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# BOOKS

*from*

**SLOVENIA**

**Miklavž Komelj**

**Taja Kramberger**

**Mojca Kumerdej**

**Dušan Merc**

**Katja Perat**

**Andrej E. Skubic**

**Marko Sosič**

**Lucija Štepančič**

**Goran Vojnovič**

**Uroš Zupan**

[2012]



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LITERATURE

# Miklavž Komelj Hands in The Rain

## About the author



Photo by Blaž Samec

Poet, translator, art historian, theorist and critic Miklavž Komelj received his PhD in Art History in 2002 from the Ljubljana Faculty of Arts. Between 1999 and 2002, he was junior researcher at ZRC SAZU (Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts) and now works as a freelance writer. He is the author of seven poetry collections: *Luč delfina* (The Light of the Dolphin, 1991), *Jantar časa* (The Amber of Time, 1999), *Rosa* (Dew, 2002), *Hipodrom* (Hippodrome, 2006), *Nenaslovljiva imena* (Unnameable Names, 2008), *Modra obleka* (The Blue Suit, 2011) and *Roke v dežju* (Hands in the Rain, 2011). He also writes and translates poems and other literary works for children; his poetry collection *Zverinice* (Little Beasts) came out in 2006. Komelj's poems have been published in every anthology of Slovenian poetry since 1991 and his poetry collections always draw wide critical attention.

Komelj translates from several languages (Portuguese, Spanish, Italian, Russian, English and German). He has published numerous academic articles and essays in the field of art history and theory, literary history and film, as well as a number of critical and polemical writings. He has published *Alternativni vodič po Ljubljani* (Alternative City Guide to Ljubljana, 2009), a scientific paper *Kako misliti partizansko umetnost* (How to Think Partisan Art, 2009), a booklet on Piero della Francesca and a collection of essays *Nujnost poezije* (The Necessity of Poetry, 2011). Komelj received the Prešeren Student Award (1995) for his undergraduate thesis on the sculptor Francesco Robba and the ZRC SAZU gold medal (2002) for his doctoral thesis; his poetry collections have won him the Veronica Award (2002), Jenko Award (2006), Župančič Award (2009) and the Prešeren Foundation Award (2010). In 2011, he also received the Rožanc Award for his collection of essays *The Necessity of Poetry*.

## About the book



The collection *Hands in the Rain* – form-wise, probably Komelj's most heterogeneous poetry collection to date – explores various situations, whether they be experienced, historical or fictional, with impressive erudition and poetic need. It brings together a number of different voices and registers, all interacting with one another in unexpected ways. More than ever, one senses Komelj's concern for proper acceptance of the Other, which the poet approaches in distinctive dialectic sequences. The difference between silence and no longer being able to speak is the gap which Komelj's poetry, not only in *Hands in the Rain*, tries to widen, in order to enter the realm of new possibilities. This gap appears when the self realizes its most deep inner conflict, in which one is confronted with his own otherness. And it is precisely this action that makes Komelj radical, as no attempt which would favour the surface through affirmation gets past him: his poetry questions the name and the identity behind it, the pain and its indefinable ideology, the subtleness and its inherent brutality, when it constitutes the opposite to brutality. However, in his poetry, Komelj offers the right to exist to a variety of feelings and relationships with unsurpassable precision and imagination of language in spaces of poetry, that are only beginning to open up. For only there can the individual be accepted with dignity. This is the concern that Komelj's poetry sets as its basic guiding principle.

## Excerpt

### Hands in the Rain – The Sickle and Hammer of Tina Modotti

Translated by  
Jack Hirschman  
with Diletta Torlasco,  
using the Italian  
translation of Ravel  
Kodrič

Pounds and pounds again. Pounds and pounds again.  
Not the heart. The hammer that forges.  
This tender naked body.  
Not the heart. The hammer that forges.  
That forges an amorphous emptiness

to shape a spot distinct as a bullet,

that transforms the sickle  
into a question-mark

then the question-mark vanishes and changes  
into a hard, graspable

sickle.  
Whose hard grasp-ability

is due to its photographic form.  
The ecstatic pang

that to the view lacks the hands  
for the blade for that potential slash

that can be felt on the tongue.  
In photography.

Tina Modotti even  
gave up photography.

(I'm writing this to her during a solar eclipse.  
During an imperceptible

partial solar eclipse  
at noon.)

An absolute renunciation. And at the same time:  
accompanied by festive sounds.

("I think about the great chats together  
with good coffee,

/better because one drank it together/, near the phonograph  
/transformed in to a fox – Felicita

knows the whole story/ and think  
about Toio's legs doing a pirouette

to the sound of Rumba.")  
Scratchy sounds.

It's not about bloody iron,  
but of blood that oozes from the iron.

This tender naked body  
is of iron.

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Of iron or steel?  
Of a special substance.  
Made of vapours. Vaporous  
glooms. Of quicksilver.

# Taja Kramberger *From The Edge Of A Cliff*

## About the author



Photo by A. C.

Taja Kramberger, born in 1970 in Ljubljana, is a poet, translator and essayist and has a PhD in History and Historical Anthropology. She lives and works in Koper, a seaside town near Trieste. She is active in the fields of literature, social sciences and involved in the struggle for civil rights. Up to date, she has published – as author, co-author, editor or translator – around 60 publications, among them 38 journal issues in social sciences and culture, three monographs, four literary and scientific collections of various texts, translations of five literary works, nine books of poetry and two children’s books. Her poems have appeared in numerous literary anthologies and journals in Slovenia and abroad. As president of Collegium artium at the Faculty of Humanities in Koper, where she worked between 2004 and 2010, she organised more than 100 cultural and academic events and was co-author of the entire Historical Anthropology programme (12 courses). She has been shortlisted six times for various literary awards and received the Veronika Award in 2007. Together with poets Tatjana Jamnik and Barbara Korun, she co-founded the KONS International Literary Award®, which recognises the literary opus of individual authors, their personal ethos and lifelong engagement and overall contribution to the welfare of all people.

## About the book



The book was written after a difficult period in the poet’s life, when, firstly, she was unlawfully dismissed from her university post as a teacher, secondly, she experienced further political pressures, lawsuit threats and was the subject of intrigues by her literary colleagues (part of the university purge behind the scenes), and thirdly, her mother died. In poetic language, *From the Edge of a Cliff* reflects not only individual struggles, but also the overall, broader social situation and the overlapping of both levels at that time. Taja Kramberger was invited to the newly established faculty of humanity studies in Koper in 2004, together with D. B. Rotar, to prepare and develop the programme of Historical Anthropology. In addition to that, they did unpaid work on a number of other things for the benefit of the academic community. In 2010, the faculty and university authorities – who wanted to turn the university into an enterprise all along – suddenly decided, in the name of the “rationalisation of personnel”, to get rid of critical academics and the most capable and engaged individuals, who helped to establish the academic infrastructure in the previous years. In the case of T. Kramberger, who lost her job, many students and residents of Koper protested loudly and publicly, drew up a petition, sent protest letters to the rector and the dean, and set up a website (<http://resimouniverzo.blogspot.com/>). But no concrete results followed. Later on, the court awarded her damages and she wrote a book of poetry on the subject.

