRISTAL VILENICE 2014 / 2014 CRYSTAL VILENICA AWARD – *Liliana Corobca*

SLOVENSKI AVTOR V SREDIŠČU 2014 / SLOVENIAN AUTHOR IN FOCUS 2014 – *Marko Sosič*

V publikaciji *Vilenica 2014* in na literarnih prireditvah so sodelovali / The following are represented in the *Vilenica almanac 2012* and took part in the literary readings:

Ivan Antić, Gabriela Babnik, Marica Bodrožić, Liliana Corobca, Artem Čapaj, Patrick deWitt, Ivana Dobrakovová, Enes Halilović, Elsa Korneti, Asko Künnap, János Lackfi, Fiston Mwanza Mujila, Andrej Nikolaidis, Tomislav Osmanli, Ioana Pârvolescu, Tone Peršak, Alek Popov, Stanislava Repar, Jaroslav Rudiš, Roman Simić Bodrožić, Linda Spalding, Dimitra Xidou, Visar Zhiti

OKROGLA MIZA SEP NA VILENICI / CEI ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION AT VILENICA:

»Iz jezika v jezik« / "From Language to Language"

MODERATORICA / MODERATOR: *Erica Johnson Debelyak*

DOBITNIK ŠTIPENDIJE SEP 2014 / CEI FELLOWSHIP WINNER 2012: *Mirko Božić*

MANJ POZNANE KNJIŽEVNOSTI EVROPE NA VILENICI / LESSER-KNOWN LITERATURES
OF EUROPE AT VILENICA: *Luksemburg na Vilenici / Luxembourg at Vilenica:*

Alexandra Fixmer, Guy Helmingier, Nico Helmingier, Pol Sax

MLADA VILENICA 2014 / YOUNG VILENICA AWARD 2014: *Lota Martinjak, Patricija
Kavčič, Lara Ružič Povirk*

Člani žirije 2015 / *Jury Members 2015*

Andrej Blatnik, predsednik žirije, pisatelj, prevajalec, urednik / president of the jury, prose writer, translator, editor

Lidija Dimkowska, podpredsednica žirije, pesnica, prevajalka, esejistka / vice president of the jury, poet, translator, essayist

Ludwig Hartinger, prevajalec, esejist, urednik / translator, essayist, editor

Vesna Kondrič Horvat, redna profesorica za nemško književnost na Filozofski fakulteti Univerze v Mariboru / professor of German literature at the Faculty of Arts in 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 Šramel, 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, prose writer

Namita Subiotto, docentka na katedri 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

Aleš Šteger, pesnik, pisatelj, esejist / poet, prose writer, essayist

Veno Taufer, pesnik, prevajalec, esejist, ustanovni predsednik festivala Vilenica / poet, translator, essayist, founding president of the Vilenica Festival

Jana Unuk, prevajalka / translator

Konzultanti 2015 / *Advisory Panel 2015*

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

Zbornik Vilenica, ki izhaja od leta 1986, predstavlja poleg dobitnika mednarodne literarne nagrade Vilenica in slovenskega avtorja v središču tudi dela avtorjev, ki jih žirija Vilenice izbere za goste festivala. Besedila so objavljena v izvorniku, v slovenskem in angleškem prevodu. Poleg avtorjev iz Srednje Evrope, ki se potegujejo za Kristal Vilenice, nagrado za najboljši literarni prispevek v zborniku, Vilenica gosti tudi avtorje od drugod, ki so predstavljeni v posebni rubriki. V zborniku objavljamo tudi zmagovalne pesmi natečaja Mlada Vilenica.

The Vilenica Almanac has been published annually since 1986. Besides presenting the Vilenica International Literary Prize Winner and the Slovenian Author in Focus, it includes presentations of the works of authors invited to the festival by the Vilenica Jury. The texts are published in the original language, and in Slovene and English translation. Alongside authors from Central Europe, who compete for the Crystal Vilenica Award for the best literary piece in the Almanac, Vilenica also hosts writers from other countries. These authors are presented in a special section. The Almanac also features the winning poems of the Young Vilenica competition.



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