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Excerpt

## From the Edge of a Cliff – Every Dead One Has A Name

Translated by  
Taja Kramberger  
and Špela Bibič

Every dead one has a name,  
only the names of the living make us falter.  
Some names are impossible to utter  
without a stammer and a fidget,  
some can only be pronounced through allusion,  
and some, mostly women's,  
are forbidden in these places.

Every dead one has a name,  
engraved in stone,  
printed in obituary or directory,  
only my name has to be tarnished,  
every few years  
smeared and substituted  
with another one.

A decade ago  
a high-ranking party official warned me:  
*Stay a poet, as long as there's still time for that.*  
Still time?                      Time for what?

I've also become a social scientist,  
an editor, an organizer  
a translator, an activist  
and a university teacher.  
Unbearable – all these things –  
all trespasses of the old land borders  
which had been delineated by the dirty  
fingers of fraternities.

I air all the rooms,  
I ignore all ratings,  
I open all the safety valves.

And they have put me –  
like the dead – out in the cold.  
But every dead one has a name.

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# Mojca Kumerdej **Dark Matter**

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## About the author



Photo by Jože Suhadolnik.

Mojca Kumerdej, writer and art critic, mainly in the field of dance, was born in 1964 in Ljubljana. She studied Philosophy and Sociology of Culture at the Ljubljana Faculty of Arts. Since 1998, she has been contributing regularly to academic and art magazines, such as *Problemi*, the former *Razgledi* and *Maska*, and particularly to *Delo* newspaper, where she publishes insightful columns, articles, interviews and critiques recording the developments in contemporary dance, theatre, performing arts, film and literature.

In 2001, she published her first novel *Krst nad Triglavom* (Baptism over Triglav), the short story collection *Fragma* in 2003 and her most recent short story collection *Temna snov* (Dark Matter) in 2011. Her short prose has been translated into German, English, French, Serbian, Russian, Czech, Spanish and Hungarian.

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## About the book



The collection *Dark matter* took a long time to ripen. It is written in a precise, controlled language, never letting on that it was snatched from silence. In astronomy, dark matter is invisible and recognisable only through its effects. Likewise, in her new collection, Mojca Kumerdej does not portray shocking intrusions into everyday life directly, but rather articulates them in a polyphony of authentic voices that these events have marked. With psychological subtlety, she unveils the thin line between personal freedom and various attempts at cohabitation in a society that tolerates no deviations or creativity and tries to reduce the human being to the level of a robot, biological matter or his TIN. The main focus of attention is again the body, struggling to overcome thanatos with eros, confronted again and again with its limitations and transience. Most importantly, what Mojca Kumerdej brings into Slovenian prose, in addition to her analytical sharpness and her brilliant, juicy language, is a component that is all too rare: intelligent humour.

*From the foreword by Amalija Maček*

The short story collection *Dark matter* is a modernistically moulded literary cast of the world which the modern individual has found himself in; on the one hand, the boundaries of his freedom have greatly extended, but on the other, he is suffocating under the stiff social norms and biological limits, mainly death.

*From the review by Sandra Krkoč in Dnevnik*

Translated by  
Gregor Timothy Čeh

I didn't see any operations or any surgeons bending over my dead body, poking around it with scalpels or sticking any useful parts of my body matter into anyone else. The next moment of awareness, or to be precise self-awareness – and it seems that there is in fact little but self-awareness left – only switched on much later. At least ten days must have gone by, but to me it is all blank. I remember suddenly becoming aware on what seemed like a hospital bed. The thought that first sprung out of the re-activation of my awareness was *Where am I?* It seems that I had an accident, but was lucky at the same time, since I obviously survived. In the next moment, when I checked out the state of my limbs, I realised in horror that perhaps I wasn't so lucky after all. This was the first serious bad turn. Only at that point did I realize that my perception of space was somehow changed. I could sense my surroundings, but the angle at which I saw things somehow didn't seem right. If I'm lying on a bed, I logically assumed, I should, when I open my eyes, be seeing the walls and the ceiling. But I wasn't. My field of view – maybe the better term would be *re-view!* – was warped in a manner I imagine space distorts at the extremities of the universe. Before I even tried to move my head, arms and legs, I could hear a snoring sound. It wasn't next to me; it seemed to be coming from some suspiciously close proximity from which I deduced that I was far from alone in the room or on the bed. And, as I soon discovered, things are likely to stay this way. Though I could actually sort of feel my arms and legs, I suddenly realised that the reason I could not move them is because I no longer have either arms or legs, not to mention a head. How terrifying, nevertheless surely only temporary, I thought. After all, humans can feel a whole load of things that turn out not to be true beyond the actual neurological process that, for god knows what reason, manipulates and distorts our perceptions. But I never expected myself – someone who always swore by logic and was always astonished by the laziness and liability of those whom life throws about like a small boat on rough seas – would find myself in a state that closely resembles psychosis. This feeling only increased when a nurse entered the room and came towards me. Well, towards something, though not literally towards me. She played about with a thermometer, poking it into something outside my field of view. *Who am I? What am I?* I kept asking myself, but asking as what? *What is myself? Where from? What am I listening, thinking and observing all this as?* All these questions started eating away at me and I had no way of knowing whether they will remain unanswered in the future. What is this thought entity – and me with it, my identity, attached to? To what kind of matter? I suddenly became furious and scared; surely it must be attached to something? I'm not just a spirit or something, am I? For me, a scientist whose remains were reduced to some kind of scientific phenomenon, this was absolutely too much to handle.

The nurse took the temperature. I gathered this from the electronic thermometer she raised up to her pointy nose a moment later when the doctors making the rounds marched into the room. Salvation at last; here come my scientific colleagues who have come to explain my state to me and tell me what I can expect – well, of course, in as much as “scientific” is the right expression for hospital staff who frequently just become arrogant, lazy routine-practitioners with little real interest in science.

But the rounds began to address me with a name and surname totally unknown to me, and when the surgeon began to explain to the mysterious bearer of the unfamiliar name that the operation had been entirely successful and that his body had accepted the donor liver well, I realized I was in deep shit. Or, more precisely – allow me to express myself metaphorically in this instance – that shit all remained of me after the accident, something the transplant experts were truly glad of, because they could diagnose without any further reservations that I was brain dead and keep my body on life support for just as long as was needed to extract any undamaged organs and then, as per my own instructions, send the remaining pulp of tissue off to the crematorium, meaning it has by now probably already had a decent burial. The liver, or *at least* the liver, had been transplanted into the man inside whose body I now live as his new liver.

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# Dušan Merc A Pedagogical Triptych

## About the author



Photo by Jože Suhadolnik.

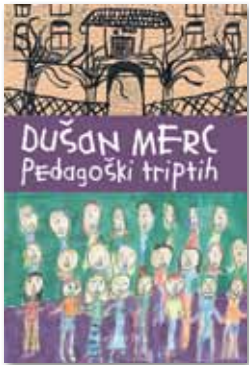
Dušan Merc, born in 1952 in Ljubljana, graduated in Comparative Literature and has been the headmaster of the Prule Primary School in Ljubljana for the past twenty years.

Even though he started publishing rather late in life, his mature writing years have turned out to be extremely fruitful, as he has published twelve novels, dealing with historical, as well as contemporary topics: *Galilejev lesteneč* (Galileo's Chandelier, 1996), *Sarkofag* (Sarcophagus, 1997), *Slepi potnik* (The Stowaway, 1999), *Potažba* (Consolations, 2001), *Čista ženska* (A Pure Woman, 2002), *Jakobova molitev* (Jacob's Prayer, 2003), *Potopljeni zvon* (The Sunken Bell 2004), *Šesta knjiga sanj* (The Sixth Book of Dreams, 2006), *Dantejeva smrt* (Dante's Death, 2007), *Ne dotikaj se me* (Don't Touch Me, 2010), *Pedagoški triptih* (A Pedagogical Triptych, 2011) and *Planet žensk* (The Planet of Women, 2011). Although the author seems to be more at home with more extensive works of prose, he has also added three short story collections to his body of works: *Golo mesto* (The Barren City, 2003), *Pega v očesu* (A Spot in the Eye, 2004) and *Akacijev drevored* (Acacia Avenue, 2006). One of his stories was also featured in *Poletje v zgodbi* (Summer in a Story, 2002), the supplement of the *Delo* newspaper.

A year after its publication, Galileo's Chandelier, translated into German in 2002, was nominated for the Kresnik Best Novel of the Year Award. Merc has been nominated for the Kresnik Award numerous times and two of his novels made it onto the shortlist.

In his novels, he likes to explore historical topics (Jacob's Prayer, The Sunken Bell), as well as current existential issues (The Stowaway, The Sixth Book of Dreams); he draws inspiration for his stories mainly from ordinary, everyday incidents and discords between partners, often featuring the character of his domineering, authoritative mother; he is especially interested in all kinds of anomalies and instinctual impulses.

## About the book



A Pedagogical Triptych is a personal account of a primary school headmaster; it is his confrontation with himself and the people around him in the hypocritical world of pedagogy. The education methods from the times of the old regime have left such a deep mark on the headmaster that he sees nothing but pedagogical evil all around him. Thus, his writings ruthlessly uncover the secrets of the pedagogical sphere, which wants to get rid of him, the backwardness and affected nature of parents, who egocentrically and fanatically defend the rights of their brats, express his frustration over the moralising, blabbing and prattling of hysterical women teachers in the staff, fully expose the splendour and misery of the annual headmasters' and headmistresses' meeting at a hotel by the sea, where whole brigades of pedagogical authorities from all parts of Slovenia flock to and where, on every such occasion, political pedagogy is portrayed as a mistake and a lie.

## Excerpt

### A Pedagogical Triptych – Primary Schools in Slovenia, Day 1

Translated by  
Špela Bibič

At these kinds of conferences, one usually senses the silent essence of the Slovenian educational system (for everything is feminised), pervading the conference and the pedagogy in Slovenia – they feel neglected, no one pats them, no one pays any attention to them, no one pays them a compliment, neither on their dress, nor their hair, no one bows before their femininity. What's more, they are sexually silenced, most of them at least, suppressed and neglected, most of them at least, they don't even see themselves in the mirrors of their expensive hotel rooms, most of them at least. Does this problem concern the running of a school? Why shouldn't it? If they were to be, that would be something at least, exploited from time to time, sexually exploited, they might feel better.

In such a luxury hotel, some pedagogical headmistress ladies take full advantage of the sauna, all kinds of massages, the hairdresser, spa-massage baths – they let themselves be



pampered, as they say and as the hotel advertisement says and as the television and various series teach them. Adding, in a most affected manner: “this is for the soul.”

Like real daily exploited housewives in their own homes, they punish the staff, the same way they are punished themselves, whenever possible – they let their luggage be carried, because back home, they constantly drag grocery bags around, so their arms are half-stretched, to live comfortably, they throw all the towels on the hotel bathroom floor every day, demand new ones, their rooms are messy and dirty, they turn into their husbands, not cleaning up after themselves, they mess everything up, behave irresponsibly towards the environment, they mock the people around them, the same way they are mocked themselves – they are real princesses now. Whatever you do, don't make them hate it by saying this is included in the price that the school pays, so that you can go to the conference. They apply mascara, or whatever it is they use, all over their faces, they put on liquid powder, which looks like plaster of an old shack from up-close, they put fake claws over their nails to make themselves more lady-like – and all they say is: “It's all paid for.” Whatever you do, don't pull their prosopopoeial mask off. They don't get paid at home, back home, they are slaves.

And some of them stay modest and humble teachers, keep strictly within the boundaries of their own world, so that they, god forbid, wouldn't be too extravagant, wouldn't step out of their modest, housewife nature, and don't treat themselves to anything except the sunset, which is so beautiful, stunning, romantic at the seaside, one really feels lucky to see the sun go down and is rewarded, just like that, you have been bestowed with something universal and you're happy, something like that really can be beautiful, like in some picture. Their rooms are tidy, they keep everything clean, so that the poor cleaning ladies wouldn't have too much work, so that they wouldn't think badly of them, but would speak well of them – these sure are tidy and neat people. So educated and so modest. They sit through all those lectures, seminars – workshops they call them – make notes and try to remember everything, after they have put their rooms in order and made the bed, tucked in the sheets, as if the room was unoccupied, and cleaned the bathroom after themselves. They feel good about having everything so tidy. They are unable to detach, despite the intellectually demanding workshops, unable to detach themselves from their tidy rooms. They will, of course, never order any room service. They will get what they need themselves. To take anything from the fridge in the room would be a sin and an extravagancy.

Some of them, if there is a brave man among the headmasters and their inner need turns out to be too great, even let themselves do it or that, it is taken care of, right? Right, right, says Jože the headmaster to himself, stretching in his expensive lair. His Self also agrees. The formal dinner that Jože is going to, along with his repressed, disgraced, humiliated Self, which only comes out in the hotel room, after it puts on his body, is always the same – the formal part concludes with the dance of the president of the special headmasters' association, a humble and timid civil initiative of pedagogues within the militant state pedagogy, we could say. It doesn't fight it nor causes trouble, it is its subordinate counterpart, this civil initiative. That is what it was established for, to support – this militant pedagogy. It turns out that the president always dances like he was taught in dance class in his final year of primary school. Mechanically, awkwardly, clumsily, stiffly and ceremoniously, with a particular, appropriately smug expression on his face, a mask (he too has mastered the art of prosopopoeia, in order to survive), behind which hides fear, great fear of messing up his footwork, of taking a step in the wrong direction and the minister would see it, notice it, this minister, the current minister, whichever minister. And so, quite befitting a headmaster – with no inner rhythm, rigorously and consistently as is right, he dances his dance of a headmaster champion. Well, there is no sin in that, whether everything is done right or everything is done wrong.

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## Katja Perat *The Best Have Fallen*

### About the author



Photo by Katja Perat.

In 2006, Katja Perat (1988) enrolled at the Faculty of Arts, the Department of Philosophy and the Department of Comparative Literature, where she is currently attending her final year of studies. Since 2009, she is an active editorial board member of the student literary magazine *Idiot*, where she publishes her poetry. Since 2007, her poems have also appeared in *Literatura* magazine (September 2007, vol. 19, no. 195 and November 2008, vol. 20, no. 209). One of her poems was published in *Dvignimo pero* – a bilingual collection of prose and poetry of young authors from Slovenia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, as part of the Treći novosarajevski književni susret in the organisation of the Association for Culture – Novo Sarajevo. Since 2010, she is a literary critic for the *Literatura* magazine, as well as the cultural bi-weekly *Pogledi*. In 2010, she was a regular correspondent for the student newspaper *Tribuna*. Her first poetry collection *Najboljši so padli* (*The Best Have Fallen*), which came out in 2011, was nominated for the Veronika Award and received the Award of the Slovenian Book Fair for Best First Book.

### About the book



I think it was Boris Pasternak who said: “Who said I like poetry? Verses I cannot stand.” Miklavž Komelj does not consider Pasternak’s thought a mere rhetorical witticism, but rather a demonstration of consistency of his *love of poetry*. I believe the criticism of Katja Perat’s poetry is a sign of precisely this kind of consistency, the consistency of feelings she might have for poetry, as well as of her attitude towards the work and the role of the poet. “It is not poetry I need, / But professional help.” Which poet can we trust, if not the one who is not ashamed of asking herself publicly if she might have fallen victim to one of the most elusive and insidious diseases of contemporary poetry – her own phantasms and personal traumas, masquerading as poetry.

Entering the literary system today, Katja Perat is certainly not a typical representative of the youngest generation of writers and brings into the literary arena a new story with new emphases, a distinct view of the world that has in fact been around for quite a while, yet has so far been prevalent on the street and at home. Katja Perat definitely does not belong among her very polite generation that speaks well, writes well, talks well and, above all, behaves well. We are not saying, of course, that we have not seen this in poetry before and elsewhere, but at the moment, Katja Perat is the biggest name of literary system disobedience, of vigorous protest against boredom (in a time when everything is amazing), of relentless persecution of collective delusions, insusceptibility to fascinate and being fascinated, contempt for egotism and seriousness, resistance to bribery when it comes to big ideas, enjoyment of the freedom of spirit, of faith in youth as the positive opposite of what comes after it.

*From the foreword by Mojca Pišek*

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**Excerpt**

**The Best Have Fallen – Engels**

Translated by  
Jasmin B. Frelj

I can say with certainty,  
that the only man who could love me without forcing himself,  
is Friedrich Engels.

There is a silent treaty among subordinates;  
that at all times of the day,  
without obligation,  
and without a shutterbug, who would cram that moment into eternity,  
they can place their heads into each other's lap,  
and summon comfort.

I go to the bathroom,  
to fix my hair and smudged mascara.  
I bump into a flock escaped from history text-books.  
They drift in a long line along the narrow hallway.  
They jostle past each other,  
as if there was revelation at the end, or at least some blueberry pie.

I feel uncomfortable,  
when Robespierre grabs my collar and pushes me up against the wall,  
so my feet dangle ten centimetres above the ground.  
Angry lad.  
So much blood spilled for freedom of speech, and now we're all silent.  
Nobody feels a sense of calling.  
We're making out with other losers in corners.  
Nobody wants to lay out a plan for a better tomorrow.  
There is no überman  
that would suddenly appear and save the day.

I feel sorry for Robespierre.  
His essay against capital punishment was good.  
With the edge of my palm I move along his face.  
He is not beautiful and many times he was wrong.  
Yet I am full of compassion, when he stands before me so upset.  
We are equal before law,  
but he needs explaining,  
that equality, as all on Earth,  
has its limit, one that is thin and hardly visible.  
He can't take me with him.  
I go back to Friedrich –  
there is nothing great about him.  
I seek refuge in his kind subordination,  
as orthodox Jews seek refuge in the shadow of His wings.

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## Andrej E. Skubic *How Much Are You Mine?*

### About the author



Photo by Jože Suhadolnik.

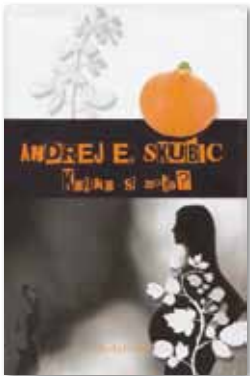
Andrej E. Skubic was born in 1967 in Ljubljana. He graduated from the Ljubljana Faculty of Arts and received his PhD in Sociolinguistics in 2004. Since 2004, he works as a freelance writer and translator.

He started publishing short stories in 1989. In 1999, he published his debut novel *Grenki med* (Bitter Honey), winning the 2000 Kresnik Novel of the Year Award. Since then, he has published three novels (*Fužinski bluz* – Fužine Blues, 2001, *Popkorn* – Popcorn, 2006, *Lahko* – You Can, 2009), a short story collection (*Norišnica* – Madhouse, 1994) and a monograph on sociolinguistics (*Obrazi jezika* – Faces of Language, 2005); he has written TV scripts, radio and theatre plays and edited several anthologies. He has translated over 20 books by Scottish, Irish, American and Nigerian authors (notably Flann O’Brien, Samuel Beckett and Ken Saro-Wiwa). In 2007, he received the Sovre Award (granted by the national Literary Translators’ Association) for his translations of James Kelman and Gertrude Stein.

His books have been translated into Czech (Bitter Honey, Fužine Blues), Serbian (Popcorn, Fužine Blues) and Croatian (Popcorn); his stories were published in literary magazines in several languages and widely anthologised, both nationally and internationally.

His latest novel *Koliko si moja?* (How Much Are You Mine?, 2011) won the 2012 Prešeren Foundation Award (national award for cultural achievement).

### About the book



After his girlfriend becomes pregnant with another man, Tomo Veis is devastated; he leaves the city and moves to “the old family homestead”, where he intends to write film scripts in peace. But the next few months have several temptations in store for him. After a not-so-accidental meeting with his former girlfriend, he embarks on an uncertain journey of helping her with the problematic pregnancy, which brings them closer together against his will. On the other hand, his peaceful stay in the countryside is disturbed by a conflict with the neighbour, who has appropriated a piece of the family land after the border river changed its course decades ago. As he struggles to solve the mounting problems, assisted by various locals of doubtful loyalties, the history of his family is gradually revealed – and it is not quite the same as the one he learned from his relatives. In fact, he himself turns out to be different than he thinks he is. All that is left for him to do is clear his own good name.

The novel focuses on the human love of possession – and the possessiveness of whom we love.

### Excerpt

#### How Much Are You Mine?

Translated by  
Špela Bibič

– Wait a minute, listen, Anja, I said slowly, slowly coming back into the picture. – Ok, I don’t know what it is, but shouldn’t we just like ...

If I had said these words with a little more conviction, everything could have turned out differently.

– No, this isn’t the time, she said. – This isn’t the right time. We’ll have plenty of time later. Go now, leave!

The look on her face was bordering on insane, completely at odds with her usual self, and so far gone it really freaked me out. This wasn’t the woman I had coffee with this morning. I drank my coffee and went to prep for editing. But here was just another broad from Studenec during a psychotic episode, during – I don’t know, something so out of my world, there’s no way I could deal with this right now. I should have slapped her around a bit, I know, but how could anyone slap such a sexy long-legged woman? She might have calmed down then and we could talk. But I didn’t.

– Just get back here, she was saying, as I was putting on my shoes again. – Don’t go. I stood up.

– Go *now*, just come back later, she said. – I mean, not like this, don't *leave*.

– Fucking hell, I said and had my jacket back on in record time, even though I was just about to slap her *anyway*, because that would be an appropriate way to say goodbye. This has to be the most moronic thing the world has ever seen.

– Come back, she kept saying, when I was already standing out in the corridor like an idiot and she was holding the door ajar, with only her head sticking out, illuminated by the light behind her, so I couldn't even see her face. – Come back, I mean it.

– Whose is it then? I asked again, because I managed to work out a few concepts while I was putting on my shoes and clothes.

– It's not yours, she said flatly and slammed the door; then all I could hear was the sound of locks turning, three at the bottom, two at the top. I'll bet she left the keys in the door.

When I left, I forgot my cigarettes and phone on the cabinet by the door. I had taken them out of my pocket when I came home. Good thing I didn't take out my wallet as well.

I drank two beers right by the apartment building, at the bar next to the Mercator supermarket. I was really upset. I thought of going back and banging on the door, but what if she still wouldn't let me in? The door can't be broken down, we had an anti-theft model installed, and there's no point in making a scene in the corridor and making a fool of myself. But I could call her, I thought. I had to call information first to get our home phone number – after all, who actually knows his home phone number these days? The bartender was looking at me like I was the eighth wonder of the world, but he too must have remembered the times when we didn't have mobile phones and had to ask the bartenders if we could make a phone call at the bar: hey, I'm having a drink here, I can't come, but you can come here if you feel like it. Those were the days.

– What the hell were you thinking, acting like that? I yelled into the answering machine. – Come on, call the bar and say it's for me. Or come here.

On hearing this, the bartender said nothing, only tried to stay clear of my table, where I sat cursing to myself, staring at the door. I was getting more and more agitated and pissed off. Only one third of this fury was due to the otherwise root cause of everything: the fact which had somehow gotten to me by then, which was that she was basically telling me that she had cheated on me, betrayed, actually *physically* mated with another guy, and *without a condom*, the fucking bastard (and then let me fuck her – so I could catch some shitty disease myself?). That was just one *part* of it, maybe even the smallest one for that matter, because the girl had obviously gotten herself into some deep shit which completely messed her up and I would want to *help her* in that case anyway, I guess she's really shaken up about all of this and that she's sorry. And two thirds of it was how she did it, how she kicked me out, how she treated me, like it wasn't even my business, our business – that's because women see everything as a *woman's* thing, controlling your *own* body, all of this is just *theirs*, the whole world is one big woman, and that's *her*, we only get a job to do every now and then, like: “go out and come back later.” How the fuck could she blow me off like that? There's no other word for it.

So after four beers, my phone call went something like this:

– Tomorrow at noon, the flat will be empty because I'm coming to get my stuff. Unless you call the bar in the next five minutes, the number is ...

The phone didn't ring that night, not even after the sixth beer.

I spent the night in a hotel. The room looked remarkably like some room in Patras, Toronto, Berlin, Lisbon ... I gave the receptionist such a look he didn't dare to make a sound.

I didn't slap her around. That's only one in a long list of my mistakes.

The next morning, when I went to pick up my stuff in the company van, my biggest fear was finding her hanging from some curtain rail, while listening to all my crap from yesterday booming from the answering machine: “If you don't call me at the bar ...” dramatic pause, “there's gonna be trouble.” Obviously, she wasn't hanging from the rail or any other thing; she wasn't there at all.

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## Marko Sosič From Earth And Dreams

### About the author



Photo by Agnese Divo

Marko Sosič, born in Trieste on 22 December 1958, writer and director. He graduated in Directing from the Academy of Dramatic Art in Zagreb (1984). He has directed at various Slovenian and Italian theatres, as well as for television. He is the author of a number of radio plays, which he recorded for the Slovenian radio in Trieste. He started publishing short prose in the late 1980's in *Sodobnost* and *Mladje* magazines. He was artistic director of the Slovene National Theatre Nova Gorica, as well as the Slovene Repertory Theatre Trieste.

Up to date, he has published a collection of novellas *Rosa na steklu* (Dew on the Windowpane; Devin, Trieste 1990), an autobiographical theatre chronicle *Tisoč dni, dvesto noči* (One Thousand Days, Two Hundred Nights; Branko, Nova Gorica 1996), a short novel *Balerina, Balerina* (Ballerina, Ballerina; Mladika, Trieste 1997), which was shortlisted for the Kresnik Best Novel of the Year Award, and another novel *Tito, Amor mijo* (Tito, Amor Mio; Študentska založba Litera, Maribor 2005). His last novel won him a nomination for the Prešeren Foundation Award and another spot on the shortlist for the Kresnik Award. In December 2011, his short story collection *Iz zemlje in sanj* (From Earth and Dreams) was published by Študentska založba Litera, Maribor.

He received the Vstajenje Award for *Ballerina, Balerina*, which also earned him a special accolade of Umberto Saba and the Citta' di Salo' First Prize in 2005. In 2007, the Slovenian Pen Club nominated the novel for the international Strega Europeo Award.

*Ballerina, Balerina* was listed among ten best novels after 1989 and was selected for the European project 100 Slavic Novels.

### About the book



From Earth and Dreams is a short story collection with exceptional lyrical power, which carries its precious, fragile load safely to the other side. Through eleven minimalist images, the author subtly lays down the dialectical laws of the protector and the protected. The old protect the children so that the children would protect the old, men protect women and women men, as there are always irresistible gaping abysses in our lives and we cannot lose the others, because that is all we have. Entering others in From Earth and Dreams seems angel-like. But this is not (Drago Jančar's) neutral dark angel of fate, which merely represents the presence of something that is beyond the individual's power. The angel in From Earth and Dreams struggles, despite his broken wings, to stay the child's guardian angel; too powerless, too exhausted to really protect, but only by trying to protect others, he will be protected himself, saved himself.

From the foreword by Petra Vidali

Translated by  
Špela Bibič

... I turn around and see the doctor. Unusual at this hour. *Come va oggi, Dragan?* asks the doctor and stops at Dragan's bed. I translate for him: How are you feeling today? I'm weak, I have no appetite, my legs are swelling. I translate Dragan's words for the doctor and the doctor's answer for Dragan. He says they are going to increase the dose of your medications but that your blood circulation is quite poor and your blood sugar is still high. Dragan is silent. He sits with his legs dangling over the edge of the bed, looking at the doctor. Ask him if he knows anything about dreams. I translate, somewhat taken aback by his question. No, he says he's an intern, I say. *Perchè?* asks the doctor. Why? Because I've been dreaming wonderful dreams, says Dragan. I translate. *Bene, bene, questo è molto importante per la guarigione.* I translate it for Dragan: He says that's good, that pleasant dreams help to recover. I see a smile on his face. *E cosa sogna il nostro Dragan?* asks the doctor. And what does our Dragan dream? I translate. I dream as if it never happened, says Dragan. I translate. As if the war had never begun. I translate. *Capisco,* says the doctor. He understands, I say. The doctor looks towards the beds that he is obviously on his way to see ... Ask him if I can tell him about my dreams, Dragan says, smiling. A little surprised, I translate Dragan's wish for him. *Non credo di avere abbastanza tempo, Dragan ...* Tell him it won't take long, says Dragan. I translate. *E va bene, ma faccia presto,* says the doctor. Alright, but make it quick, I tell Dragan and see his bright eyes light up for a brief moment. The doctor sits on the edge of Dragan's bed.

I dream that I am in my hometown, at the grand opening of my girlfriend's painting exhibition, begins Dragan. I translate. Her paintings are like the hidden landscapes of the soul. I translate. Greenery on the walls of city houses, ivy, bushes by the fence marking out the front yards. I translate. Her paintings are silent stories of people that are not depicted, but are written on those walls, in that greenery that covers them. I translate. As if the people, in that greenery on the walls, had left a piece of their face, a record of their life. I translate. The expressive power of her paintings is magnificent in its simplicity. I translate. Just like her. I translate. In my dreams, we are planning a film that will emerge from her paintings and real greenery, from all the grasses, even that small tuft of weeds growing by the walls of city houses that have such beautiful flowers. I translate. She puts her arms around me, I feel her body merging with mine, becoming one, disappearing together in the glow of intimacy. I translate. Then all of a sudden, we are somewhere else, sitting under a thick canopy of a tall tree, singing the melody that will accompany the images in the film we are dreaming of. I translate. Then a sudden bright light falls on us and we find ourselves in front of an old, tall city house. The spring, late afternoon light shines upon the house front, reflecting off the windowpanes, behind which hide the faces of people. We look at the hidden faces in the front windows, obscured by the glass and lights glimmering before them. I translate. Every window, one life radiating towards us. Every face behind the window, one story, unique and glorious. We see it. I translate. And the sun, glaring down on those windowpanes, golden yellow, inspires in us a vague feeling of happiness. I translate. *Bello,* murmurs the doctor, as if enraptured by Dragan's dreams. Beautiful, I translate to Dragan, who resumes his narration.

Then the faces of those people are no longer hiding behind the windowpanes. They lean out of the window, in that orange light, so that it seems as if a whole mass of them suddenly hung over the window sills. I translate. We look at those people, leaning, reaching out of the windows and all of a sudden, it seems as though they want to get out, not just stick their heads out to look on the street, but their entire bodies, as if they had no doors to go through, as if only windows were before them, high and wide open onto the city, the emptiness and light. I translate. Their bodies lean precariously out. Me and my girlfriend run beneath the windows to catch the bodies in case they fall into empty space. I translate. We look up towards those faces and the light falling lower and lower upon them, and then, their bodies actually slide down the window frames and start falling into empty space. We stretch our arms out and feel as if we suddenly had hundreds of them. We can use them to catch all those people in our arms, we think. I translate. We stretch out our arms and catch them. Their bodies are light, as if unreal, as if made of dreams and memories. I translate.

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## Lucija Stepančič Thursday At Six

### About the author



Photo by Damijan Stepančič

Lucija Stepančič (1969) is an academic painter and fine art restorer at the Ljubljana Restoration Centre. She entered the literary scene as a writer and literary critic. Her spot-on, sharp and lucid critiques (mostly published in the *Sodobnost* magazine, *Književni listi* and *Dnevnik*) have won her the 2003 Stritar Award for Best Young Literary Critic. A selection of her critical writings *Sedem let* (Seven Years) was published in 2007 (Center za slovensko književnost, Aleph).

Her first book, the collection of short stories *Mrtvaki in šlagerji* (Corpses and Schlagers), came out in 1997 (Aleph), followed by another short story collection *Prasec pa tak* (What a Pig – Študentska založba, Beletrina) in 2007 and her first poetry collection, *Alternativni vodič po Ljubljani, Ljubljanski imenik* (Alternative City Guide, Ljubljana's Phonebook – Zveza društev slovenskih likovnih umetnikov, *Likovne besede* magazine). *V četrtek ob šestih* (Thursday at six) is the author's first novel.

### About the book



What is the narrator up to, when she freely opens the story with an event that will only occur in some distant future of the literary world we haven't even managed to enter yet? What is left for us, the readers, to expect, if we know from the very beginning that this world is heading straight for disaster? Since the novel is the work of Lucija Stepančič, she will not spare us her wryness, irony and sarcasm. Even though this story could be read as a tragedy of some private world: Katarina, an economics student drop-out – partly out of boredom, partly as revenge on her ex-lover and partly out of fear of being alone – has an affair with Davor, who is, without his knowing it, HIV positive. If in nothing else, the world of the novel Thursday at six resembles other fictional worlds of Lucija Stepančič in that it is another one of her "comedies of errors", so it is clear that, with the contact between Katarina and Davor, the virus' path has only just begun.



Translated by  
Gregor Timothy Čeh

Today I will meet Davor. He will give me AIDS, but of course I don't know that yet. How come? It is 1998. For now there is no real cure for it. This doesn't trouble me, not yet anyway. I go out for a while in the afternoon. There's plenty of time to catch the virus, hours. Actually I don't really fancy anyone. I still pretend that you are the only one I am capable of thinking of. Particularly when I called you today. Phone booths are already a rarity and I had to walk all the way to the centre of town. The streets were full of people. On a messed up summer's day drawing to its close people are still rushing around. The town centre is chock-a-block with traffic. Other things in this world, like holidays and going to the seaside for example, don't feature on any of these people's minds. Miserable sods.

At least I have one advantage here. No one cares tuppence about me. I am virtually incognito. Surrounded by working madmen hurrying along. What would they think if they knew I still call you every Thursday at six? From a phone booth. Like today. I was particularly careful to be on time, despite knowing in advance that, yet again, you won't be at home. You never are anyway. I always get Magda answering the phone telling me you went to play tennis.

Tennis! That's a good one! The shit you tell her, convinced she believes you! It's what you kept telling her when we were together. For two whole years you fed her the same story. It seems you still do, but no longer because of me. Magda is always equally polite and correct though she must have realised some time ago that something was dodgy here. How come she's never lost it? After all, she could at least be interested in who you are with now. Unless of course she is totally dumb. But I don't think she is. Quite the opposite.

It's the same old story this time. Again Magda picks up the phone and is utterly polite. Again she tells me where you have gone and doesn't let on that she remembers me from last week or show any impatience. She doesn't even lose enough of her temper to put the phone down too quickly. I ask myself whether it's not just a kind of perversion. The only sound coming from the phone is the signal that the conversation has ended. The universe is reduced to the size of the receiver in a public phone booth. To sticky plastic and dirty glass. A second later to the phone card that pops out of the slot. Two seconds later to Tjaša's face. When I step aside the cosmos breathes in some air again, increasing to the size of the entire square, claiming back its houses and people, driving and rushing around as if they'll never stop. The flat on the other end of the receiver recedes into the background again. Somewhere far away. To the north northeast. And there is Tjaša in the foreground, waiting for me to get out of the booth. As if right now all I need to attain total happiness is her hysterical smile. Heck, where did she come from?

You know, Tjaša, you remember her? I told you about her, she's the one in the room next to mine. Tjaša, the sex bomb about to explode as the guys see her. In front of old ladies she pretends to be some kind of goody two-shoes. And now she has decided that I'm up for it. Right here on the spot. It seems to please her immensely. At least judging by her grin. So we go. Of course she would never guess I am a perv, calling from the public phone booth just so my number cannot be traced. And how I harass the poor woman who has done nothing wrong and has on top of it all, been cheated on. Tjaša doesn't know any of this. That's a good thing since she might like the whole thing too much. You won't believe it, but she suddenly knows all there is to know about cool dudes. Ever since she hitched up with Škis last month she has mastered the entire cosmos from the basics upwards. Tiny but juicy, like a curly little devil. A fairly plain face with some acne even, but still quite a catch. I suppose she uses Edo as a finance minister, or what?

## Goran Vojnović *Yugoslavia, My Country*

### About the author



Photo by Jože Suhadolnik

Goran Vojnović (b. 1980) holds a degree from the Ljubljana Academy of Theatre, Radio, Film and Television, where he specialised in film and television directing. He has directed several short films and co-wrote a screenplay with Marko Šantić for the film *Good Luck Nedim*, which won the Heart of Sarajevo Award and was nominated for the European Film Award in 2006. In 2010, he directed his first feature film *Piran/Pirano*. He is regarded as one of the most talented authors of his generation. He is also a weekly columnist for one of the country's biggest newspapers, *Dnevnik*. *Čefurji raus!* (*Southern Scum go home!*, 2008) is his bestselling debut novel. His second novel *Jugoslavija, moja dežela* (*Yugoslavia, My Country*) was published in 2011 and achieved immediate success among the Slovene readers.

### About the book



When Vladan Borojević googles his father Nedeljko, an ex Yugoslav People's Army officer who supposedly fell in the war, he unexpectedly uncovers a dark family secret, which takes him back to the year 1991, when he first heard the word "transfer" and his idyllic childhood suddenly ended. Seventeen years later, the painful discovery sets him on a journey through the Balkans in search of his runaway father, finding out in the process how his family fell apart and why the world they once lived in fell apart as well. The story of the Borojević family unfolds and juxtaposes the faces of the Balkans then and now, but focuses mostly on the tragic destinies of people, who were unable to escape the war, even though they managed to get away from its bombs.

Translated by  
Gregor Timothy Čeh

Packing up the huge pile of our belongings in room no. 211 the following morning, mother needed someone to stand up to her, someone to whom she could spit out all her own arguments and in doing so convince herself that Uncle Danilo in Novi Sad, father's second cousin and only living relative, was the best short-term emergency option available to us. She needed this, since she did not in the least believe it and was furious with father and angry at allowing herself to be pushed into a situation she could no longer control, one where she would soon be dependent on strangers.

I kept quiet, worried, not used to visiting people I didn't know, worried about not having my own room and even more worried that there might be local Novi Sad lads of my age living at Uncle Danilo's who would eye me with suspicion, observing my every move, waiting for me to make a mistake that would cost me dearly. I was afraid of these Novi Sad ten to twelve-year-olds, frightened of having to prove myself to them and of the unrelenting fight to accept me as an equal into their midst. But mother didn't have time for my fears. She had plenty of her own to deal with. Having to comfort herself, she could not comfort me. She kept repeating to herself that all would be well; after all, Danilo is family and, unlike with her own kin, that meant something with these people. They would probably welcome us and we should be glad and grateful; we had little choice, having to wait for this "state of emergency" to pass and father to return; then we could all return to Pula together.

But when father informed us over the phone that since he was being sent "out into the field" he would be unable to get to Belgrade and take us to Novi Sad himself like he had promised only yesterday, mother finally broke down and collapsed on the floor in the middle of room no. 211, bursting into tears. I wanted to curl up to her and take away some of her pain despite not really understanding it, but she kept pushing me away like she had father on the day we moved from Pula. That day in the Hotel Palace her courage had irrevocably deserted her and mother finally abandoned her lifelong fight. She was a defeated woman who, at that point, probably finally realised she had been left alone in this story. I do not know whether she had a hunch that father would never return from "the field", or that "the state of emergency" would never end, but I do believe her sixth sense could feel the approaching horror and that, sitting there amidst boxes and suitcases full of our stuff, she finally transformed into the woman on the run who for years to come would still be running away from everything that had led to her collapsing on the dirty cheap carpet-covered floor in room no. 211.

\*

Mother thus stepped into Danilo Radović's flat on the fourth floor of a building on Žarko Vasiljević Street near Riblja pijaca, the fish market square, right in the heart of downtown Novi Sad, resigned to all she could expect in this flat. She was in no state to reassure or encourage me over the impending confrontation with our distant relatives, so I stood by her side, overcome with a fear greater than anything I had ever felt in my life. When we finally stopped at no. 2 Vasiljević Street, it was this fear that nearly made me piss my pants. My heart pounded as it never had done before, my legs shook, the palms of my hands sweated, so I dropped one of the boxes twice and I felt like collapsing onto the ground and crying right there in the middle of Novi Sad, just like my mother had done in Belgrade. I probably would have done, had Danilo not rushed up to us at that moment and started to hug and kiss us, shrieking like he would shriek right until the day mother and I would ask him to drive us to the coach station and stick us on a coach to Ljubljana.

At that moment I was saved from fainting by his howling and even more so his strong hands that dragged me towards the entrance of the block of flats and all the way up the stairs to the fourth floor, pushing me through the door into their flat, continuously repeating that I should leave my stuff behind, that they would bring it up later, that I should not worry and that the main thing is that mother and me were alive and well and here with them, and of course that I was "the spitting image of my father Nedeljko when he was ten and both of them lived together and were like two brothers".

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# Uroš Zupan *A Form Of Paradise*

## About the author



Photo by Nataša Jan

Uroš Zupan (born in 1963 in Trbovlje) exploded onto the literary scene with *Sutre* (Sutras, 1991), one of the most celebrated debut poetry collections of the last decades. Up to date, his body of work has grown to nine independent collections of poetry. He has received numerous awards for his writing and his works are frequently translated into other languages. Although we could easily say that he is a poet by profession, he has also established himself as a sharp essayist and perceptive translator.

## About the book



In 1991, *Sutras* was published, which became a sort of milestone; an immortal book. Exactly two decades have passed between the publication of *Sutras* and *Oblika raja* (*A Form of Paradise*). This is of course reflected in the poems. They are written in “almost” regular forms (sestina, sonnet). They inhabit the space between the given pattern, adapted to the poet’s own needs, and “the mistake” that is conscious and deliberate. Quite a few of them are rhymed, but the rhyme is irregular and imperceptible. Some of them are also in free-verse form. In fact, all of them could be said to be in free verse. Their themes differ. They rarely have to do with the world we live in. They are much more drawn to the past. They wish to for ever lay their claim to the light, which has already reached its zenith, its golden glow that is about to darken. They seem like the poet’s attempt at redemption. To reclaim his body without pain. Future without end. Time that is lost. If Zupan screamed in *Sutras*, his voice in *A Form of Paradise* is much lower. But it can be heard as far away as then, or farther still.

## Excerpt

### *A Form of Paradise – Cranes*

Translated by  
Barbara Jurša

In *Sweet Bird of Youth*, Paul Newman  
was driving a white convertible by the sea. Grey  
cranes were rising from the water and flapping their wings.  
The water was greenish brown – lurking, silent  
slumber at the land’s edge. Enough for the evening  
to become a flowing summer fabric  
and pour itself as a flood of air into drowsy eyes.  
Nostalgia, Doctor. But not mine.  
Nostalgia, as though somebody died while I was  
already living, and bequeathed the light

and the air of some other generation to me. The world was  
turning lazily in its slowness and  
every piece of chocolate, wrapped in silver paper,  
was a kind of wealth, all the newspapers  
were snowed up with the victories of untiring humanity.  
When I watch the TCM channel, I sometimes wish  
I could enter the past through the TV  
screen. What would I find there,  
Doctor? Perhaps a world without me  
and You. A world with another me. My parents

would be young, with smiling faces they would leave  
the office where they had just signed an  
agreement with immortality. And hadn’t they signed it,

clumsily frozen on the photos from times  
when people still stopped on the stairways  
and talked to each other about dreams and other  
everyday things in elevators? What is the  
time, actually, what does the calendar say? Don't  
believe numbers and letters. Music is the only  
immaterial tranquilliser. Nostalgia,

Doctor, nostalgia. 45 years and already such an acute  
form, this usually befalls men who are really old –  
on the way to the toilet that unconscious gasping  
for clarity which hovers above the ground, that abstract  
desire for air and the particular smudged  
colours which have accidentally ended up in the light,  
beside the complete breakdown of the memory of  
smooth and elastic bodies, due to fear  
and drunkenness, the missed women. To disappoint  
love, this is perhaps the only worthy reason  
for regret. Nostalgia, Doctor.

What will you prescribe me? Valium? I love  
Valium. But chemistry scares me. Had Paul  
Newman ever weighed valium with his tongue?  
Probably. But he is still a hero; blue eyes,  
amnestied by time. I must persist till  
the film's end. I mustn't fall asleep and  
sink into brief death too early.  
The forest outside stands firmly entrenched in the dark.  
And the moon's silver light shines on the wings  
of cranes who will never take flight, although  
they will keep on fluttering, as if they were,  
together with the clouds, the only thing real in the night.

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## The Center for Slovenian Literature is a member of LAF – (Literature Across Frontiers)

[www.lit-across-frontiers.org](http://www.lit-across-frontiers.org)

The Center for Slovenian Literature is a non-governmental organization dedicated to literary and publishing activities. It was founded to contribute to the international promotion of Slovenian literature, and began operating in 1999.

The Center is dedicated to attracting support for, and encouraging work in the following areas:

- making quality translations of contemporary and classic Slovenian literature possible,
- drawing the attention of international publishers to the rich, albeit not very well-known, heritage of Slovenian literature,
- presenting relevant information to the interested public in the international context.

In this way the Center responds to the needs which other institutions in this field are either unable or unwilling to meet. While the Center's primary task is to address an international audience, it is no less committed to informing the Slovenian public about important international literary trends, authors, and publishing events. It is open to collaboration with other local and international institutions and individuals working toward similar goals.

The Center finances its activities with funds raised both locally and internationally. Its priorities include, but are not limited to, creating computer-assisted databases of translations and translators; providing information to chosen target-audiences; presenting selected works and authors abroad; enabling, coordinating and promoting international collaboration; integrating into existing international programs and networks with similar aims; and developing a creative approach to the promotion of Slovenian literature.

The Center for Slovenian Literature supplies information on contemporary Slovenian literature to its foreign partners through mail and contacts at various fairs. It sponsors translations and translators' visits to literary events and residencies. It supplies translators with books and literary magazines; occasionally, it provides them with grants for translations given by the Slovenian Book Agency.

The Center for Slovenian Literature is the publisher of the *Aleph* book series, which includes new Slovenian literary works as well as translations of contemporary world literature. While the Slovenian authors are supported by the Slovenian Book Agency, the majority of translations are published with the help of foreign translation/publication grants. Over a hundred titles have been published in the series, some bilingual.

## The Trubar Foundation

The Trubar Foundation is a joint venture of the Slovene Writers' Association ([www.drustvo-dsp.si](http://www.drustvo-dsp.si)), Slovenian PEN and the Center for Slovenian Literature. The financial means for its activities are provided by the Slovenian Book Agency and by other sources. The aim of the Trubar Foundation is to subsidy publications of Slovenian literature in translation.

Foreign publishers can apply for subsidies to publish Slovenian authors in their native languages. The Trubar Foundation contributes up to 50% of printing costs (see the form at: [www.ljudmila.org/litcenter](http://www.ljudmila.org/litcenter)). It does not subsidy translation; translators can apply for translation grants directly to the Slovenian Book Agency [www.jakrs.si](http://www.jakrs.si)

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10  
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